

Notice 1

Under the Copyright Act 1968, this thesis must be used only under the normal conditions of scholarly fair dealing. In particular no results or conclusions should be extracted from it, nor should it be copied or closely paraphrased in whole or in part without the written consent of the author. Proper written acknowledgement should be made for any assistance obtained from this thesis.

Notice 2

I certify that I have made all reasonable efforts to secure copyright permissions for third-party content included in this thesis and have not knowingly added copyright content to my work without the owner's permission.

English Communication Skills in the Ready-Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh: A Case Study

Mohammad Moninoor Roshid

Bachelor of Education (Honours), Institute of Education and Research (IER),

University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Master of Education (Language Education), Institute of Education and Research

(IER), University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Master of Philosophy (English Language Teaching), Institute of Education and

Research (IER), University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education, Monash University

June 2014

Declaration

I certify that this thesis, except with the Graduate Research Committee's approval, contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution, and affirms that to the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Mohammod Moninoor Roshid

27 June, 2014

The plan for this research was approved by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (Reference: CF10/2174 - 2010001224).

Dedication

To

Shorna,

Samiha and

Saheel

for their sacrifice and support.

And my parents.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I thank the Almighty, and my parents.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Sue Webb and Dr. Raqib Chowdhury for their great support, continuing encouragement, time, patience, and guidance. I appreciate their contributions, and their warm support and guidance. I would like to acknowledge my former supervisors, Dr Margaret Gearon and Dr Phan Le Ha for their support with my PhD research until they left Monash University. They sharpened my ideas for this project and helped me to confirm my candidature at Monash University in my first year of PhD. I am also thankful to Professor Peter Sullivan who guided me in the absence of my former supervisor.

I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude to all panel members, who gave me feedback and approved this project. Their suggestions helped this thesis to be more focused.

I acknowledge the participants, who agreed to take part in this research and share their valuable perceptions and experiences with me, despite their busy schedule.

I gratefully acknowledge the funding sources for both living and tuition allowances that made my PhD work possible. I was funded by a Monash Graduate Scholarship (MGS) and Monash International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (MIPRS). I am also thankful to the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh for granting me study leave to conduct this research.

I thank my lovely friends, colleagues and relatives, both in Australia and Bangladesh, who constantly supported and encouraged me at different times in my

research. Without their support it would have been very difficult to complete this thesis.

I would also like to thank Mr Karl for his support in my part time job.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr Mayur Kataria, who supported me providing necessary administrative care and advice with a smiling face from the beginning to the end of my study at Monash University.

I thank Dr Diane Brown for proofreading the thesis according to the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (2nd edn, 2013). I also thank Bronwyn Dethick to assist me in setting format of the thesis.

Finally I would like to express my love and appreciation to my family for their endless sacrifice. I would like to say to my family (Shorna) that no need to stay away from me, no need to suffer anymore with two lovely kids (Samiha and Saheel), instead, let us stay together and lead a celestial family life.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	III
DEDICATION.....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VII
LIST OF TABLES	XIV
LIST OF FIGURES	XV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XVII
ABSTRACT	XX
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview of the study	1
1.2 The need for communication skills in business	3
1.3 Research aim and questions	9
1.4 The context of the study: Bangladesh and its RMG industry.	9
1.4.1 The place of English in Bangladesh: An overview.	10
1.4.2 The RMG business in Bangladesh.	16
1.5 Rationale for the study	19
1.5.1 Shortage in skilled personnel.....	19
1.5.2 Gaps in the literature.	21
1.5.3 Personal motivation for the study.....	23
1.6 Significance of the study	26
1.7 Organisation of the thesis.....	28
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	32
2.1 Introduction	32
2.2. The global spread of English and its linguistic consequences	33

2.3	The global contested status of English.....	38
2.4	ELF in global communication.....	41
2.4.1	ELF as a global communication tool.....	42
2.4.2	The linguistic features of ELF: Settings, speakers and exchanges.....	46
2.4.3	ELF in digital speak.....	50
2.4.4	From ELF to ELFB: Forms and function.	52
2.5	Communicative competence: The basis of communication skills	57
2.6	Developing English skills for workplaces.....	72
2.7	Conceptual framework	76
2.8	Conclusion.....	80
CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		81
3.1	Introduction	81
3.2	Philosophical underpinning/worldview	82
3.3	The selected strategy of inquiry: Qualitative case study approach	84
3.4	Situating the self in research	90
3.5	Participants	92
3.5.1	General introduction.....	92
3.5.2	Selection, sample size and demographic.....	96
3.5.3	Access.....	100
3.6	Data collection methods and process	101
3.6.1	In-depth interviews.....	101
3.6.2	Observation and field notes.....	105
3.6.3	Documents analysis.....	106
3.7	Methods of data analysis and interpretation.....	107
3.7.1	Interview data: Thematic analysis.....	108
3.7.2	Observation and field notes analysis.....	110
3.7.3	E-mails: Discourse analysis.....	111

3.8	Ethical considerations	113
3.9	Validity and reliability	115
3.10	Generalisation debates.....	117
3.11	Methodological challenges in collecting data	118
3.12	Conclusion and directions for the findings chapters	120
CHAPTER FOUR THE NEED FOR ENGLISH IN RMG BUSINESS: VOICES FROM THE WORKPLACE		121
4.1	Introduction	121
4.2	The need for English in the RMG industry: “Without English the garments sector is unthinkable”	122
4.2.1	A shared contact language for a shared business interest.....	124
4.2.2	English for documentation	138
4.2.3	English for communication practicalities	141
4.2.4	Extent of English language used in the RMG sector.....	147
4.3	English language as capital? “More languages, more capital”	151
4.3.1	English for career development.....	153
4.3.2	English for organisational promotion.	159
4.4	Place of other languages in relation to English: “We just use Bangla while communicating with local people”	162
4.5	Conclusion.....	165
CHAPTER FIVE COMMUNICATING IN THE WORKPLACE: LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES THAT MATTER.....		168
5.1	Introduction	168
5.2	Fluency: “Yes, they must have fluency”	169
5.2.1	Why does fluency matter?	169
5.2.2	The required level of fluency depends on buyers.....	172
5.2.3	Is oral fluency needed for all?	177

5.2.4	Fluency in written communication.	182
5.3	Grammatical knowledge and skills: “The grammatical aspect is important but less important. But it’s ok if buyers understand”	184
5.3.1	The need for grammatical accuracy.	185
5.3.2	Grammar in written communication.	191
5.3.3	Grammar in spoken and written contexts: A comparative necessity. ...	193
5.3.4	Perceived and actual practice of grammatical skills with RMG professionals.	197
5.4	Vocabulary, technical terms and abbreviations: “I can manage total communication using these words”	202
5.4.1	General vocabulary.....	202
5.4.2	Garments speak: Vocabulary, technical terms and abbreviations.	206
5.5	Pronunciation and accents: “Accent[s] and pronunciation need to be good” 212	
5.5.1	Pronunciation.....	212
5.5.2	Accents.	217
5.6	Listening and understanding skills: “Who listens well, can speak well” ...	220
5.7	Reading skills: “If we do not understand terms and conditions, it is difficult to have reimbursement”	222
5.8	Conclusion.....	222
CHAPTER SIX COMMUNICATING IN THE WORKPLACE:		
SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCES		226
6.1	Introduction	226
6.2	English itself is a language of courtesy: The need for sociocultural skills in business	227
6.3	Positional factors of business counterparts in communication	231
6.3.1	Hierarchy of positions: “Yes, certainly the change occurs but not like the culture we have.”	231

6.3.2	Business positions: “To us the buyer means God.”	235
6.3.3	Language positions: “With native speakers, I have to give my best effort and speak as nicely as possible.”	245
6.3.4	Geographical positions: “We have to go to their level for talking.”	251
6.4	Personal and social factors in rapport management	257
6.4.1	Gender: “I feel interested to talk to a young woman.”	257
6.4.2	Age: “Actually we don’t use language considering age.”	263
6.4.3	Religion: “It works when we are in the same religion.”	264
6.5	Salutations and greetings in business communication	265
6.6	Conclusion.....	271
CHAPTER SEVEN COMMUNICATING IN THE WORKPLACE: DISCOURSE AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCES		275
7.1	Introduction	275
7.2	Simple, short and easy: Professionals’ perceptions of spoken and written language at work	276
7.3	Pragmatic strategies in intercultural business communication	284
7.3.1	Achievement strategies.....	284
7.3.1.1	Approximation.....	284
7.3.1.2	Nonverbal/Non-linguistic skills.....	286
7.3.1.3	Code-switching, restructuring and circumlocution.	289
7.3.2	Time-gaining and self-monitoring strategies.....	291
7.3.3	Interactional and collaborative strategies.	295
7.3.4	Tempo of speech.....	298
7.3.5	Proactive strategies.....	299
7.4	Conclusion.....	301
CHAPTER EIGHT COMMUNICATING IN THE WORKPLACE: PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT		304

8.1	Introduction	304
8.2	English in interpersonal skills	305
8.2.1	English in business persuasion.	305
8.2.2	English in establishing confidence in business.	309
8.2.3	English in business negotiations.....	311
8.3	Business specific knowledge and skills in English	313
8.4	Practical experience as a great factor	316
8.5	Workplace learning: An approach to professional skills development.....	318
8.6	Perceived congruity between university and industry in English communication skills development of professionals	326
8.6.1	Education meets the labour market: Examining matches and sufficiency. 327	
8.6.2	Education does not meet the labour market: Examining mismatches and insufficiencies.....	329
8.6.3	Skills are neither sufficient nor insufficient.	335
8.7	Conclusion.....	341
CHAPTER NINE SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....		344
9.1	Introduction	344
9.2	Revisiting the research questions	345
9.3	English as garments speak: Forms, function, skills and challenges.....	346
9.3.1	Linguistic intelligibility as communicative effectiveness.	347
9.3.2	Intercultural skills in a business setting.....	357
9.3.3	Professional skills and challenges for professional preparations.	359
9.4	English for change for a better tomorrow	362
9.4.1	Specific businesses require specific communication skills.	362
9.4.2	Pedagogical implications: Lessons for ELF syllabus design.	364

9.4.3	From workplace learning to work integrated learning: Preparing job-ready graduates.	367
9.4.4	Theory shifting: Reconsidering communicative competence in ELF business settings.	369
9.4.5	Policy implications.	371
9.5	Limitations of the study and future direction	374
9.6	Conclusion.....	375
REFERENCES.....		379
APPENDICES		402
Appendix 1:	Interview schedule for RMG professionals.....	403
Appendix 2:	Demographic information of the participants	408
Appendix 3:	A list of technical vocabulary, terms and acronyms used in RMG business	415
Appendix 4:	NVivo coding screenshot	420
Appendix 5:	A sample of thematic mind map	421
Appendix 6:	A checklist of e-mail analysis	422
Appendix 7:	Explanatory statements	424
Appendix 8:	Consent form.....	429
Appendix 9:	Approval letter from the gatekeeper	431

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Bangladesh RMG at a glance	18
Table 3.1 Type and number of participants	98
Table 3.2 Sample details of e-mails	107
Table 4.1: Extent of English language use	149
Table 5.1 Importance of grammatical accuracy in spoken and written communication	194
Table 5.2 Types of written mistakes executed by RMG professionals.....	200
Table 5.3 Abbreviations used in the RMG business	211
Table 6.1 Greetings used by three groups of RMG professionals (percentages).....	267
Table 7.1 Types of spoken features in written discourse	281
Table 7.2 Nonverbal means of communication in e-mails	288

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: ‘Made in Bangladesh’ in different world brand names	17
Figure 1.2: Tree structure of the thesis.....	29
Figure 2.1: Bangladesh in business relations with Kachru’s (1992) three concentric circles	37
Figure 2.2: ELF from different philosophical standpoints.....	45
Figure 2.3: Model of CC by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983).....	62
Figure 2.4: Components of strategic competence	67
Figure 2.5: Conceptual framework for the study	79
Figure 3.1: Structure for research design	89
Figure 3.2: The basic role of different RMG professionals	95
Figure 3.3: The areas of study.....	99
Figure 3.4: The types of university	99
Figure 4.1: The words refer to necessities of English in the RMG business world.....	123
Figure 4.2: Comparative views between participants and literature	138
Figure 5.1: RMG related business and technical jargon	209
Figure 5.2: RMG business specific acronyms	209
Figure 6.1: Buyer’s e-mail from Japan (E-mail 37).....	240
Figure 6.2: Supplier’s e-mail from Bangladesh (E-mail 38).....	241
Figure 6.3: Buyer’s e-mail from the UK (e-mail 40).....	241
Figure 6.4: Reply e-mail to buyer by a Bangladeshi marketing person (e-mail 41).....	242
Figure 6.5: E-mail sent by a Bangladeshi professional to a buyer (e-mail 7).....	243
Figure 6.6: E-mails to accessories suppliers from Bangladeshi RMG person (e-mail 25)	244
Figure 6.7: Reply from a Chinese supplier (e-mail 26)	245
Figure 6.8: Types of salutations by formality	267

Figure 8.1: The existing forms of workplace learning in the RMG industry.....	320
Figure 8.2: The new production of knowledge: Mode 3.....	331
Figure 9.1: Model of ELFB skills	370

List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association for Southeast Asian Nations
BATEXPO	Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
BELF	Business English Lingua Franca
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Associations
BSB	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CC	Communicative Competence
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLA	Communicative Language Ability
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EAB	Export Association of Bangladesh
EB	English for Business
EBP	English for Business Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGL	English as a Global Language
EIB	English for International Business
EIL	English is an International Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELFA	English as a Lingua Franca in Academic settings
ELFB	English as a Lingua Franca in Business settings

ELT	English Language Teaching
EMT	English as a Mother Tongue
ENL	English as a Native Language
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
ESBP	English for Specific Business Purposes
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for a Specific Purpose
EU	European Union
FUC	Forms, Uses and Cultures
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GL	Global Language
IBA	Institute of Business Administration
IBC	Intercultural Business Communication
L1	Language One (Mother Tongue)
L/C	Letter of Credit
LDC	Least Developed Country (LDC)
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NNSE	Non-native Speakers of English
NSE	Native Speakers of English
OJT	On-the-job training
RMG	Ready-made Garments

UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-based learning
WEs	World Englishes
WIL	Work-integrated Learning
WPL	Workplace learning

Abstract

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is playing an imperative role in communication in multilingual settings. The importance of English in global communication demands the necessity of English communication skills for operating a business worldwide. Constructing a conceptual framework for this research grounded in theories of ELF and communicative competence for language learning, this study explored understandings of the English communication skills required for business professionals working in the ready-made garments industry in Bangladesh and who are engaged in communication with business personnel from different linguacultural (language and cultural) backgrounds. The study further looked at how and how far the identified required skills correspond to the university education these professionals had experienced in Bangladesh. A qualitative case study was applied to conduct the research.

The findings of the study show that for successful communication in an international business, the RMG professionals require a set of skills that embrace five core areas such as linguistic skills, sociocultural skills, discourse skills, pragmatic skills and professional skills. Deploying these skills in an integrated way was understood by the professionals as necessary to bring about an effective outcome in international business communication. The finding also demonstrates that despite vast differences in the ways the participants in the RMG business understood, conceptualised and practised English in their business communication; in the end, they all agreed that any kind of mix in language is effective in communication as long as their counterparts understand. The findings further reveal that the set of skills RMG professionals needed for effective operation in a global business were overlooked in university education. The finding identified potential gaps between university and industry in preparing graduates with

necessary communication skills in English as per the demands of international business communication.

The results of this thesis carry potential lessons and directions for university, industry, government, researchers and educators to narrow the gaps between what business professionals need and what can be realistically taught in universities. The insights derived from this research could potentially be an important addition to both local and global knowledge.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the study

Owing to an ever expanding world business and economy, English has become not only an international language of business (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998; Ferraro, 2002; John, 1996) or a ‘global language of business’ (Neeley, 2012) but one of the biggest and most recognised ‘business lingua franca’ (Ehrenreich, 2010; Evans, 2013; Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013). ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF) is playing an important role in communication in multilingual settings (Rogerson-Revell, 2006). As a ‘default means of communication’ (House, 2012, p. 173), English today is not just a choice but the *only* choice to facilitate commerce at a global level. It is no longer perceived as a ‘foreign’ language (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011), rather a language of necessity. Thus the role of English as a lingua franca of business is now largely unquestioned and firmly established (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2003; Nickerson, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2006).

Given the importance of English in a global business setting, English communication skills (or communicative competences, used interchangeably) have become a necessity for operating a successful business. However, to date, there has been little agreement among scholars on what communication skills in English are required for non-native English speaking business professionals, who operate an international business at a professional level with both native and non-native speakers of English (NNSE). In particular, little attention has been given to the South Asian local English used by people who learn English as a foreign language and later use English as a business lingua franca with global professionals. Here the professional role refers to

someone at graduate entry level or professional level employment (see, Evetts, 2006 for definition of professionalism).

Constructing a conceptual framework for this research grounded in ELF for ‘English as a lingua franca in business settings’ (ELFB) and ‘communicative competence’ (CC) for communication skills (see for example, Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011), this study aims to explore the English communication skills required in global operating corporate settings located in Bangladesh, and how (and how far) English communication skills inculcated and developed in higher education are likely to meet the needs of global business. Grounded in a qualitative case study, as an attempt to narrow the gaps between understanding what business workplaces require and what could be realistically taught at the universities as perceived by participants, this study investigated and assessed the need for English communication skills in the Ready-made garments (RMG) industry, the leading business sector in Bangladesh, the second largest garments exporter in the world (Islam, 2012). Several studies have been conducted on business communication skills in academic settings (e.g. Wardrope, 2002; Wardrope & Bayless, 1994) but few have focused on workplaces. This study focuses on the business workplace and shows how English communication skills are enacted through the daily life of a group of employees working in professional (graduate entry) roles in a number of garment industries in Bangladesh (see, Evetts, 2006 for definition of professionalism).

This introductory chapter discusses the need for communication skills in a business setting, the research aim and questions, the context of the study, and the rationale for conducting this research. In addition, the chapter highlights the significance of the study followed by describing the organisational structure of this thesis.

1.2 The need for communication skills in business

In a rapidly changing global economy, a competitive business market requires good communication skills in workplaces (Locker & Kaczmarek, 2009; Stevens, 2005). Emphasising the importance of communication skills in an international business sector, Victor (1992) argues:

It is probably better to have mediocre technical skills and excellent international business communication skills than to have excellent technical skills and poor international business communication skills. (p. 246)

Communication skills play an important role for employers and other representatives of the commercial world (Cameron, 2002). In surveys undertaken to assess which skills are needed to maximise job opportunities, surveys of most employers have consistently rated ‘communication skills’ in general as the most important (Cameron, 2002). Communication skills are seen as important in all business regardless of whether people are communicating in their own language or not. It becomes crucial if business is global and operating across languages. It is argued that communication skills are critical to job placement, performance, career advancement and organisational success (Guffey, 2010). The need for communication skills in today’s business world is more important than ever before, and so it is advised to younger generations to have mastery of these skills in the early stage of their careers (Moss, 2012).

In an international business, both oral and written communication skills are valued. Oral and written communication skills are seen as soft skills necessary for any profession (Conrad & Newberry, 2011). A review of contemporary studies (see Conrad & Newberry, 2011; Crosling & Ward, 2002; Freihat & Al-Machzoomi, 2012; Stevens, 2005; Ulinski & O’Callaghan, 2002; Wardrope & Bayless, 1994; Weldy & Icenogle,

1997) highlights that, to function effectively in a business organisation, strong oral communication skills are necessary. A lack of these skills will be a disadvantage in the workplace (Crosling & Ward, 2002).

Oral communication, also known as verbal communication, is not as simple as merely the ability to speak, converse, argue or negotiate an issue (Chaturvedi & Chaturvedi, 2006). It is a multifaceted field of communication that includes a wide area of verbal interaction and covers informal, spontaneous unplanned conversation, formal presentation, team participation and meetings, usually with a set agenda (Crosling & Ward, 2002). Weldy and Icenogle (1997) identified a number of oral communication skills that include: following instructions, listening skills, conversation skills, giving feedback, communicating with the public, meeting skills, presentation skills, handling client complaints, conflicting resolution skills, negotiation skills, taking customer orders, teaching/instructing skills and interviewing skills. These skills are essential and necessary for business communication.

Similar to oral communication skills, writing skills are also increasingly important in business workplaces, and business professionals depend on written communication more than ever before as a consequence of technological development, especially the development in internet and e-mail communication. It is argued that e-mail is today's version of the business letter and it has become the primary channel of communication (Guffey, 2010). People who are engaged in doing business depend more on written communication than personal face-to-face oral communication with each other. In the current business environment, writing skills are a necessity. Grounded in perceptions of the heads of six departments (i.e. accounting, computer information systems, economics, finance and marketing in the USA about the importance of business communication skills), Wardrope (2002) argues that written communication

skills were perceived and rated more important than any other communication skills. Similarly, Stevens (2005) contends employers demand strong writing skills because these skills are considered as an indicator of competency, higher wages and professionalism. These skills bring opportunities for business professionals in any workplace.

Language, both spoken and written, is the most powerful force of effective communication (Stevens, 2005). Proficiency in English language is considered as an invaluable communication skill (McLaren & Hills, 1987) with both native and non-native speakers of English, because English is the hegemonic and de facto language of globalisation, international and intercultural communication, and commerce and trade (Crystal, 1997, 2003; Graddol, 1997; Tsuda, 2008). On the one hand, English plays a hegemonic role in the ongoing process of globalisation (Phillipson, 2001); on the other hand, in an international business sense as a consequence of globalisation, English works as a ‘common corporate language’ (see Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, & Piekkari, 2006; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999a; Piekkari, Vaara, Tienari, & Sääntti, 2005) or ‘business lingua franca’ or vice versa.

English is therefore clearly the dominant language of communication (Teichler, 2005) which is a key factor in the rapid economic development of a country. Nunan (2003) observes that in developing countries, access to English is a determining factor for access to economic advancement. It is argued that foreign investment in business largely depends on English communication skills. According to Wharton (2002), the extensive ‘use of English as the international language of business, a workforce’s ability to communicate effectively in English can give a non-native English-speaking country a competitive edge and attract lucrative foreign investment’ (p. 39). In the knowledge-based economy therefore, workers irrespective of business, industry and government,

are increasingly expected to develop proficiency in English (Nunan, 2003). The ever-growing need for communication skills in English has created a huge demand for English teaching around the world (Richards, 2005, p. ii). Many universities, particularly in Europe and Asia arrange their courses to teach communication skills in languages to their students (i.e. University of Helsinki, Finland) (see, Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2009) and some universities offer programs entirely taught in English (see, Altbach & Knight, 2007; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008). Employers too insist on their employees having good English language skills (Richards, 2005).

While there is great pressure to develop English communication skills, there is also strong criticism of the dominance of English language in intercultural and international communication. It is argued that the dominance of English as a means of communication causes serious consequences such as: a) it creates linguistic and communicative inequality for the non-native English speakers, b) it is one sort of linguistic discrimination and social inequality against non-English speaking people and those who are not good at English, c) it creates ‘colonization of consciousness’ that refers to the mental control of the colonised by colonisers (Tsuda, 2008). It is also evident that the hegemony of English causes not only linguistic or communicative inequality but also a feeling of anxiety and insecurity especially on the part of non-native English speaking people in this rapidly globalising world (Tsuda, 2008). Nevertheless, this study is not about criticising the position of English or about finding out how to exert hegemonic control of English among non-English speakers, nor is this a study about the imbalance of power relations among and between nations with regard to their status as native and non-native speakers of English. Instead, the scope of this study focuses on how English plays a role in international business communication and

what communication skills in English are required for effective interaction in a worldwide business context.

Despite the abovementioned strong criticism of the hegemonic position of English, it is evident in literature that in today's globalised business workplaces, English communication skills are essential to those in professional roles where they have to engage in international business. Communication skills in English are needed for employees to work in national and international companies and improve their technical knowledge and skills. Communication skills in English therefore, are an important economic factor in business settings (Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2009). Some theorists regard these communication skills to be of economic value to business and to the individuals that possess them. English is thus seen as 'linguistic capital'.

Drawing on Bourdieu's work (1986, 1991), a number of theorists have argued that language is 'linguistic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991; Cameron, 2005; Dhir & Savage, 2002; Loos, 2000; Morrison & Lui, 2000; Silver, 2005). The exchange of language is associated with value in certain markets; English language competence is connected with economic development for individuals, organisations and society, thus English is considered as linguistic capital. Silver (2005) contends that English 'has a gatekeeping function which allows, or prevents, continued education and, thus, future job opportunities (for the individual) and fulfilment of labour market needs (for the society) (p. 59)'. The exchange of English means the exchange of wealth is also viewed as linguistic capital. What is the value of a working language in an organisation? Dhir and Savage (2002) contend that a working language is one kind of asset which is as valuable as money. When language is used, it becomes capital. Therefore, the learning of English, knowledge of English and skills in English are real investments for any business and imperative in business communication.

The ready-made garments industry in Bangladesh is a macro business (see section 1.4 for more detail) that has drawn the attention of national and international scholars and organisations over the last two decades to conduct research in this area of business. A number of studies have been conducted on the RMG industry, mostly focused on women's empowerment (e.g. Khosla, 2009; Paul-Majumder & Begum, 2000), the rise and growth of this industry in Bangladesh (Rashid, 2006), understanding its story of success (Rhee, 1990), its sustainability (Ahmed, 2009), the effect of globalisation on this manufacturing industry from the point of vulnerability (Rahman, 2014), problems surrounding wages (Absar, 2009), workers' rights (Ahmed & Peerlings, 2009), and child labour (Nielsen, 2005). Little or no attention however has been paid to this industry from the perspective of English communication skills needed for RMG professionals to work in a worldwide communications system. It is probably an untouched area of knowledge in Bangladesh. Against this backdrop, adopting a qualitative case study, the purpose of the present research is to increase understanding of the English communication skills required for the RMG business industry engaged in communication at a global level where English is used as a 'business lingua franca'.

This study contributes to the debates on how English is used in an international business where both native and non-native speakers of English interact. The study considers four issues of inquiry: how RMG business professionals conceptualised the need for different communication skills in English for effective business dealings; how they feel about to what extent higher education is able to prepare graduates for the RMG business communication; any gaps between the need for communication skills necessary for the RMG business and skills taught in higher education; and thus how the RMG business professionals overcome such skills shortage. Considering these issues, this study presents the following research aim and set of research questions.

1.3 Research aim and questions

The aim of this study is to investigate the congruence between English communication skills expected/required in the RMG corporate sector for business purposes and communication skills taught at higher education institutions in Bangladesh. This research aim outlines the following set of research questions:

1. How do RMG business professionals view the role of English in the RMG international business setting?
2. What communication skills do RMG business professionals perceive are required in the RMG global business communication?
3. How do RMG professionals perceive the congruence between university education of English and the English communication skills required in the workplace?

In regard to how to analyse and understand the answers to these questions, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the context of the study – Bangladesh, its RMG industry, and the place of English in the country in general and business workplace in particular. It is supportive for readers to grasp the study if they comprehend the place of English in education and business settings in Bangladesh, and the rise of RMG business and its socioeconomic contribution to the country. To this end, the following section briefly describes the setting for the study.

1.4 The context of the study: Bangladesh and its RMG industry.

Since this study is about English in RMG international business communication located in Bangladesh, in this section I offer a general view of Bangladesh and the status of English in education and business, including its postcolonial history, to understand where English originated as far as education in Bangladesh is concerned,

followed by brief historical background of the rise of RMG business in Bangladesh and its enormous socioeconomic contribution to the country.

1.4.1 The place of English in Bangladesh: An overview. Bangladesh is one of the least developed countries (LDC) with a total area of 147,570 square km in the South Asian region of the world. The total GDP of the country is \$116.4 billion with a population of 154.7 million (World Bank, 2012), with a per capita income of US\$ 848 (BBS, 2012). In the fiscal year total export was \$24.287 billion while total imports were \$ 35.44 billion (Board of Investment, 2014). The main export goods are garments followed by frozen foods, jute goods, leather and chemical products. Major trading zones are the USA, Europe, Asia and Asia Pacific regions. The literacy rate is around 68.5%.

While officially and constitutionally Bangla is the national language of Bangladesh and the leading language of communication, English occupies a predominant place in the country due to its international prominence. Thus the role of English in Bangladesh is functional and mostly used for international communication (Rahman, 2009; Rahman, 2005). English is generally understood and a widely spoken language in the country. Of 150 million people in Bangladesh, about 7.5 million people who constitute 5% of total population speak English (Bolton, 2008).

As an international language, English is considered as a language of developing human capital which contributes to national progress through economic growth (Hamid, 2010). Being a developing country, Bangladesh is trying relentlessly to attain rapid economic progression. Within this general context of a country, it is not surprising to see English in a position of unprecedented importance in education in Bangladesh. Proficiency in English is not only an educational issue, but also an issue associated with

the modernisation of a country (N. Li, 2001). Recognising the importance of English, the government of Bangladesh considers English as an important instrument to compete in the global market (Choudhury, 2010). English is seen as a key tool of social and economic improvement. It is the dominating language in education, administration, business and employment sectors in Bangladesh after the mother tongue, Bangla.

In today's corporate sector in Bangladesh, English is an undisputed and indispensable means of communication (Khan & Chaudhury, 2012). Bangladesh largely depends on its external and internal business where English is a dominant language because of the rise of English as a corporate lingua franca (Earling & Walton, 2007). In different service and manufacturing sectors in Bangladesh, English is widely used for communication 'via a myriad of forms' (see Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a, p. 425) such as oral, electronic, written, and so forth. Within the country, for verbal communication with local people, although Bangla is mostly used, English is the only language in which communication takes place with foreign people, in and out of the country. However, in written communication within the country or across borders, English is the leading language. Letters, e-mails, advertisements, minutes, notices, circulars, reports, faxes, paperwork – all are in English. Consequently, when employers recruit employees, they require good communication skills in English (see Khan & Chaudhury, 2012).

English is therefore, considered to be strongly linked to socioeconomic status (Banu & Sussex, 2001b; Francis & Ryan, 1998; Hossain & Tollefson, 2007; Kachru, 2005; Silver, 2005). It is thus seen as an important tool to avail economic, social and educational opportunity providing access to employment, promotion, higher education and social status (Chowdhury & Farooqui, 2011). Over time, the need for English in Bangladesh has become essential, rather than necessary. Accordingly, the government

of Bangladesh has highlighted the importance of English in education more than ever before with the aim of coping better with the rest of the world (Imam, 2005).

Due to the socioeconomic development of the country, the government has actively promoted English as the most important foreign language in Bangladesh for communication. Undoubtedly English is a significant vehicle of communication in this era of globalisation (Jahan, 2008). Over the last two decades, as previously mentioned, the Bangladesh government has become more concerned in promoting English language education in Bangladesh (Imam, 2005). In the recent National Education Policy (2010), the government has focused on skills development to create human resources where developing English language skills have been frequently highlighted. The stress on English in government policy is not new: its origins stem from the beginning of the country, and even prior to the establishment of Bangladesh. After de-colonisation, English was well emphasised in government policy as a consequence of British colonisation.

Being a postcolonial country, the study of English in Bangladesh has a long history of more than two hundred and fifty years. The British had left a legacy of teaching English in Bangladesh. English first came to the Indian subcontinent with the merchants of the East India Company in order to trade in India (Rahman, 1996). It was Lord Macaulay's Minute of 1835 that, for the first time, addressed the necessity of teaching English in the South Asian subcontinent to create an English-speaking local elite (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007), who would work for the British government. Macaulay states in his Minute on Education of 1835:

It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters

between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. (Weir, 1940, p. 80)

The above notorious statement shows that the purpose of English education was to reinforce British colonial power by creating a small elite group for dominating colonised people (Islam, 2011). Consequently, English became the official language of British rulers in India in 1835 (Kamaluddin, 2008) and the prime language of administration, courts, media communication, parliament affairs and education (Imam, 2005; Kamaluddin, 2008), which resulted in the spread of learning and practice of English widely throughout the Indian subcontinent. Recognising the socioeconomic value of English (Pennycook, 1994), local elites were also involved in promoting English education (Islam, 2011)

This situation continued after colonial independence in Pakistan in 1947. During the then Pakistan period, Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) was a part of Pakistan. Nationalist sentiment led to the growth of Bangla as the state language of Bangladesh (East Pakistan) while Urdu was the state language of Pakistan (West Pakistan). English, however, became the common language for communication between East and West Pakistan. In addition, English was taught as a compulsory subject in schools, and the medium of higher education remained English.

After the liberation war in 1971, Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign country. In the independent Bangladesh, the government formed a number of education commissions over time to reform the education system in Bangladesh, where English is considered one of the important issues. English has been central in all education commission reports (1972, 1987, 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2009). After the independence of the country, Bangla was declared the sole official language. The medium of

education at all levels was Bangla. However, considering the importance of English, it was introduced as a compulsory subject in school education. Now it is a compulsory subject from grade 3 to grade 12. The main objective of teaching English in Bangladesh is to develop students as communicatively competent. It is assumed that students would be skilled in four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The secondary English curriculum states that English skills are needed in Bangladesh because these are essential work-oriented skills (NCTB, 1995). English has a prominent place, as far as the curriculum and assessment are concerned, by as much as 20% of the total weighting (Hamid, 2010).

Despite providing this weighting on English in the school curriculum, there is widespread criticism of the quality of English education at primary and secondary levels in Bangla medium schools (see, Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Roshid, 2009; Yasmin, 2005). The situation, nonetheless, is slightly different in English medium education, mushrooming rapidly in different metropolitan cities in Bangladesh (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007). People have a belief that if their children study in English medium education, they will be proficient in English. As such, belief can be termed as ‘English fever’ (Piller & Cho, 2013), which may have implications for the employment market in Bangladesh, even in the RMG industry.

Unlike English in pre-higher education, English is considered an important subject in higher education in Bangladesh. It has been taught as a foundation course at all public universities since 1996 (Mirza, Mahmud, & Jabbar, 2012). Today it is taught at all 104 universities regardless of whether they are public (34) or private (70). Although in public and private universities English is taught as a foundation compulsory course for undergraduate students, some universities offer remedial English to place more importance on English in order to remove weakness in student’s English

and make them skilled in everyday communication. The current National Education Policy (2010) also encourages English teaching and learning. It recommends compulsory English courses (100 marks/3 credits) for all disciplines at tertiary level. The purpose of such English courses is to develop students' basic communication skills in English language. Even post Bangladesh independence, the first National Educational Commission in 1974 also recommended that all students should become competent in English and emphasised English language rather than literature (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007). The contents of foundation English courses mostly focus on basic grammar, writing composition and essays, letters and application. These courses are generally offered in the first year at undergraduate level.

To summarise the section on English in Bangladesh, it can be said that despite the spread of English in Bangladesh, as a consequence of colonisation in order to strengthen British colonial power, the need for English in Bangladesh has become a relatively new necessity to meet global and local needs. English is an asset, necessary for national development. The government seems more concerned than ever to promote English language to build the nation and its skilled manpower, ready to meet the challenge of globalisation. Since the existing proficiency level of graduates is unable to meet the needs of the employment market (see Khan & Chaudhury, 2012), especially corporate sectors involved in business on a global scale, it is necessary to explore the need for communication skills in English in global and local contexts by analysing workplace communication needs, eliciting comprehensive feedback from major stakeholders in workplaces so as to address the present shortfall in English communication skills of graduates in Bangladesh. This is a powerful justification for conducting research in any corporate sector in Bangladesh, even in any employment sector where English is used. But I was interested in specifically conducting this

research in the RMG business setting. Before describing the potential reasons for conducting this research in the RMG industry, it is useful to explore the general scenario of RMG business in Bangladesh. Here the rapid growth of the RMG industry and its enormous socioeconomic contribution to the country is underlined.

1.4.2 The RMG business in Bangladesh. Against the backdrop of globalisation and trade liberalisation, the RMG business of Bangladesh has turned into a huge industry in the global market. Being interconnected with other portions of the globe through the flow of capital, goods and movement of people, ready-made garments have become the main export merchandise (Ahmed, 2009; Murshedy, 2010), and the industry has experienced incredible growth over the last three decades. Over time, the RMG industry in Bangladesh has gradually become the largest national industry and highly export-oriented business sector in the global supply chain, where the medium of communication is English. The growth rate of RMG export was over 20% per annum over the last two decades. The sharp incline of the garment industry in Bangladesh has been quite dramatic and its progress has overtaken the jute industry. While there is a constant threat of inundation and substantial decrease in the price and demand of jute in the global market, the jute industry in Bangladesh collapsed in the late 1970s; the position of the jute industry has been replaced by the export-oriented garments industry (Rahman, 2014).

In the fiscal year 1983/84, the total number of garments factories was 134 while in 2011/2012 the total figure reached 5700. Within the last three decades since its inception in the late 1970s, Bangladesh has emerged consistently as one of the leading garments suppliers in the world. In the RMG global business, while China holds first position, Bangladesh has achieved the position of the second largest exporter in the world. In his message to the 21st Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition

(BATEXPO) 2010, the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh argued that garments with the tag-line ‘Made in Bangladesh’ have become a brand name (Zia, 2010), which works as an identity ambassador in the developed world (Islam, 2010). The expansion of the garments industry helps the country to earn worldwide recognition in the global business market.



Source: website of BGMEA. <http://www.bgmea.com.bd/>

Figure 1.1: ‘Made in Bangladesh’ in different world brand names

The market for Bangladeshi garments is worldwide. Bangladesh is engaged in supplying garments to a number of world famous importers (see Figure 1) including Wal-Mart, J.C. Penny, H&M, Target, K-mart, Nike, GAP and POLO. It exports more than 100 garment items to more than 50 countries including the USA, Canada, the European Union (EU), Australia and many countries in Asia such as China, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. Recently, Bangladesh has started exporting its products to the Latin America region – Brazil, Mexico and Chile. Moreover, it has opened its market in South Africa and Russia. The spread of Bangladeshi garments in the world market is seen as an industrial renaissance in Bangladesh (Islam, 2010) and exports are still rising sharply. Even during the recent global recession and ongoing local political instability, the industry managed to hold its growth, facing both local and international challenges. The rise of the industry, even during globally difficult times,

demonstrates that the RMG in Bangladesh has become a resilient sector (Murshedy, 2010). Table 1.1 shows the RMG sector in Bangladesh at a glance.

Table 1.1

Bangladesh RMG at a glance

Commencement of RMG business	Late 70s
First RMG export was made	In 1978, worth US\$ 12,000
Total experience of garment manufacturing	About 30 years
The rank of Bangladesh RMG in the world	Second
Total number of factories (in 2011/2012 fiscal year)	5700
Country's export earning sector	Nearly 80%
Economic contribution to GDP	More than 13.5%
Main type of garments exported	Woven garments, knitwear, sweaters
Number of people employed	Around 4 million
Main workers	Women total 3.20 million (80%)
Main importers of garment goods	EU and USA
Major appeals items	Shirts, trousers, jackets, T-shirts, sweaters
Number of people dependent on this industry	40 million
Controlling Authority of garments business	BGMEA
Set export target in 2013/2014	US\$ 24.15 billion (US\$ 21.516 billion profit in 2012/13)

Source: website of BGMEA <http://www.bgmea.com.bd/>

The garment's sector provides a great and exclusive support to the socioeconomic development of the country. About 80% of the country's foreign exchange comes from this sector. In addition, the honourable President of Bangladesh declared that the RMG sector plays a critical role in creating job opportunities and helps to reduce poverty and unemployment in the country. Around 4 million people are directly employed in this industry where 3.20 million are women (80%), most of them underprivileged, poverty stricken women, who are predominantly migrants from rural areas, mainly from the poorest rural families (Ahmed, 2009; Mlachila & Yang, 2004; Murshedy, 2010). Nearly 40 million people are directly or indirectly dependent on this

sector (Hassan, 2010). The socioeconomic contribution of the RMG sector to Bangladesh through providing high employment and contributing to women's empowerment plays a vital role and considered to be a step towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) (Islam, 2010). Today, the RMG sector is not just an individual property of individual business owners, rather it has become a 'national asset' (Islam, 2010).

1.5 Rationale for the study

The underlying rationale for the study is presented here from three points of view: the need for skilled personnel, gaps in existing literature and personal motivation.

1.5.1 Shortage in skilled personnel. While the first leading garments exporter and the new economic superpower China has started losing its attractiveness in the domination of the global RMG trade, Bangladesh has strengthened its position. Recent statistics reveal that Bangladesh is the third largest exporter of garments in the world after China and the EU. In the fiscal year 2009, the RMG sector in Bangladesh accounted for 13.5% of total GDP and earned US\$ 12.50 billion. Such a giant business also means that a greater amount of communication with people of the outside world is now required, which has made English an even more important and indispensable communication tool for the RMG businesses. English is extensively used in this international business sector for its global communication. RMG business professionals have to communicate both in spoken and written modes with buyers, suppliers, and manufacturers in different countries for marketing garment goods, taking orders, importing required accessories and delivering ready-made products is English. English is therefore indispensable as a shared language to communicate with the different counterparts in the international business world (So-mui & Mead, 2000). To be successful in RMG business communication, the sector requires skilled people working

in the professional areas of sales and marketing, supply chain management, and in areas of contract and compliance management to have sound English communication skills to be able to communicate with their counterparts globally.

Evidence shows that Bangladesh has a severe shortage of skilled professionals to work in the RMG business sector (see Mizan, 2013). The recent outgoing former president of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and current president of the Export Association of Bangladesh (EAB), acknowledges that Bangladesh does not have sufficient skilled professionals needed in this sector to run RMG business successfully. He argues that RMG business in Bangladesh is a first-generation business. Consequently most of the entrepreneurs do not have the necessary skills to run this business effectively. Instead, for communication overseas, they are compelled to depend on middle - management who are mostly foreigners (see Mizan, 2013). Statistics show that more than 25,000 RMG professionals are foreigners: among them 20,000 are Indians (see Mizan, 2013).

The massive dependency on foreign management in the RMG sector in Bangladesh is causing multidimensional complexities. On the one hand, Bangladesh is spending lots of money on salaries to foreigners; on the other hand, the use of migrants to solve the skills shortage problem in Bangladesh is taking job opportunities away from Bangladeshi graduates. Consequently, it is creating extra pressure on the increasing unemployment rate. In addition, this sector is rapidly becoming under the control of foreigners, some of whom abuse their control in different ways by instigating workers to cause an environment of unrest in the sector (see Mizan, 2013). The entrepreneurs blame the lack of skilled Bangladeshi professionals for such unrest. They even believe that Bangladesh does not have sufficient business related university or training institutions that can develop skilled professionals for this sector. Many entrepreneurs

urge universities to solve this scarcity of skilled human resources and they have demanded the introduction of garments business specific courses at universities to develop skilled RMG professionals for this global operating business sector (The Economist, 2014; Mizan, 2013).

It is therefore high time for Bangladesh to develop its own professionals for the RMG sector. It is also imperative to identify the English communication skills necessary for the RMG international business communication, both spoken and written. However, despite the huge economic contribution of this arena of business to the country's socioeconomic development, the need for research and creating skilled human resources with the required communication skills have been largely ignored.

1.5.2 Gaps in the literature. Gaps in the literature provided ideas for conducting this study. Over the last two decades, scholars have shown greater interest in how English is used in different business settings in different parts of the world. For example, Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta (2005), Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010), Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) discuss the use of English in European business contexts, particularly in Finland-based global operation business settings. Ehrenreich (2010) focuses on English as a business lingua franca in a German multinational corporation in the technology sector. Based on a report on a survey in seven multinational companies, Erling and Walton (2007) discuss English at a workplace in Berlin. Chew (2005) investigates English language skills used by new entrants in their regular work in different departments in four banks in Hong Kong. So-mui and Mead (2000) explore workplace English needs for textile and clothing merchandisers in Hong Kong. Evans (2010) examines the importance of English in both Cantonese business and professional communication in Hong Kong. Tanaka (2006) focuses on workplace interaction in English in a Japanese chemical corporate setting

that works as a subsidiary of an American multinational corporation. Gimenez (2002) examines electronic mediated communicative practices in two corporate settings: one located in Europe and the other in Argentina.

The above studies offer a glimpse of increasing attention among researchers about the place of English in business communication including both spoken and written discourse. These studies also show that English is a matter of importance in global business contexts (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). English is perceived as an indispensable shared language of global business. Recognition of the importance of English in global business communication demonstrates the necessity for developing English communication skills of business professionals engaged in both oral and written communication. However, most of the studies were conducted in Europe (e.g. Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) or carried out in some specific country context (i.e. Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Argentina and so forth) focusing on different areas of business. Little attention has been paid to the South Asian countries, particularly in Bangladesh, a developing country; but it is leading in the world market in export oriented garments business. As a country of non-native speakers of English (NNSE), Bangladesh is doing business both locally and globally using English as a communication tool. In order to see how English is used in different international business workplaces, it is necessary to conduct studies in global business sites located in Bangladesh.

Nevertheless, no in-depth and comprehensive inquiry was found in this area of knowledge that identified English communication skills needed for an international business communication from language and professional communication perspectives, particularly in the RMG corporate sector in Bangladesh from an applied linguistic point of view – ‘the application of linguistic theories and procedures to the issue of everyday

life' (Finch, 2005, p. 179). This results in lack of availability of literature and discussion on this issue from the Bangladesh standpoint. Moreover, considering the role of universities in Bangladesh, it seems they have also ignored this area of knowledge. Therefore, in order to develop a better understanding of English communication skills for today's competitive business workplace, particularly the RMG international business workplace, an empirical qualitative investigation is required.

1.5.3 Personal motivation for the study. My personal interest in conducting this study derives from a variety of sources. I have been studying English for more than 20 years. In addition, as a teacher, I have been working at university level for eight years. I have also conducted three studies on English language teaching in Bangladesh including one study as an M. Phil researcher. From my background experience as a language learner, teacher, researcher and observer in society, I found that most of the students in Bangladesh learn English merely as a subject to enhance their certification. Though the English curriculum and textbooks enable students to use English for their real-life communication, the students' aim of learning English is to pass examinations or manage good grades rather than develop English communication skills for their personal and professional life. In fact, most of the students consider English like any other general or content-based subject, rather than as a skill-based subject (see A. Banu, 2009, p. 2). This observation is identified in the international literature where in describing English language learning in practice in general around the world, Mufwene (2012) notes: '...many students are learning English like some other subjects, such as trigonometry and physics, just to satisfy academic requirements that they put to rest after graduation' (p. 367).

As such, their 'wrong' aim does not help them much to develop their English communication skills. Consequently, after graduating, they face difficulties in day-to-

day communication in English. And they face more challenges in communication when they look for a suitable job (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013) because for any standard job in the employment market, employers require good communication skills, both verbal and written, in English (see Khan & Chaudhury, 2012). In job assessment, when graduates sit for written tests or face interviews in English, they encounter difficulties in English due to lack of good communication skills in English. Studies show that jobseekers mostly face written and spoken communication challenges that are the key communication areas of employment (Khan & Chaudhury, 2012). Even if, after getting jobs, especially in business firms, initially a number of graduates face communication difficulties but gradually they overcome their communication barrier. However, there is no reliable in-depth evidence that explores how new graduates learn to cope and build themselves into competent communicators. These learning processes and the communication practices they develop need to be investigated. As industry requires work-ready manpower with the necessary skills, including communication skills, universities cannot avoid their responsibility to develop job-ready graduates with essential skills for the employment market. But, research shows that at present there is incongruence between labour market needs and higher education provision in Bangladesh (The Economist, 2014).

Another source of inspiration for this study is my informal observation of language use in the RMG business communication. I gleaned the idea about English communicative activities in the garment's sector when I started living with my elder brother after my graduation. My elder brother was an MBA graduate majoring in marketing. Simultaneously, with his study at university, he worked in a RMG industry as a 'commercial officer' later 'commercial manager'. The role of commercial staff is described in the methodology chapter (see section 3.5.1). After completing his MBA, he

left his job and started running a self-owned RMG business. He set up his office in his house. I found him busy with the computer and Internet for communication with buyers and suppliers by e-mail and telephone. Sometimes he asked me to check the language of his e-mails, always in English. Checking the language prompted me to think about the nature of English used in the RMG business communication.

While he was an MBA holder with experience in RMG business communication, he was not very competent in English. Similarly, I found e-mails written by some of his customers with mistakes. For instance, while I was reading an e-mail from a Chinese counterpart, I found some common grammatical mistakes in his language. Despite these mistakes, the notion of the message was very clear. That made me wonder what is actually happening in the RMG sector, what happens to those who work in the RMG industry in different capacities where English is used by those who did not study English extensively. More questions came to my mind. In business communication, is grammar really important? Language is a means of communication rather than to impress someone with accuracy in grammar or with vocabulary. As an English educator this encouraged me to think about English in the RMG business communication – what level of English do professionals in this industry need to know and what forms of English do they need to use? If they do not have much skill in English, does it matter? These questions motivated me to conduct this study in the RMG business.

Moreover, my small scale qualitative study on the relationship between English and employability inspired me to conduct a large scale study on English in professional communication. Very recently I co-authored a study (see Roshid & Chowdhury, 2010) on English and employment of Bangladeshi university graduates in the Australian job market. The findings show that English language skills have a deep influence on the employment of Bangladeshi graduates in Australian job markets and usually ‘better

English skills, bring better opportunities’. Graduates, who are good at English communication skills, usually get good jobs. Findings also suggested that the origin of the challenges associated with English can be traced back to tertiary education, and this necessitated the current study which now attempts to look at where we start. In fact, my previous study focused on the product – being what graduates were producing while this PhD study focuses on the process. Still, my interest is in exploring the relationship between English communication skills and employability, but I am also exploring English communication skills of business professionals in the RMG global business setting in Bangladesh. It is still about employment and workplace communication but in the context of an ELF business setting.

1.6 Significance of the study

This section briefly outlines the significance of this study although the implications are discussed in more detail in the final chapter (see subsection 9.4.5). This study is significant for its contribution to knowledge generation, theoretical addition, policy guidelines and pedagogical points of view. One of the contributions of this study is to provide new knowledge about an area that has been under-researched. It demonstrates an understanding of how English is used as a lingua franca in the RMG international business setting where people from different first languages interact. This approach helps in understanding how language operates in relation to cultural phenomena and how language is enacted as an international language. It also suggests ways of optimising our tertiary education to better suit the needs of RMG workers. It correspondingly identifies the communication skills required for the RMG global business context where English plays a role as a lingua franca. By increasing our knowledge and understanding about how ELF is used in the RMG business, the thesis will add to theoretical understandings of ELF, the circumstances in which it develops

and the forms it takes. The study proposes a model for a global business communication in an ELF setting (see chapter nine). The proposed model is assumed operational in an international business setting with its ‘ELFB skills’ – the skills of using English effectively and appropriately in a lingua franca business context. The proposed model can contribute to the existing model of communicative competence by Canale and Swain (1980). While Canale and Swain’s (1980) model of communicative competence is used in academic settings, my proposed model can be used in business settings.

The study has a number of pedagogical implications. One is the urgency of introducing RMG business specific courses into higher education in Bangladesh. As Lehtonen and Karjalainen (2009) argue, ‘knowing the language and communication demands at the workplace helps universities to plan their degree requirements and curriculum. This, in turn, facilitates the graduates’ adjustment to the demands’ (pp. 411-412). Another implication is exploring the necessity of introducing work-integrated learning (WIL) in higher education from the insights of workplace learning practised in the RMG workplace. In WIL students would learn theoretical knowledge at university while developing practical experience by active participation in actual workplaces. In addition, this study discovers what communication skills are needed to teach graduates to develop their English communication skills to work effectively in a global operating business setting. Moreover, this study could be insightful for both native speakers of English (NSE) and non-native speakers of English (NNSE) about how business discourse happens in: ELFB settings; how NNSE use grammar, pronunciation, accents, pragmatic strategies etc. to create meaning in the context; how they write e-mail messages in their daily work; and what the discourse features of those messages are.

In addition to pedagogical and theoretical implications, this study has policy implications at macro and micro levels. At the macro level, it shows government needs

for restructuring proper manpower planning to prepare job-ready sufficient graduates through establishing RMG business related more to universities and introducing RMG business courses into existing universities. At the micro level, it suggests announcing a proper career structure to attract high grade achievers to the RMG sector.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

In order to help readers to understand the structure of the thesis, this section briefly describes what is discussed in each chapter. The following figure also gives a summary of this study. Chapter one provides an introductory overview to the entire thesis, which focuses on the importance of communication skills in workplaces, the context of the study, the rationale and motivation for the study, the research aim and questions and significance. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature related to the study and constructs a conceptual framework for the research. Chapter three presents the research methodology employed for this study.

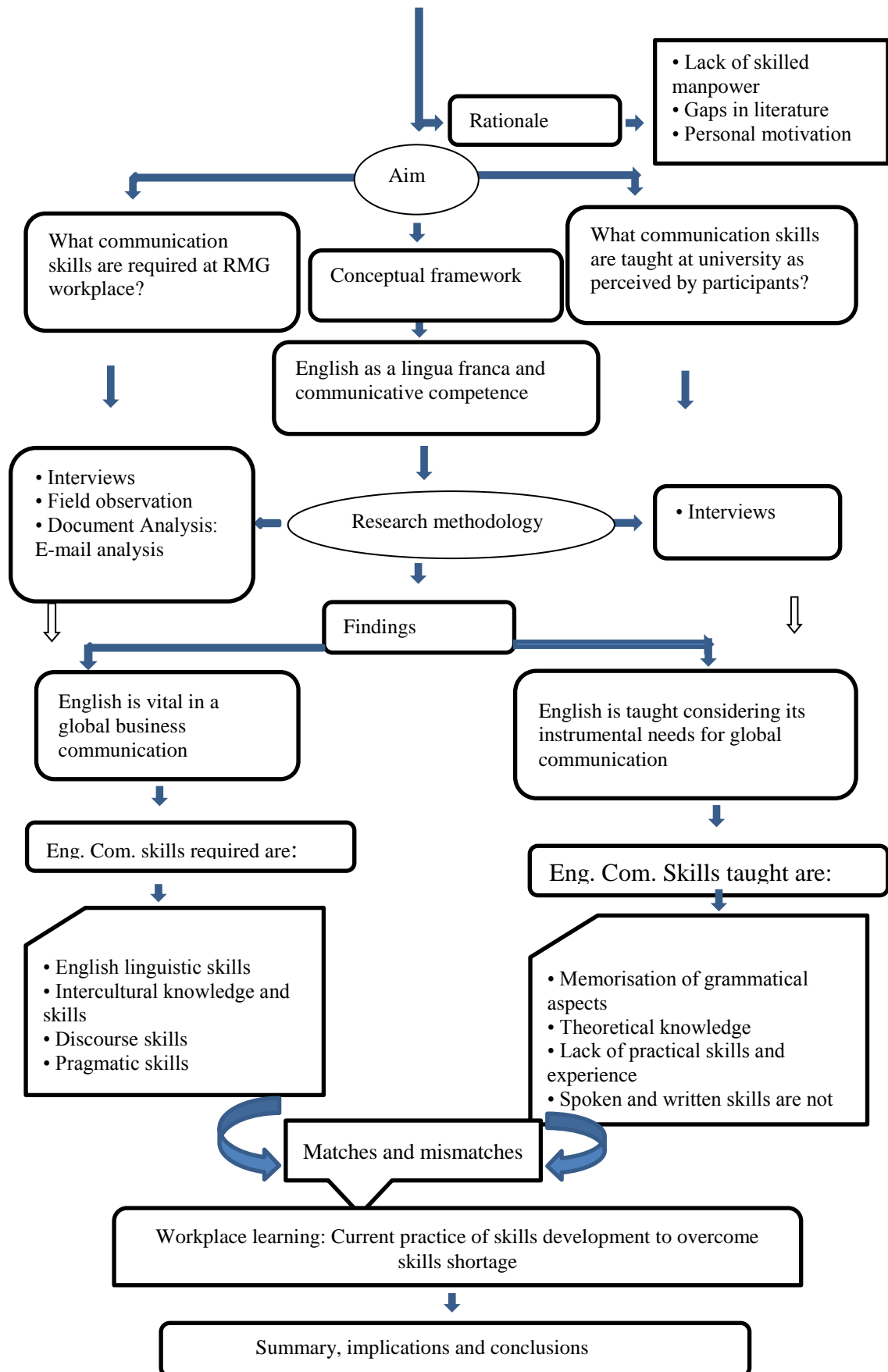


Figure 1.2: Tree structure of the thesis

Chapters four through eight present findings, interpretations and discussions of the study. Chapter four demonstrates the perceptions and voices of participants about the position of English in the RMG business. Chapter five shows what linguistic skills are needed for both oral and written communication in the RMG sector as perceived by the RMG personnel. Chapter six provides a discussion on the needs and practices of multicultural competences which refer to sociocultural norms and values exercised by the RMG professionals in their intercultural business communication. Chapter seven presents the discourse features and pragmatic strategies perceived as practised and necessary for the RMG business communication. Chapter eight discusses the professional skills and preparation perceived as necessary for communication in a global operating business communication. In addition, this chapter looks at how university education corresponds to the need for the RMG industry in preparing graduates with necessary communication skills. Chapter nine concludes the thesis with the overall discussion on findings linked to the world literature, revisiting the research questions, and discussing implications and directions for future research.

In this thesis, data presentation, interpretation and discussion are presented together. It is also important for readers to note that substantive quotations from data are presented in the chapters as italicised and indented, while shorter quotations from participants are presented in-text in both italics and double quote marks. Moreover, sometimes I have lifted several quotes from different participants and presented their key words within the text using double quote marks. However, literature quotations are presented in the normal roman font. In addition, to highlight a notion or idea, rather than participants' quotes, was presented through the use of single quote marks. For emphasis, italicised words have been used. In addition, to modify a quotation from participants or

make comments square brackets [] have been used. I now turn to the chapter two to review the relevant literature and to construct a conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter Two

Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Introduction

The paramount function of a language is communication. English is predominantly used for global communication in different settings including international business. The aim of this chapter is to review related literature and construct a conceptual framework for this study. In addition, this chapter defines and interprets some related contested concepts that are crucial in providing a more solid base for this study. The conceptual framework is grounded in two main concepts: ELF that underpins the concept of ‘English as a lingua franca in business settings’ (ELFB) – the use and role of ELF in an international business context. Another concept of the conceptual framework is ‘communicative competence’ (CC) that outlines the notion of communication skills. In this research, ELF has been seen from its functional point of view, that is, how English plays a role as a communication tool in multilingual settings. However, communicative competence is also considered from the point of view of language acquisition and communication research (see, for instance, Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). This chapter reviews earlier literature related to these basic concepts. In addition, in order to understand the contemporary relevance of the thesis, the chapter also addresses the spread and the place of English in the global context, particularly in business and education settings – the focus of this thesis.

The chapter begins by presenting the research theory, and looks at how English is spread globally over centuries as a means of communication between native and non-native speakers of English, including the linguistic consequences of this spread of English in academic and business settings, particularly from its functional point of view

and with different features. It then discusses the theoretical understanding of the ELF framework as a means of communication in a multilingual context and its characteristics, and how ELF is used in a global business setting with its different names and functions. This chapter then describes the theoretical understanding of the concept of 'communicative competence' followed by presenting current trends in developing English skills for workplaces, so that professionals can play a successful role in multilingual contexts. Finally, this chapter introduced the conceptual framework for the study.

2.2. The global spread of English and its linguistic consequences

English is the most popular and powerful language in the world for international communication. Today 1.75 billion people speak English at a useful level (Neeley, 2012). Among them 400 million are native speakers, 400 million speak English as a second language, and 600 million speak English as a foreign language (Crystal, 2004). The statistics of English speakers suggest that the non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers of English as a consequence of its global spread.

This spread is unique in terms of its geographical reach as well as its depth of penetration (Phillipson, 1992). The reasons for the spread of English in recent decades have been explained by scholars from different perspectives. Literatures show that it is associated with colonialism, technological advancement, international trade and commerce and globalisation. Ferguson (1983), for instance, relates the spread of English with that of communication technology. Computer technology has transcended the language barrier and accelerated the spread of English for global communication. Criticising the Ferguson's narrow view, Phillipson (1992) argues that not only has computer technology worked as a driving force for the global spread of English, but

economic, political, intellectual and social forces have also advanced English as a language of international communication.

House (2002) considers some factors that promoted the spread of English worldwide as a language of communication. These factors are: the extension of British colonial power worldwide; the great influence of the USA's political and economic power; the advancement of information and communication technology; and the growth of international business mergers and acquisitions (see also Pennycook, 1994). The spread of English as a consequence of colonial power is treated as 'a luxuriant growth from imperial seed' (Widdowson, 1994, p. 377). McKay (2002) discusses that this phenomenon is not only a consequence of the migration of native speakers of English (NSE), but also arises from the growing number of bilingual speakers of English who learn and speak English as their second or third language (McKay, 2003). It is argued that more than 80% of communication in English is held between non-native speakers of English (NNSE) (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Crystal, 2003). In the late 1990s Graddol (1999) projected that the number of NNSE would go beyond the number of NSE. This projection has been reached (Yano, 2001) and now the majority of English speakers are non-native. McKay (2002) considers such shifts as a reflection of English as an international language for wider communication at a global level. It is assumed, in the next 10 to 15 years, the total number of English speakers is likely to peak at around 2 billion (Graddol, 2006).

Other scholars (e.g. Kachru, 1986; Pennycook, 1994, 2007; Phillipson, 1992, 2012) also observe the spread of English from a sociopolitical perspective. According to Kachru (1986), the unprecedented global spread of English is associated with power and politics. Using a metaphor, he considers English language as the 'loaded weapon' (p. 121), suggesting that the spread of English is not seen entirely as benign. Phillipson

(1992, 2012) considers the spread of English and English language teaching as 'linguistic imperialism'. Pennycook (1994) assesses the spread of English as 'cultural politics', which he terms 'worldliness of English'. According to Pennycook (1994, 2007), English as an imperial language was a product of colonialism. While the above scholars see the spread of English as colonialism, a post-colonial perspective sees it as both a route to economic success and a form of resistance. Thus English is no longer a language of colonial rulers. Instead, English is widely seen as a language giving access to economic advantage for nations and individuals. It is 'by and large beneficial' (Pennycook, 1994, p. 6). Fishman (1982) states, 'Not only is English still spreading, but it is even being spread by non-English mother-tongue interests' (p. 19). Canagarajah (1999) takes linguistic imperialism as a given and considers how to resist it. He recognises that language has both 'repressive' and 'liberatory' or emancipatory powers. Liberatory power facilitates critical thinking and enables subjects to subvert domination; therefore, Canagarajah (1999) observes the spread of English from the resistance perspective.

Some scholars associate the global spread of English with globalisation. Tsui and Tollefson (2007) argue that globalisation has brought about an 'unprecedented spread of English' (p.vii). While 'English is integral to the globalisation processes that characterise the contemporary post-cold-war phase of aggressive casino capitalism, economic restructuring, McDonaldisation and militarisation on all continents' (Phillipson, 2001, p. 187), globalisation functions as a driving force in strengthening the position of English as a global language (Bamgbose, 2003; Tsuda, 2008; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Bottery (2000) demonstrates that the development of globalisation has historically been associated with the dominance of the English language. English can therefore be said to embody the very language of globalisation.

What are the linguistic consequences? The worldwide expansion of English embraces more people from non-English speaking backgrounds in speaking English. English is used among and between native and non-native English speakers for communication (Matsuda, 2003a, 2003b) that ‘has changed not only forms and functions of the language but also the demographics of English users’ (Matsuda, 2003a, p. 722). The growth of English leads to the diversification of form, use and culture (Marlina, 2012). ‘Form’ refer to varieties of English, such as Singaporean English, Indian English, Nigerian English, collectively known as ‘New Englishes’ (Brutt-Griffler, 2002) Whereas ‘use’ refers to the application of English in different demographic backgrounds. Statistics show that the majority of English speakers worldwide are bilingual (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Giving such statistics, Graddol (2006) argues that 70% of English speakers are bilingual. They speak English differently from NSE because their language is influenced by their culture. Therefore, one language English takes in different forms in multiple cultures. When people speak English, they use the values of their culture which has created diversity of English language in terms of form, use and culture (FUC) (Marlina, 2012).

Kachru (1992) demonstrates the growth of English around the world through three concentric circles: inner, outer and expanding. Kachru’s circles are a well-regarded approach to representing English language learning and the use of English in diverse cultural contexts. These circles also represent groups of English speakers. The *inner circle* refers to the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English. Here English is used and spoken as the primary and first language. The USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are in the inner circle. The *outer circle* denotes the countries colonised by any English speaking county in the *inner circle*, and where English is used as a second language in multilingual contexts. India, Singapore and over

other 50 regions are included in the outer circle. The *expanding circle* comprises countries that have neither experienced colonisation, nor is English the status of official language. Rather English is used as a foreign language. Among others, China, Egypt, Indonesia and Japan are in the expanding circle.

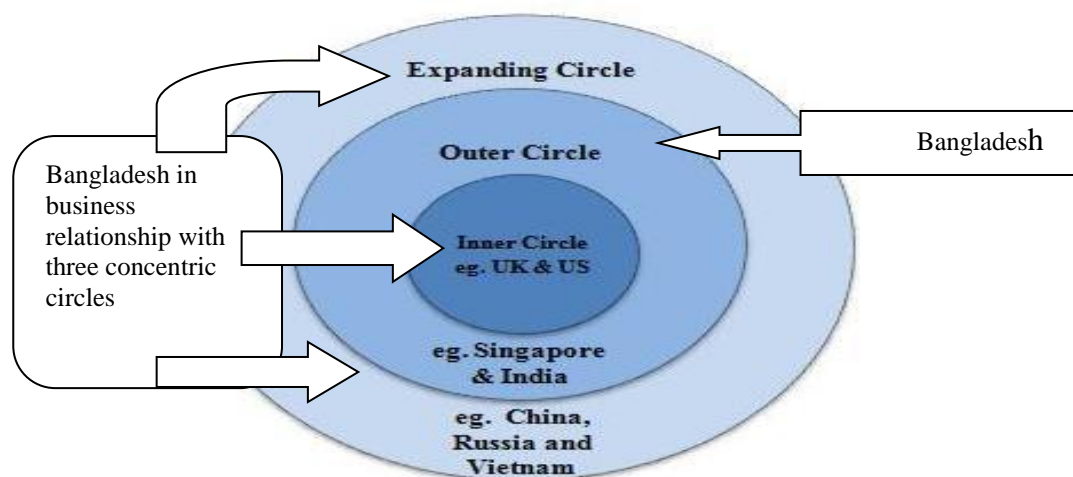


Figure 2.1: Bangladesh in business relations with Kachru's (1992) three concentric circles

Source: <http://doanbangoc.researchland.net/2011/07/world-englishes/>

According to Kachru's concentric circle above, Bangladesh is supposed to be a part of the outer circle, as Bangladesh was a colony of the British ruler and thus English was theoretically supposed to be used as a second language. Nonetheless, in Bangladesh, English is considered and taught as a foreign language for sociopolitical reasons (Chowdhury & Farooqui, 2011). Despite theoretically being a member of an outer circle country, the RMG business professionals of Bangladesh are employed in business interactions with people from all three circles. Their learned/acquired English knowledge and communication skills are used as a communication tool with people from all three circles regardless of their English as a mother tongue, as a second language or as a foreign language.

In conclusion, this section discussed why English has spread worldwide and its linguistic consequences. A final linguistic consequence of this global spread is the emergence of different English names/labels promoted by different schools of thought. Some of these names/labels have been repeatedly used in this study. Hence, it is necessary for readers to be familiar with frequently used, different tags of English as endorsed by the global literature.

2.3 The global contested status of English

The spread of English has resulted in the global promotion of many labels or terms to describe the role of English language worldwide. Seidlhofer (2004) points out that when people consider English as a preferred means of communication among people from different first language backgrounds, they encounter English through different names or terms such as English as an international language (EIL), a *lingua franca* (ELF), a global language (EGL), a world language and a medium of intercultural communication. Bolton (2004) termed these multiple ways of naming English, as ‘a plethora of terminology’ (p.67).

Scholars have explained the meaning of these labels as follows. EIL is defined as a ‘vehicle for communication between non-native speakers only, as well as between any combination of native and non-native speakers’ (Smith, 1982, p. 102), World Englishes (WEs) refer to varieties throughout the world incorporating any Englishes including standard, dialect, national, regional, creole, hybrid, broken and so on (McArthur, 2001). Nonetheless, according to Crystal (1997; 2003), ‘English is a global language’ because English gives access to connecting people globally more than any other language. And it is needed for communication, particularly for international academic and business communities. Global language works as a *lingua franca*, a common language. Seidlhofer (2005) argues that EIL along with ‘English as a global

language’, ‘English as a world language’ and ‘World English’ (McArthur, 2004) have for some time been used as a general term for English spanning Kachru’s (1992) three concentric circles, as previously mentioned. Seidlhofer (2005) further contends that the traditional meaning of EIL is the use of English within and across Kachru’s circles for intra-national and international communication, whereas ELF is a preferred term, when English is used as a means of communication among people from different first language backgrounds and across linguacultural boundaries.

Finally Seidlhofer (2005) notes that EIL is also used interchangeably within the context of ELF. Jenkins (2012) explains the reason for merging ELF with EIL: ELF was virtually unknown whereas EIL was a better known term. However, over the past decade, ELF has gained ascendancy, whereas EIL has fallen into minority use, mainly because of its ambiguity (p. 486). Yet, as mentioned above, ELF is sometimes known as EIL. To avoid confusion with other uses such as ‘International English’, some researchers prefer the term ‘ELF’ to ‘EIL’ (Jenkins, 2006a, 2009). Yet for others, both terms are used interchangeably to avoid confusion (Jenkins, 2006a, 2009). However, Friedrich & Matsuda (2010) argue that ‘ELF and EIL are *not* one and the same phenomenon’ (p. 23). To them ELF is a broader functional term while EIL is a sub-category of ELF. Firth’s (1990) argument about ELF is twofold: a) international lingua franca (beyond any national boarder) and b) intra-national lingua franca (within a linguistically diverse country). They further argue that when English is used by different nationality groups, English is conceptualised as EIL – a part of ELF. When they equate ELF with EIL, they restrict the use of English as a lingua franca in the international context. And because English is used in communication in the RMG business sector, both within the country and beyond the country, English can be therefore viewed as a lingua franca in the RMG business communication in both contexts. Indeed, whichever

English term is used (here I prefer ELF), its main function is to communicate with people from different first language backgrounds, and therefore ELF is the central focus of this study.

Why are there so many names for English? Erling (2005) gives three main reasons which are: a) the growing use of English globally, b) the critical assessment of the spread of English by emerging scholarships, and c) the argument of ELT scholars and practitioners about their perceived dominance of English. Despite different reasons for so many Englishes and the inherent linguistic consequences, the main emphasis is its functional rather than geographical varieties (Erling, 2005) and ownership. English is thus no longer a property of any individual community or continent. More than 30 years ago, when there were no mobile phones, the Internet, Google, Facebook, Twitter, or social media, English was perceived as ‘de-nationalised’ (Smith, 1976, p. 41), that is, it did not belong to any nation. As Widdowson (1994) contends:

English is no longer the preserve of a group of people living in an offshore European island, or even of larger groups living in continents elsewhere. It is an international language. As such it serves a whole range of different communities and their institutional purposes and these transcend traditional communal and cultural boundaries. (p. 382)

Similarly, Graddol (1997) points out, ‘[n]ative speakers may feel that the language “belongs” to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future’ (p. 5). English is a language of international and global communication rather than necessarily being a language of identification (Erling, 2005). Instead, the different varieties of English that can be identified, all have a common purpose, which is English for global communication (Graddol, Leith, & Swann, 1996).

As mentioned above, one of the aspects of the conceptual framework for this study is ELF, because the context of this research is RMG international business, where communication held among people from different linguacultural backgrounds across all three concentric circles of English. It is observed that with the upsurge in worldwide trade as a consequence of economic globalisation, the need for English is growing rapidly. More people than ever before are involved in international business communication. Every day, there are many millions of business professionals from different parts of the world engaged in thousands of business transactions and negotiations, communicating in English (Nickerson, 2012). Despite variation in English proficiency, pronunciation and accents, vocabulary and sentence structure among the interlocutors, they use English as a common language in their business communication. In spite of the anticipated rise of Chinese, Hindi and Arabic as business lingua franca, it is expected that English will dominate global business communication as a common language at least for the next 50 years (Nickerson, 2012). In order to focus specifically on English as the lingua franca in the RMG global business setting, and to explore the associated need for English communication skills, it is necessary to understand the concept, setting and features (linguistic features) of ELF, and how ELF is used in global business settings with different forms and functions. The next section discusses these aspects of ELF.

2.4 ELF in global communication

This section discusses the theoretical concept of ELF that underpins the concept of English as a lingua franca in business settings (ELFB). English is a lingua franca in many settings in various ways including verbal/oral communication, e-mail communication and in social media. This section also discusses the notion of ELF from different perspectives and ideological standpoints. In addition it describes the features of

ELF settings, speakers and discourses in both spoken and digital contexts. The section moreover highlights how ELFB works in both spoken and written communication grounded in ELF.

2.4.1 ELF as a global communication tool. This section discusses how I conceptualise ELF that facilitates my understanding of this research. Among many other labels, English as a lingua franca (see Firth, 1996a; Gnutzmann, 2000; Honna, 2012; House, 2003, 2012; Jenkins, 2000, 2006a, 2008, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Meierkord, 2006; Mufwene, 2012; Nelson, 2012; Pakir, 2009; Qiufang, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004, 2005; Sowden, 2012) is a dominating name/label for global communication. It is regarded as a beneficial outcome of the spread of English (Mufwene, 2012) and the fastest growing English in the world (Mauranen & Ranta, 2005). Before conceptualising ELF from a multiplicity of perspectives and ideological standpoints, it is important to understand the concept. Lingua franca is

a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language. The lingua franca could be an internationally used language of communication (e.g. English), it could be the native language of one of the groups, or it could be a language which is not spoken natively by any of the groups but has a simplified sentence structured and vocabulary and is often a mixture of two or more language. (Richard & Schmidt, 2002, p. 309)

Thus, lingua franca is a common language among people from different language backgrounds and its main function is communication. As Meierkord and Knapp (2002) describe: ‘The term ‘*lingua franca*’ is used in reference to a particular language’s function only’ (p. 10, cited in Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010, p. 22). When English is considered as a lingua franca it refers to English as common language for mutual intelligibility among people who interact with each other from different first language backgrounds.

Scholars define ELF in different ways, which is quite problematic over time, even though the definition of ELF has been refined. In the 1990s, scholars defined ELF as follows:

A lingua franca is a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication. (Firth, 1996a, p. 240)

ELF interactions are defined as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue. (House, 1999, p. 74)

The above definitions do not include NSE in ELF communication. Hence, the definitions of ELF are narrowly defined. Jenkins (2006a) criticises such narrow definitions and argues that it is accepted by the majority of ELF researchers that English speakers from both inner and outer circles also participate in intercultural communication. Accordingly, House (2012) has revised her definition of ELF in which she views ELF as a 'default' means of communication among people who do not share a common language and culture. She does not however exclude English speakers of the inner circle from ELF. Jenkins (2009) discusses that although in practice ELF is used for communication among NNSE from the expanding circle, it does not intentionally exclude communication with people from the inner and outer circles. Any user of English, irrespective of speakers from inner, outer and expanding circles, can be a user of ELF (Jenkins, 2012). Jenkins (2008, 2009, 2012) defines ELF as a means of communication and a common language of choice among speakers who come from different linguacultural circumstances. ELF therefore accommodates all parties for mutual negotiation and intelligibility rather than forming a particular variety for a particular group of people. ELF thus shares common ground among the many varieties of English usage (Jenkins, 2009).

Based on the above discussions, in understanding ELF my focus is more inclusive: ELF is a common language used for communication among people who come and interact from different linguacultural backgrounds irrespective of their location in specific countries in linguistic circles, regardless of whether English is their mother tongue, or second language or foreign language. They use English as a common language for communication with each other. English can therefore be used as a *lingua franca* both within a country and across countries. English is therefore said to be a ‘global *lingua franca*’ (McArthur, 2001; Pözl & Seidlhofer, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2005), or ‘world *lingua franca*’ (Kirkpatrick, 2007) or ‘international *lingua franca*’ (Jenkins, 1998).

As the aim of this research is to understand the role of English in the RMG international business setting, how English is used in this corporate world, and the skills required, it is imperative to describe how I conceptualise ELF for this study and locate my understanding within different perspectives emerging from the literature. The literature suggests that ELF scholars perceive ELF from different perspectives (see Figure 2.2). The perceptions of scholars about ELF can be classified into four categories (for more perspectives, see Saraceni, 2008). Firstly, ELF is seen as an emerging *paradigm* (see, e.g. Pakir, 2009; Roberts & Canagarajah, 2009), which denotes a distinct way of thinking: a pattern or model. Secondly, it is considered as a communication *code* or a *variety* of English (see, e.g. House, 2012; Jenkins, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Mauranten, 2003), ‘that emerges in situations where interlocutors do not share an L1’ (Mauranten, 2003, p. 514). ELF has particular existing features that are different from native language varieties and are also homogeneous in and of themselves (see Mollin, 2006). ‘Euro-English’ (e.g. Jenkins, Modiano, & Seidlhofer, 2001), ‘ASEAN English’ (Kirkpatrick, 2011) and ‘South Asian English’ (e.g. Kachru, 1996)

are examples of local and regional varieties. Thirdly, ELF is viewed as a *function*.

Friedrich and Matsuda (2010) observe: ‘ELF is a term that describes a *function* that English performs in multilingual contexts’ (p.20). ELF speakers recognise situation specific linguistic choices, a use of different pragmatic strategies in communication to make interaction successful (see Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010). In addition, literature further describes ELF as both form and function (see Saraceni, 2008) that can be considered as a fourth perception. As Saraceni (2008) describes:

In my opinion, the most crucial node to disentangle in the discourse about ELF is the seemingly interchangeable way in which the two meanings are attributed to ELF, one about a function of English, the other about a variety (or varieties) of English, with its (or their) own distinct features (p. 24).

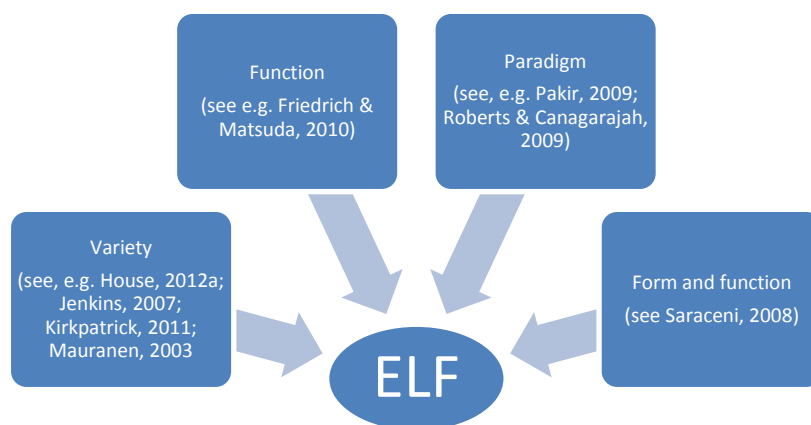


Figure 2.2: ELF from different philosophical standpoints

In this research I conceptualise ELF as between form and function (see Saraceni, 2008). It denotes both role and code. ELF also refers to a means of communication between any English speaker as Seidlhofer (2005) states, ‘it cannot be denied that English functions as a global lingua franca’ (p. 339). It is used as a common language to communicate among non-native speakers as well as between native and non-native

speakers of English. Monitoring each other's language proficiency, ELF speakers mutually determine the use of appropriate grammar, phonology, lexis, and pragmatic conventions that ensure mutual intelligibility (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 925). However, as a consequence of English as a global lingua franca, different forms and varieties are being used by different speakers of English (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339). For the purpose of understanding the use of English in the RMG business communication in both spoken and written contexts, it is necessary to understand ELF settings, speakers and exchanges.

2.4.2 The linguistic features of ELF: Settings, speakers and exchanges.

ELF researchers identify various features and characteristics of ELF, ELF setting and ELF speakers. For instance, in pointing out the ELF setting, Pözl & Seidlhofer (2006) argue that ELF users: a) live and interact in a country other than their own; b) meet for a brief period of time in a country other than their own; c) constitute a mixture: both speakers in their own location and speakers on "alien ground" are involved; and d) are in their own habitat but interact internationally via telephone, Internet, etc., with speakers elsewhere, who also are in their own habitat.

Likewise, in explaining the features of ELF, the following scholars make a contribution. House (2012) argues, ELF is 'a new type of English, a hybrid language, a kind of 'pluralized English' that accommodates diverse speakers' needs, norms and values' (p. 173). 'ELF talk cannot be conceived with a view to an ideal English norms and the ELF speaker cannot be measured in his/her competence vis-à-vis 'the native speaker' (House, 2003, p. 557). Meierkord (2002), cited in Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), suggests ELF conversation as a 'linguistic masala' – a blender of speakers' language and their cultural norms with it. It avoids complex words and structures. The 'linguistic masala' is created by the heterogeneity of ELF users and is

displayed as highly dynamic ‘communicative hybridity’ (Meierkord, 2002, p. 124) that embraces interlocutors’ cultural norms, linguistic backgrounds and context specific requirements (see also Canagarajah, 2007). Considering the consequence of diversity in national, regional, local and individual linguacultural identities, House (2012) called ELF a ‘stateless’ language (p. 173).

Similarly, House (2012) points out some characteristics of ELF speakers and argues that they have variations in their proficiency, background, motivation and purpose for using English. The majority of ELF speakers are bilingual and multilingual. Using such a definition, the large number of ELF speakers will be significantly greater than that of NSE. Another characteristic is that ELF interactions are often consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive (Seidlhofer, 2001). This is why ELF speakers when interacting do not frequently misunderstand one another (Pözl & Seidlhofer, 2006). Another reason behind the assumption of infrequent misunderstanding is the innovative nature of ELF speakers.

It is contended that ELF speakers are creative and innovative in English (House, 2012; Jenkins, 2008). For successful communication they use innovative strategies of communication. Such strategies facilitate the creation of preferred forms for communication (Jenkins, 2008). In addition, these strategies at the same time compensate communication breakdown that happens because of limitations in one or more of areas of communicative competence, that is, linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse (see Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). These innovative strategies enhance the effectiveness of communication (Canale, 1983). They are termed as ‘strategic competence’ (see Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 1991) or ‘pragmatic strategies’ (see Björkman, 2011b; Cogo, 2010). Both terms have been used in this thesis interchangeably to avoid any confusion. One of the research

questions is to identify how the RMG personnel use both linguistic and different non-linguistic strategies to facilitate uninterrupted conversation.

A number of empirical studies (e.g. Björkman, 2011b; Cogo, 2009, 2010; Mauranen, 2006) investigated ELF speakers in different settings and it was repeatedly evident that they use different pragmatic strategies in negotiating meaning g meaning. For instance, describing the context of a wedding discussion among a small group of colleagues in higher education in Britain, Cogo (2010) demonstrates that translation or code-switching, elaboration, expansion of expressions, repetition for clarification, enquiring about the meaning, confirming understanding, overlapping and closest expressions (approximation) are used. In the same article, to explain the working relations inside community, Cogo (2010) reveals that hesitation, confirmation and repetition are used as interactional strategies. In addition, proactive work (Björkman, 2011b; Mauranen, 2006), paraphrasing (Cogo, 2009), ‘cooperative principles’ (Widdowson, 1990, p. 108) are also pragmatic strategies to negotiate understanding and to accommodate differences in communicative practices in ELF conversations. Not surprisingly, most of the studies above were conducted in social or academic settings. One of the purposes of this study, however, is looking at pragmatic strategies in an ELF business setting to identify strategies that RMG business professionals apply in their business communication for negotiating meaning.

This negotiation Negotiating meaning (interpretability) among speakers can also be seen as *intelligibility* in a broader sense that refers to both ‘intelligible production and felicitous interpretation of English’ (Nelson, 1995, p. 274). In ELF communication, intelligibility, in the sense of interpretability, is more important than any other element of language. As communication is reciprocal, here production and reception are both important regarding intelligibility among interlocutors (Seidlhofer, 2001). However, for

intelligibility among ELF speakers, pronunciation and grammatical use of language is not necessarily like Standard English (i.e. British or American). Instead, research suggests, the process of understanding among ELF speakers is achieved qualitatively, which is different from understanding, as observed in interaction among native speakers of English (Pickering, 2006). Here understanding (interpretability) is an outcome of the whole social interaction, not just the result of people understanding the meaning of the words used (comprehensibility) (see Smith, 1992, p. 88, for understanding of intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability).

Giving examples of some pronunciation sounds, particularly ‘th’ /θ/ sound, Jenkins (2000) contends that such sound is difficult to pronounce and is not necessary for mutual intelligibility in ELF communication. Likewise, research shows that ELF speakers often do not use ‘s’ with verbs in present tense (i.e. eats), yet it does not work as a barrier to intelligibility and meaning negation (Jenkins, 2000). The findings of my research show how intelligibility has been emphasised as a salient skill of communication as expressed through different elements of language (i.e. grammar, fluency, pronunciation and accents).

This study not only focuses on spoken communication but also written communication in which English is used as medium of communication. Because of technological advancement, e-mails have become one of the major ways in which English is enacted. E-mails have become the most conspicuous, frequent, convenient and preferred medium of communication in all global business settings. It is necessary to consider the use of English through e-mails in more detail. The following section centres on how English is used in written communication, particularly via digital communication and specifically e-mail.

2.4.3 ELF in digital speak. English is a lingua franca, not only in spoken communication, but also in written communication. In explaining the role of English as a global contact language, Canagarajah (2006) argues that unlike spoken ELF, the written code for ELF does not have many variations, rather the norm is still considered to be standard written English, particularly in academic writing. However, digital communication (i.e. e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, SMS) is more flexible, simplified and nonstandard. It also represents local values and identities. In addition, digital speak symbolises hybridity in nature – combining both spoken and written forms of communication (see Crystal, 2001; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000; Kankaanranta, 2005; L. Lan, 2000; Rice, 1995). And yet, negotiating meaning becomes smooth and lucid (Mallon & Oppenheim, 2002).

Among digital modes of communication, e-mail has become widely used and is the overwhelming preferred medium of choice where English works as a lingua franca. Arguably, e-mail is a powerful communication tool (Guffey, 2010; L. Lan, 2000; Rice, 1995) and genre as a consequence of the advancement of communication technology, especially computer and Internet technology. Crystal (2006) argues that Internet based e-mail communication, which may be called ‘technospeak’, is radically changing or removing standard forms of English language used in formal writing and replacing conversational forms. Internet based discourse is becoming simplified (i.e. omission of preposition, copula or auxiliary verbs). It is not just a matter of typing economy, but it also represents different dialogic features in order to accommodate many diverse group members (Crystal, 2001). Given the relevance of this form of communication, e-mail communication has been investigated as a part of this study.

In recent years, e-mail analysis in general (e.g. Crystal, 2001; Gains, 1999; L. Lan, 2000; Rice, 1995), and cross-cultural e-mail communication in particular, has

drawn the attention of scholars (e.g. Bjørge, 2007; Gimenez, 2000, 2006). In addition, some researchers have examined cross-cultural business communication (Kankaanranta, 2005; Kirkgoz, 2010). In examining the features of e-mail communication in international settings, it is seen that the linguistic choice and features in e-mail communication have brought about vast change. Over time, it has become relatively flexible, conversational, informal and personalised in nature. Simple syntax is used in communication. And mistakes in grammar and spelling are not uncommon (see Gimenez, 2000). Different stylistic features (i.e. abbreviations, omission of words) appear in e-mail texts (see Gimenez, 2000; Kirkgoz, 2010).

To investigate the discourse features, particularly functional categories, stylistic features and a register of commercial e-mail messaging, Kirkgoz (2010) analysed 220 e-mail messages sent by five native speakers of English to a Turkish textile company. In the analysis of stylistic features of e-mail messages, the focus was on subjects, openings, closings, abbreviations, word omissions, capitalisation, and lexical are in many respects closely associated with spoken discourse, which is unplanned and informal rather than planned and formal written discourse. The analysis of the register indicates more informal, flexible and personalised features of language. Yet it does not impede in effective communication with business counterparts. Indeed, it has become a natural flow of language use which is mutually acceptable and intelligible to both parties. Crystal (2006) notes: 'E-mail had extended the language's stylistic range in interesting and motivating ways. ...it is an opportunity, not a threat, for language education' (p. 133).

The above discussions on ELF and the features of ELF communication suggest that ELF is a versatile language for communication (House, 2003). Further, it is a simplified and hybridised form of communication. Despite grammatical and spelling

mistakes, the progression of meaning flows. Based on English as a lingua franca in written communication, this study has analysed the discourse features in e-mail communication, a digital means of communication in the ready-made garments industry. The study examines how RMG personnel negotiate meaning with partners through their nonstandard forms of communication that reflect hybridity. House (2012) has explained the reasons for choosing ELF for global communication. One of the reasons is that people feel comfortable with ELF communication; another reason is ELF's highest economic value, termed 'linguistic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991).

ELF can be used in different settings such as academic, social, and corporate contexts. As this research is about ELF in a business setting, it is necessary to understand how ELF works in corporate settings. In light of the global literature, the following section discusses the use of English in international business contexts with different names, forms and function.

2.4.4 From ELF to ELFB: Forms and function. Parallel to many names of English in a global communication context, when English is used in business settings, it can also be labelled different names associated with business. These names signify different notions of English in business contexts. Among many other names it can be termed as Business English Lingua Franca (BELF) (e.g. Charles, 2007; Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007, 2010; Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005; Nickerson & Camiciottoli, 2013).

In recent times, BELF has become a popular name in global business settings. Grounded in ELF, BELF is a shared communication code used for global business communication by the business community regardless of English speaking circles. It is

viewed as a highly functional form of communication – a ‘code language’ for business purposes (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). As my research focuses on English in the RMG international business sense, where English is used as a lingua franca among and between business professionals, I am exploring not only formation of different linguistic features as code language for communication practicalities, but also the function of English in the RMG international business setting. Accordingly, in this study, following from ‘English as a lingua franca in academic settings’ (ELFA) (see Mauranen, Hynninen, & Ranta, 2010), I frequently used the term ‘English as a lingua franca in business settings’ (ELFB). In explaining ELF in an academic context, scholars (see Mauranen, 2003; Mauranen et al., 2010) used the term ELFA. Likewise, when English is used as lingua franca in a business context, among many names, it can be termed as ELFB. However, as BELF is a well-established term in English in the global business setting, I have used ELFB interchangeably with BELF. Thus the focus has been on function of ELF that forms a unique type of language for effective communication in the RMG business workplace.

BELF scholars (e.g. Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012) argue that in BELF, the vocabulary, structures and discourse practices of English also work as the ‘lingua franca core’ (Jenkins, 2000). The features of ELF, ELF interaction, ELF speakers, ELF settings – all are applicable in ELFB contexts. For instance, research shows that like ELF, BELF discourse is a hybrid form of communication (see e.g. Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Here interaction happens among people from different linguacultural backgrounds. Despite different cultural identities, business professionals use English as a common communication code to interact, and negotiate meaning. There is no fixed or single norm that is accepted as a

proper or standard version of BELF (Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013). Instead, it is different from 'standard English' in many ways (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

Despite the absence of a single standard version of BELF discourse as noted above, BELF scholars (e.g. Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012) are agreed on some common features of BELF discourse such as hybridity, variation, contextuality and dynamism (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012, p. 267). They argue that although the nature of such discourse is highly context based; it is devoid of complicated structures, is highly specialised, and it reflects mother tongue discourse practice (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) note some contextual features of BELF discourse, for example, the shared business domain, the shared professional expertise and the length of organisational rapport. These contextual features are reflected in using: simplified English with directness and clarity rather than grammatical accuracy; using business specific terminology rather than only general English; professional expertise in particular business contexts; and using a hybrid form of discourse practice that integrates features of both interlocutors' mother tongue practices (i.e. pidgin, creole, and code mixing) (see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

In addition, these hybrid phenomena are associated with aspects such as directness versus indirectness talk and politeness related aspects. Moreover, the above study found three vital factors for effective BELF communication: getting the facts right (accuracy of information); making the discourse clear (simple, explicit, unambiguous communication, directness and honesty); and finally making the recipient feel good (appropriate tone and politeness). Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) conclude that in

today's world of business communication, for successful communication in a global context, competence in BELF is essential.

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) also argue that the use of English in a global business context is 'simply work' (p. 207) and its use is highly contextual. It is not necessary to be competent in English; instead it is essential to gain mastery of the business associated issue such as a particular genre used in a specific business context and business communication strategies. They considered that the knowledge of business-related issues and business communication strategies form the foundation for communicative success and overlap with proficiency in English. In addition, they observed that despite the challenge of accents in intelligibility, as previously mentioned, misunderstanding is rare between professionals because people are familiar with their shared business context. Therefore their limitation of vocabulary does not impede communication. The authors also show that in the BELF context the main focus is to get the job done.

As BELF is a shared communication code, the business professionals from different language and cultural backgrounds have variations in language proficiency (House, 2012). Such difference in language proficiency is viewed differently by members of the BELF discourse community. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) identify that when NNSE communicate with NSE, it was considered 'unequal' and sometimes 'uncomfortable' because NSE have a high level of proficiency and consequently they speak fast. However, NNSE considered they were on the same footing in language proficiency and communication (see also Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Such variation in proficiency causes inequality and imbalance of power between participants in the BELF discourse community (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

While proficiency in English is seen as significant in BELF discourse, the concept of proficiency is considered a very pragmatic aspect closely associated with competence in business and communication and business know-how overall (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). For successful business communication, BELF members need to have business competence together with knowledge of business communication and business genres. Here, knowledge of a particular business genre is more important than knowledge of grammar (see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Similarly, if one business partners' proficiency level is lower than their counterpart, the partner with the higher level of proficiency will use simplified English to ensure that the partner with the lower level of proficiency can understand (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). BELF members are cooperative in negotiating meaning in their communication.

In written communication as in oral communication, and particularly in e-mail communication, ELF researchers identify some linguistic characteristics. In analysis of e-mail communication in a multinational company in Europe, Kankaanranta (2006) shows some ELF features of e-mail discourse. One of the features is despite having grammatical imperfection, there was no recognisable misunderstanding. Another characteristic is the presence of spoken language features in e-mail messages. These reflect hybridity – a mix of spoken and written language (see also Munter, Rogers, & Rymer, 2003; Rowe, 2010). In addition, like the spoken form, in written communication as well people simplify English through using direct language (i.e. please comment on this) that reflects their cultural identity and use of mother tongue forms of discourse in language use (see also Meierkord, 2002). There was no fixed and rigid norm in ELF digital communication.

Considering the above discussions on English in business communication, this study explores how the RMG business personnel perceive the role and use of English in the RMG business setting. The findings could be similar with the above studies because this study has also been conducted in a worldwide corporate setting, similar to the above studies. And they could differ from the previous research because here both the context and the industry are different.

As previously pointed out, along with ELF, there is another concept that supports building up a conceptual framework for this study. It is communicative competence that is extensively used as an aim of developing English communication skills. I will not discuss communicative competence in isolation but in the context of understanding how English works in the setting of a global business. I will now discuss theoretical understandings of communicative competence and how these work as an analytical tool for collecting data in the RMG business communication.

2.5 Communicative competence: The basis of communication skills

As discussed in chapter one, communication skills are necessary for a business organisation to achieve its goals. Lack of effective communication skills act as a barrier in building organisational relationships between professionals and this lack can damage long-term effective rapport (Griffith, 2002). The purpose of this section is defining communication skills that support the formation of a conceptual framework for designing the research and analysing data. Like ELF, communication skills can also be viewed through different perspectives; in this study, however, it has been viewed from the applied linguistics perspective, because the area of this study is language education that deals with practical problems and issues associated with language and communicative competence. English communication skills in this study refer to the mastery of English language code and the subsequent use of this code appropriately and

effectively in international and intercultural business contexts. Communication skills also involve the ability to understand and produce contextualised language in spoken and written texts, and knowledge of using different kinds of strategies to express something when language resources are lacking (Hedge, 2000).

Over the decades, it is usually seen that in developing communication skills in English, communicative competence (CC) is commonly emphasised as a goal to achieve. For instance, constructed on communicative competence, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is widely used because it is regarded as the ‘best’ approach (see Bax, 2003; Hu, 2005) in English language teaching (ELT) in many parts of the world (see also, e.g. Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Phan, 2008 for criticism). Accordingly, it can be assumed that communicative competence underpins communication skills. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this research draws on the theoretical lens of ‘communicative competence’ (see Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Chen & Starosta, 2008; Ellis, 1994; Hymes, 1972; Lustig & Koester, 2010) that involves grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) to explore understandings of communication skills used in the RMG industry.

It is said that, ‘to be communicatively competent a person must be able to communicate messages appropriately in a given context of interaction’ (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, cited in Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 247). It is also argued that the CC should not be confined to an individual’s ability to use a specific language system (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011), but rather it should be extended to the level of organisational wellbeing (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Here CC has been seen from the perspectives of language acquisition and communication research (see for example, Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011),

where the focus of the CC is on effectiveness and appropriateness in interaction (Canary & Spitzberg, 1989).

The following paragraphs in this section discuss how different scholars theorise communicative competence. In conceptualising such competence, I primarily depended on Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale's (1983) model of CC because of its comparatively acceptance by educationists and researchers in developing communication skills of learners. In addition, in order to make the conceptual framework comprehensive for this study I adopted the concept of CC from other scholars' models, such as Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991) and Chen and Starosta (2008).

It is also noted that the notion of CC however is not without debate. Indeed, as Alptekin (2002) argues it is a 'utopian' and 'unrealistic' view because the model of CC is based on standardised native speaker norms which are quite difficult to achieve for NNSE. It also fails to reflect the lingua franca status of English. Alptekin (2002) poses the question that in the lingua franca context 'how relevant is the need to learn sociocultural norms and values of NSE when communication happens between non-native English speakers'. Despite this criticism, achieving CC is still the target of English language education in developing communication skills of ESL/EFL learners (Anderson, 1993).

CC encompasses both 'competence', which is seen as a buzzword (Peterwagner, 2005) and performance. Competence and performance were introduced by Chomsky (1965) in the 1960s to explain first language acquisition and communication among native speakers. Since then the term has been used in various fields of linguistics. Although the terms initially originated to describe the knowledge of mother tongue of a speaker that enabled them to speak fluently, later others concepts were adapted to

describe the aims and objectives of second and foreign language teaching and learning (Byram, 1997). Chomsky's view of knowing a language is reflected in his distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. Linguistic competence is the ability to use a language appropriately (Chen & Starosta, 2008). Chomsky's linguistic competence focuses on knowing the grammar of a language. Campbell and Wales (1970) point out that the terms (*competence* and *performance*) used by Chomsky have both a weak sense and a strong sense. In the former, while competence is the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language, performance is the actual use of language in concrete situations (Chomsky, 1965, p. 4). In the latter, Chomsky's competence refers to the linguistic system and focuses on knowing the rules of grammar of a language.

In criticising Chomsky's notion of competence, Hymes (1972) points out that language acquisition is not just acquiring abstract grammatical rules; it also occurs in a social context. Chomsky however gives no account of social interaction. Both Hymes (1972) and Campbell, and Wales (1970) propose a broader notion of competence, that of CC, which includes grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence. According to Hymes (1972) competence depends upon both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use*. The CC that Hymes (1972) suggests consists of four types: grammatical (what is formally possible), psycholinguistic (what is feasible), sociocultural (what is appropriate), and probabilistic (what actually occurs).

In providing a theoretical framework appropriate to the specification of a person's communicative competence in a second language, Munby (1978) proposed three major constituents and their parts as a model of CC: 'sociocultural orientation' (competence and the community, contextual appropriacy and communication needs): 'sociosemantic basis of linguistic knowledge' (language as semantic options deriving from the social structure, and a communicative approach): and 'discourse level of

operation'. Somewhat differently, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) stress two aspects of CC which include knowledge and skills. While knowledge refers to what one knows (consciously and unconsciously) about the language and other aspects of communicative language use, skill refers to how well one can perform this knowledge in actual communication (Canale, 1983, p.5).

Canale and Swain (1980), and later in a slightly modified form by Canale (1983) outline four major components of CC (see Figure 2.3). The first and foremost component is *grammatical competence* which is the mastery of language code (verbal or nonverbal) that comprises knowledge of vocabulary, rules of words and sentence formation, linguistic semantics, pronunciation and spelling. It is knowledge and skills that help to grasp the literal meaning of any utterances. This grammatical competence is similar to Chomsky's linguistic competence. It is the base of language rules reflected in accuracy in performance (Alptekin, 2002). According to Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), linguistic competence embraces the basic elements of communication. Linguistic competence includes sentence patterns and types, constituent structure, morphological inflections, lexical resources, phonological and orthographical systems. In the context of a global business, linguistic skills are seen as crucial because language skills empower employees at the corporate level; inadequacy in corporate language skills make business personnel dependent on others (see Charles, 2007). One of the main concerns of my study was to explore what linguistic skills, both spoken and written, do RMG business personnel perceive as necessary for effective communication. The elements of grammatical competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) will be used to recognise CC through linguistic competence in my conceptual framework for this study.

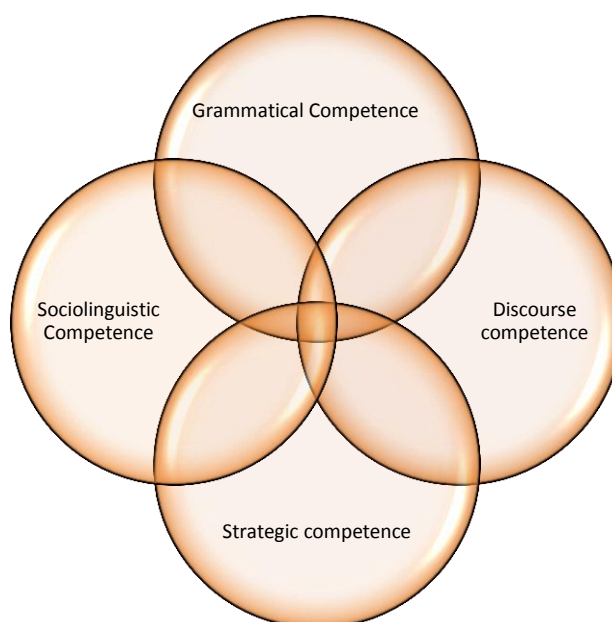


Figure 2.3: Model of CC by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983)

The second component of CC, that of *sociolinguistic competence*, involves ‘sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse’ (Canale, 1983, p. 7). According to the authors, this aspect of CC involves the appropriateness of language use in both meanings and grammatical forms in different sociolinguistic contexts, depending on different sociocultural factors such as roles, status, gender of interlocutors, their purposes, topics of discussion, tasks, norms and conventions of interaction. Every society has their own social rules, norms, beliefs, values and behavioural patterns (Alptekin, 2002). Sociolinguistic competence requires knowledge and understanding of the social contexts in which language is used (Pica, 1988), and accordingly involves using language appropriately in a given sociolinguistic setting. In sociolinguistic competence, the particular communicative functions (e.g. command, request), attitudes (e.g. politeness, formality) and ideas are evaluated based on a given situation in a particular sociocultural context. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) term sociolinguistic competence as ‘sociocultural competence’ that denotes speaker’s knowledge of how to express messages in language in appropriate ways that take account of the sociocultural

context. In their consideration, the elements of sociocultural competence are categorised into four different factors: social contextual factor (i.e. age, gender, status, relations and power); stylistic appropriateness factors (i.e. politeness, degrees of formality and field specific registers); cultural factors (i.e. sociocultural background of the target language community, awareness of major dialects or regional difference); and nonverbal communicative factors (i.e. kinesic, proxemics, haptic, paralinguistic factors, and silence).

Additional social aspects of communication among people from different cultures are called ‘intercultural communication’, sometimes also called ‘cross-cultural communication’ or ‘transcultural communication’. In intercultural communication, people from different cultures negotiate and create shared meanings in the context (Lustig & Koester, 2003, 2010; Schmidt, Conaway, Easton, & Wardrope, 2007). Creating shared meanings across cultures can be a quite a challenging task and requires intercultural communication skills (Lan, 2007). It is argued that business communication is intercultural communication (Beamer & Varner, 2001), as it involves communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. In today’s business market irrespective of domestic or international, intercultural communication has become necessary for business professionals (Cheney, 2001). Research shows that overseas business failure most frequently results from an inability to understand and adapt foreign ways of thinking and acting (Ferraro, 2002). For doing intercultural business, business professionals need intercultural communication skills. Dudley-Evans & John (1998) argue that:

Sensitivity to differences between cultures is necessary for successful business communication in matters such as the purpose of meetings, the use of direct or indirect negotiations tactics, the structuring of information or the use of politeness strategies in letters or meetings. (p. 69)

One of the purposes of this study was to explore the intercultural business communication skills that RMG business professionals recognised as paramount in their business communication. The understanding of sociolinguistic competence outlined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) helped to develop the elements of sociocultural skill for the conceptual framework in this study.

The third aspect of CC in Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale (1983)'s model is *discourse competence* which is the knowledge required to combine forms and meanings to achieve unified spoken and written texts in different genres (type of text). In discourse competence, 'cohesion' and 'coherence' are two important aspects needed to achieve unity in a text; Bublitz (2011) describe this unity as a form of connectedness within spoken and written discourse or text. While coherence refers to any structural link which helps to understand a text and discourse, cohesion is a semantic relationship among different parts of a text (Blum-Kulka, 1986). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion refers to 'relations of meaning that exist within the text' (p.4). It is argued that it is easier to describe and explain coherence in written discourse than spoken discourse (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). According to Alptekin (2002) discourse competence is achieved through

the connection of series of sentences or utterances, to form a meaningful whole. These connections are often quite implicit: ideas are linked to each other based on general knowledge of the world as well as familiarity with a particular context. Where these conceptual and experiential bonds are weak or inadequate, the meaning inferred from them are likely to be erroneous. (p. 58)

Pronouns, synonyms, ellipses, conjunctions, and parallel structures are examples of cohesion devices. Both cohesion and coherence are necessary for discourse competence used in discourse analysis.

In business communication, the use of appropriate discourse, both spoken and written, is seen as crucial. Several scholars (see, e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen & Charles, 2006) have paid attention to international business discourse and focused on different aspects of business communication. In a comparative analysis of spoken discourse between Finnish and Swedish speakers in the context of BELF, Louhiala-Salminen and Charles (2006) found that Finnish spoken discourse tended to be more direct and issue-oriented than that of Swedish. In describing BELF discourse, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) characterised this as simplified and clear English with few idiomatic expressions, little complicated phraseology, or complex sentence structures. They also identify the frequent use of business specific general and specific terms and hybrid forms of language and grammatical inaccuracy. Despite having grammatical inaccuracy, miscommunication and non/misunderstanding was not reported by interviewees. The above discussions on discourse competence by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) and discourse practice in business settings as revealed in the literature will develop discourse competence in the conceptual framework.

Strategic competence is the final component of communicative competence outlined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). In defining strategic competence, Canale and Swain (1980) note that the component is ‘made up of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence’ (p. 80). Three years later, Canale (1983) unpacks the definition of strategic competence and defines it as a component composed of mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons: to compensate for breakdown in communication because of limitations in one or more

of the other areas of communicative competence; and to enhance the effectiveness of communication.

According to Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), strategic competence is ‘the ability to express oneself in the face of difficulties or limited language knowledge’ (p. 16). It is an ability that can be used to facilitate continued communication with partners if problems arise due to lack of insufficient competence in the communication process. Alptekin (2002) observes strategic competence as ‘the ability to cope in an authentic communicative situation and to keep the communicative channel open’ (p. 58)’. If communication is interrupted because of limited knowledge of other communicative competence, or for any other factors such as fatigue, inattention, or distraction, this ability can compensate the breakdown of communication. Based on the above concepts, in short, I define strategic competence as a set of skills that compensate and keep the communication process ongoing when communication is failing due to linguistic limitation or any other difficulties. For an example, what an interlocutor does when s/he does not find or remember appropriate words or grammatical forms to continue communication. In such situations, s/he may paraphrase to compensate for communication breakdowns. Limited vocabulary or inability to remember a term or word cannot be a barrier in communication if a person is able to apply strategic competence properly to compensate for communication breakdowns. Strategic competence, therefore, plays a significant role in successful communication (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991).

Scholars (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Dörnyei, 1995; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991) have identified different components of strategic competence. Canale (1983) describes the components under four areas of difficulties and factors including grammatical difficulties, sociolinguistic difficulties,

discourse difficulties and performance factors. However, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Dörnyei (1995) suggest a number of components of strategic competence in five main board categories including avoidance and reduction strategies, achievement or compensatory strategies, stalling or time-gaining strategies, self-monitoring strategies and finally interactional strategies.

Canale (1983)	grammatical difficulties
	sociolinguistic difficulties
	discourse difficulties
	performance factor
Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Dörnyei (1995)	avoidance and reduction strategies, i.e. alternation, a reduction, or a complement abandonment of the intended message
	achievement or compensatory strategies, i.e. circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means, restructuring, word-coinage, literal translation from L1, foreignizing, code-switching, and retrieval
	stalling or time gaining strategies, i.e. hesitation devices, and self- and other repetition)
	self-monitoring strategies, i.e. self-initiated repair, and self-rephrasing (over-elaboration)
	interactional strategies, i.e. appeals for help and negotiating meaning strategies

Figure 2.4: Components of strategic competence

Each category has different elements (see Figure 2.4). The above noted suggested components of strategic competence by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Dörnyei (1995) have been used to form the conceptual framework for the study, and they have also been used as an analytical tool for data related to strategic competence as used in the RMG international business communication in the ELF context.

In the above paragraphs I have discussed the model of communicative competence as outlined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) plus ideas of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Dörnyei (1995) that support the formation of the

conceptual framework for this study; however, there are other models of communicative competence proposed by different scholars (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Byram, 1997; Savignon, 1983; Van Ek, 1987). In order to fully understand how communicative competence has been used or manifested in the voices of the participants, it is necessary to go beyond the model of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) and explore other models of communicative competence and their classification and characteristics. For instance, Savignon (1983) suggests a number of characteristics of communicative competence:

1. It is a *dynamic* rather than static concept; it is an *interpersonal* rather than intrapersonal trait.
2. It applies to both written and spoken language, as well as to many other symbolic systems.
3. It is context specific.
4. It is a presumed underlying ability.
5. It is *relative*, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all participants involved.

Another scholar Van Ek (1987) uses the term ‘communicative ability’ instead of communicative competence, which comprises six ‘competences’ which are *linguistic competence*: the ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning; *sociolinguistic competence*: awareness of ways in which the choice of language-forms – the manner of expressions – is determined by such conditions as setting, relationships between communication partners, communicative intention etc.;

discourse competence: the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of text, particularly those formed by stringing sentences together;
strategic competence: the ability to use ‘verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to compensate for gaps in the language user’s knowledge of the code or for breakdown of communication for other reasons; *sociocultural competence*: awareness of the sociocultural context in which language concern is used; and *social competence*: the ability to use social strategies appropriate to the achievement of one’s communicative goals’ (p. 8).

Bachman (1990) describes *communicative language ability (CLA)* as consisting of both knowledge or competence, and the capacity for implementing that competence in appropriate, contextualised communicative language use. In the framework of CLA, Bachman (1990) includes three components: language competence, strategic competence and psycho-physiological mechanisms. Language competence comprises, essentially, a set of specific knowledge components utilised in communication via language. Strategic competence is the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence for contextualised communicative language use. Psycho-physiological mechanisms refer to the neurological and psychological processes involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon. Language competence can be classified into two types: organisational competence and pragmatic competence. Again organisational competence contains two types: grammatical competence and textual competence. Pragmatic competence also consists of two types: illocutionary (functional competence) and sociolinguistic competence. However, according to Ellis (1994), communicative competence is ‘knowledge the speaker-hearer has of what constitutes appropriate as well as correct language behaviour and what

constitutes effective language behaviour in relation to particular communicative goals’ (p. 13).

Hedge (2000) defines communicative competence as knowledge of language rules, and of how these rules are used to understand and produce appropriate language in a variety of sociocultural settings. She proposes five components of communicative competence: *linguistic competence*; *pragmatic competence*; *discourse competence*; *strategic competence* and *fluency*. Lustig and Koester (2010) explain communicative competence as a social judgment about how well a person interacts with others. This social judgment depends on the context, the relationships between the interactants, goals and objectives of the interactants, where specific and nonverbal messages are used to achieve goals (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

The different theoretical explanations of communicative competence are inconsistent, but similar and overlapping, and indicate that the acquisition of language competence means acquisition of communicative competence in that language. Communicative competence means people have communication skills in sociocultural contexts. As pointed out before in this study, communicative competence is evident from language and communication research (see for example, Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). In communication research communicative competence is mostly seen as an effective and appropriate interaction, avoiding the violation of relations with counterparts (see Canary & Spitzberg, 1989; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011) in the context of communication. Here, the ‘context of communication’ is emphasised. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) argue that ‘communication studies take a more holistic approach toward competence compared to the characterizations of competence in linguistically oriented studies’ (p. 247). In my study as well, the purpose is to identify the communication skills holistically that RMG business professionals

perceive as an appropriate and effective in their global business interaction, where people from different linguacultural backgrounds interact. In order to recognise the necessary communication skills for the RMG business, this research develops a conceptual framework as discussed at the end of this chapter (see section 2.7).

A final strand of literature relevant to understanding the communication skills required and used in the RMG industry, concerns understanding how the RMG professionals develop these skills. Given the recognition of the different aspects of CC discussed above, arguably the sociocultural context and interactions people engage in as professionals in a global business will affect their language skill development and practice, particularly that of ELFB. Yet, as I have argued so far, much of the discussion about ELF and BELF or ELFB has been concerned with whether the preparation of graduates with communication skills corresponds to the needs of the industry, rather than discussing the effects of the sociocultural processes at work in global business contexts. Professional preparation with required communication skills can be developed in two ways: through university education and by gaining experience in a workplace. In order to understand the perceptions of the participants with regard to the communication skills they use and how they have been developed, the following section discusses the above skills development process in light of the literature.

However, I am not proposing to examine the literature on workplace skills development in detail, because the research questions of my study focus more on linguistic skills in use than preparation of graduates with communication skills through education and training. But there are connections between the writing on CC and the impact of social cultural contexts on language use and practices, and the theories of workplace learning and the importance of sociocultural contexts in affecting learning

and practice. For this reason, I am providing a very brief introduction to the literature that is relevant to the development of the conceptual framework.

2.6 Developing English skills for workplaces

The constant changing global economy has posed a challenge not only to business organisations but also to higher education institutions in terms of demand and preparation of a skilled workforce respectively. It is commonly expected that higher education institutions should play a major role in skills development, including communication skills, whilst simultaneously providing students with discipline specific theoretical knowledge.

In order to develop the required communication skills of graduates, English is taught globally, albeit with different status, such as English as a Native Language (ENL) in inner circle countries (i.e. UK, USA, Australia) where English is used as a mother tongue as discussed earlier (see section 2.2). It is taught as a second language (ESL) in outer circle countries (i.e. India, Pakistan). In contrast, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) in expanding circle countries (i.e. China, Russia) where English is not used much in daily life, but learned at school. In such countries, there is limited scope to use English outside of the classroom (among others, see Kirkpatrick, 2007). As mentioned before, although theoretically English should be taught in Bangladesh as a second language, it is, however, taught as a foreign language for sociopolitical reasons. According to Jenkins (1998) the goal of EFL is to communicate with the NSEs. However, at present, English is no longer being taught mainly for communication with its native speakers, but rather it is taught to enable communication with any speakers of English (i.e. native or non-native). Despite the target group of communication being both native and non-native speakers of English, in ESL/EFL contexts university

language policies and practices are still grounded in largely national (either British or North American) English norms (Jenkins, 2011).

In addition to ENL, ESL and EFL, some countries and education institutions, particularly higher education, tailor special courses in English to develop English communication skills for graduates or professionals to fit their specific needs. Some educational providers even link these courses to workplaces. Tailored courses are called English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In recent years, English for Business Purposes (EBP) has undergone significant growth worldwide because of the substantial opening out of international business and trade (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). However, in Bangladesh higher education does not offer English for business purposes or Business English courses. Instead, to some extent Business Communication courses are treated as Business English. Consequently, it can be assumed that graduates enter the workplace without having sufficient communication skills in English.

Bhatia and Bremner (2012) contend that in this changing world of business, communication becomes increasingly intercultural, multimodal, virtual and strategic where the existing academic world, frameworks, models and theories of business communication are becoming outdated. The authors suggest bridging gaps between classroom activities and professional practice for business communication. Therefore, it is important for English for business communication researchers and practitioners to collaborate with business professionals to understand why and how they communicate with their business counterparts in this changing business world. They need to analysis the needs of communication skills in various contexts. Consequently, this study, in analysing the need for communication skills, is very timely and necessary for the RMG business context in Bangladesh. In addition, by exploring to what extent university education meets the needs of the RMG industry as RMG professionals perceive, the

study will contribute to understanding how higher education outcomes can be developed to be congruent with the needs of the workplace (The Economist, 2014).

Researchers (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010; Patrick et al., 2009) contend that while the purpose of higher education is to produce job-ready graduates with high information and skills by combining theory and practice in learning, industry requires work-ready manpower. Similarly, students expect to be employed with required attributes and employable skills through work experience. In order to prepare job-ready graduates for work and careers, scholars (e.g. Slotte, Tynjälä, & Hytönen, 2004) suggest higher education should provide graduates with both tacit knowledge and practical experience through a collaborative strategy which develops knowledge workers for society and the workplace. Hymes (1972) contends that competence depends upon both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) use. For the knowledge economy, workers will be competent and equipped with a wide range of skills ‘not only in specific vocational skills, which increasingly include information technology skills, but also in understanding the interconnections between theoretical, practical and general life experience knowledge’ (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 4).

As mentioned earlier, along with institutional education, the workplace itself can play a significant role in developing professional skills including communication skills of its professionals. In the literature this process is called ‘work-based learning’ (WBL), or ‘workplace learning’ (WPL) or ‘work-integrated learning’ (WIL). WBL, WPL, WIL and similar learning approaches have become fashionable approaches in tertiary education and organisations during the last decade of the 20th century (Illeris, 2011). WPL refers to ‘learning that happens in the workplace’ (Cooper et al., 2010, p. xiv). In defining WPL, Holliday and Retallick (1995) stress the ‘processes and outcomes of

learning’ (p.415) while Rylatt (1994) focuses on the ‘development of employees’ (p.409).

However, definitions of workplace learning are also often predicated on a number of binaries. Cairns and Malloch (2011) argue that the discussions and explanations of WPL are dominated by a number of binaries such as informal versus formal, education versus training, the academy versus the factory, and classroom versus workplace are noteworthy among others (p. 11). The contemporary research on WPL reveals that although workplace training may be organised, learning in the workplace is mostly in the form of informal learning (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003). Therefore, one notable binary is that WPL is regarded quite differently from university or formal school learning (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003). While school learning is often formal, planned, predictable, outcome based, and focused on explicit and individual learning, workplace learning is highly contextualised, informal, unplanned and implicit, and the outcome is unpredictable (Hager, 1998, cited in Tynjala 2008).

Turning attention explicitly to how people learn at work, researchers of WPL have identified that learning happens at workplaces in a number of different ways. For example: learning by doing the job itself, facing challenges and solving problems at workplace, interacting and cooperating with colleagues and clients, observation and through formal education (Tynjälä, 2008). Everyday experience enriches each worker’s competence and skills (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003). The recognition that learning at work can take these different forms has underpinned the framework we have used for studying how new graduates learn and develop their English communication skills in the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

I will conclude this chapter describing a conceptual framework for this study that will enable data interpretation, presentation and organisation of the findings chapters. I will now illustrate a conceptual framework as an analytical tool.

2.7 Conceptual framework

For the analysis of data in this research, I developed a conceptual framework that is based on the aforementioned discussion of the notions of ‘English as a lingua franca’ (see section 2.4), ‘communicative competence’ (see section 2.5), and how people learn and develop communication skills for the workplace (see section 2.6). In this study, to form a conceptual framework for communication skills in the ELF setting, I primarily depended on the model of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) because I assumed their model was useful in understanding the notion of communicative competence that forms the basis of communication skills. As discussed earlier, their model not only emphasises the role of knowledge about language and about other aspects of communicative language use, but also emphasises skills and how well one can perform this knowledge in actual communication. Consequently, this model helps to recognise the relevance of what participants talk about with regard to English communication skills required for the RMG industry and what practices they adopt in their actual communications. Moreover, like many other countries, in Bangladesh also CLT is used to develop English communication skills of learners and the model of communicative competence outlined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) is a pedagogical goal. Considering the above factors, I assume that their model is supportive to form the conceptual framework for this research (see for example, Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

In addition to the this model, I also borrowed from other models of communicative competence (e.g. Celce-Murcia, 2007; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995) in

order to make the conceptual framework more comprehensive. For example, to analyse and explain data related to pragmatic strategies used by the RMG professionals, I followed the suggested components of strategic competence by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Dörnyei (1995). Likewise, for the definition of linguistic competence, I embraced the definition by Chen and Starosta (2008) to emphasise ‘appropriateness’ because appropriate language use is context dependent. However, the elements of linguistic competence were taken from Canale and Swain (1980). In this sense, it is a ‘hybrid’ conceptual framework. Consequently, in the findings chapters, occasional references will be made to other models of communicative competence.

In addition to describing how I define communication skills as communicative competence in the conceptual framework based on the above discussions in this chapter, I also described how people learn and develop English communication skills for the workplace. As discussed earlier, people can learn and develop communication skills both formally and informally through university education as pre-professionals or pre-employees, and through workplace learning as professionals or employees respectively as shown in the conceptual framework. While language learning in higher education is limited, language development through work-based learning is a continuous process. Figure 2.5 reflects the conceptual framework for the study that will enable analysis and interpret the collected data.

I am not the first person who has adopted the notions of ELF and communicative competence, and the combination of both aforementioned concepts that form a conceptual framework as an analytical tool for conducting research. In exploring global professional communication in the present-day of international business, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) developed a conceptual framework based on ELF and communicative competence. In Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta’s

(2011) concept of communicative competence, they used Hymes' parameters of possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and probability, and from the perspective of global business communicators they explored the answers to what is possible, feasible, appropriate and probable. In analysing data, however, assuming as appropriate, they adopted the model of communicative competence by Canale and Swain with its four elements. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) study empirically validates that professional communication in a global business setting can be analysed following the elements of Canale and Swain's communicative competence.

Likewise, in my study, communicative competence is an umbrella term adopted as an acceptable analytical tool for data gathering, analysis and classifying competences in English as required in RMG business communication in Bangladesh. Considering this was appropriate for data analysis, I followed the concept of communicative competence as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) as discussed above. On the basis of communicative competence, I explored the competences (i.e. linguistic, sociocultural, discourse and pragmatic) that RMG professionals identify as necessary for effective and appropriate communication in the RMG international business setting, where English is extensively used as a lingua franca. The four components of communicative competence offered an analytical lens through which data about English communication skills were analysed.

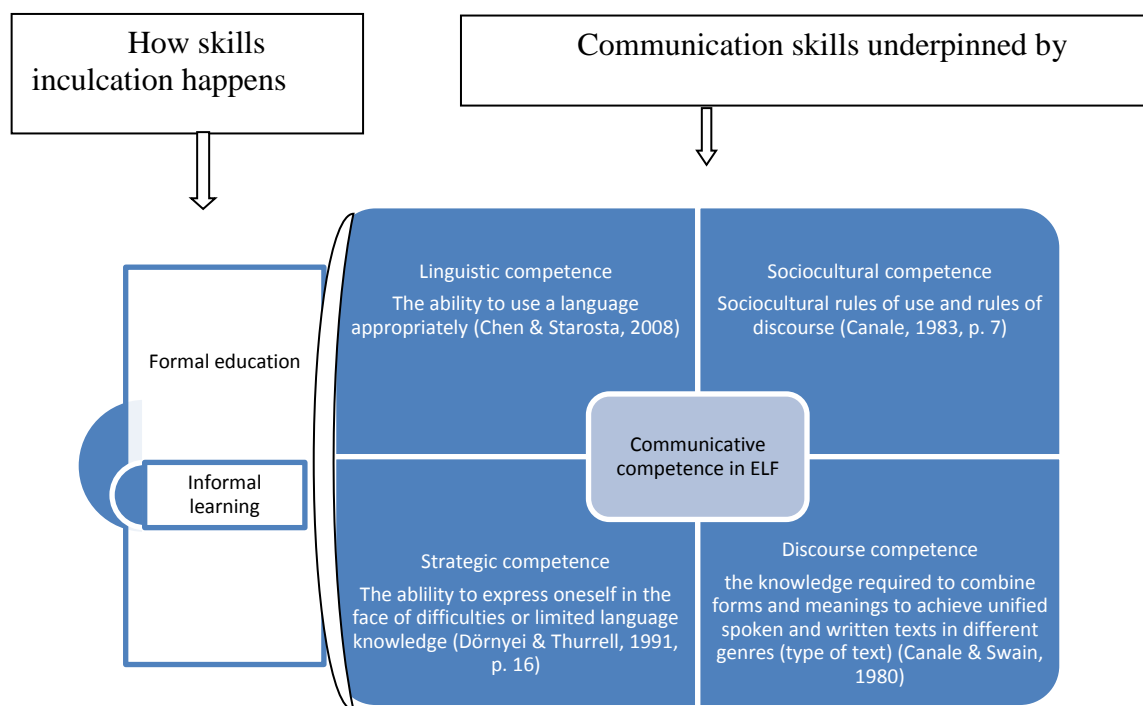


Figure 2.5: Conceptual framework for the study

Correspondingly the discussion chapters have been organised to align with these four competences that together make communication possible in the RMG workplace. More specifically, what is the role of English in the RMG business setting (see chapter four)? What linguistic skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, accents, are required for RMG business communication located in Bangladesh (see chapter five)? What sociolinguistic competence or intercultural communicative competence are required and practiced in the business communication in this sector? In other words, how the sociocultural norms and values (e.g. gender, age, status, language, religion, etc.) are considered in terms of language use in written and spoken discourses (e.g. choice of words, tone, address to show honour, style of writing and speaking etc.) (see chapter six). What spoken and written discourse features are practised and required in the RMG

business setting, and what pragmatic strategies RMG professionals adopt to overcome challenges of non/misunderstanding that occurs because of linguistic or any other reasons (see chapter seven)? And finally, how do participants perceive university English education as fulfilling the needs of the RMG workplace (see chapter eight)?

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter focused on the global literature and the formation of the conceptual framework for this study. In addition, the chapter reviewed the relevant literature on how universities and workplaces can play a role in developing the required communication to prepare job-ready graduates and professionals for the workplace. In reviewing the literature, the chapter discussed how English has been spread worldwide. It also discussed the proliferation of forms and function of English, different terminologies to describe these forms and different emphases as to what skills/ and types of English need to be learnt. Moreover, in order to identify and analyse what forms of English are being used, what skills are required and what skills are taught to play an effective role in the RMG business setting; at the heart of the chapter a conceptual framework was introduced founded on the concepts of ELF and communicative competence. In other words, this conceptual framework has been used in designing the research questions, developing the research tools for collecting data, and analysing and presenting data. Before going on to discuss the findings of the above research questions, the thesis needs to discuss how the study was conducted. The next chapter discusses methodology of the research.

Chapter Three

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the literature review and conceptual framework for the study. This chapter outlines the methodological choices adopted in order to conduct the study and discusses some of the practical aspects such as recruitment of participants, ethical facets, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and triangulation and validity. It is said that research methodology is ‘a way to systematically solve the research problem’ (Kothari, 2004, p. 8).

The research problem in this study sets out to explore the congruence between communication skills in English as required in the RMG industry for operating its business dealings at a global level, and communication skills as inculcated and developed through English education in universities. In particular, the research investigates the views of the RMG professionals about the role of English in the RMG international business setting, communication skills recognised as necessary for effective communication in this sector and finally, it explores how university education of English corresponds to the needs of the RMG industry in terms of developing English communication skills of graduates. These have guided this study to adopt an appropriate research methodology. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) contend, research questions must lead to the methodology. This methodology chapter provides a comprehensive understanding about the different steps followed for conducting this research.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the philosophical understanding that underpins the research methodology selected as appropriate for this inquiry. It then

discusses the strategy of inquiry, my position in this research, descriptions of participants, data collection, analysis and interpretation methods and process. This is followed by ethical considerations, confidentiality and generalisation debates. The chapter ends with describing the methodological challenges in collecting data and the direction for the findings chapters.

3.2 Philosophical underpinning/worldview

As noted earlier, research methodology is underpinned by the basic belief or worldview that guides the researcher in their choice of methods and the nature of evidence being generated (Merriam, 1998). My philosophical worldview is ‘constructivism’, particularly ‘social constructivism’ that suggests the adoption of a qualitative approach. This section discusses what social constructivism is in the context of a philosophical worldview and how it is related to my study.

In the constructivist paradigm ‘reality is socially constructed’ (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). Here, participants are understood to construct the meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). According to Creswell (2003), there are three elements that need to be considered in research design. These elements are: philosophical assumption that constitutes *knowledge claims*; general procedures of research which is called *strategy of inquiry*; and detailed procedures of data collection, data analysis and writing called *methods*. *Knowledge claims* refer to certain assumptions about *how* and *what* researchers will learn during their inquiry (Creswell, 2003). As Creswell (2003, 2007, 2009) observes, there are four schools of thought about knowledge claims which are: postpositivism, constructivism (often also referred to as constructionism), advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. The philosophical underpinning of this study is constructivism which ‘assists that social phenomena and their meanings are continuously being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 19). In

constructivism, knowledge and meaningful reality is contingent; it is constructed through interaction with people and developed and transmitted to society (see Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

There are two general strands of constructivist thought. The first is known as ‘radical constructivism’, which focuses more on the individual knower and acts of cognition. The second strand is known as ‘social constructionism’, focusing more on social process and interaction (Schwandt, 1997). I adopted a philosophical foundation for this investigation of social constructionism – in other words, acknowledging that meaning is not something to be discovered, rather that it is socially constructed (Crotty, 1998). I believe knowledge is socially created through interaction. Human beings construct meaning relative to context, time and culture (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009). Knowledge gets shaped and reshaped in society over time. As Burr (2003) contends, versions of knowledge are revised and fabricated through interactions among people during the course of their daily life. Lincoln and Guba (2000) identify as social constructionists who accept the ontological assumption associated with constructivism: that reality is not absolute but defined through community consensus; multiple realities exist that are time and context dependent. The phenomenon being studied in this research has been socially constructed based on people’s experience, and reality is not absolute but rather multiple realities may exist that are context dependent.

In this study the focus is on understanding how RMG personnel construct meaning around English communication skills, the place of English in the RMG business, what communication skills are required, gaps between university and industry in terms of communication skills, as perceived by RMG professionals, and so forth. This is based on their experiences in social work-based settings. Therefore, based on their perceptions and constructed meanings, as the research, I constructed meaning

around communication skills required in the RMG sector. Here meaning is co-constructed or jointly constructed. Mercer (1995) called it ‘the guided construction of knowledge’ – in which one person helps another to develop their knowledge and understanding (p 1). These meanings might be subjective – varied and multiple as the aim of this research was to largely rely on participants views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2009).

I therefore argue that the philosophical worldview of this study is social constructionism and this has led me to adopt a qualitative approach. Lincoln and Guba (2000) identify qualitative methods as the preferred methods for researchers working with the constructivist paradigm. Similarly, Creswell (2009) contends that social constructivism is typically used for qualitative research. The research questions addressed in this study have been explored primarily based on the perceptions of participants and this focus has required exploration of these perceptions in a field or a case. Since the participants’ perceptions may be multiple and variable, the data that needs to be collected is also unpredictable. This point advocates adopting a qualitative paradigm. Accordingly, this study is situated within a qualitative strategy of inquiry.

3.3 The selected strategy of inquiry: Qualitative case study approach

‘Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3) and qualitative data is the main basis of qualitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) that usually emphasises words and their meanings rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008). In what way does this study constitute qualitative research? To answer this question it is necessary to describe the common characteristics of qualitative research. To explore and discover a social phenomenon in depth is the main purpose of qualitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Understanding meanings as people construct them is the focus of a

qualitative researcher (Merriam, 1998). The aim of the study is to explore and understand deeply, thoroughly, intensively and extensively the nature of communication skills required in the RMG sector in Bangladesh, largely based on participants' perceptions and meanings as they construct and enact these skills, which are 'subjective and socially created' (Anderson, 1987, p. 384, cited in Taylor & Trujillo, 2000, p. 162). To describe and explain these perceptions greater emphasis has been given to the words people use, rather than quantification (Bryman, 2008). The product, this thesis, has been presented as a form of narrative report with rich description, not with statistical reporting (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Merriam, 1998); except in some areas the frequency of different types of skills and language uses have been presented, along with qualitative data, as percentages and frequencies in order to indicate the thematic importance of these forms of meaning or enactments in peoples' communication practices.

Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting (Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2011), making it possible to understand and explore a phenomenon in a specific context (Golafshani, 2003). And this usually involves fieldwork (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2003) notes that to acquire actual experience about participants and their workplace, qualitative researchers often visit work sites where participants carry out their normal activities. In this study, being a qualitative researcher, I visited a certain number of RMG workplaces to meet and interview participants (see section 3.6.1), observe them and make field notes (see section 3.6.2) to gain actual experience about the nature and practice of communication in the RMG business industry. Further, a qualitative researcher often uses multiple methods (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). This study similarly was conducted adopting multiple methods for data collection (i.e. interviews, observation and documents analysis) in order to fully understand the

participants' points of view, work contexts and practices in these contexts and these methods are described below in more detail (see section 3.6).

Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). A social phenomenon is studied open-endedly rather than with any prior expectation of what will be found (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Accordingly, it often happens that qualitative researchers modify or add to the original research questions and data collection process, because the research process can prompt new questions for the researcher to fully explore, emanating from the original research question. As a researcher I consequently had to change and refine the research questions and develop different data collection tools during the study (see section 3.6.1). Finally, qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). My interpretations in this study were based on collecting and analysing data. It is also said that qualitative research is essential to explore 'what', 'why' and 'how' (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This study has explored answers to 'what' and 'how' (see section 1.3) and in some contexts 'why'. Accordingly, it seemed that qualitative research was the appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study.

There are different strategies of inquiry in conducting qualitative research such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory and case study. For this study, I followed case study as a strategy of inquiry. What is a case study? A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2008, p. 18). Case study research is used to gain an extensive and in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon in context (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1989, 2008). Here, a social phenomenon is English communication skills as required in the RMG workplace. The aim of the study is to investigate the congruence between

required English communication skills of corporate settings for business purposes and skills developed by higher education institutions in Bangladesh (see section 1.3). To address this aim, the study required an in-depth and extensive understanding of English communication skills practised and required in RMG business communication and in general irrespective of any particular firm or company within the RMG garments industry sector. Therefore, for this research design, RMG companies where different participants worked as a single case of the RMG industry sector was used.

But within the discussion in this thesis, sometimes ‘case’ is used in a non-technical way because it is also a word that can identify a person or a place or a unit of something. For the purposes of this research, each garments industry or individual firm or company is a case and English communication skills in a RMG business workplace is a phenomenon. Since this research collected data from different RMG firms or companies in the industry, consequently, this research looked at multiple cases or firms. However, it is important to mention that this research did not compare the phenomenon (communication skills) among the cases (firms/industry) as a general case study usually does, because the selection of the individual firms was opportunistic. Instead, this research compares perceptions about a phenomenon (i.e. English communication skills as required in the RMG business communication) in relation to the functional role and position of the professional within the sector, based on the assumption from the literature (e.g. Zaid, Abraham, & Abraham, 1994) that position and role type might affect the perceptions of the requirements for communication skills. Three types of roles and functions were identified in the RMG business industry in a global context and this identification of different jobs led to the selection of three groups of participants (see section 3.5). As this study specifically selected multiple sites as cases to examine English communication skill as a phenomenon (see section 3.5.2), it followed an

‘instrumental’ case study approach (Stake, 1995). An instrumental case study design is employed to gain insight and understanding of a particular situation or phenomenon rather than a particular case (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). It provides insights into an issue and helps to refine a theory (Stake, 1995).

Yin’s (1989) discussion of the contexts or situations when case study research is the most appropriate strategy was also very applicable to this research. First, the present study had little control over the main focus of the study, that is, the communication skills needed in corporate settings. Second, it was obvious that communication skills in business settings were part of real life. Third, it was unclear to the researcher and the literature review (chapter two) revealed a gap in our knowledge of what sorts of communication skills are needed in corporate settings. Finally, to ensure the authenticity of the findings, this study collected data from various sources (see section 3.6).

In this study, the final stage analysed participants’ perceptions of match and mismatch between communication skills needed in corporate settings and those taught by universities. This research therefore, in part, followed the format of an evaluative case study which involves description, explanation and judgment. Judgment is the final and ultimate act of evaluation. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981) case study is the best reporting form for evaluation.

As pointed above, grounded in constructivist paradigm, qualitative research design suggests using multiple methods. It allows more openness, where participants can express their views. It also suggests a researcher should visit the real field/world of research to understand the context and gather information. In qualitative research, I used those methods of data collection that qualitative research advocates. Among these methods are: in-depth interview, field visits and document analysis to understand and

answer research questions. Detailed discussion about different methods of data collection is discussed later in this chapter (see section 3.6). The following figure presents the structure of research design which interconnects worldview, strategy of inquiry and research methods. This outline guided me to address my research questions and investigation them.

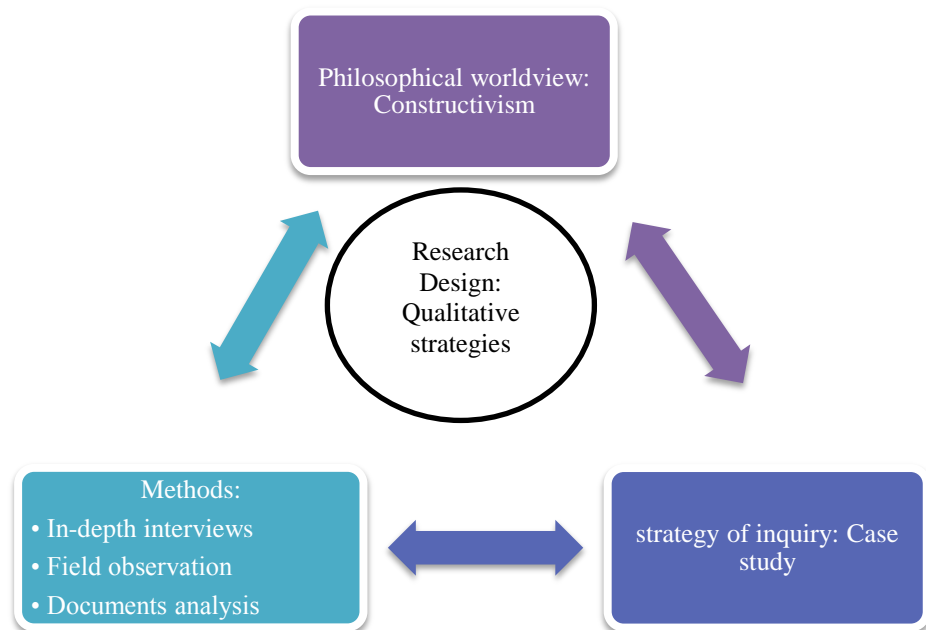


Figure 3.1: Structure for research design

Finally, it can be said that in qualitative research, the role of the researcher is very important because qualitative research is exclusively subjective – influenced by the researcher's own beliefs, status, knowledge, skills, power, background and position. Interpretation of qualitative data is thus shaped by the experience and background of the qualitative researcher (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, in order to understand this research well, particularly access to the participants, data collection procedures and interpretation of data, it is necessary to understand my position in this inquiry. Accordingly, in the following section, I will describe my place in the research where focus was on my

insider and outsider role and my orientation with the forms of English language used in the RMG business communication.

3.4 Situating the self in research

One of the most powerful factors in conducting research is ‘where the researcher is coming from’ (Sikes, 2004, p. 18). The position of the researcher influences him/her to understand, experience and evaluate the world, and influences participants’ responses to the researcher (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2009). In qualitative research, a researcher needs to visualise his/her position in the location of the research as Cloke et al. (2004) state:

...the researcher should aim to clarify his or her own position in a wider societal hierarchy of power, status, and influence, and thereby ascertaining the different sorts of relationships – complete with the many different roles, responsibilities and possible limitations to what can and should be ‘exposed’ about the researcher...(p. 29).

It is argued that a ‘researcher’s position is not fixed, rather it is fluid simultaneously, and allows the researcher to move back and forth with some kind of agency’ (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006, p. 39). The emic (insider) and etic (outsider) positions of the researcher are seen as important factors in research because of the relationship of the researcher with participants (Colucci, 2008). In this study context, I find myself as both a researcher and outsider, rather than insider. To explain my position, it is worth telling my stories about how I became acquainted with RMG people and the use of English in the RMG business. It is argued that personal experience is seen as a way of cultivating crucial insights (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, cited in Chowdhury, 2008).

First I became familiar with this sector through my brother-in-law, who was then an executive officer in the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturer and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the apex trade body that represents the export oriented woven, knitted and sweater garment manufacturers and exporters of the country. Due to family reasons, sometimes I used to go to his office to visit him. He introduced me to his colleagues in the office. Although I was younger, some of them became my good friends. I enjoyed their unconditional friendship. Such friendship hugely supported me in gaining access to the participants as discussed later (see section 3.5.3).

As discussed earlier (see section 1.5.3), I developed the idea about communication in English in the garment's sector when I started living with my elder brother after my graduation. As I was occasionally involved in reading RMG business e-mails, as noted previously, it instigated me to think about my position before I conducted this research. I felt that I might be a part of this sector. I assumed I was an insider in the sense that my family members were associated with this sector and I sometimes read and checked the language of e-mails. However, when I started my research in the RMG sector, my understanding of my position was as an outsider, as I was neither an owner nor employee; I had no formal experience of corporate culture in the RMG sector; rather I was an English teacher and an educator at a university which had little direct connection with this sector. Therefore, my position in this study was as an outsider and stranger to the participants.

However, my approach to participants was friendly and accordingly they cooperated with me in conducting this research, providing me with required information and documents. They welcomed and entertained me as a guest, providing information and a cup of tea, sometimes lunch. Accepting their offers, I built a rapport with participants. This helped me to relax with them and vis-à-vis through establishing a

comfortable atmosphere (Yee & Andrews, 2006). From this point of view, I assumed my position as researcher, friendly outsider (Greenwood & Levin, 2006) and welcomed ‘guest’ (Yee & Andrews, 2006). This friendship and trust greatly supported me to gather authentic data. This trust was such that some participants willingly provided me with confidential documents (i.e. bill of exchange) to show how they use language in different documents. Some documents were not necessary for this research and I did not accept them.

This section so far has demonstrated my position in this research. This provides understanding about access to participants and collection of data and interpretation. It is argued that the constructivist researcher likely relies upon the ‘participants’ views of the situation being studied’ (Creswell, 2003, p. 8).

3.5 Participants

In this section I explain who the participants were, how they were selected and how I obtained access to them. I also discuss the sample size, demographic information, how I recruited them and the cases – the firms.

3.5.1 General introduction. In selecting participants I attempted to take into account a wide range of background landscapes such as category of the participants, the nature of their work, role and communication, their experience, educational qualifications and type of RMG industry (see section 3.5.2). For instance, experience of participants may give rise to an understanding of how the role and uses of English have changed over time in this industry. Likewise, the nature of involvement in work may give insight as to how English is involved in different activities participants are engaged in. In this study, I wanted to see how different roles and categories of RMG personnel engaged in international communication perceived the need for English communication

skills required in this sector. Accordingly, I collected data from three groups of participants: marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel, who were involved in different professional functions of the RMG businesses in which English would be needed.

The classification of these three groups is generic and well established in the Ready-made Garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh. All business communication is conducted under these three established categories. Although they are involved in regular interaction and communication in English with international buyers and suppliers in the RMG business, the nature of communication and their involvement is different, which necessitate the relative need for English communication skills. Based on my insider knowledge of the structure of the RMG industry in Bangladesh, I assumed these would be the most appropriate groups of participants for providing comprehensive information with English communication skills practised and required in this sector for international business communication. Although there were some other categories of people in the RMG sector (i.e. production staff, quality controller and so forth), they are not as directly involved in international business communication in English in this sector as the above three cohorts are. Accordingly, I have analysed data from the views of these three groups of RMG professionals. Before moving on, it is useful to introduce and describe the role of the above three groups of personnel, in brief. This is because although their roles are interconnected and slightly overlapping, there are distinct activities and areas of work they are engaged in. For instance, some are more involved in written than verbal communication, and some are engaged in local communication rather than international settings. Figure 3.2 summarises their roles while the following text describes these roles in detail.

1. *Marketing personnel*: Marketing personnel are involved in exploring the market for RMG goods worldwide, mostly by oral and written communication with buyers or buyers' representatives. Usually owners and directors of companies are involved in exploring markets. They negotiate and discuss with buyers while hired employees work as merchandising and commercial personnel. Once an order is confirmed, marketing personnel hand over the latter tasks to merchandising personnel to take care of. As noted, marketing personnel generally head the organisations; they are also engaged in recruiting and training up employees according to the needs of the company simultaneously with their regular communication activities with international customers. It is noted that when they recruit personnel, they require good communication skills in English, both verbal and written. Based on their practical experience as international communicators and recruiters of employees, marketing personnel have given their insights and perceptions about the need for: communication skills as required in the RMG industry; perceptions about communication skills of the current graduates; satisfaction levels with their employees' communication skills acquired in higher education; and so forth as additional questions. In this study, a total of 15 participants belong to this group. Their demographic information is discussed in more detail in the appendices (see Appendix 3).



Figure 3.2: The basic role of different RMG professionals

2. *Merchandising personnel:* Merchandising staff are seen as one of the main groups of personnel who are engaged in communication with buyers or buyers' representatives and accessories suppliers and their medium of communication is English (see also So-mui & Mead, 2000). Merchandisers are the main users of English in this corporate setting. They are employed in communication with buyers and accessories suppliers about costing and pricing and other related issues like buying cloth, sample preparation and sample sending, measurement of goods, and so forth (see also So-mui & Mead, 2000). There are different levels of merchandising staff such as the merchandising manager, senior merchandiser and merchandiser. Merchandising personnel work under the guidance of marketing personnel. A total of 17 merchandising personnel participated in this study. The detail demographic for each participant from merchandising is provided in Appendix 2. Nonetheless, when the production of goods is ready after following all communication with customers, the responsibilities then fall under commercial personnel.
3. *Commercial personnel:* Like merchandising staff, commercial personnel are also hired employees as mentioned earlier. This group consists of the senior commercial manager, commercial manager, senior commercial executive/officer,

and commercial executive/officer. Their main roles are importing accessories, shipping products and dealing with payments. For this work, they communicate with buyers or buyers' representatives and suppliers of accessories as well. They are also employed in communication with different agents and organisations such as banks, BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association), customs office and the EPB (Export Processing Bureau). Some of them communicate with all of these organisations while others communicate with one or more organisations. Their medium of communication is almost always English, especially in the form of written communication. This group of professionals have given information about their perceptions of how English communication skills play a role in RMG international business. They also gave their perceptions about English communication skills needed in this business setting. A total of 11 commercial staff was included in this study.

In the analysis chapters, while narrating the participants' stories, often but not always the level of the participants as described above has been presented because such contextual information provides the detail to understand the interconnections between the needs of different roles, and the use of English and perceptions about English communication skills as required in the RMG industry.

3.5.2 Selection, sample size and demographic. Participants were selected from different firms (cases) based on 'purposive sampling' – 'where people from a pre-specified group are purposively sought out and sampled' (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010, p. 149). As mentioned before (see section 3.3), this study followed an instrumental case study, where the focus is on a phenomenon or issue, that is, English communication skills as required in the RMG business setting. In this study participants were selected purposively from multiple sites and/or cases concentrating on the above phenomenon.

Qualitative researchers generally follow purposive sampling which is a non-probability form of sampling. Merriam (1998) argues ‘sample selection in qualitative research is usually (but not always) non-random, purposeful, and small, as opposed to the large, more random sampling of quantitative research’ (p. 8). Identifying and selecting participants and sites (cases) purposefully is the best way for a researcher to understand the research problem and the research question (Creswell, 2003). Authors have identified different types of purposive sampling (see Cohen, Manion, Morrison, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2008; Gerrish & Lacey, 2010; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). I followed a combination of ‘convenience’ and ‘snowball’ sampling (see Creswell, 2008; Gerrish & Lacey, 2010) and I selected those participants who were willing and available to participate in the study. In this regard, I requested my friends, including BGMEA friends as mentioned earlier (see section 3.4), to provide me with the contact details of some willing participants. In addition, I asked participants to identify others who could potentially participate in this research. They helped me in this regard; for instance, one of the merchandisers Mosharraf, who was my friend, participated in this research. Later I asked him whether or not he could provide me with contacts for more merchandisers. On my behalf, he requested one of his fellow merchandisers, who later took part in this research. The above sampling greatly helped me to select the required sample size for answering my research questions.

My aim was not theory generation following grounded theory, but my concern was to collect rich and in-depth data to maximise information about the phenomenon under investigation in order to address the purpose of the study and answer research questions (Pitney & Parker, 2009). I therefore collected data through interviews until I reached a point of saturation or redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Padgett, 1998). When additional interviews did not give me any new information, I

ceased data collection. In this process I collected interview data from 43 participants in total in three groups: marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel, from 29 export oriented garments industries located in Dhaka city and surrounds in Bangladesh. My data collection depended on quality rather than quantity (Padgett, 1998). The sample size is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1
Type and number of participants

Types of personnel	Sub-types				Number of participants
Marketing	Chairperson	Director	Manager	Executive	15
	(3)	(9)	(2)	(1)	
Merchandising	Merchandise manager (1)	Senior merchandiser (9)	Merchandiser (7)	-	17
Commercial	Manager (6)	Commercial Executives (5)	-	-	11
	Total				43

The demographic information of the participants (see table in Appendix 2) shows three levels of participants: senior, mid- and entry levels. More than half (25) of the participants were from senior level followed by mid-level (15) and entry level (3). The majority (39) worked for Bangladeshi-owned companies while a small number (3) worked for foreign-owned companies and very few (1) worked for a joint company. There were three types of companies in terms of size: small, medium and large. More than half of the participants (24) were from medium-size companies followed by those from small (17) and large (2) firms.

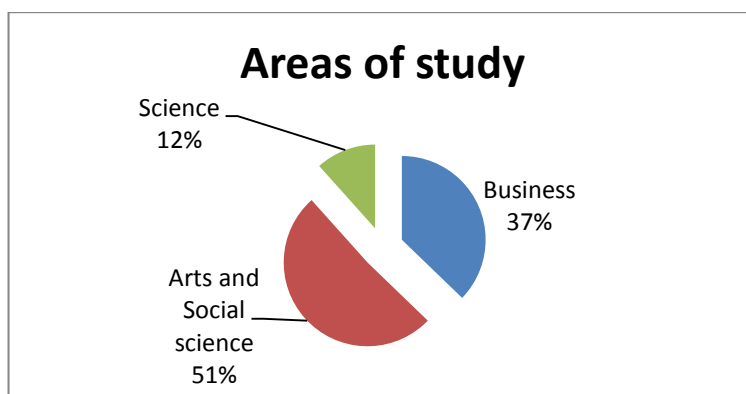


Figure 3.3: The areas of study

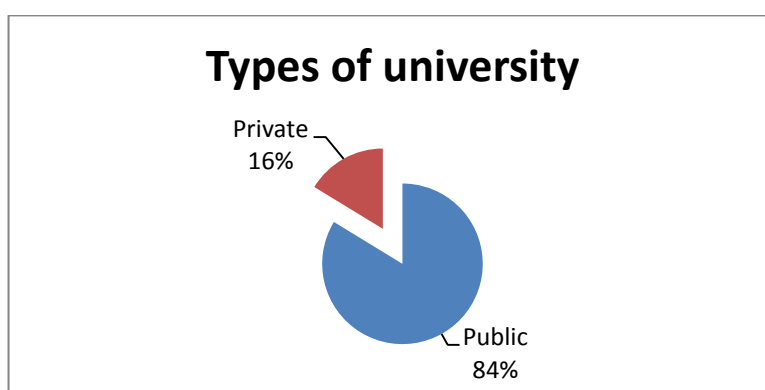


Figure 3.4: The types of university

All participants could be described as professionals with university level qualifications as defined in chapter one (see section 1.1). Among participants, the majority (14) held bachelor degrees without honours followed by equally ‘masters with honours’ and ‘masters without honours’ which constituted 12 each. Only 5 participants had a ‘bachelor degree with honours’. They were from different disciplines such as science, business, arts and humanities. Just over half of the total participants (22) graduated from Arts and social science disciplines followed by business (16) and science (5) (see Figure 3.3). While more than three-quarters (36) studied at public universities, a minority group (7) studied at private universities (see Figure 3.4). As noted earlier, at both public and private universities English is taught to develop communication skills of the graduates (see section 1.4.1). Participants from both types

of universities have reflected their experience and perceptions about English communication skills developed through English courses at university (see section 8.6). Of the public universities, nearly two-thirds (26) studied at the National University followed by the University of Dhaka (5). Very few (5) had garments related professional education or diplomas from the BGMEA Institute of Fashion Technology (BIFT) (has become a university since 2012) that produces technically competent human resources for the RMG sector of the country. The overall work experience of participants ranged from less than 5 years to 30 years. The age of participants ranged from 25 to over 50 years and the majority belonged to the 31 to 35 age group. Interestingly, in my study, the sampling method resulted in only one participant who was female. This indicates that while more than 80% of workers are female in the RMG sector, the number of female executives is very few because female graduates were not interested in this sector until recently, due to lack of corporate culture in the business sector. However, the situation is gradually changing and improving.

3.5.3 Access. Initially I experienced considerable difficulty in gaining access to participants. First I tried to follow the procedures outlined in my research proposal. I contacted the President who was the gatekeeper of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the controlling authority of RMG industries in Bangladesh, by sending him a letter along with an explanatory statement to obtain permission to access the field.

After receiving the permission letter from the gatekeeper and piloting the tools, I sent an invitation along with the approval letter (see Appendix 10), explanatory statement (see Appendix 8) and consent form (see Appendix 9) to the RMG employees/business professionals of RMG industries. The list of RMG industries and contact details of individual industry specific gatekeepers were collected from the open

access website of BGMEA. The initial invitation had limited success in gaining responses from prospective participants. I then used my personal networks and accepted the help of my brother-in-law, his colleagues and my friends to identify and select participants, and accordingly I sent invitations to those who might participate in my study. In recruiting participants, I tried to maintain variation in terms of age, experience, type and size of RMG industry, educational background and gender. This time I got a better response. About 50 participants expressed their interest in taking part in the research. However, among them, four participants did not have time, while three others I did not need to collect data from because of data saturation (see section 3.5.2). I therefore finally interviewed 43 participants from 29 RMG firms or cases.

3.6 Data collection methods and process

As mentioned earlier, data were collected using multiple methods (see section 3.3). Multiple methods are very useful for triangulation, which is one of the criteria for establishing the validity of the research. The methods used for collecting data are: in-depth interview, observation and field notes and document analysis. The descriptions of data collection procedures using multiple methods are described below.

3.6.1 In-depth interviews. In-depth or qualitative interviews were used as an appropriate method of data collection to obtain in-depth information about English communication skills required in the RMG business communication, as perceived by the RMG business professionals, and how they feel university education fulfils the need for the RMG workplace in developing communication skills of graduates. The in-depth interview is a widely used and prominent method for in-depth data collection in qualitative research. It allows a researcher to explore and gain an understanding of participants' perceptions, thoughts, insights, belief, knowledge, understanding, reasoning, feeling, motivation and perspectives on a subject being studied (Guion, Diehl,

& McDonald, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2008) by using an open-ended method. It gives greater accessibility to data. Semi-structured interviews followed in order to maintain the intended focus because they are flexible, and allow researchers to change the sequence and rephrase items or questions when necessary (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Patton, 2002). In this study, sometimes I needed to change the sequence of questions, repeated the same question, or rephrased questions to obtain explicit and meaningful data from participants. It is also argued that interviewing is well suited for an explorative study, such as this one, on which little research is conducted (Daniels & Cannice, 2004). English communication skills in the RMG business setting are an area of knowledge, little research is available here both in local and global contexts.

In this research, the interview was the main method of data collection. A total of 43 face-to-face, one on one, in-depth interviews were conducted. Before undertaking the interview I built up a 'delicate balancing' (Bryman, 2008) rapport with participants to make them feel comfortable with me so they would actively participate in the interview. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded so that no information was lost. The duration of interviews varied from participant to participant. Usually marketing and merchandising personnel took more than commercial personnel because the responses of the former two groups were more in depth than that of commercial participants. The duration of interviews ranged between 45 minutes and two hours.

Although the interview protocol was written in English, I allowed participants to use their preferred language in interview. Most used Bangla, which was their mother tongue. Using Bangla in the interview helped them to articulate and provided more information. Nonetheless, some participants gave full interviews in English while some started their interview in English but ended with Bangla. The process of translation and transcription is discussed in data analysis and interpretations (see section 3.7).

Data collection strategy through interviews was participant oriented rather than process oriented. That is, my main focus was on the availability of participants and their appointment time. It was not a matter of whether they were marketing, merchandising or commercial personnel. Whenever one of them gave me an appointment, I undertook his/her interview as per the interview schedule. Sometimes, I completed interviews with three participants in one day. It generally happened that I completed the interview with marketing, then merchandising and finally commercial personnel. The reason for adopting this process was to acknowledge the hierarchy that operated in the RMG firms at the organisational bureaucratic level in Bangladesh. Another reason was that the marketing person was the head (gatekeeper) of the organisation. If I wanted to gain access to the merchandising or commercial person, I had to go through the marketing person/owner. It was not that the director forced the merchandising or commercial person to take part in this research. Instead, when a director of a company participated in this research, it encouraged other participants, such as merchandiser and commercial personnel, to come on board. Moreover, assuming the importance of the study, the directors also allowed their employees to take part in the interview during their working hours. It is also mentioned here that this process was not always watertight with hard and fast rules. Sometimes, I met commercial personnel, then merchandising, then marketing personnel. Again sometimes, I met merchandising personnel first, then marketing and finally commercial personnel. It depended on the convenience of participants.

I was always cautious of ethics and accordingly I tried to conduct interviews ethically. I did not impose on anyone to take part into the research or report something they did not want to say. The participants deliberately expressed their experience and perceptions. They had the freedom to be interviewed for as long as they wished. Care

was taken so that no power relations played a role from either side because this was an important ethical consideration: to be mindful, especially in researching organisations where people may be in different roles and power relations with one another.

A semi-structured interview schedule/protocol was developed to collect in-depth qualitative data that reflected deeper insights into opinions and attitudes (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). The instrument was designed based on mainly the four components of communicative competence as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), so the aim of the study could be explored. The detailed theoretical discussions on communicative competence discussed in chapter two provided the framework for developing these questions (see section 2.5). Both open-ended and closed questions were used in the interview schedule. However, mostly the questions were open-ended to give freedom to respondents to answer the questions using their own words (Guion et al., 2006). Similarly, in the interview schedule, at the beginning there were some basic questions to gather demographic information from participants. Some of these questions were open-ended and some were closed (see interview schedule attached in Appendix 1).

The final interview protocol was developed through a process of piloting. The aim of the piloting was to develop the protocol appropriately to achieve the goal of the study. I followed some preliminary steps before finalising the schedule. First, I developed a draft interview schedule. Then I sent it to two persons who were involved in communication in the RMG sector. Based on their suggestions and necessary revisions, I administered it for pilot testing. Pilot testing involved three RMG personnel working in the RMG sector. The final interview protocol was applied for data collection.

The interview schedule was designed to consider three groups of participants (see appendix 1). The basic items or questions in the interview schedule were the same for all three groups. Notably here, I collected a wide range of data for this study in order to make it comprehensive.

3.6.2 Observation and field notes. Observation is an important and major method of data collection in qualitative research. It involves ‘watching of behavioral patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest’ (Johnson & Christine, 2008, p. 211). To obtain additional information about the topic being researched, this study also used naturalistic observations as a method of data collection and field notes were used as a tool/means of data recording. Based on my close observations during interviews with participants in the offices of garments industries, I took some field notes on communicative events and activities. No structured observation schedule was used because the aim of the observation was cross-checking of participants’ perceptions, which was unknown to me beforehand. Instead, I took notes on what I considered important for my study and relevant to my research questions. In particular, I observed incongruity between claims they made and actual language used such as: whether they used English exclusively or English and Bangla while communicating with counterparts; what means of communication they used while communicating with local people; what sort of pragmatic strategies they used in their communication; and so forth. Notes were taken during interviews and/or after immediately after conducting interviews. Naturalistic observations, as a complete observer, helped me understand the nature of communication practised in natural settings in the RMG sector. I draw on this observation data as supporting evidence in the analysis of interview findings.

3.6.3 Documents analysis. Documents as good sources of data are a recurrently used method of qualitative research. In understanding a context or setting, documents can be useful. A document is a clear and tangible record, which is less likely to be manipulated (Grady, 1998). Here document refers to a written text, which works as a record or evidence. Analysis of documents as a data source ‘lends contextual richness and helps to ground an inquiry in the milieu of the writer. This grounding in real-world issues and day-to-day concerns is ultimately what naturalistic inquiry is working toward’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 234) . Documents include a wide range of different kinds of sources that can be private, public and official. In this qualitative study, I collected official documents that were business e-mails. The purpose of collecting and analysing e-mail documents was to understand the nature and practice of language use and the need for written communication in the RMG international business context.

A total of 130 e-mails were collected from six RMG personnel in five RMG companies. Among these e-mails, 92 e were purposefully selected for analysis. The rest of the e-mails were too short to analyse. In addition, there was little variety. Accordingly, I excluded those e-mails from detailed analysis. As e-mail messages are quite confidential and sensitive, I requested the inclusion of e-mails only from those participants who seemed to be cordial and more supportive than others. I assured them I would maintain the confidentiality of e-mail documents. A number of the participants volunteered to provide me with e-mail messages; however, finally six participants provided me with e-mails and confidentiality was assured by deleting the sender’s identification.

The e-mail messages used in this study were sent to and from 25 RMG personnel from seven countries: Bangladesh, India, China, Honk Kong, Japan, Belgium

and the United Kingdom. Most of the e-mails (64) were sent by local Bangladeshis while the rest (28) were sent by foreigners – one from each of the following countries: India, China, the United Kingdom and Japan, and two from each of the following countries: - Belgium and Hong Kong. All e-mail messages analysed in this study were used for external distribution, rather than for internal communication within a company. Details about the sample of e-mails sent by different categories of RMG personnel, who worked on behalf of Bangladesh or on behalf of foreigners, are shown in the table below.

Table 3.2
Sample details of e-mails

Number of organisations	E-mail messages written by RMG professionals	Number of professionals	Number of e-mails
5	Marketing personnel (foreigners)	4	9
	Marketing personnel (Bangladeshi)	3	9
	Merchandising personnel (customer behalf)	4	11
	Merchandising personnel (Bangladesh behalf)	7	34
	Commercial personnel	4	8
	Suppliers (foreigners)	2	13
	Supplier (Bangladeshi)	1	8
	Total	25	92

Who were recipients of these e-mails? About 77 e-mails had multiple recipients while 7 had single recipients and the recipients of 8 e-mails were deleted in the supplied, printed copies. Of 92 e-mails, 84 e-mails were chained/thread while another 8 were unchained or individual or one-way e-mails. The timeline of e-mail communication was from May 28, 2010 to June 29, 2012.

3.7 Methods of data analysis and interpretation

The analysis of data is seen as the creation of meaning from raw data (Johnson & Christine, 2008). Data analysis and interpretation is a series of steps. Different

methods of data analysis were followed for different sources of data (i.e. interview, observation, documents). This section described how I analysed and interpreted data collected from interviews, observations and documents. Although it is a qualitative study, it has some quantitative outputs indicated through numbers and percentages. But the primary concern was individual responses and specific ways in which individuals responded to individual questions, rather than to categorise or quantify responses into categories. That is why numbers are not significant beyond occasional and incidental contexts or topics under research questions.

3.7.1 Interview data: Thematic analysis. After the data collection, the first step was to transcribe the qualitative data. Transcription is a process of transforming or reproducing qualitative data into written texts (Halcomb & Halcomb, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). I fully transcribed all audio taped interviews into English, typing into word processing files. I was not selective in transcribing and did not omit any part of the interview, deeming it might be necessary to answer any part of the inquiry. The interviews conducted in English were transcribed directly into English. However, the interviews conducted in Bangla were also directly translated and transcribed into English. It is notable that I started transcribing Bangla audio interviews into Bangla, and then translated from Bangla into English. In this process, it seemed to me that I was losing the real rhythm of the interview data. I then directly translated and transcribed all audio taped interviews into English, which gave me a real sense and meaning of the data. In addition, the direct transcribing process from Bangla audio-taped interviews into English reminded me of the context and plot of the interviews and all related information; for example, the facial expressions of the interviewees, and tone, emphasis and emotion of participants. These are marked in the transcriptions in the discussion chapters.

There are different conventions for transcriptions. I followed thematic rather than verbatim transcription – ‘the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data’ (Halcomb & Halcomb, 2006, p. 38). It is argued that thematic analysis does not necessarily require verbatim or detailed transcriptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Halcomb & Halcomb, 2006) if it is practically suitable for the purpose of the study (Edwards, 1993). To maintain the accuracy of the transcribed data, all transcriptions were cross-checked one more time against the original recordings. If the recordings were not clear, I contacted the participants for clarification. The self and paired transcriptions and the cross-checking process gave me an opportunity to familiarise with all data. In transcribing data, an Olympus VSS player was used, supplied by Monash University. The software made transcribing relatively easy.

When the lengthy and tedious transcribing was over, I started coding to generate themes over a series of steps. Coding is seen as analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It starts the data analysis process in the qualitative study (Bryman, 2008). Coding helps to organise data into meaningful categories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). A researcher can codify data manually or use computer software. I used a computer software program for codification. After transcribing, I imported all interview transcription files (in MS Word) into NVivo 9 software for which I received basic and advanced training from QSR. I read through all transcripts to sort extracts into codes. A screenshot of codes using NVivo 9 is attached in appendices (see Appendix 5). I generated initial codes which are called ‘nodes’. Although I was aware of theoretical and epistemological obligations of the study, in coding I followed an inductive approach – ‘coding the data *without* trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame, or the researcher’s analytical preconceptions’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Instead, the process of coding was ‘data driven’ rather than ‘theory driven’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I allocated names for each node and

placed all extracts related to nodes from each transcript by dragging and placing into the nodes. I created as many nodes as necessary to reflect all the issues in the data. It was evident that the same extract was placed into more than one node. Within each node there were sub-nodes. In some instances there were three levels of nodes. I coded the contents of transcripts without omitting any text.

The next step was searching for and generating themes. I reviewed all initial nodes and printed out the text. Then, reading through the texts of each node, I sorted the different nodes into subthemes – subthemes are themes within a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In generating subthemes, I used tables in MS Word. Afterwards, I collated the subthemes using thematic mind maps (see Appendix 6 for an example). Reviewing subthemes, I developed ‘candidate’s themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I again reviewed these themes and developed major themes which aligned to the research questions. Then I developed suitable names for each theme which are presented in this final thesis report with thick and rich descriptions and with minor quantitative input. In analysing all data collected from different methods, repeatedly I went back to the data, the categories and the themes to check ‘if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense, if they really reflect the nature of the phenomena’ (Patton, 2002, p. 570). This process, in fact, determines the credibility of the study.

3.7.2 Observation and field notes analysis. I transcribed and translated the field notes which were handwritten and audio recorded in code, mixing English and Bangla. After transcribing the notes, I manually codified them into different themes considering my conceptual framework. In developing themes from the observation data, I followed an inductive approach. After analysing data collected from field notes, I used those data to cross-check with the major themes of the thesis that were developed largely from interview data. As notes from field observation were not the main source

of data, field notes were rather selectively written, noting down only those observations considered as important. Consequently, in the findings chapters, the presence of observation data is not so prominent, but it gives valuable support to the analysis in some contexts.

3.7.3 E-mails: Discourse analysis. Similar to analysing interview and observation data, I also followed some steps to analyse e-mail documents to see the written communication skills required and practised by RMG personnel as perceived and expressed in their interviews. E-mail is a written text – a basic means of communication, a *discursive unit* and a *material manifestation* of a discourse (Chalaby, 1996). E-mail analysis is seen as an analysis of written discourse. Discourse analysis is the study of language in use (Brown & Yule, 1983a; Gee, 2011) to communicate for a purpose in a social context. Language is seen ‘as a practice in its own right’ (Gill, 2000, p. 175), and discourse is a form of action which may be affected by context (Gill, 2000). Discourse comprises both text and context (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). Phillips and Hardy (2002) illustrate:

We define discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practice of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings and object into being... In other words, social reality is produced and made real through discourse, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning. As discourse analysts, then, our task is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality. (p. 3)

Discourse analysis makes ‘assumptions about the nature of language, social reality, and how the two are related’ (Schreier, 2012, p. 47). How language and social

reality are interrelated and how one influences the other is the main concern of discourse analysis (Schreier, 2012).

As a social constructivist assumption, as the basis of discourse analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002), I assume that language shapes social reality. In other words, in the assumptions of constructivist paradigms, social reality is constructed by how people use language (Schreier, 2012). Since I am interested to see the process of reality construction using language in e-mail communication in the RMG business context, I used discourse analysis as a method of e-mail text analysis. I focused on the process of how discourse operates in these texts – how language is used, and how a social phenomenon is constructed in and through discourse (Schreier, 2012). In applying discourse analysis to e-mails, I was also interested to see what is in e-mail discourse and what is not. As the goal of e-mail analysis is to see and describe how language is used in e-mail communication in order to understand the English communication skills required and practised in written communication in the RMG business context located in Bangladesh, descriptive discourse approach rather than a critical discourse approach is more suitable.

Applying the conceptual framework of communicative competence to the e-mail analysis meant examining the discourse features of e-mail messages used in the Ready-made Garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh. I analysed the functions, components, stylistic features and registers of syntax, lexis and semantics used in these e-mail messages, aligning these features with the four major components of communicative competence identified by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) that focus on grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences.

After selecting 92 e-mail documents, I sorted the data from e-mail texts and managed these data using an MS Excel spreadsheet following a checklist conceptualised from the theoretical model of communicative competence by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). Various items were included in the checklist (see Appendix 7). The grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic components were reflected in the checklist, which also includes the basic information of selected e-mails such as date, type (i.e. chain or individual), number of recipients and function. Similarly, the checklist includes information about senders and receivers such as their gender, position, country and region. All e-mails were given a code number (i.e. E-mail: 1, E-mail: 2) to identify and manage the data easily.

Documents basically contain qualitative data. In this e-mail text analysis, however, in presenting themes from the qualitative data, I also quantified the textual data in order to represent recurrences of features of written communication reflected in these e-mail communications. While quantitative data have been presented using simple statistical analysis, such as frequency and percentage, qualitative data have been presented by giving examples from the original e-mail messages. In giving examples of the data, all original typographical errors have been retained because the actual use of language is the focus of this study. Frequently the original errors are indicated using square brackets. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the names of persons and organisations have been deleted. In such cases 'X' is used. Also square brackets were used to indicate any mistakes in e-mail messages or to make any comments.

3.8 Ethical considerations

During my study I encountered some ethical issues which I discuss here and later in the chapter. In beginning the research I was aware of the ethical guidelines for social research and conducted the study accordingly. Before conducting research in the

field, I applied for and collected ethics approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). Then I obtained access to participants following due process outlined in the research proposal. As pointed out earlier in this thesis, I found the names of the contact persons to obtain access to the participants from the public domain (see www.bgmea.com.bd), and later by personal networks (see section 3.5.3). I then invited participants to take part in interviews. I collected data from the participants, building and balancing rapport with them. The place and time of interviews were selected by the participants. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants' respective offices at a time of their convenience. Participants were treated with due respect and courtesy. As mentioned before, professionally I was a university teacher, but I went to their workplaces as a researcher. For the most part I was not known to participants in advance of them agreeing to take part. I was not in a position to exert my power over them in any manner.

Before the interview, I provided them with a copy of the approval letter signed by the gatekeeper – the President of BGMEA (see Appendix 10) as expressed above. In addition, I provided them with the explanatory statement and consent form (see Appendices 9 and 10) and requested them to read both documents carefully and return the consent form with their signatures. I also explained their right regarding their participation in this research. Participants were ensured of confidentiality and anonymity of their information to anyone outside of the research project. The collected data were presented in the report using pseudonyms for individuals and organisations to maintain anonymity. The ethical concern and awareness, and accordingly necessary steps helped me to avoid any possibility of deception. I faced challenges however including some unanticipated ethical considerations in collecting data in the field and these are discussed later in this chapter (see section 3.11).

3.9 Validity and reliability

This section discusses the validity and reliability of the research, which are essential criteria for judging the quality of a study. The traditional concept of reliability is assured by ‘the consistency or constancy of a measuring instrument’ (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 1998, p. 558, cited in Long & Johnson, 2000) while validity refers to ‘the determination of whether a measurement instrument actually measures what it is purported to measure’ (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 1998, p. 561, cited in Long & Johnson, 2000). These traditional conceptualisations about reliability and validity developed for positivist and quantitative research approaches are quite different from that in a qualitative study where the research questions and data to be collected are open ended (Patton, 2005). Yet, it is argued that a qualitative researcher still needs to be concerned with the validity and reliability of the study during its design, analysing the result and judging the quality of the study (Patton, 2002). However, the notion of reliability and validity in a qualitative study is best addressed through the notion of credibility and trustworthiness. Here, validity and reliability have been conceptualised as ‘trustworthiness’ (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999). Establishing trustworthiness is the main issue of conventional reliability and validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A major criterion of trustworthiness is credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A qualitative study requires establishing the credibility of the research. There are different procedures to establish trustworthiness of a qualitative study and a researcher may employ one or more procedures (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation is one of the more important modes of establishing credibility of findings and interpretations. Triangulation commonly refers to ‘the employment of multiple data sources, data collection methods, or investigators’ (Long & Johnson, 2000, p. 34). As discussed

earlier, this study collected data from multiple sources using multiple methods (see section 3.6). The multiple sources and methods of data collection were: firstly, interviews of three groups of participants, i.e. marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel; secondly, e-mail analysis as documents; and finally observation and field notes of some RMG personnel. Triangulation was used not for ‘checking whether data are valid, but of discovering which inferences from those data are valid’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 232, cited in Long & Johnson, 2000). Accordingly, when I inferred a meaning from the data, I verified that inference using different data sources and methods. For instance, when I inferred that short and simple language is a preferred means of communication in RMG business interaction, I justified this inference not only by analysing interviews of several participants but also by analyzing several e-mail communications of RMG personnel. I believe that such a process of validation has enhanced the trustworthiness of this research.

Another technique for establishing credibility of qualitative research is thick, rich descriptions of the setting, participants and themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Such a description of any social event or action or phenomenon provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting (Patton, 2002). In this study, I have provided detailed descriptions about the settings, participants, their background information, interactions with the participants, their perceptions about the importance of communications skills, types of communication skills required, the gaps between university and the RMG workplace regarding communications taught and required, how to overcome them and so forth, as heard, observed and read about in the RMG context. The descriptions are abundant and interconnected (Stake, 2010). A balance was maintained throughout the analysis to establish the significance of the event where participants were involved, rather than by accumulating too much detail (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Such

descriptions give readers an impression of credibility and authenticity of the setting and the situation.

Finally, in relation to credibility, I strove to maintain a critical awareness of insider and outsider perspectives and their effects on both the data collection process, and analysis and interpretation. Although I am an outsider in this research, I tried to prevent myself from making judgments based on my personal beliefs; instead I constructed meaning by exclusively relying on data collected, maintaining validity, reliability and triangulation that helped me to understand that what is presented in this study is trustworthy and authentic. Literature suggests that authenticity of educational research is reflected through the procedure of how validity, reliability and triangulations are addressed in the study (see Bush, 2007). It is assumed that readers of this thesis will perceive this study as an authentic piece of work.

3.10 Generalisation debates

Generalisation can be an important factor in research but the ‘goal of generalisation is not always an important consideration for research studies’ (Seale, 1999, p. 107). The goal of qualitative research is in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon rather than generalisation based on findings (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). This qualitative study was conducted with a small number of participants and sites (cases) using purposive sampling rather than probability sampling. This study does not have any aim to generalise its findings. However, as this study aims to look at the communication skills required for RMG industries, adopting an instrumental case study focusing on multiple cases covering different participants with different roles, this study can ground some findings and patterns in rich accounts of particular contexts where the communication in English is occurred. A case study by nature is incompatible with the idea of generalisation because it tries to understand phenomena within the boundary of a

case. Whilst one cannot generalise, others can use these rich contextualised analyses as a comparison with their own contexts.

3.11 Methodological challenges in collecting data

In this section I present some unanticipated scenarios that happened in the process of data collection that was not recorded in transcripts. In such incidental stories I present supportive and challenging events encountered in the field during data collection. One of the supportive events was the enthusiastic participation of a marketing person in this study. He was the executive director in a medium sized RMG company, and had the most experience among participants. At the beginning of the interview it seemed to me that he was very busy and would not be able to give me any more time than ten minutes. However, this was an assumption. When I started the interview, within about five minutes, he asked me to pause for a moment. He called his attendant and told him not to send anyone into his office [chamber] during the interview, and then asked me to continue. He appeared interested and engaged. He gave me more than one hour of his time without interruption. It was a meaningful and cathartic experience for him; he needed to discuss the issues openly and the interview provided him with space to talk. Indeed, I gained valuable data from this interview and when it was finished I received an export quality pair of trousers as a gift from this participant. Needless to say the gift did not influence any interpretation I drew from subsequent analysis.

In spite of the positive, enthusiastic and engaging manner in which participants gave of their time, there were some challenges as well. One was to obtain the permission letter from the ‘gatekeeper’ of the BGMEA, an organisation that oversees the RMG sector. As per ethical rules, I needed permission to access this sector of industry. When I applied for permission, initially the gatekeeper was sceptical in

issuing the permission letter to conduct this study in the garment's sector assuming that such research work and the presence of an outsider in the RMG industries might create unrest in the sector. It is notable that although RMG business is a booming sector in Bangladesh, the majority of the workforces are mostly not highly educated and underprivileged. This sector is renowned for having some RMG owners who try to exploit the workers by not providing them with reasonable salaries and rights that very frequently result in unrest and strikes (see Correspondent, 2010). This dialectic situation probably has made the owners sceptical towards outsiders who want to do something related to the RMG sector, even if the outcome is good for the sector. Being an outsider and researcher, the challenge I faced was the consequence of the sceptical attitude of the owners towards an outsider.

The vital challenge I faced was to get access to participants, particularly marketing and merchandising personnel. Marketing personnel are busier than merchandising personnel because of their position. Most of them are involved in politics and have multiple agendas and remain quite busy. Marketing personnel often work off site too which meant it was not easy to access them. Making contact with these managers was a long process because it meant following the firm's protocols and making an appointment by contacting their Personal Secretary (PS) as most of them have one. Hence, I had to spend about six months collecting data.

Most importantly, I had to change the methods of data collection. Before working in the field, I outlined the strategy of collecting data by adopting two methods in the following sequence: questionnaires and then follow-up interviews with participants to obtain in-depth data. Nonetheless, RMG business professionals irrespective of marketing, merchandising and commercial professionals did not have time to pay attention to tasks considered to be voluntary and additional to their official

responsibilities. In addition, it was difficult to arrange to meet these busy professionals twice –for questionnaire and interview. Considering the practical situation in the field, I merged questionnaires with interviews in light of my supervisor’s suggestion and developed a comprehensive interview schedule. Accordingly I collected data in the form of a longer in-depth interview. I felt the necessity to adopt two further methods of data collection to make the study more comprehensive, namely observations of field visits and e-mail document analysis after consulting with my supervisor.

3.12 Conclusion and directions for the findings chapters

This methodology chapter provides a detailed understanding about the settings, participants and the way of conducting research. It provides all the background information that offers important contextual facts in understanding the data presented over the next four chapters.

Throughout the findings chapters I attempted to explore the answers to the following: *how* the RMG personnel perceived the place of English in the RMG global business (see chapter four); *what* forms of language were important and to whom in the RMG business communication (see chapter five); *why* and *what* social aspects they considered necessary in business communication and *how* they maintained these aspects (see chapter six); *what* discourse features they preferred and communication practice; *how* they continued communication when linguistic or any other competences do not work or become insufficient (see chapter seven). In addition, the findings go beyond the need for language related skills and required professional skills along with integrated English skills. The findings also show the perceptions of participants about the role of higher education to prepare graduates as pre-professionals with necessary communication skills.

Chapter Four

The need for English in RMG business: Voices from the workplace

“English is very necessary in this sector in the global context”

“...nothing is possible here without English”

4.1 Introduction

This first findings chapter discusses the importance of the role of English in the RMG global productive system located in Bangladesh. In order to understand the role and use of English in the RMG industry where reality is not absolute, but defined through community consensus, this chapter is developed from analysis of the responses of the participants in interviews and supplemented by analysis of observations and field notes of the contexts in which these participants were working. In order to understand the place of English in RMG international business in Bangladesh, marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel in the RMG sector were asked to talk about reasons, contexts and the extent of English language used in this corporate setting. The responses were analysed following a thematic approach based on identifying key issues in their narratives, where the focus was on themes emerging from the data rather than a predefined set of concepts. Connections between individual themes are summarised and presented in this chapter through the heuristic of three major themes: the role of English in the RMG sector, English language as a business capital and the place of other languages in relation to English. The first two themes are derived mostly from the conceptual framework that informed the questions put to participants, while the latter theme emerged from inductive analysis of primary data. This chapter presents these themes as listed above.

It is worthwhile to remind readers that in analysing data throughout thesis chapters, I repeatedly highlight the functional role and context of the perspectives of the three groups of RMG personnel (i.e. marketing, merchandising and commercial) and explain that these three groups encompass the different roles of professional management (i.e. communication with clients, recruiting employees and so on) undertaken in the RMG sector (see methodology chapter, section 3.6). In addition, I occasionally used participants' individual demographic information (i.e. experience, educational background) as variables in order to reveal the link between participants' characteristics and their perceptions. The profile of individual participants appears in Appendix 3.

4.2 The need for English in the RMG industry: “Without English the garments sector is unthinkable”

As seen in the literature, English is viewed as the most powerful language in global business (see section 1.2). This fact is not exceptional for the RMG international business in Bangladesh. In almost every aspect of this business activity – from beginning to end, from top to bottom, from enquiry to payment, at every step, English is used in order to maintain the mobility of business internationally. All participants, regardless of marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel, unanimously evaluated English as a language of high value in the sector. To signify the status of English, they used different descriptors that are shown in Figure 12.



Figure 4.1: The words refer to necessities of English in the RMG business world

These descriptors used by the participants strongly indicate the undisputed prominence of English in the RMG business context. English is highly valued by all of its professionals from top to lower level of management. Hence, it seems that English is the *life-blood* of this business. Without English, RMG business cannot sustain its place in the global market; it is even “unthinkable” in the contemporary business world.

This finding is consistent with previous research on English in an international business that has firmly been established over the past decade, as stated in chapter one (see section 1.2). For example, based on empirical research in a family-owned German multinational corporation in the technology sector in Germany, Ehrenreich (2010) identified that top and middle level management perceived English as a “must” in the company. Another study conducted by A. Holliday (1995) shows that English is “essentially” used for communication both within the company and within the international business community in an oil company in the Middle East. This study further reveals the necessity of English in global business. Indeed, English is considered by these professionals to be a global language of business (Neeley, 2012).

I further probed participants as to why English is so important. What are the reasons for English language use in the RMG business sector? What extent is English used in spoken and written contexts? In response to these questions, participants

outlined a number of explanations summarised and classified into four sub-themes and discussed below in detail (see sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.4).

4.2.1 A shared contact language for a shared business interest. In describing the prominence of English and the rationale for English language use in RMG global business, participants discussed English as a ‘contact’ language. Regardless of position, experience, age and type of industry, two-thirds of participants spontaneously claimed that RMG was an “international trade” or an “export-oriented business” where all professional dealings happened worldwide. To them, on the one hand, Bangladesh exported its garments to a large number of countries worldwide; on the other hand, it also imported garment accessories (i.e. cottons, buttons, zippers) from Asian countries, particularly from China, India, Pakistan and Hong Kong. In such two-way international trade, there was no “alternative” to English, rather English was “mandatory” to use.

Participants’ views suggest that if a business crosses borders, English *must* be used in that business. Although some of the participants acknowledged the use of other languages along with English (see section 4.4) in cross-border communication in different communication contexts, English is an “essential” medium. Even, in most of the cases, without English everybody is considered as “dumb”. As seen in chapter one (see subsection 1.4.2), the RMG business in Bangladesh is not limited its space within the country; instead it has become mainly a “100 percent” export-oriented international business. The products of this trade are supplied to more than fifty countries. Consequently, English is “essentially” used in this worldwide trade.

In addition, in this transnational industry, professionals need to communicate mostly with foreigners, who are from different countries and from different

linguacultural backgrounds, and who therefore cannot speak and understand the local language of Bangladesh – Bangla. Among them some were native speakers of English (NSEs) while others were non-native speakers of English (NNSE). In such circumstances, English is used as the predominant medium of communication, and this is perceived as the primary reason for English language use in the RMG industry. About two-thirds of total participants from all three groups of members (marketing, merchandising and commercial) stated consistently that they used English in the RMG business for ‘communication’ with their foreign business counterparts. The difference in roles did not represent any incongruence in their perceptions about the position of English in their businesses.

According to them, RMG personnel had to deal with a lot of facets of business (i.e. discussions, meetings, negotiations, paperwork with their international business counterparts) (see also section 3.5.1 for responsibilities of the RMG professionals), and accordingly English was the *only* means of communication with buyers and suppliers. There was “no way but English” for mutual intelligibility. They believed that without English, no delegates were able to explain the work to each other about what buyers wanted, what their requirements were and what RMG professionals needed to manufacture for their buyers in Bangladesh. Aazim, who had worked in merchandising for ten years remarked:

The main work of marking and merchandising is communication. All sorts of discussions, negotiations in our communication, are in English. Without English my buyers cannot explain me the work. I am also cannot explain them. The works I do – everything is in English, even my e-mail and keyboard are also in English. In fact, without English I see nothing.

Likewise, a marketing person (Nayeem) who worked as a director commented with a smile:

Hahaha [laugh]... without English we cannot explain to our buyers. We also cannot understand if they speak in a language other than English. Our mutual understating happens in English.

Over time, participants experienced that the intensity of English language use for communication in the RMG sector had steadily increased because the business was becoming more *direct* with foreigners instead of having a “middleman” between suppliers and buyers. In this regard, a marketing participant (Monir), engaged in exploring the marketing of garments worldwide, observed how English had been used in customer dealings in this trade for more than a decade:

I am speaking with my customers, I am writing to my customers. My message, my communication should be in English. Because there is no via media between me and my customer, rather I have direct dealings and communication with my customer. I am directly sending goods to overseas. So there is no scope for any other languages than English.

It is worthwhile to note here that in the past, the RMG sector in Bangladesh worked merely as a *habitat* of workers, who were employed only in cutting, sewing and making garments rather than having direct dealings with buyers for taking orders and preparing products as an established industry. In other words, previously the industry provided a production workshop servicing companies based elsewhere and did not need its own professional management to develop and market their products worldwide. Over time, this has changed and RMG professionals in Bangladesh are now engaged in direct communication with buyers, collecting orders from them. Thus they are making products and supplying garments. Therefore, the importance of English in the RMG sector in Bangladesh is increasing, and it has become the most “vital” language in this sector. The situation has reached such a level that “*without English RMG cannot move further*” (Monir).

Another reason for using English in this sector is its easiness for mutual intelligibility as a shared language. According to respondents, mostly merchandisers, communication in English was “comfortable” for many customers, particularly those from English speaking countries because English is their mother tongue. As one of the participants (Mafian, merchandiser) commented, “*We use English to communicate effectively with the buyers. ... See, maximum foreigners are comfortable with English*”. No participants reported that they felt uncomfortable with communicating in English as a shared language. The reason could be that they did not have any other choice other than English in this context.

A similar notion is reflected in the ELF literature. As discussed in chapter two (see section 2.4), House (2012) argues that as people feel comfortable with communicating in English, they use English as a lingua franca. However, this may be an advantage for proficient speakers of English over less proficient ones. As NSEs are proficient in English, they may use English as a more comfortable tool of communication than that of NNSE. How proficiency in English plays a dual role between native and non-native speakers of English has been discussed in more detail in chapter six (see section 6.3.3). Different proficiency levels in English among ELFB members contribute to inequity (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Therefore, English divides people (Rogers, 1998). In this regard, Nickerson’s (2005) argument about the status of English as a business *lingua franca* as ‘neutral’ is questionable. Thus English has become a ‘hidden’ tool for exercising power for proficient speakers over less proficient speakers in intercultural business dealings.

Despite the fact that some participants felt very comfortable using English for communication, the analysis of data reveals that some Bangladeshi RMG professionals

– particularly marketing professionals – did not use English enthusiastically with their international business counterparts; instead, they felt “obligated” “bound”, and “compelled” to use English for communication. Here the perceptions of three highly educated marketing personnel are reported. They were owners of different types of RMG business and had different experience. In spite of variation in type of industry and level of experience, they were unanimous about their attitude towards English being forced upon them. As they observed:

Actually, we are under “bindings”..., I have to use English obviously while talking to them. (Duala, marketing)

We are becoming “compelled” to speak or making corresponding in English as it is a 100% export-oriented industry... We do not have other choices. (Shibly, marketing)

All over the world, the customers know only one common language that is English. So, we are “bound” to use English. (Monir, marketing)

As they did not have any other option, to them English became a *given mode* of interaction in the RMG international business. However, when they had the option to use languages other than English, such as Bangla or Hindi, they used those languages (see section 4.4).

Interestingly, in explaining why English is used in the RMG sector, a small number of participants raised a contestable issue, that is, the use of ‘English for who’. One of the marketing participants (Harun), who worked as a general manager in a woven textile industry with more than 25 years’ experience emphasised that RMG professionals used English for the “betterment” of their foreign business counterparts. He argued that Bangladeshis knew Bangla, but as their foreign customers did not know English, the RMG professionals had to use English to support them. Likewise, a

merchandising person (Babu) with less than five years' experience in the RMG business also stressed that they (Bangladeshi professionals) used English for the sake of their clients. To him, foreign clients irrespective of buyers and suppliers, spoke or used English. In order to cope with them, Bangladeshi RMG professionals had to use English. The findings suggest that despite differences in experience and professional engagement, these participants were consistent in their notion, and they wanted to point out that English was used for communication in the RMG business 'for the interest' of foreign customers rather than that of Bangladeshi RMG professionals.

The above perceptions, however, did not go uncontested. Ershad, a marketing executive, who had less than five years' experience, strongly challenged the opinions of his colleagues and argued that Bangladeshi RMG professionals did communicate with their customers in English, not for the benefit of customers, but rather for the benefit of their own customers. As he noted:

No, being employees we will say that we are using it [English] for our need. If we cannot ensure them [customers] that we will work properly for them, they will never give us an order. If we are in a deal or a contract or in a meeting, they will not give us an order or they will not have faith on us unless we convince them that we will be able properly to execute the order they have given us. To get an order, we talk to them in English; we do communicate with them in English for our benefits, otherwise we could stay at home.

The views expressed by these participants seem conflicting, and these contrasting perceptions might be largely associated with personal education, attitudes and beliefs rather than positional experience in the RMG business. The individual demographic information (see Appendix 3) shows that both Harun (marketing) and Babu (merchandising) graduated from a college under the National University, while Ershad (marketing) completed his MA in English from the same university, followed by

a diploma in apparel merchandising from BIFT. He later completed a course from the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB). Apparently, Ershad's educational background was much better than both his colleagues.

Accordingly, educational qualifications might play a significant role in order to think critically. Whatever the reasons for viewing differently the use of English in RMG business communication, English prevails and is predominantly used in this industry, which plays a role in further spreading English worldwide.

It is somewhat nonetheless surprising that while marketing and merchandising personnel were engaged in the above debates, no participant from commercial personnel contributed to this argument. It is likely they did not think as critically as the other two groups of professionals because they were relatively less qualified and had had less involvement with English in communication, in comparison to the other professionals. Both my observations and demographic information on participants suggest that in commercial positions they had lower entry requirements than marketing and merchandising professionals, and it is the case that people without postgraduate degrees can engage in this role. This may account for apparent lack of knowledge or ignorance about 'English for whose advantage', reflected in this group

Like the differences exhibited by the above participants, the literature also shows different perspectives about who benefits from growth in the use of English. For instance, Jenkins (2006a) argues that English serves the interests of NSEs and this can marginalise non-native speakers (NNSE). On the contrary, Fishman (1982) states that English also serves the interests of NNSE (see also, Pennycook, 1994, 2007) as discussed in chapter two (see section 2.2). Thus it can be argued that both the use and spread of English in RMG international business are of interest to both parties – foreigners and Bangladeshi RMG professionals alike. As both groups are involved in

business, both have their own mother tongue, but for the benefit of both counterparts, they use English in this business sector as a ‘common platform’ to continue their business.

To summarise the above findings, it can be said that albeit there was no controversy in the opinions of the participants about English as a communication tool in the RMG export-oriented business; there is disagreement however in viewing the use of English for the purpose of ‘whom’ and its hegemonic power. While some participants viewed English as serving the interests of foreigners, some considered that Bangladeshi RMG professionals gained economic benefits in order to continue and grow their business. Similarly, several participants observed the use of English as a kind of obligation, compulsion and binding for Bangladeshi RMG professionals rather than spontaneous and impulsive. Whatever the views of these participants, English is widely used in the RMG sector as a shared language for business communication, and this finding is consistent with that of other international businesses (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen & Charles, 2006; Rogerson-Revell, 2008). Thus English plays a role as a leading communication tool that RMG personnel cannot avoid, whether they like it or not. English is therefore inevitable in the RMG global business.

While the participants were discussing English as a medium of communication, they coincidentally engaged in anecdotal arguments on how they perceived the status of English. Although the current study did not aim to justify the perceptions of participants about how they viewed English as a communication tool in the RMG business context. At one stage in the interviewing, however, I observed that participants started using the many names for English used worldwide by different schools of thought quite

differently. The following paragraphs present a glimpse of global labels as perceived by participants in relation to the RMG business communication.

Analysis of the transcripts identified that ‘English as an international language’ (EIL) is the most frequently used by participants. More than one-third (16) of participants, irrespective of three different cohorts of RMG professionals, reported that they used English as an international language for communication in the RMG sector. When participants were labelling English as an “international language”, it seemed to me that this label was *obvious* to them, because they were repeatedly using it. When I asked why they considered English as an international language in the RMG business context, among other replies, Pavel’s comment is invaluable. As a young merchandiser in a well-reputed large sweater industry with more than six years’ experience, he remarked on why English is used as an international language:

It is not possible to know seven or eight languages at the same time. That’s why I have learned an international language through which I can communicate with people irrespective of their countries like China, Hong Kong, UK, and Spain, etc.

In the above quote, the phrase “international language” appears to indicate a language which is used to communicate with people from different countries. Pavel attributed the function of an international language as one that facilitated communication globally, regardless of any country, nationality and/or linguacultural background of counterparts.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on EIL. However, there is disagreement among scholars about the concepts of EIL (see also section 2.3). For example, Smith (1976) defines an international language as a means of communication ‘which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another’ (p.38). As English is seen as the most frequently used language for communication in the RMG

international business with people from different countries and languages, participants perceived English as an international language that accords with Smith (1976) notion of EIL. Another distinguished scholar of EIL, McKay (2002), observes English as an international language that is used for communication with people in other countries. Later, however, she argues that when English is used in cross-border communication, it is considered as a global language. From the above discussions, it can be assumed that although the participants did not have much scholarly knowledge about the characteristics of EIL or EGL, they might look at its function and consider English as an international language rather than a global one because it was a means to cross-border communication.

Additionally, a small number of the participants, explicitly, marketing and merchandising personnel, viewed English as the *only* international language in this sector. A marketing person (Monir), who was a director in a knitwear industry with an English literature background, stated that the RMG personnel talked with their customers, wrote to their customers, and sent messages – all were in English. There was no scope for any language other than English, which was the *only* international language in this sector. A similar view was expressed by Mosharraf, a senior merchandiser with a Master of Education background from a public university, with more than six years' experience in business communication, reported that in the RMG sector all communication was in English, because English was an international language. A marketing person (Harun), who worked as general manager, argued that if Bangla could have been an international language, people would have communicated in Bangla. Analysis manifests that the wide range of English language use in every context and activity of the RMG business generated a strong notion among some participants about its status, that is, English is the 'single most' international language in the RMG

business world. They came to this view from experience rather than knowing anything about scholarly discussions of the features of an international language. And even though other languages (i.e. Hindi) were occasionally used in this intercultural business, this did not detract from their view of the importance of English as an international language.

Moreover, a minority group of participants (three) further reported that the use of English as an international language had been “conventionally going on” for a long time in RMG business communication. They hinted that English as an international language was an accepted mode of communication practice, had not been established recently, but instead had a long cultivation. According to them, from the inception of transnational RMG business in Bangladesh, English was used as an international language. Ahsan, a manager in merchandising from a foreign buying house, who had had experience in RMG business communication for more than six years, observed how English had been used in this industry during this period as a language of international communication:

It is an international language and everybody communicates through this language. It is conventionally going on. My buyers accept English. Everybody learns English as a second language. So, people use this language accordingly.

The above statement suggests that as per the RMG corporate need, RMG professionals used English as an international language to communicate with their foreign business counterparts as part of business tradition, rather than a new step. If we look at the history of English as a language of trade, we can see that English was used as a common contact language among traders from different languages. In the above statement, Ahsan further used another label of English, that of “second language”, that will be discussed later in this section.

Some other participants, predominantly marketing and merchandising personnel, however used a different term, and viewed English as a “common” rather than international language. No participant from commercial personnel made a comment in this regard. These participants (four) argued that English was important to RMG professionals as they used English as a common language between all business counterparts. Participants considered that the RMG business was a worldwide business where a common language was necessary for communication between international interlocutors. To them, English was widely used and the most common language in the world. They alleged that buyers and suppliers all knew English. Hence, English was used as a common language in the RMG global business communication. No participants used the term ‘lingua franca’. In describing the role of English as a common language in this multicultural business, a merchandising person (Masum) noted:

English is a common language in this world. Pakistan, China and Indian suppliers – all know English. They have different [mother] languages. [But] English is the easiest and the most common language.

Likewise, a marketing person (Arif) viewed English as a “common platform” for mutual intelligibility among participants from different mother tongue backgrounds:

The main reason is we have to do business internationally. A Chinese businessman cannot make me understand through their language, vice-versa I will not be able to make him understand through my mother language. So English is the common platform to exchange our views. That’s why we have to use English in our business sector.

Such findings suggest that when people from different first language backgrounds interact in a language other than their first language, the substitute language of communication is considered as a common language. As in the RMG sector, personnel were from different countries with different first language backgrounds, but

they communicated and interacted with each other using English as a ‘shared’ (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) and ‘contact’ language (Firth, 1996a, p. 240), thus English was used in this sector as the “easiest” and “most” common language. This finding also indicates that to adopt a common corporate language (see Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a) as previously discussed (see section 1.2), it is not necessary to be a multinational corporation (MNC); instead, a monolingual corporation can adopt a common corporate language if it communicates with foreign counterparts, who speak other languages other than the language of respective corporate personnel. Further, the country examples mentioned in participants’ statements demonstrate that English was used as a common language among people from different linguacultural backgrounds, but none of them used English as their mother tongue. This experience: of using English as a default means of communication, not only with NNSE but also with NSE has been discussed in the ELF literature (House, 2012). In other words, English is used as a common language among people who interact from different linguacultural backgrounds, irrespective of any mother tongue and any user of English (Jenkins, 2012). In this current research, a similar ELF scenario is reflected in the use of English in the RMG industry. English can therefore be termed as the ‘RMG business lingua franca’, even though no participant actually used this term. Nonetheless, a very small number of participants (two) reported they used “English as a second language” (ESL) rather than a common or international language. They considered that, in Bangladesh, the RMG business was totally global, where a large amount of garments were exported to North America and the EU, and the mode of communication was English. Subsequently, in the RMG sector, they all had to communicate or correspond internationally in English. English as a second language (ESL), they felt, was mandatory for all people in top positions handling this worldwide business.

It is highly likely that the tendency of participants is to use words, such as common language or second language, rather than lingua franca because of their respective academic disciplines. None came from English language or applied linguistics or TESOL/ELT or related disciplines. Consequently, the various names of English can be seen as a consequence of participants' anecdotal knowledge rather than their specialist knowledge. In the research literature (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2007; Smith, 1976), ESL is not a paradigm or concept or phenomenon that can be used as a label like ELF or EIL. Therefore, when participants conceptualised their use of English as ESL, they were applying their anecdotal understanding of English language learning as follows: they learned Bangla as their first language and English as a second language (although English is not taught as a second language in Bangladesh as a consequence of cultural and political sentiment, rather it is a foreign language). As in RMG business communication, they were not able to use their first language (Bangla) as a substitute; instead they used English, considering it was the second language they learned.

To conclude this section, it can be said that whatever the labels English participants used to view English in communication with their own understanding, the terms have similarities with those used in the literature (see Figure 4.2). English as an international language is thus a common term reflected both in the literature and in participants' voices. Participants possibly looked at the function of language rather than characteristics of different labels of English.

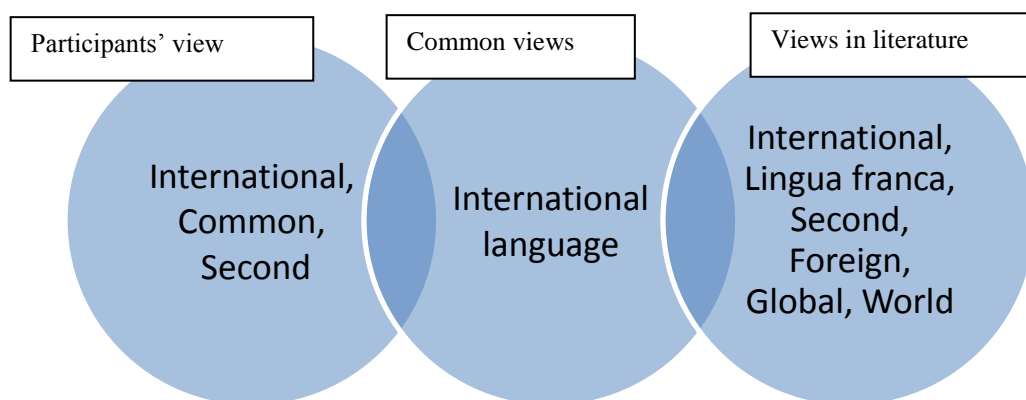


Figure 4.2: Comparative views between participants and literature

So far this section has focused on how English is used as a shared communication instrument in RMG cross-cultural business communication for different reasons, albeit that participants used different terms to name the language used. The reasons for English language use were not limited to the above rationalisations. Other grounds for growth and dominance of English use in this industry are discussed in the following three sections, where business documentation and communication practicalities are identified as technological drivers of English use.

4.2.2 English for documentation

Documentation is another purpose for using English in the RMG sector. As in other international businesses, documentation is quite a critical aspect in the RMG sector. Personnel keep records of their tasks, communication and instructions as evidence to avoid any mistakes or miscommunication. In this regard, Ripon, a young senior merchandiser with more than six years' total RMG business experience, who worked in a senior level position in his current industry noted:

In order to keep proof, we need to maintain documents in every step of processing of production. To give purchase order to a factory or to be sure about the confirmation and so forth – for all these, recorded documents are very necessary.

As per the importance of documentation, approximately one-third of total participants (14) from all three groups of RMG professionals stated they used English for documentation; for instance, a marketing person (Asraf) who worked as a managing director in an industry for less than five years said, “*Every paperwork is done in English*”. To these RMG personnel, although sometimes it was possible to communicate verbally with some customers using other languages, such as Hindi and Bangla concurrently with English (see section 4.4), there was no scope for using other languages other than English in written documentation. RMG personnel must use English for all written records. Even, if something was written in Bangla or in any other language, it was necessary to translate into English and to send the documents to buyers in English. Likewise, customers whose mother tongue was other than English also used English in documentation to send abroad. Giving the example of French customers, one participant stated that, despite French buyers who love to use their own mother tongue (French) in internal communication, when they send documents to Bangladesh, they use English. This finding suggests that internal written communication in some country contexts can be in their languages, but international communication must be in English.

In addition to describing the significance of English in RMG business documentation, participants specifically described the names of different documents they received from their business counterparts, both buyers and suppliers, and the documents sent to them. All papers, particularly commercial invoices, order sheets (Purchase Order), L/C (Letter of Credit), e-mails, applications, technical files, communication with financial institutions, reports (both internal and external), sketches,

measurement details, accessories instructions, sample comments, other quality comments, minutes, tags and labels – everything was in English. In relation to documentation in English, one of the marketing personnel, Rumana, the only female participant in this study, who worked as a director in her family business under her father's chairmanship said, *"Here [in office] we speak Bangla but our documents are in English"*. She made it clear that in internal communication within the office, they might use Bangla for spoken communication with internal staff, but not for written communication and documentation. Similarly, another participant, Sarwar, one of the youngest participating merchandisers, who worked in a Bangladeshi-owned industry said, *"If we work with local agents who are Bangla speakers, in that case speaking English is not necessary while writing in English is a must because our all corresponding documents are in English"*. It appears from these views that documentation in English helps to communicate easily, saves time, avoids confusion and miscommunication. All commercial personnel, nevertheless, reported that in documentation and paperwork, concurrently with English, they also used Bangla for a few commercial documents submitted to a small number of government offices in Bangladesh.

Therefore it can be said that maintaining documentation in English is an important factor in the RMG sector, and it is one of the causes for English language use. Although oral communication is mixed – mostly in English with foreigners and partly in Bangla with Bangladeshis (see section 4.4) – written communication and documentation, including e-mails, letters and other correspondence, is totally in English with customers, irrespective of whether they are local or international. However, there is also an exception. In Bangladesh there are a few government offices, such as the customs office, which prefer Bangla documents as per government legislation. In such cases, RMG

personnel, particularly commercial personnel, use Bangla for documents designed specifically for government offices. Apart from this, all documents are in English. Therefore, one participant said, “...*there is no alternative to English*” in relation to documentation in the RMG business.

The present findings seem to be consistent with other research, which found that English is used in written communication and documentation in an international business (see Casady & Wasson, 1994; Evans, 2010; Kilpatrick, 1984), and that this applies equally to documentation at the local organisational level (e.g. Chew, 2005). For example, in a survey in the USA, Kilpatrick (1984) reported that between 95 and 99 per cent of international business letters are written in English. Similarly, to investigate the use of English in the professional world in Hong Kong, Evans (2010) shows a clear functional differentiation between English and Cantonese in written and spoken communication in an international business profession, where English functions as the principal language of documentation while Cantonese is usually used in oral communication particularly in meetings and discussions (see also Hill & Zyl, 2002 for English and multilingualism in the South African engineering workplace). Indeed, this study further reveals that documentation is one of the vital reasons for using English in an international business context and it is not exceptional for the RMG global trade. The vast use of English necessitates the need for RMG professionals with sound written communication skills, as will be discussed in chapter six. I will now describe another reason for using English in this business sector.

4.2.3 English for communication practicalities

Approximately half of the total participants described certain unique advantages in using English in the RMG business sector. One of the striking opportunities that

participants pointed out was close relations between English and technology, which they believed accelerated communication. They reported that their communication was heavily dominated by computer technology whereas English was used as a key language. All their e-mail correspondence, typing and browsing depended on English language. As Monir, a director, said,

...communication in the RMG sector fully depends on computer, internet and e-mail where language is English. ... Hence English is the most important language everywhere in the ready-made garment's sector.

Business communication literature also supports the idea that today's international business workplace largely depends on computer-mediated communication. The advancement of communication technology, especially computer and Internet technology throughout society, has brought about a great revolution and profound change in today's workplace communication, particularly in business communication settings (Gains, 1999; Kirkgoz, 2010) where English is used as a business *lingua franca* (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2003; Nickerson, 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2006). E-mail is now essential (Munter et al., 2003), dominant (Kiang, 2003) and a preferred channel (Habil, 2010) of communication in the business workplace where English is used as the main language.

In addition, participants further observed that it was easier to use English with communication technology than other languages, particularly Bangla. As such, perceptions of participants demonstrate a comparative analysis between English and Bangla in relation to technological support. Dulal, a marketing person, who was one of the most experienced participants in this study, for instance, contended that the use of English was more advantageous than using Bangla. Correspondingly, some merchandising personnel also acknowledged the usefulness of English over Bangla as

Ripon, a senior merchandiser argued, “*English is much easier than Bangla to write down with keyboard*”. Participants perceived that in comparison with English language, Bangla was quite complicated to write on a computer and time consuming. To them, Bangla was not so user-friendly in relation to technology and was not as well accepted internationally as English (see further discussion on Bangla in relation to English in section 4.4). That is why Bangladeshi RMG professionals were not so interested in being skilled in writing in Bangla on the computer. Instead, they were more skilled in writing in English. Moreover, analysis of interview data further reveals that computer technology provided little support for sending e-mails in Bangla. Shibly, a director, who was also a professor in business at a renowned university, simultaneously with his RMG trade, described the advantages of English over Bangla in technology-based business communication:

Normally we use Bangla to communicate with our employees orally but in case of e-mails or letters we use English with them. We could use Bangla in e-mail corresponding internally, but our typing problem that is our employees are not used to use Bangla in typing. That’s why we take advantage of using English in corresponding. In some cases we send cc our internal documents to our foreign buyers and internal staffs. As the documents are in English, we can easily send our same documents internally and externally. So we get advantage in both internal and external written communications in English. If it was in Bangla then we had to make another carbon copy in English to send it to our foreign buyers. This could make difficulty in our work. Now both internal and external people can understand easily as a result of using English.

In the above statement, Shibly, who was highly educated among participants prioritised, glorified and normalised English language over Bangla in technology-based communication, particularly in e-mail communication, even at the cost of stigmatising

Bangla. He also viewed the use of English in e-mail communication as normal practice. However, in an earlier statement (see section 4.2.1) Shibly described the use of English as a kind of compulsion. Consequently, his statements seem somewhat inconsistent. In order to make sense of these different views, in this instance I have been drawn to discussions of the hegemonic power of English in technology as well as global business markets that create inequality in languages, as Phillipson (1992, 2012) discussed earlier (see section 2.2). Phillipson's views of linguistic imperialism as involving linguisticism – favouring one language over another, ideological – belief, attitudes and imagery, glorifying the dominant language and stigmatizing the other, and the hegemonic – internalised and naturalised as being 'normal. At the same time, the cultural politics of English ensures that the hegemonic power of English influences people of other languages, culturally and psychologically, to employ English language due to its technological advantage. It is one kind of cultural neo-colonisation (Pennycook, 2007). A closer look at Shibly's two statements suggests that whether we like it or not, the necessity of English in any international business communication is a *given* and we cannot deny or resist it.

Additionally, participants further reported that in this sector, there were many English technical terms, jargon and abbreviations used that were seen as further technology related incentives to use English in this sector (see detailed discussion on RMG technical terms in chapter five, section 5.4.2, and a list of these terms in Appendix 4). According to participants, it was quite difficult to compose such English terms on the computer in other languages, particularly in Bangla. If anyone wanted to compose those English terms in Bangla, it was relatively complicated on a computer. Moreover, it was problematic to identify the proper Bangla equivalent of English technical terms and abbreviations used in the RMG business. In this regard, Saidul, a director, who had

an English literature background from a reputed university overseas and later acquired an MBA qualification from a private university in Bangladesh, pointed out that “*Bangla words of those terms are not that much easy or nice to listen as English words*”. Giving examples, he said that if anyone tried to translate the words “knitting” “dyeing” “finishing” into Bangla, it would likely not be familiar and acceptable to the RMG professionals and would not sound right, “*So ultimately English comes there*”. Like many other world languages, in the context of Bangla, it is not uncommon for a limitation in English equivalents to Bangla words. If there is, some of those seem unusual, for instance, ‘belt’, ‘tray’ ‘table’ and so forth do not have well-known Bangla equivalents. Consequently, Bangla has embraced many English terms into this language, not only from English, but also from other world languages.

The above findings are consistent with those of Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), who point out that business professionals working in Finland-based globally operating companies used English terms or jargon instead of their mother tongue, because either they were more easily expressed in English in their mind than in their mother tongue, or because there were no equivalent terms in their mother tongue. In contrast to earlier findings in the literature, however, there were also different scenarios in the RMG industry in Bangladesh that several participants raised. They revealed that in some circumstances, Bangla was used for computer generated communications, in spite of the recognition that the language was less technology friendly. Indeed, over time Bangla has become more user-friendly. And the technology has been developed accordingly for internal communication, particularly with production workers (and other service labours), where computer-written Bangla is widely used for different notifications.

The above discussions on communicative practicalities suggest that in technology based communication, English is helpful and convenient and motivates RMG personnel to use English in their sector. Moreover, at the same time, the hi-tech underpinning of working practice also prevents people from using Bangla, because it is not as technology friendly and supportive as English is worldwide. Not surprisingly, this use of English due to technological backing is playing an influential role in spreading English in the business world. These findings correlate with the argument presented in the literature chapter (see section 2.2): that the spread of English is associated with technological advancement (see, e.g. Ferguson, 1983; House, 2002). In addition, contemporary research also shows that English has advantages over other languages (see Hurn, 2009; Selmier Ii & Oh, 2012). In comparison among four trade languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic), Selmier Ii and Oh (2012) identify that English has the largest advantages in relative importance of each trade language in international business activities. Technological expansion, therefore works as a prominent pull factor for the use of English in the business world. Such domination of English as a lingua franca in the business world at the cost of other languages is considered as linguistic genocide, which motivated some scholars to label English as a big ‘killer language’ (Pakir, 1991; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

On the whole, in light of the above discussions about the importance of English and the reasons for using English in the RMG sector, it can be said that English is certainly an indispensable language in the RMG business sector for all types of communication, documentation, technical and technological practicalities, both spoken and written. In addition, the increasing adoption or embracing of technology has necessitated a greater use of English. Although participants gave many reasons for the importance and use of English in the RMG sector, their many voices express similar

perceptions, but their way of expressing these are different. To summarise, it can be said that RMG trade is an international business where customers are foreigners who cannot understand and speak the local language, Bangla. For communication with foreigners, RMG personnel, whether working locally or internationally, have chosen English as a preferable medium of communication, because it is globally understood and well accepted. In addition, documentation practices in English for mutual understanding and terminological dependency on English have further necessitated English usage in this sector. In addition, the limitation of Bangla in communication technology promotes English language use.

While participants' views indicate that English is an essential language in the RMG business industry for communication, documentation and when using new communication technologies, a further issue that emerged was that English may not be equally used in both spoken and written communication. To understand the degree of English language use in both spoken and written contexts, I asked participants to what extent is English used in the RMG sector in spoken and written communication. The findings are discussed in the following section.

4.2.4 Extent of English language used in the RMG sector

The aim of asking this question was to understand the general trends of English use in both spoken and written contexts, rather than looking for exact values. It is notable here that during interviews I observed that participants had a common tendency to quantify, with different degrees of conviction, their statements which is a common cultural aspect in this corporate business. It is seen above that participants reported "100%" use of English in this sector that indicates the highest importance of English: 100% is business jargon which is frequently used in this sector to measure the amount

of cotton or polyester. Even, during interviews, a number of the participants used this numeric term frequently. Accordingly, in interview, given a table with a five-point scale, I posed a question in order to understand how they quantified the use of English in spoken and written contexts in the RMG business. I acknowledge that while it is difficult to make a distinction between the categories, it would give the general trend of English language use in both spoken and written contexts. In other words, the quantifiable options gave the participants a clearer choice, , even though their answers would not be numerically or mathematically accurate. It was, however, done as a practical step to ensure a greater degree of clarity and understanding of meaning from participants. The findings are shown in the following table.

Table 4.1: Extent of English language use

Area of professionals in RMG	Very much (More than 80%)		Much (Between 60% and 80%)		Significantly (Between 30% and 60%)		Minimally (Less than 30%)		Not at all		Total
	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	
Marketing	11	11	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	15
Merchandising	6	11	10	2	1	2	2	-	-	-	17
Commercial	5	11	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	11
Total	22	33	14	4	5	4	4	-	-	-	43

The above table shows that different groups of RMG personnel have diverse opinions about the use of English language in both spoken and written forms. Most of the marketing personnel reported that spoken and written forms are similarly ‘very much’ used in the RMG industry, while the majority of merchandisers claimed that English is ‘very much’ used in written rather than spoken contexts. The commercial personnel expressed the view that English is used both in spoken and written communication, but within that, their main work role focus is much more on written than spoken usage.

These data suggest there is a huge difference in perceptions between the three groups of participants about the use of English in spoken and written communication in the RMG business sector. These different perceptions are associated with differences in their positional roles and job responsibilities. As marketing people are equally involved in spoken and written communication, they equally reported that English was “very much” used in both mediums. On the other hand, commercial personnel are much more involved in written than spoken communication and consequently they considered English was used more frequently in written than spoken contexts. Similarly, merchandisers are engaged more in written communication and hence they believed English was used more in written communication. This finding is parallel with the findings of a previous study conducted by So-mui and Mead (2000) in textile and clothing merchandising in Hong Kong. They show that English is extensively used in both spoken and written communication but it is used more frequently in the written context (see also Evans, 2010). This finding suggests which skill(s) (spoken or written or both) needs to be emphasised in professional communication and this largely depends on the professionals’ roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, when employers

recruit professionals, they need to consider the role and job responsibilities and to employ business professionals accordingly, considering their skills.

Skills are something people can use and therefore would be desired when recruiting and selecting people for entry or promotion – it is part of people's human capital as well as cultural capital and can increase their economic capital. As discussed in the literature chapter (see section 2.2), language can be regarded as a capital which is called 'linguistic capital' (see Bourdieu, 1986, 1991; Cameron, 2005; Dhir & Savage, 2002; Loos, 2000; Morrison & Lui, 2000; Silver, 2005). Bourdieu presents the forms of capital in three fundamental categories: *economic capital* (immediately and directly convertible capital into money or material wealth); *cultural capital* (the accumulated knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions which is not directly convertible into economic capital but convertible on certain condition); and finally, *social capital* (social obligations). Bourdieu further added *symbolic capital* which indicates accumulated prestige or honour. As the overall discussions indicate that English, both spoken and written, is highly valuable in every context of the RMG business, I was curious to infer whether or not participants considered English as a capital, and if yes/no, what their explanations were. The following section discusses the views of participants as to whether and how they considered English language as capital.

4.3 English language as capital? “More languages, more capital”

While participants were describing the importance of English communication skill for the RMG industry, I asked participants whether or not they acknowledged English language as a form of capital. In response, about half of the participants (20) from the participating three groups of RMG professionals expressed their strong acceptance that English language was capital and they used different phrases for their stance such as “of course”, “certainly”, “I do agree”, “absolutely”, “definitely” and

“obvious”. For example, among these participants, Arif, a director in a woven textile industry argued, “*Yes certainly English is a capital*”. However, two participants, who were commercial personnel, used other words, for instance, “asset” and “resource”, to indicate the value of English as capital.

In relation to English as capital, a marketing person (Yakub) pointed out three important aspects that were assumed to bring success to the RMG business. Among these traits were English communication skills. As he said, “*There are three things that work as capital in this business – communication skills, quality of the product and commitment*”. Participants also further offered reasons for considering English language as capital. All are specifically instrumental. The reasons proffered by the participants can be categorised into two subthemes. The first discusses more personal aspects of the role of English in one’s career development, while the second subtheme focuses on the contribution of English to organisational advancement as a whole, beyond personal advancement. The ensuing subsection discusses these subthemes in detail.

Not only English, but also any language proficiency is capital, as argued by some participants, who were merchandising personnel. They contended that in addition to English, some of the business organisations encouraged their employees to learn other languages, especially French and Chinese. According to them, some French buyers did not know English well and communicated in French. Consequently, they reported that some buying houses recruited some people who knew French. They observed that in communication with a counterpart, the language of the counterpart was more effective in building rapport. For example, if a Bangladeshi counterpart communicates with a French counterpart in French that will be more effective in bridging a bond with a French customer than speaking in English or a third language. It does not mean that English is not used in the French business; rather English is also

used along with French. Similarly, it was reported that employees who knew Chinese in addition to English were in extra demand in a corporation that had dealings with China. In this regard, some of the participants expressed their interest in learning Mandarin. They believed that not only English, but also any foreign language was capital or even ‘more languages, more capital’. This finding is in agreement with the study of Ehrenreich (2010), who observes additional foreign languages are an asset, particularly in customer relationships in a country like China or Japan or Russia, where a national or local language rather than English is expected by business counterparts. I will now explore how participants perceive English as capital at individual and organisational levels.

4.3.1 English for career development

Analysis of data reveals that English language was considered as capital for its importance in a career trajectory. Participants argued that English language proficiency played an important role in getting a job and/or better position. To them, people who had a sound level of English language skill were able to get a good job. Marketing personnel explained the role of English in employment from employers’ perspectives as they were engaged in recruiting employees. Nayeem, for instance, a director in a woven textile industry with experience in this industry, described how English language played an important role in getting a job and functioned as capital. He presented a scenario of two job chasers and noted, *“Among two job seekers, for example, one can explain a matter in English but another one cannot. Isn’t language a capital for the first one?”* The view expressed by Nayeem indicates that English language proficiency greatly supports a job seeker to face the challenges in a job interview, respond to questions of interviewers, and self-manage their career to obtain a good job in competitive situations. A similar view was expressed by another marketing person (Rumana), who contended,

“It [English] is obviously a capital for anyone. Person, who knows English well, can communicate easily and can get a better position than who does not know English well”.

Through the above comments, both participants indicated that the ability to communicate with interviewers in interview was a key employability skill in winning a job. Sound skills in English played an important role for a job seeker to communicate easily with interviewers in an interview board. Evidence of English skills helped a person to be hired by a prospective employer with a better position. Over the last two decades it has become an increasingly common trend in renowned private organisations to conduct interviews for prospective employees in English. Through conducting interviews in English, employers try to assess the communication skills of candidates. Usually candidates with sound English communication ability receive priority in getting the advertised job, if the other required qualifications are satisfactory.

In addition to getting a job and a better position, analysis further reveals that English language also played a striking role in securing a good salary in an employment market, especially in the RMG sector. This was also another reason why participants regarded English as a capital. Participants (three) argued that one of the important factors of getting a good job was competency in English language. One contended that *“people, who know English, get handsome salary”*. The meaning being conveyed here through the phrase “know English” was that competence in English influences employers to offer or increase the salary of an employee who had high proficiency in English. Mosharraf, a senior merchandiser, who had several jobs within the RMG sector considered English as “money”. He said: *“English can give you a good job, you can earn more money, can get handsome salary. English is your money”*. Consequently, the findings suggested that English language proficiency and career success were interlinked.

This finding corroborates a plethora of previous works over the last two decades in the field of English and employment in different country contexts (see Dustmann & Fabbr, 2003; Erling, Seargeant, Solly, Chowdhury, & Rahman, 2012; Kossoudji, 1988; Rivera-Batiz, 1990; Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013; Shields & Price, 2002; Tainer, 1988). Dustmann and Fabbr (2003) study, for example, shows a positive relationship between language proficiency and employment probabilities. Their study suggests that English language proficiency is a determinant factor for non-white migrants in the UK to get a job.

Additionally, participants also revealed the reason for getting an increased salary in their job for having good levels of English. Ajgor, a senior merchandiser, was very energetic and supportive, also provided the longest interview, and pronounced that if people knew English well and communicated well with buyers, these practices helped with promotion and salary increases. Ajgor, in fact, indicated that sound knowledge and skills in English not only helped in getting a higher salary or earnings (see, e.g. Casale & Posel, 2011; B. Chiswick & Miller, 2010; B. R. Chiswick & Miller, 1995; Dustmann, 1994; Shields & Price, 2002; Tainer, 1988), but also helped to be promoted in a career. Considering instrumental outcomes of English in professions, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) consider English as a career development tool.

On the downside, lack of required English skills worked as a barrier to promotion. The literature also suggests there are costs to English language deficiency in jobs and occupations (see, Kossoudji, 1988). One of the participants, Arif, who was a director in a woven textile industry, and had more than a decade of RMG business experience, described his sadness at not being able to promote one of his employees who was skilled and experienced in the garment's workplace, but was not so skilled in English, which acted as a main hindrance to promotion. Arif noted:

Yes certainly English is a capital. For an example, we didn't give promotion to one of our vital employees, only reason was that, although he had long experience in production, he was not good in English. We knew that he was not able to speak with business counterparts in English. If we sent him to Hong Kong to talk to our business counterparts, we had to send interpreters along with him to meet buyers. If a buyer understands that to who he is talking cannot speak English, needs an interpreter, it is waste of time and irritating that we cannot do.

The above comment may have several possible explanations. One salient explanation could be the indication of both economic as well as social values of English language. Regarding economic value, it can be said that if the owner sends an employee, who is incompetent in English, along with an interpreter to support staff to explain an issue to a Hong Kong counterpart, it has economic costs – to pay for an interpreter. On the other hand, there is also the value of the business relationship, which is a form of social capital. That is why the owner did not want to hamper such business rapport, irritating his business counterparts by sending an interpreter as additional support. It seems he not only considered a human resource for whom he needed to pay, but also the quality of rapport. The owner was concerned with the quality of relationships rather than economic cost (i.e. paying for an interpreter). He considered the social value of English as a form of bond. Moreover, it was also a matter of image and prestige for a company that is arguably part of Bourdieu's symbolic capital. From the relational perspective (e.g. Fukuyama, 1995; R. Putnam, 1993), social capital is potentially beneficial for social actors. Relational benefits rely on the nature of social ties demonstrated through belief and attitudes that include trust, norms, identity and identification among other attributes (Kostova & Roth, 2003). Social relationships drive 'positive and cooperative behaviour' and create a psychological environment conducive to collaboration and mutual support (Kostova & Roth, 2003).

In addition, one of the most experienced commercial participants, Sayeed, who worked in a mid-career position in his industry, and who had switched experience in jobs, deemed English as a capital from another point of view connected to employment. He argued that English language skill was an asset in a business, and this asset was embedded and set in a person, and it helped a person to work and communicate anywhere. To him, if a person with good proficiency in English switched to a new job, he would get support from his language proficiency in his new job as well. He indicated that English language proficiency builds up confidence and skill in a person and so a person does not face as many challenges in switching to a new job and using his acquired skills. The comments of this participant relate to the notion of human capital. Language skill is a form of human capital (Cameron, 2005) but it is a *mobile* capital. The mobility or portability of English as capital makes it even more versatile in the workplace, unlike material position or physical infrastructure.

Moreover, English is capital because it helps in any workplace. It develops or increases economic capital. Anwar, a very young commercial executive worked in a senior level position in his office. He observed that “[In the] RMG [sector], most of the works are in English, and if my English is good, I can do all works with my English. In this sense, it is my capital”. Similarly understanding is found in Shajahan, who was a commercial manager and had more than 16 years’ experience in the RMG business believed:

Yes, it is a capital and an asset. For example, if I am an owner of this business and I am not skilled in English. In that case, I have to employ a skilled person. However, if I were skilled in English, I did not need to employ this skilled employee. I can do his work and so I can save money. In this sense English is a capital.

The views Shajahan expressed show that English is capital because it can save money without hiring an employee. English, however, not only saves money but also saves time, but how? One of the merchandisers, Mahfuz, who worked in a senior level position in a knitwear industry said: *“If somebody knows English well, he can do all works himself. It saves his time”*. Mahfuz meant that hiring an employee is time consuming. To recruit an employee, a company needs to go through a formal recruiting process by placing an advertisement, conducting interviews, appointing an employee, explaining tasks and providing training and so forth. Self-service with proficiency in English may help in avoiding time spent on the process of hiring an employee. The ability of saving time with English language skills is also considered as capital. In other words, it can be said that the employer regards those with English skills as being able to do both the jobs of the professional (buying selling, etc.) and with people in many contexts, so that interpreters are not needed.

While participants were describing the economic value of English language, one from the marketing professional position, however, reported rather surprisingly a negative impact of English language skills, as he observed in the RMG corporate in Bangladesh. He informed me that an employee who knew English well could sometimes be harmful for the RMG industry, particularly for the owner of an industry. He pointed out that occasionally a “smart employee” with sound communication skills in English established a self-owned, new RMG industry, “snatching away” some customers from the industry where he was an employee. Such malpractice was considered as the negative side of having good English language skills as an employee. Consequently, he further reported that some industries did not recruit “over smart” employees with good language skills. In this respect, it is worthwhile to note that among the participating directors/owners of this study, some emerged as owners from

previously working as employees. First, they gained experience, and they then established an industry. But it is not certain that any of the participating directors/owners in this study started snatching business away from customers from the previous industry. This is an unusual finding that has not so far been described in the literature or explored in any study, to my knowledge

Despite a little negative notion about the negative use of English language skills, from the views of the participants it seems that English language skills have a highly positive correlation with employment, better salary, promotion, and saving time and money. That is why participants considered English language as a capital. The next section of this chapter discusses how participants considered English language as a capital that is associated with organisational advancement.

4.3.2 English for organisational promotion. As stated in the previous section, organisational factors in considering English as capital is associated with organisational promotion of a corporation. As English is the main medium of communication in the RMG international business, it is seen as one sort of wealth in this business as argued by a number (nine) of the participants across all three groups of professionals and with different levels of experience. Participants, particularly marketing professionals, argued that communication in English was vital in the RMG sector because without communication and correspondence in English, this business was not possible. The merits and demerits of this business largely depended on communication in English. This finding indicates that if a business professional has good English, it may strongly support the advancement of this business by exploring markets. Deficiency in English, nonetheless, may hamper the development of the business by not being able to cope with the needs of the market. Consequently, English language works as both a supporter and barrier for advancement of business. A young

merchandiser (Ripon) viewed English as a form of asset, focusing on organisational communication and presentation of products in an international market. He described:

Of course a capital, world and private sector are running on English. If you have good language skills, you can present your product in the market well; can draw the attention of customers. Therefore, language is very important. The total process is proactive where language plays an important role.

Two other merchandising participants contended that communication skills in English were significant capital for an organisation, as it played a decisive role in convincing buyers and getting orders from them, and such orders brought money from abroad as remittance. They further treated English language as a commodity in the sense that by exporting commodities –Bangladesh received remittance. Similarly, by exporting garments by convincing buyers with *English*, Bangladesh earns foreign currency. In this sense, they considered English language as a commodity in the RMG business, similar to Cameron’s (2005) observation about English as a commodity in call centres in India.

One unanticipated finding was to see English as an asset from the point of view of sustainability. A general manager (Harun), who had the most experience in a single industry, exemplified how English language plays a role in the survival of an organisation. He portrayed past dealings in the garments’ sector in Bangladesh and discussed that, in the past, many owners of garments’ industries did not know English well. In such circumstances, buyers themselves used to come to this country and purchased garment, preparing all the paperwork themselves. He observed that many of those older companies were no longer in business in the industry due to their lack of English communication. Describing this history, he contended that “*English was a*

capital but not fully capital". He indicated that without English, people might run international businesses, but not for long. According to him, to sustain an international business market, it was necessary to know English well and have to have the ability to communicate in English.

Finally, English was seen as capital because it created and developed human resources. A few participants believed that people who knew English were in high demand in this corporate sector. That is why they assumed that globally people had a tendency to learn English. A marketing person (Ershad) argued that the RMG was a large and booming sector, where gradually the amount of orders increased and the industry was flourishing. To him, it was quite difficult to run this big industry with interpreters. That is why he believed more people were learning English and preparing themselves for corporate needs.

In summary, most participants regardless of their positions in the RMG corporate were in agreement in evaluating English language as capital for its economic and social values. The economic importance of English creates and helps to maintain material wealth including money, property, job, salary, promotion, sustainability of an industry and human resources. In addition, English has social importance in maintaining quality relationships. As a consequence, English as well as any language which meets a demand in a business market is considered to be linguistic capital. As stated in the literature chapter, House (2012) considers using English as a lingua franca for its highest economic value, which she termed 'linguistic capital' (p. 174).

4.4 Place of other languages in relation to English: “We just use Bangla while communicating with local people”

While English is predominantly used as a language of RMG business, does it mean that other languages, including local languages, are not used in the RMG business context? In other words, do other languages disappear from use in the RMG sector? To answer this query, it is necessary to look at the data collected from interviews and field observations (see also section 4.3). From the interview data, a mixed response was received from participants. Several (eight) reported that the local language – Bangla – was not used in the RMG business industry. To express their views, they noted different expressions, such as “*There is no scope of using Bangla or any other languages here*”, “*Here no work is done in Bangla*”, “*Bangla is not used here*”. Interestingly, no marketing person reported that they did not use Bangla in the RMG business setting, but in practice they did use Bangla, a practice that I observed in field observation. Nearly one-third of the total participants from three groups of personnel, however, informed me that they used Bangla in the RMG business context along with English. Even occasionally, to some extent, Hindi was also used with Indian partners. As one merchandising person (Ripon) remarked, “*We just use Bangla while communicating with local people*”.

The finding about the use of local languages suggests there are differences in opinion among participants about whether Bangla ‘is used or not used’ in the RMG industry, and perhaps some participants were ambivalent about admitting using Bangla. The participants, who reported that Bangla was not used in their RMG business context, might work in a foreign owned RMG industry where colleagues along with customers were international. This explains why they did not have any scope to use Bangla in their business contexts. For example, Ahsan, who was a merchandising manager, worked for

a foreign company but his local office was based in Dhaka. His direct dealings were with international buyers or/and buyer representatives on the one hand, and with his foreign director on the other. Thus, he did not have a choice to use Bangla in his business workplace. The indication of participants' willingness and opportunities for using their first language by no means corresponded to the relative information that they individually attached to English. In fact, it had more to do with management, the ownership of the company, rather than how important they thought English was. Another important reason could be that they only considered international communication with foreigners, where there was no room for Bangla. At the same time, they ignored totally the local communication with colleagues and local representatives of foreign buyers when responding to my questions.

Nevertheless, the participants who claimed that Bangla also was used synchronously with English in the RMG sector possibly looked at communication both with in-house colleagues and local representatives of foreign buyers simultaneously with international communication. They reported that their use of Bangla was exclusively limited to oral communication with their Bangla speaking office mates, or with factory workers or Bangla speaking local representatives of buyers rather than written communication. My observation also revealed that RMG professionals used Bangla along with English. When they talked to foreigners they used English. However, they used Bangla when they spoke to Bengalees. However, written communication (e.g. e-mails, letters, documents) are always in English. Language use is thus dependent on context. This finding is in line with previous research in different country contexts that show that in an international business, concurrently with English as a primary language, other languages including local language are used (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). As Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) argue, in an

international business, internal communication takes the place of English while other languages are highly setting based. These researchers show that with local people, business professionals use native languages, while English is used in an international communication rather than the mother tongue.

Studies also show that in international business contexts, along with English, business personnel use their mother tongue for in-house oral communication rather than written communication (see Erling & Walton, 2007; Evans, 2010; Pang, Zhou, & Fu, 2000). In an investigation into written and spoken professional communication in key industries in Hong Kong, Evans (2010) observed that while English functions as a medium of written communication, Cantonese continues as the typical language of spoken communication.

Further, a small number of participants described that they sometimes used Hindi, to some extent, concurrently with English with their Indian business counterparts. Such use of Hindi as a means of communication provided feelings of being closer to each other than with their other international counterparts. These participants added that they acquired Hindi watching Bollywood movies and Hindi television serials, rather than studying in an education institution. This finding indicates that speaking in partners' languages enhances closeness and builds rapport. That is why a few participants expressed their interest to learn Mandarin. They reported that as they were very frequently in contact with Chinese partners, if they learned their counterparts' language, it would give them a sense of familiarisation. This finding is parallel with a study conducted by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012), who identified a global operating organisation where participants highlighted the significance of learning a third language that would be the partners' language. On the one hand, it would open doors to

new cultures; on the other hand, it would create rapport with communication partners (p. 266) (see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Based on this finding, I argue that in a global business setting, particularly in a NNE country, at least two languages are used: one is the mother tongue with local people; the other is shared language with foreigners. BELF literature also shows that the professionals of global operating business corporations need two languages for their work: one is their mother tongue and the other is English (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). The simultaneous use of two or more languages and the switching between other languages and English is quite compatible with English. As noted: ‘Although English is clearly the dominant language in international business, other languages do not disappear from the business scene but interact with English in many ways’ (Ehrenreich, 2010, p. 411).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has so far discussed the prominence of English in the RMG sector. It was found that like many other international businesses, by default English has become the primary, shared contact language for communication with both native and non-native speakers of English. It is used in both spoken and written communication in different contexts and activities in the RMG sector in Bangladesh along with the use of Bangla in the local context, particularly in oral communication. The necessity of English in the RMG industry is beyond dispute for several functional reasons, which are inevitable. Nobody debates the beneficial role of English any more but the question remains – for whose benefit? Despite some controversy, it appears that English is beneficial for both buyers and sellers, local and international groups of people. It does not matter whether professionals use this communication tool willingly or are being

forced to use English in context. It is also not an issue for these RMG personnel to be able to name this use of English, when it is used in communication both within and across countries, using the terminology of the academic community. Its function is understood by the RMG personnel to mainly serve the industry, that is, to ensure effective communication and make a profit. The beneficial role of English for an individual's career development and organisational advancement provokes RMG professionals to regard English as capital. Not only English, but any language which is in demand in the business market is viewed as capital.

One of the possible conclusions from this chapter is that the widespread use and acceptance of English in the RMG business reconfirms that the dominance of English in a global business is becoming more prominent, even in a non-English speaking country such as Bangladesh. When a business crosses borders, English usually becomes necessary. Even within a country, the hidden global pressure drives the use of English in corporate business. As seen in the literature, the global spread of English is associated with that of business (see section 2.2). It may happen in different directions, for example, from the centre of English to the periphery (i.e. from an English speaking country to a non-English speaking country), or periphery to the centre (i.e. a non-English speaking country to an English speaking country). It may even happen from one periphery to another. The voices of these RMG personnel indicate there is little space for their businesses to depart from the hegemonic power of English. Therefore, it is better if we embrace English, both academically and professionally, and develop our skills accordingly in order to achieve our communicative goals at both global and local levels.

While participants described the significance of English in the RMG industry, I asked them about what spoken and written communication skills in English, in

particular, they considered necessary for effective communication in this sector. In response, participants reported a wide range of skills presumed indispensable for spoken and written communication. These skills have been classified into five broad themes: *English linguistic skills, multicultural skills, pragmatic skills, discourse skills, and professional skills*. These skills have been discussed thematically in subsequent chapters. I will now turn to English linguistic skills.

Chapter Five

Communicating in the workplace: Linguistic competences that matter

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the ways in which English has become the predominant language used in the RMG international business setting. English is seen as critical to the work of professional personnel in RMG international business communication; but in order to inform educators' understandings of how English is used and what forms are needed in the workplace, this chapter discusses specific English linguistic skills that RMG personnel perceive as essential communication tools for effective dealings in global business. Here, linguistics skills refer to Chomsky's (1965) *linguistic competence* and Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) *grammatical competence* as discussed in chapter two. In that chapter I argued that linguistic skills underpin the code of language (verbal or nonverbal), and comprise knowledge of vocabulary, rules of word and sentence formation, linguistic semantics, pronunciation and spelling.

The findings presented in this chapter are mainly based on interviews, and e-mail analysis as supporting evidence. The chapter discusses different elements of English linguistic skills. It begins with participants' perceptions of the need for fluency. Then it describes the necessity of grammatical skills in both spoken and written communication, as perceived by participants, followed by the need for vocabulary, pronunciation and accents. Subsequently, the chapter discusses listening and reading skills.

5.2 Fluency: “Yes, they must have fluency”

The bulk of literature on language learning shows the importance of fluency seen as an essential skill in communication (see Ciortescu, 2012). Beamer (1992) considers fluency as invaluable. It provides extra motivation to gain competitive advantage in an international business sense (see Hurn, 2009). In the current study, fluency is the most frequently reported skill that nearly all participants, regardless of the type of work role undertaken by the three groups of the RMG professionals, and perceived to be necessary for oral communication. To demonstrate their focus on the importance of fluency in speaking, participants used different, empathetic words (i.e. “must”, “must be”, “should have”, “have to have”, “should be”, and “have to be”). For instance, a marketing person (Saidul), owner of a RMG business, expressed his strong opinion about the need for fluency in speaking in RMG business communication saying, “*Yes, they must have fluency*”. Why does fluency matter, what level of fluency is required, does knowledge of English mean fluency in English, and do all RMG personnel need fluency at every stage of their career? These were different aspects related to fluency that were raised by participants that could give a comprehensive understanding of the place of this skill in RMG business communication. Detailed discussion of the above aspects of fluency is exemplified in the following four subsections.

5.2.1 Why does fluency matter? In explaining the need for fluency, participants showed different reasons (i.e. fluency is supportive for customer dealings, expressing ideas and intelligibility of speakers’ voice). Moreover, fluency is also helpful for comfortable communication, and direct communication with customers. In addition, it is an indicator of the level of proficiency that plays an invaluable role in developing a career path. How does fluency influence personnel in their dealings with customers and

in developing their ability to express? Two marketing professionals observed that fluency was instrumental in business negotiations and it positively mobilised business discussions. To them, convincing buyers required fluency, and they indicated that a high level of fluency increased the level of confidence of speakers to manage their customers, and accordingly manifested in negotiations and persuasion. It is seen in the research literature that in business negotiations fluency is needed. Describing a framework for cross-cultural understanding in a business setting in China, Osland (1990) argued that fluency in corporate language is required in negotiations. Simultaneously, playing a role in dealing with customers, particularly in negotiations and persuasion, fluency was perceived as a support tool to express ideas that personnel had. A marketing person (Nayeem), with experience in RMG business communication, contended that people who were able to speak English fluently could convey and explain messages to buyers spontaneously and eloquently. As he observed, fluent people did not hesitate (see Nation, 1989) to express what was on their mind; instead, they felt ease or smoothness in delivery of speech.

Like marketing professionals, merchandising and commercial personnel also explained the need for fluency from the point of business communication. They argued that fluency was good for “easy understanding” in conversation. If a speaker was fluent, it helped his/her interlocutors to understand the message easily and clearly, without any interruption. Moreover, it ensured it was “comfortable” to continue conversations between interlocutors. Research shows a relationship between fluency and intelligibility (see Pickett & Pollack, 1963). A further necessity for fluency that merchandising personnel reported was that fluency could be a marker for concealing the grammatical mistakes of a speaker. As Ahasn, who served as a merchandising person in a foreign-owned buying house, observed: “...*I work with many professionals from English*

speaking countries, they also make grammatical mistakes but not much. However, their mistakes are covered by their fluency...”

Additionally, fluency is perceived as a powerful tool that indicates the degree of proficiency of a speaker. If the fluency level is high, it indicates a high level of oral proficiency, as perceived by some commercial staff. Research literature also shows that ‘fluency is the true definition of mastery or competence’ (Binder, 2003, p. 19). Moreover, considering the increasing “direct” communication, some commercial staff also stressed the importance of fluency. As previously pointed out (see section 4.2.1), over time the RMG business was involved in more direct communication with buyers. There were no more middlemen in between buyers and sellers as there had been before. Thus to communicate with buyers directly, “complete fluency is needed” (Anwar).

However, what happens if people do not have a “complete level” of fluency? Is this problematic? It was perceived that lack of fluency worked as a barrier to express a message “spontaneously” and “comfortably”. Two merchandisers (Mahfuz and Mredul) who had different levels of experience, observed the consequence of lack of fluency. While one was an experienced merchandiser, another one was relatively a novice. Yet, both unanimously described there were many RMG professionals in the industry who knew many things about garments but they did not have fluency which worked as a barrier to expressing their ideas well. In such a situation, they accepted the help of their colleagues to communicate with partners and they themselves became passive to avoid situations. Previous studies also show the negative impact of lack of fluency. As Babcock and Du-Babcock (2001) state, ‘...lower proficiency speakers use avoidance strategies to face issues as well as a lack of fluency’ (p.378). In the current study a similar finding was reflected in the perceptions of participants, particularly in merchandising personnel. Another study by Welch, Welch, and Piekkari (2005)

revealed that lack of fluency in the common corporate language (English) prevented its professionals from participating in different corporate programs (i.e. meetings, training). Accordingly, the lack of fluency was seen in this study as an obstacle to communication in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. It is a major barrier for communication rather than being supportive (Schrage, 2001). Thus, the RMG sector requires this powerful skill from its professionals for effective business communication.

One of the limitations with the above explanation is that it does not explain what level of fluency is required for successful communication. Whether it should be high or average depends on context and this is discussed in the following section.

5.2.2 The required level of fluency depends on buyers. As seen in the literature review (see section 2.4.2), ELF speakers do not have the same level of proficiency (fluency) because they come from different linguacultural backgrounds (see House, 2012). While some have high levels of fluency, some have lower levels of fluency. Nevertheless, for communicating effectively in a global business, the level of fluency is necessary and has become a crucial issue that needs to be resolved. Earlier in this chapter, one of the commercial participants (Anwar), called u for “complete fluency” for RMG professionals to communicate with customers in the RMG sector, while another merchandising participant (Ahsan) demanded a “good level of fluency”. The notions of both participants suggest a high level of competence as fluency. However, they did not fully explain these components of “complete” or “good level” of fluency. Instead, it is rather slippery and relative – varying from person to person and context to context. Does RMG business communication really require a good or complete level of fluency? What do others say?

The notion of having a good or complete level of fluency, nonetheless, was challenged by two highly experienced commercial personnel (Kamrul and Shariar), who observed that it was not necessary to be fluent in English. Instead, they discussed the level of fluency as being enough ‘to get the job done’ – neither high nor low. They in fact, suggested having a working level of fluency that is intelligible to interlocutors. This finding is supported by BELF literature where it is demonstrated that in an international business communication the main focus is to get the job done (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010) rather than to be highly proficient (fluent) in English. Here, to get the job done means to negotiate deals, manage orders, contact people, etc. If RMG personnel are able to do their assigned jobs successfully, it is not a big deal what level of proficiency they have.

The above analysis exhibits that while a merchandising person called for a good level of fluency, the opinions of commercial personnel were divided. I assume these contrasting opinions were about their own job responsibilities and practices. In chapter three (see section 3.5.1), the role of different levels of RMG personnel were described. It was noted that in the RMG sector, merchandisers were directly involved in oral communication, and consequently they argued for a good level of fluency. In contrast, commercial personnel were not as engaged in direct oral communication with foreigners. In fact, some commercial personnel did not even come into oral contact with foreign customers or suppliers, as Sayeed, a commercial manager noted, *“I have been working in this organisation [name of the organisation] for a long time; I did not talk to any buyers yet”*. Accordingly, several commercial personnel might not feel they have to have as good a level of fluency as merchandisers. Further, they might think that while English was a shared language, it was not necessary to be so fluent in English. Instead it was enough to ‘get the job done’ (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010, p. 205). Therefore, it

the level of fluency required to communicate in the RMG business largely depends on staff engagement, their job responsibilities and duties.

Unsurprisingly, a minor group of participants (5) argued that “fluency depends on buyers”. Through this comment, they associated the need for the level of fluency of interlocutors that indicates whether an interlocutor’s proficiency is high or low. If an interlocutor’s fluency level was high or native-like performance in English, it was necessary to talk to him/her with a high level of fluency. Conversely, if the fluency level was comparatively low, it was better to talk to them accordingly (understood by the participants as ‘speed’). This perception suggests that in this business market, all partners from Kachru’s three concentric circles (see section 2.2) did not have equal levels of English fluency. Some were NSE with high levels of fluency while others were NNSE with different levels of fluency, especially with Asian and European people. In these different circumstances, Bangladeshi RMG professionals perceived they needed to be very fluent in English with NSE. While on the contrary, with Asian business counterparts, especially with Chinese, Korean, Taiwan, and Hong Kong business counterparts, the RMG professionals perceived they did not necessarily need to be as fluent as with the NSE because NNSE were themselves not usually as fluent as NSE. Further discussion on how geographical difference and native and non-native difference play a role in communication, particularly in language use, will be discussed in chapter six (see section 6.3). Clearly, participants regarded the level of fluency needed as essentially dependent on the position and fluency of the interlocutors. In this regard, the research literature also supports this idea and suggests that in speaking, people consider their partners. As Ciortescu (2012) noted:

Part of our speaking proficiency depends upon our ability to speak differentially, depending upon our audience, and upon the way we absorb their reaction and respond to it in some way or another. (p. 221)

From the discussions on the level of fluency needed for industry, the answer is not absolute and rigid rather than relative, and this depends on the perception of needs, which include the nature of the work and job responsibilities of professionals employed and the level of proficiency of interlocutors. Despite mixed opinions about the level of fluency, I conclude that participants support the idea that it is better to speak with foreigners, as fluently as needed with the person, aiming at mutual intelligibility. It is not perceived as necessary that people must have high levels of fluency. However, if people have good levels of fluency, it was really helpful for communication through increasing and decreasing the rate of speech, as per the needs of interlocutors. In addition, fluent speakers can be more adaptable and simplify their language to adjust to the intelligibility of their interlocutors.

Recent studies have addressed the above issue (see, e.g. Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) that accords with the above finding. In describing language-based communication zones in international business communication, Babcock and Du-Babcock (2001) note, 'Higher proficiency speakers engage in language simplification strategies due to a need to communicate at a level closer to that of their less fluent communication partners' (p. 378). Likewise, in BELF contexts in Europe, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) reveal that the English spoken largely depends on the competence of other parties and knowhow. If the proficiency level of a counterpart is weak, then simplified English with simple structures and words is used. I assume this simplified English should not be limited to words or sentence

structure, but it should include the rate of speech, that may promote smooth communication between interlocutors.

While participants were discussing the importance and need for fluency, others engaged in distinguishing between English knowledge (linguistic knowledge) and fluency. A group of participants argued that to have a good level of fluency, it is necessary to have a sound level of “English knowledge” while others considered that having good knowledge of English does not ensure good fluency. This argument draws attention to whether there is any interconnection between the knowledge of English (linguistic knowledge, i.e. lexis, syntax, etc.) and fluency. Does English knowledge facilitate fluency in speaking? Several participants differentiated between English knowledge and fluency as mentioned above. For example, Asraf, one of the marketing people observed:

There are persons who are university graduate cannot not speak English fluently whereas only high school graduates speak English fluently with buyers and convince them. So, there is difference between English knowledge and ability to speak. I know English but I cannot speak. Again I know English little but can speak stylish English. In that case practice is important.

Asraf indicated that higher education is presupposed to providing a higher level of English knowledge and skills, and such linguistic knowledge in English pushes a speaker forward to be fluent in English. In practice, the participant argued that a higher level of English knowledge did not always lead to fluency. Arif argued that a person could be linguistically knowledgeable in English (i.e. grammar, syntax, etc.) but those linguistic skills do not necessarily guarantee oral fluency. Instead, fluency is a skill

achieved through practice. ‘Practice makes people fluent’. However, it is assumed that a person with linguistic knowledge will have good writing skills.

Some scholars (e.g. Schmidt, 1992) also view fluency as a skill exercised rather than knowledge gained. Fluency is seen as purely a performance phenomenon or aspect (Lennon, 1990; Schmidt, 1992) – ‘doing something in real time’ (Schmidt, 1992, p. 359). It is developed through more of a production process, depending on automaticity (Chambers, 1997). That is why Schmidt (1992) states: ‘fluency in speech production is [an] automatic procedural skill’ (p. 358). However, Chambers (1997) considers that although the distinction between knowledge and skill is important, he argues that linguistic knowledge supports the achievement of fluency.

Along with the debates on English knowledge versus fluency, further questions have emerged from participants’ discussions. For example, do all RMG personnel need to have fluency? Or at what stage of a professional’s career is fluency needed? The next section addresses these questions.

5.2.3 Is oral fluency needed for all? Participants stated that personnel engaged in oral communication in English, particularly merchandisers, needed oral fluency. It does not however mean that the other two groups of RMG professionals did not need oral fluency. Instead, participants perceived that among the three groups of RMG professionals, merchandisers needed more fluency in speaking than others, because they were perceived to be more closely involved in international communication than the others. Underpinned by such perceptions, if I rank the need of fluency for the RMG professionals, merchandisers ranked first followed by marketing and commercial personnel.

The analysis of the data further raised another question: at what stage or level of career is fluency required? Some participants believed that fluency was not necessary at the beginning of a profession in the RMG sector, whereas others considered fluency to be important at every step along the way. A senior commercial manager at mid-career level with more than six years' experience argued that “...*fluency is important at later period, not at the beginning of career*” (Shariar). The reason for such thinking may have several explanations. A possible interpretation could be that the beginning of a professional's career in the RMG business is considered as the training period. When a graduate comes to this sector, s/he does not come with much knowledge and skills about the communication mechanism applied in this sector. Accordingly, there is no communication with customers at the outset. Rather, through workplace learning in the RMG workplace under supervision of a senior person (see section 8.5), s/he learns how to communicate through participating in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). It is mostly informal learning in nature (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003). When learning through social practice is assumed by the RMG professional who has gained competencies about how to communicate with customers or suppliers, they can then engage more fully in cross language communication. Thus, Shariar might consider that fluency is not necessary at the beginning phase of one's employment in this industry.

However, a senior merchandiser at the same level, with similar working experience in a sweater industry, appreciated fluency at every level of RMG profession. He said “Fluency ... is appreciable at every level” (Mosharraf). His point is that now this business is very competitive and everybody is engaged in communication, irrespective of senior and junior personnel. If everybody has fluency in English, it is helpful for communication in the business. Moreover, sometimes, in the absence of a key person, anybody who has fluency in speaking can manage the work on standby. Therefore, it is

good for the industry to make every professional communicatively competent with the required level of fluency which helps the industry to fill the stopgap on the one hand, while the fluent person can be employed in different positions and situations in the workplace on the other hand. This finding shows that if fluency is extended to all employees regardless of their roles in the business industry, the language as a power factor will be enforced. This finding is in line with previous research, for instance, Binder (2003) strongly stresses the importance of everyone having fluency regardless of personal and professional endeavour.

Nevertheless, there is also the opposite finding as revealed in the research literature. Welch et al. (2005), for example, contend that if all employees within the business subsidiary are fluent, ‘language as power’ will be negated (p. 19). The analysis, in fact, shows there is a difference of opinion among participants about when fluency is required and as such opinions might be influenced by positions and roles. Arguably, the merchandising personnel stressed the importance of fluency more than commercial professionals, because they occupied more powerful positions and roles in the industry, closely associated with the perception that they had to be fluent in English.

Though fluency constitutes a very important skill in the RMG sector for international business communication with international clients, some participants expressed doubt about the level of fluency held by Bangladeshi RMG business professionals. A senior commercial manager who considered himself a fluent speaker argued that at present the RMG industry was run by professionals who had ‘average levels of English language skills’. This suggests stammering rather than smooth fluency when speaking. Likewise, a marketing person (Saidul), who worked as a director, had a background in English literature in academic life, as noted before, explaining his grief when describing the weak scenario of fluency with RMG professionals in Bangladesh.

He noted: “...when we speak English, we [get] stuck somewhere else or we try to find words, and that is our great weakness”. He indicated that when RMG professionals talked, they stuttered and stammered, and tried to find suitable words, taking time in using different pragmatic strategies, such as pauses, fillers, etc., to continue their oral communication. The detailed discussion of pragmatic strategies, including time-gaining strategies (see section 7.3.2), will be presented in chapter seven. Accordingly, they have lost fluency in speech. In other words, he argued that many of the RMG professionals were not as fluent as they should be for this business market.

If I examine this finding from the point of ELF communication, it is very likely associated with ‘pragmatic fluency’ (House, 1996) and/or ‘dialogic fluency’ (Hüttner, 2009). As discussed above, House (2012) argued that ELF speakers have different levels of proficiency in English, which also indicates different levels of ELF fluency. Such variation in fluency derives to reconceptualise fluency in ELF contexts. House (1996), for example, discusses pragmatic fluency for advanced adult foreign language learners. This is characterised by different performance criteria. Although this study did not look at fluency in light of these performance criteria, some of these features such as fillers, repairs, and other pragmatic strategies are revealed in the current study to maintain fluency and continue communication (see chapter seven).

Another author, Hüttner (2009), cited in Cogo (2010) reconceptualised fluency as dialogic. In dialogic fluency both speakers and listeners collaborate to ensure intelligibility. The fluency of ELF speakers cannot be compared with the fluency of native speakers. Research shows that native-like fluency is not even seen as a relevant criterion for success in the international business world (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). In the RMG sector, professionals perceived that they did not have good levels of fluency, but rather had average levels of fluency. And yet they are able to

communicate with partners with necessary intelligibility because they might have pragmatic fluency and/or dialogic fluency that ensure mutual intelligibility.

The same participant (Saidul) further reported there might be some reasons for such weakness in spoken fluency. One of the causes he identified as the main barrier to fluency was the shortage of vocabulary. Data analysis of interview transcripts provided a sense that RMG personnel might not be rich in vocabulary. They handle their business with a limited number of words and those words are used recurrently. That is why Saidul suggested RMG personnel participating in oral communication should be prepared. He observed:

...Whatever we say, we have to complete the sentence. When we talk English we [get] stuck somewhere or we try to find words, and that is our great weakness. We should not find out words while talking, rather we have to find it out before starting the conversation.

Literature also demonstrates that fluency largely depends on richness of vocabulary. For instance, Raupach (1984) cited in Schmidt (1992, p. 378) argues that fluency heavily depends on stored chunks which can provide an enriching vocabulary that can be drawn on. Dechert (1983) has proposed that learners must develop lexicalised *islands of reliability* that become the basis for the search processes necessary for planning and executing less formulaic speech (cited in Schmidt, 1992, p. 378). The finding about the role of vocabulary in fluency for RMG business professionals is consistent with other studies. A study by Kankaanranta and Lu (2013) reveals that limited vocabulary is a challenge for the Chinese to explain messages clearly in BELF settings.

Alongside participants who were frustrated with fluency with fellow colleagues, this study also identified some participants who are optimistic for the future because

they have RMG personnel with better levels of fluency. This latter group of participants had worked in this industry for a long time and observed lot of changes in the use of English. They assumed that as RMG business in Bangladesh was gradually getting more competitive, the industry required more competitive personnel with the necessary skills in order to sustain this market. Consequently, they projected that such a situation (lack of fluency) would not last for long and suggested “stressing fluency”.

Whilst this discussion has emphasised the importance to personnel of focusing on fluency in oral communications, participants tended to overlook fluency in written communication. I discuss this aspect of fluency in the next subsection.

5.2.4 Fluency in written communication. Literature suggests that fluency is not only linked to oral communication but also connected with written communication (see Lennon, 1990), even with reading (see Klauda & Guthrie, 2008; Stahl & Heubach, 2005). However, with the exception of one participant, the others did not talk about fluency in relation to writing. This suggests that fluency is the most demanding skill in oral communication rather than writing. The reason for not demanding fluency in written communication might be a lack of awareness about fluency in writing. Participants might consider that fluency is solely connected to oral rather than written proficiency. Despite not voicing concerns about fluency in writing explicitly, participants talked about the need for speed in writing, a term that may be considered an indicator of fluency in writing. In fact, although in language use speed can infer fluency, in their language, participants only used the word ‘speed’ in relation to writing and fluency when referring to speaking.

Irrespective of the three groups of participants, several argued for “fast” writing and “speed” writing. They considered that one of the skills needed for written

communication for RMG professionals is “*the ability to write fast*”. One marketing person (Sultan) reported that criteria for good communication skills are “*how fast he is able to write, how fast he is able to complete the task*”. The RMG sector is such a corporate business where every employee remains under constant work pressure. It is therefore argued that crucially speed is necessary in writing. It is observed in the RMG corporate sector that people need to write and reply to many e-mails in a short time. A senior merchandiser working at middle management level informed me that “*senior merchandisers usually write about 100 e-mails daily*” (Khusru). Thus, it is assumed that in such a hectic time frame, speed in writing is essential for RMG business communication.

While several participants talked about the need for speed in writing, a minority challenged this view. They said that “*speed in writing is not necessary*”. Once again though, this contrasting perception can be understood as being based on the role of the participants. The people who supported the need for fast writing were more likely to be involved in high volumes of e-mail communication. As noted above, Khusru, being a merchandiser, might have engaged in most of the written communication on behalf of his knitting organisation. On the other hand, participants who questioned the need for such speed in writing were less likely to be as busy with written communication as their counterparts. Although speed in writing was a matter of debate, it seems an undeniably important factor in written communication in the RMG business.

I will conclude the section on fluency with a discussion in light of the conceptual framework underpinned by communicative competence and ELF. From the perspective of communicative competence, fluency and communicative competence are interlinked. Fluency supports the widening of communicative competence (Chamber, 1997). However, in the model of communicative competence proposed by Canale and

Swain (1980), I assume that fluency is an element of communicative competence, and in particular, part of grammatical competence. Yet, grounded in communicative competence, CLT stresses the importance of fluency (Slater & Li, 2012). In the model of communicative competence suggested by Hedge (2000), fluency is seen as one of the components of communicative competence. In this study I view fluency as a part of linguistic competence rather than a separate component (or part of other components) of communicative competence because fluency largely depends on vocabulary and grammatical skills and practice. As Chamber (1997) notes, ‘from a psycholinguistic perspective fluency depends mainly on grammatical knowledge’ (p. 537).

While talking about fluency, one of the merchandisers (Sarwar) at middle management level in a small knit company talked about grammatical accuracy. He compared the importance between fluency and grammatical accuracy in RMG business communication. He argued “*Here fluency is important, not grammar*”. His comments posed a question: whether or not grammatical accuracy is important in the RMG sector for communication. The next section discusses how RMG professionals perceived the place of grammatical accuracy in RMG business communication – the second most reported skill after fluency needed by participants.

5.3 Grammatical knowledge and skills: “The grammatical aspect is important but less important. But it’s ok if buyers understand”

In communication, grammar – ‘the knowledge of how words are adapted and arranged to form [a] sentence’ (Widdowson, 1990, p. 82) – is generally seen as a vital factor. Scholars of language learning and teaching (e.g. Batstone, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 1991; Kress, 2010; Nunan, 1991) believe that in order to provide solid background of language, grammar cannot be avoided. For instance, Batstone (1994) considers that language without grammar is handicapped and chaotic and there are serious barriers to

effective communication. He observes grammatical knowledge and concept is a must for successful communication. In this study, a number of participants were for and against the need for grammatical skill in oral and written communication in the RMG corporate setting.

This section outlines the different arguments among participants about grammatical skills, such as whether or not grammatical accuracy is important in oral and written communication in the RMG sector. If so, why is it important? If not, why is it not important? An additional issue that emerged from the participants' discussions is about the importance in the RMG industry of either grammatical accuracy or mutual intelligibility. Which one is more important? Moreover, participants talked about the present situation of grammatical skills held by RMG professionals in Bangladesh.

5.3.1 The need for grammatical accuracy. There was general disagreement among participants as to the need for grammatical accuracy in RMG business communication, and balancing the relative importance between intelligibility and grammatical accuracy. Irrespective of the three groups of RMG professionals, more than one-third explicitly talked about the priority of grammatical skills in speaking. While several participants perceived that grammatical skill in oral communication was important and it was required in the RMG business communication, as stated, "*RMG personnel should have a good knowledge of grammar*", quite a few participants challenged this opinion saying that they did not have to be grammatically correct. In both groups, there was the presence of the participants from the three groups of professionals. Although there was also a minor group consisting of two merchandising personnel who claimed that grammatical accuracy was less important and was not essential in RMG business communication; but they did not ignore its significance completely either. As one noted, "*I put less emphasis on grammar*". This finding

suggests that regarding the necessity of grammar in oral communication in the RMG industry, participants were divided in their opinions, such as grammar is ‘important’, ‘not important’ or ‘less important’, and these perceptions are relatively incompatible.

A number of different reasons were put forward for why grammatical accuracy is important: it facilitates easy communication; it provides customers and suppliers with comfortable feelings in communication; and it avoids confusion in getting the correct message across. For instance, one of the marketing personnel (Ahsan) suggested speaking with “correct English” as much as one can, because he considered correct English helped customers to feel comfortable in communication, which makes communication easier. In addition, he believed that correct English could play an influential role in business negotiations to convince buyers that being a confident negotiator was grammatically correct. It is like the role of fluency in business communication and negotiation as discussed in section 5.2. Previous research supports this finding. Booher (2009) argues that proper grammar can influence people. Through the phrase ‘correct English’, the participant (Ahsan), in fact refers to grammatical accuracy.

Whilst grammar is a broad and vast area of language, a merchandising person (Ajgor) highlighted the particular importance of tenses. He deemed that people might consider tense as a “silly aspect” but he speculated that if a person was unable to speak English using the proper tense, it might cause “confusion” to a business counterpart. Giving an example, he said there was a difference between “*goods were delivered*” and “*goods will be delivered*”. The same participant also further emphasised the importance of the use of verbs to communicate with customers. He described indicating merchandisers specifically, knowing English was not enough. RMG professionals also needed to know the correct use of English, particularly “*uses of verbs ... to communicate*

with customers. Otherwise it is very difficult". Indeed, he stressed the need for the appropriate use of English in the actual business context rather than theoretical knowledge.

Research literature also suggests that the knowledge of a language and the ability to use this knowledge in context are seen as two distinct aspects of communicative competence, but both are intertwined in practice (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Peterwagner, 2005). Equally, a relatively young and novice merchandiser (Mredul) observed grammar as a less important skill, but he emphasised the value of sentence formation in oral communication. In brief, the current finding reveals that if people have a good grasp and knowledge of grammar, the use of tenses, verbs, sentence formation plus their appropriate use in a practical context along with other components of English, there might not be such difficulty in communication between interlocutors. However, no participants reported that they had faced problems or communication breakdown due to grammatical mistakes in oral communication.

Albeit while a number of participants believed in the prominence of grammatical accuracy in the RMG business communication, an equal number from the three groups of RMG personnel did not consider grammatical correctness as an important skill in communication, particularly in international business interaction. Their main reason for not judging grammar as a leading skill in oral communication is, without grammatical precision, people can understand a given message in context. Another reason that participants gave against grammatical accuracy, that is, in oral communication in a foreign language, it is rather difficult to follow grammatical accuracy always, even using the mother tongue. In this circumstance, they claimed grammatical mistakes in speaking communication could be ignored. Hence, it is considered acceptable if someone makes grammatical mistakes in verbal communication.

A marketing person (Monir) with an English literature background in higher education challenged the need for grammar from another point of view. He contended that it is not necessary to use English grammatically. He believed, language was not so demanding for grammar because “*Grammar is 500 years back than language, rather grammar follows language*”. He argued that the main focus of this industry was its products and technical aspects. Therefore, the skill he perceived important here was the “*ability to talk about the product and its technical issues... Grammatical accuracy is not important*”. Using technical words appropriately and communicating information rather than grammatical accuracy were seen to be more relevant to the needs of this group of RMG business professionals. The finding suggests the ability to communicate in the context with technical aspects is more important than maintaining grammatical accuracy.

Along with prioritising technical aspects of communication over grammatical accuracy, several participants prioritised intelligibility over grammatical perfection for different reasons. In this regard, the opinions of two participants are worth noting:

...grammatically correctness is not essential for us. But mutual understanding is very important. ... if I want to be correct grammatically then I might not be able to move forward in this sector, so I have to leave behind that grammar and focus on intelligibility. (Shamim, a merchandiser)

And another fact is that we do not emphasize the use of correct parts of speech, tense and etc – that is grammatical purification. To understand and to make someone understand is the main thing. (Arif, a marketing person)

Thus it can be seen that in contrast to the merchandising person (Ajgor), who emphasised the importance of tense as a part of grammar in oral communication, some participants did not value grammatical aspects or grammatical accuracy for different reasons, but instead valued reciprocal intelligibility. This finding is further supported by a commercial participant (Hasnat) with more than sixteen years’ experience. He

emphasised a need for intelligibility rather than grammar, but his grounds for arguing this need were specific, not general. He showed not only the reasons for not being grammatically correct in speaking but also explained why people need to be more concerned with intelligibility. In his argument, he presented his concern about knowledge of English with Chinese and Korean counterparts and stressed intelligibility. As he said:

Korean or Chinese buyers don't understand English very well. So it is not necessary for us to be grammatically accurate with them. If we can make them understand, that will be enough. For study grammatical issue is important while for work understanding is important.

The above comment indicates that like fluency, as discussed in the previous section (see section 5.2), grammatical precision is also not imperative with all business counterparts. Instead, it depends on the level of the interlocutors' language skills in English. In addition, through the above comments, the participant may mean that grammatical limitations cannot be a barrier to communication. There are many other ways to explain a matter to an interlocutor, other than grammatically. The purpose of communication is intelligibility. If this intelligibility is conveyed, there is no need to focus on grammar. Moreover, the above comment by Hasnat further raised a question: when is grammar important? This clearly demonstrates that the place of grammar is in school where it can be learned. There is little room for grammar in the workplace but rather the focus should be on intelligibility. Critics may raise a question, if grammar is not important in the workplace, why do schools and students spend time and effort in teaching and learning grammar? However, it is argued in the literature that grammar cannot be ignored by schools (Greenbaum, 1982, cited in Herrick, 1986). It is seen that in teaching and learning English in schools, grammar is widely focused, both implicitly

and explicitly, to make a learner competent in English. Grammar thus cannot be avoided in education.

While the RMG participants were divided into two blocks in their opinions for and against grammatical accuracy in the RMG business communication, the analysis of this study demonstrates the emergence of the third group of people as noted above. This small group consisted of two merchandising personnel, who neither accepted grammar as an important skill nor refuted its significance. To explain the status of grammar, it is worthwhile noting a comment from a young merchandiser, who said: *“The grammatical aspect is important but less important. But it’s ok if buyers understand”* (Mredul).

To conclude this section, it can be said that the perceptions of participants about the role and status of grammar in RMG business communication is diverse rather than unanimous. There is no clear-cut choice between accuracy and intelligibility. Often it has been observed that participants had to choose one over the other, depending on their respective situations. The reasons they gave to support their arguments were related to their understanding of what was valuable in their area of work, in other words, related to their pragmatic rationality. On the one hand, it is perceived as fairly rational that grammatical errors may cause problems in receiving the correct message and can cause a breakdown in communication. In addition, grammatical accuracy helps to make the business counterparts intelligible. It also develops confidence, which helps a speaker to influence and convince his clients. On the other hand, the constant focus on grammatical accuracy in speaking is also perceived as difficult, particularly for NNSE. In such situations, the view as to which aspect of communication should be prioritised has become a debatable issue. The analysis in this study suggests that the majority of RMG personnel argued that intelligibility of a message should be prioritised over

grammatical accuracy, in other words, communication of a message is more important than accuracy.

This finding has similarities with previous research. The study by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) showed that in oral communication in an ELF business setting, grammatical inaccuracies are typically ignored or ‘passed over’. Clarity is more important than correctness. As English is a foreign language to Bangladeshi RMG professionals, who are involved in international business communication with both native and non-native speakers of English as discussed above, it is not always possible for them to speak with clients with proper grammatical accuracy. However, they tried to make their spoken communication error free grammatically. If it is not 100% error free, the message can still be intelligible in context, because both parties are familiar with the context and understand each other. This effort helps them to overcome the challenges related to grammatical skills in their spoken communication.

One of the concerns of the study was how participants positioned grammar in written communication.

5.3.2 Grammar in written communication. Nearly half of the participants argued for grammatical accuracy in written communication. They considered that RMG personnel have to have “good grammatical knowledge” or “writing power with grammatical sense”. To emphasise grammatical skills in writing, they used different modal verbs such as “need”, “have to have”, “should have”, “must be” and “should be”. Such varieties of model verbs indicate the weightiness of grammatical accuracy in written communication in the RMG business.

Participants also interpreted the reason for the necessity of grammatical skill in writing. They discussed that grammar is a part of “excellent” or “standard” or “good” or

“minimum” levels of writing skills of a person. The level of writing skill a RMG professional possesses is assessed by grammatical skill. It is also an indicator of communicative fitness. Whether or not a person is fit for communication largely depends on grammatical skills in writing. Accordingly, it was suggested that before sending written documents (i.e. letter, e-mails, etc.) were sent, a person needs to check whether it is ready to go. In this regard, it is worthwhile telling a brief story from a marketing person (Ershad). While he was being interviewed for this study in his office, I noticed that he took two breaks in the middle of the interview, going to his desk to send an important e-mail to one of his buyers. However, he was not able to send the e-mail and returned to the interview. He later informed me of the reason for his inability to send his e-mail. He reported that as his mind was on the interview, he could not pay due attention to check the grammatical mistakes in the e-mail. Without checking the grammar, he was not prepared to send the e-mail. The literature suggests that taking a glance over e-mail messages, particularly non-routine e-mails, before hitting the send button (see Munter et al., 2003) is desirable, otherwise there is the possibility of making mistakes.

This participant (Ershad) also further described the advantages of grammatical accuracy in written communication. He believed that being skilled in grammar, one can form good sentences with structural diversity. The ability to write diverse sentences is good for both the writer and the industry where he works, because it demonstrates the language competency of a person while setting the ‘standard’ for the company. Participants further added more reasons for grammatical skills in written communication when they compared the importance of grammatical accuracy between spoken and written contexts, which have been discussed in subsection 5.3.3.

While several participants emphasised the need for grammar in written communication in the RMG trade, a small number of participants (four), particularly merchandisers, perceived that grammatical mistakes were acceptable as reported above. Their argument is that although they expect writing without error, it does not mean that it would be necessarily “100%” correct. Rather it should be intelligible. The reason they gave for such acceptability of grammatical errors is the heavy workload in the industry. They informed me that RMG professionals constantly remain under pressure. Every day they needed to write and send e-mails with different issues and purposes: they did not get enough time to read their e-mails before sending them. Therefore, it might be obvious to make some written mistakes as a merchandiser reported, *“Yes, sometimes we make mistakes because of more pressures. We do not get time to read our e-mails before sending”* (Mafian). What types of mistakes RMG personnel made was another issue, as discussed in subsection 5.3.4 in this chapter.

As previously mentioned, participants also compared grammatical accuracy in both spoken and written contexts and the following subsection will discuss this aspect in more detail.

5.3.3 Grammar in spoken and written contexts: A comparative necessity.

Using five-point scales in the interview schedule, I asked participants how relatively important they thought grammatical accuracy was in spoken and written communication in English in the RMG industry. In response they provided heterogeneous opinions described in the table below. I further asked them to give reasons for their choice of answers. The following narratives describe and explain these choices.

Table 5.1**Importance of grammatical accuracy in spoken and written communication**

Type of RMG professionals	Not at all	Not so important	Neutral/Not so important	Important	Very important
Importance of grammatical accuracy in speaking					
Marketing (15)	0	3	3	6	3
Merchandising (17)	0	4	4	7	2
Commercial (11)	1	0	3	4	3
Total : 43	1	7	10	17	8
Importance of grammatical accuracy in writing					
Marketing (15)	0	0	0	7	8
Merchandising (17)	0	1	2	6	8
Commercial (11)	0	0	2	3	6
Total : 43	0	1	4	16	22

The above table shows grammar is more important in written than spoken communication. While the majority of participants, regardless of the type of role they performed, stressed the need for grammar as an important skill in spoken communication, most considered grammar in written communication as very important. Why is grammar more important in written communication? In response participants offered some reasons which include:

- most of the communication is written;
- grammatical mistakes might cause misunderstandings which in turn may cause loss of business;
- a written document is permanent, and not likely to change;
- it is a matter of “prestige”, “image”, “reputation” and “status” of a communicator and his/her company;
- a written document is a record and as such should be accurate;
- people do not seriously consider verbal mistakes as they do written ones;

- in written communication, nonverbal skills are not as supportive as in spoken communication.

One of the marketing personnel compared spoken and written contexts in terms of grammatical accuracy and he gave more importance to grammatical correctness in the written context than the spoken context. He stated:

In this sector, when I talk to someone, I can explain him somehow. Nevertheless, when it is about writing, it would remain as a recorded document. So, accuracy is needed in this record. As an example, when it's about bargaining of any products orally, I could change my words or price. But if I write it down, it couldn't be changed. It is permanently done. If there is any mistake, I have to pay for it because there wouldn't be any alternative. That's why perfect accuracy is needed whenever I'm writing.

Participants indicated that in oral communication, it is not so difficult to make someone understand. There might be nonverbal/non-linguistic means to help someone understand a message and, if there is a mistake when speaking, it is correctable. Nevertheless, written communication is permanent, and often used as a formal record that must be accurate and sometimes difficult to correct.

It is notable here that one of the marketing personnel (Monir), who was a director in a knitwear industry, was not interested in emphasising grammatical accuracy either in verbal and written communication as noted earlier (see section 5.3.1). However, later he retreated from his previous stance and emphasised the need for grammatical accuracy in communication, especially in writing. In his initial consideration, he said: *"Grammar is 500 years back than language"*. But later he expressed: *"It [grammatical accuracy] is important because without grammar nobody can understand my language."*

If I cannot use correct grammar, somebody will disregard me, they will say, we are not civilized'. That means that finally he placed importance on grammatical accuracy for intelligibility and for avoiding dishonour from others for not being civilised. He indicated that grammatical accuracy in language makes people cultured and civilised in society. That is why he considered that grammar in writing is very important. This finding revealed that most of participants prioritised grammar in written rather than spoken communication for reasons associated with upholding the reputation, status and image of the company.

However, some participants identified situations where their grammatical skills could be more important in spoken communication. As a commercial participant, Rahman observed, *"in a board meeting where high level of people present, if I am not able to present my matter properly, it is not good"*. Again, it was found that some participants did not distinguish the necessities of grammatical accuracy in spoken and written communication; rather they considered it as equally important both in spoken and written contexts. As one of the merchandising participants said:

If I am grammatically correct, it is helpful for him [customer] to understand. That's why I am putting emphasis on grammar in both spoken and written [communication]. (Babu, a merchandiser)

In concluding this section, it can be said that grammar is seen to be a crucial element in written contexts and at times in prestigious and important spoken contexts. The reason for it being more important in written than spoken communication is because written communication results in documents that provide a long lasting record, whereas spoken communication is more ephemeral. Overall though, the imperative to maintain grammatical accuracy in communication is associated with upholding the image and reputation of the communicator as well as the company. It is also connected

with profit and loss due to misunderstandings caused by grammatical inaccuracy. However, no participants reported they had faced any challenges as a consequence of grammatical mistakes in spoken and written communication. Rather, participants stated they were relatively more concerned with information than grammar. To them information mistakes could cause severe problems in business. To avoid misunderstandings, they exchanged “meeting recap” with a phone call and exchanged follow-up e-mails to ensure accurate documentary records of their mutual understanding. This finding corroborates the previous research in ELF business communication. For example, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) demonstrate that it is difficult to resolve grammatical mistakes in situ. However, business personnel check their comprehension in official documents through follow-up e-mails or phone calls that are considered essential elements of successful BELF communication in getting the facts right.

Simultaneously describing the place of grammar in the RMG business communication, participants also expressed their perceptions about the grammatical skills they perceived with their fellow colleagues. The next section depicts how RMG professionals perceived grammatical skills and grammar status.

5.3.4 Perceived and actual practice of grammatical skills with RMG professionals. One of the queries of this study was to understand how RMG personnel perceived the grammatical skill of their fellow professionals engaged in RMG global business communication. The finding shows a dissatisfactory scenario. For instance, a marketing person, who was closely involved in recruiting employees made a general comment about the current situation of grammatical skills with RMG professionals. As he observed:

They should...have a good knowledge of grammar. But the fact is that we get only 10–20% people who can speak English properly in this sector. The other 80%

can speak English with grammatical mistakes. They have problems with grammar and sentence formation. But business people try to understand their language. (Shibly, a director)

The above data suggest a supply-demand mismatch situation. While the RMG business market demands a large number of people with a good level of English with grammatical accuracy, supply is not sufficient, but rather shows disappointing. The anecdotal perception of the participants demonstrates that less than 20% were able to speak using correct grammar. The rest had a common tendency to make mistakes while speaking. In order to explore how many RMG professionals speak with grammatical perfection, a new study may need to be conducted.

Another marketing person, Harun, had recruitment experience with employees, reporting that, in his company, he had recruited people whose minimum educational qualification was graduation. Yet, he observed that they were so poor in written English they needed dictation for language correction, as a student learns English writing in a classroom. They were unable to write independently. The analysis of this research further identified the areas where RMG personnel usually made mistakes. In interviews, participants reported that they made mistakes in sentence formation and grammar in both spoken and written communication, but not in spelling, as the computer checks spelling mistakes. In grammar, they mostly made mistakes in singular/plural tenses ('s/es'). This finding is consistent with Seidlhofer's (2004) study. She identified the lingua franca use of English, showing that by dropping the third person present tense –s is a typical error of ELF speakers (see p. 420 for details). Surprisingly, grammatical mistakes in oral communication are a problem, not only with the Bangladeshi RMG professionals who are NNSE, but also with foreigners, even NSE. A merchandising manager shared his professional experience with NSE. He observed that professionals

from English speaking countries also made mistakes to some extent, but those were overlooked due to their oral fluency, as noted before (see section 5.2.1).

In order to triangulate the perceptions of participants about their written English and subsequent comments, I collected and analysed e-mail documents written by different groups of RMG personnel from home and abroad. In analysing these e-mails, I followed discourse analysis as discussed in the methodology chapter (see section 3.7.3). The analysis of e-mails, written by both local and international RMG personnel, shows various mistakes. Out of 92 e-mail messages written by both local and international RMG professionals, nearly half showed different types of common mistakes including grammatical errors. E-mail messages sent by local Bangladeshis (56%) were also found to have errors. The table below shows the types of mistakes with examples. The mistakes in sentences are indicated by using bold italics. Sometimes square brackets have also been used to indicate mistakes.

Table 5.2

Types of written mistakes executed by RMG professionals

SL	Types of mistakes	Number (out of 92)	Examples
1	Omission of subject and verb	24 (26.08%)	E-mail 17: Thanks for your prompt reply & <i>looking</i> forward to your next mail.
2.	Inappropriate preposition	14 (15.21%)	E-mail 36: We have explained your situation <i>with</i> [to] our management
3	Syntax	10 (10.87%)	E-mail 18: We already <i>L/C open</i> for solid 108,000Lbs & 26,000Lbs.
4	Tense	6 (6.52%)	E-mail 2: We <i>wait</i> long time to get the confirmation from you.
5	Past participle	5 (5.53%)	Please find the herewith <i>attach</i> sign back IP for your reference, please confirm your receipt.
7	Absence of article	4 (4.35%)	E-mail 7: If you confirm this order by tomorrow (Sunday) then we can manage capacity for [the] end [of] September delivery...
8	Spelling	3 (3.26%)	E-mail 19: "Price is only kept for you..."
9	Omission of object	3 (3.26%)	E-mail 48: As referred, can you advice <i>[us/me]</i> what labels & packing product you are doing for LTB?
10	Number (singular/plural)	2 (2.17%)	E-mail 26: many problem [no s] happen infactory [no space].
11	Inappropriate word split:	2 (2.175)	E-mail 35: We <i>can not</i> [two words] do anything for good [s missing] delivery ...[three dots after a space]"
12	Gerund	2 (2.175)	E-mail 44: After <i>send</i> the parcel, pls advise AWB# for our easy tracking.
13	Voice	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 49: As per our meeting today we <i>were</i> concluded with the following things
14	Omission of clause connective	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 79: Kindly check & confirm <i>[if/whether the]</i> above delivery is ok with you"
15	Using co-ordinating conjunction instead of subordinate clause	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 3: Pls relook at this and confirm your best delvy <i>so</i> we can get you the order sheet.
16	Inappropriate use of verb	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 25: <i>Are</i> you know , this is not a new...???
17	No explicit dependent clause	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 26: Otherwise [Sic] more problem will happen...[ends with three dots]
18	Wrong phrasal verbs	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 27: Pls <i>call for</i> me [end with dots]
19	Interrogative notion without interrogative sentence structure	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 32: Pls kindly tell me 108,000lbs solid and 26,000lbs melange ,[comma is one space later] 1st 1x40fcl delivery?

20	Use of incomplete conjunction	1 (1.09%)	E-mail 36: You below mentioned delivery schedule is workable <i>even</i> it is tight.
----	-------------------------------	-----------	---

The table shows that the most frequent mistake is the omission of subjects and verbs (26.08%), followed by the use of inappropriate prepositions (15.21%) followed by mistakes in syntax (10.87%).

The above types of mistakes were made by all three groups of personnel: marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel: both local and international. The overwhelming majority of mistakes were found in e-mail messages (87.5%) sent by commercial personnel. The reason might be their comparatively lower educational qualifications. It was commonly seen that relatively less qualified people in English were engaged as commercial staff. On the other hand, people who were comparatively better in English were engaged in merchandising positions. The overall demographic information of the participants in this study also suggests that commercial professionals were lower qualified in general than marketing and merchandising personnel. Interestingly e-mail messages sent by merchandisers had less grammatical mistakes than the other three groups of e-mail senders including more qualified marketing personnel. The reason may be their constant practice of writing e-mails (see section 5.2.4). This practice made them more skilled in writing e-mails without making mistakes or fewer mistakes. Furthermore, the analysis shows that despite grammatical weaknesses or mistakes in writing, it did not work as a barrier to progress or negotiating meaning because the sentences were written in short, simple language. The detailed language features of e-mail communication by RMG personnel are discussed further in chapter seven (see section 7.2). Similar findings were reflected in the analysis of e-mail messages written by lingua franca speakers in Europe (Finnish and Swedish). It was

found that e-mail messages were not grammatically perfect, yet it did not play an explicit role in causing misunderstandings (Kankaanranta, 2006).

Simultaneously, in acknowledging the relative importance of grammar in business communication, the analysis further accentuated the necessity of vocabulary in general and in business specific terms, in particular. The following section discusses essential words, business specific technical terms and abbreviations necessary for global business communication, as perceived by RMG business professionals.

5.4 Vocabulary, technical terms and abbreviations: “I can manage total communication using these words”

As seen in the research literature, in an international business, having a wide vocabulary of English words and knowing business specific English vocabulary, both in spoken and written communication, are seen as possible features for success (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). In this section I will describe how participants perceived the urgency of general and business specific vocabulary, technical terms and acronyms, and how these types of words play a role in RMG business communication. The findings have been presented here in two subthemes (i.e. general vocabulary and business specific vocabulary) that emerged from data analysis associated with such words and vocabulary.

5.4.1 General vocabulary. General vocabulary is usually used in daily communication, and is seen as necessary in RMG business communication. Regardless of type and size of industry, and level and category of work, more than a quarter a quarter of total participants intensely felt the need of vocabulary for oral communication in the RMG sector. They called for “lots of vocabulary”, “enough stock of words”, “alternative words” and “conventional words to work”. Through the phrase

“conventional words”, the participant might suggest knowing frequently used current words. As seen in the research literature, in describing a pedagogical framework for ELF speakers, Qiufang (2012) suggested teaching high frequency words to ELF speakers for communication. How does a store of lexis play a role in effective communication? Dulal, a marketing person, experienced in the RMG business, was also involved in staff recruitment. He contended that if professionals had their “own stock of words”, this would be helpful when they forgot appropriate words. How RMG personnel continue their communication using similar words has further been discussed in chapter seven (see section 7.3).

The notion of this participant indicates that lack of necessary vocabulary plays a role as a barrier in communication, and accordingly, a professional should be ready earlier with required vocabulary. For him, there is no way to keep quiet during communication. This finding is consistent with other previous research. In a study investigating the use of English as a lingua franca in international business meetings, particularly in a European business organisation, Rogerson-Revell (2007) shows that limitation of knowledge of a wide vocabulary plus difficulty in finding the right words at the right time are seen as particular difficulties for NNSE communicating in international business meetings. Sometimes a limited vocabulary does not prevent communication, but it reduces efficacy in communication. In addition, not finding adequate words for immediate reaction in a discussion can lead to silence on the part of an interlocutor.

In addition to knowing plenty of words, it a considerable number of participants suggested to be aware of constant changes in English and how to use the right ones in the right place. A young director (Saidul) with an English and MBA background noted that English was a very dynamic language, where new words were incorporated every

day, and the nature of words changed too. He advised the RMG professionals to keep this in their mind when communicating with others. It would seem that he might have indicated borrowing words for English from other world languages or replacing old words with new ones. It is common in this globalised world that one language is enriched by accepting vocabulary from other languages. At the same time, old words are going out of practice and being replaced by new words. Being an English literature academic and a business professional, Saidul was more mindful of this issue than other RMG business professionals. He further recommended that there were many synonyms for words and people needed to know the appropriate use of a word in the right place.

Hirok, a merchandising person, illustrated this point as follows:

... the words – thread, yarn and fibre have similar meaning, but these words are used in three different places. People need to know the basic differences between such types of technical words. These technical words are also related to vocabulary. If basic skill is strong then he can understand.

While most participants recognised the need to enrich their vocabulary, two participants dismissed the need for increasing the stock of vocabulary for communication in the RMG business. For example, having 10 years' experience, a senior merchandiser (Ajgor) argued that in this trade, common English words were repeatedly used. Therefore, he noted, *"it is not necessary to be very strong in vocabulary"*. However, he later acknowledged with other participants about the advantage of having a robust vocabulary and added, *"Yes, if vocabulary is strong, presentation would be good"*. Agreeing with Ajgor's view, a marketing person (Saidul) reported that a person might have a limited stock of words, but must be able to use them properly. He stressed the importance of knowing how to use words in conversation so as not to interrupt the conversation, rather than memorising words alone. In addition, some participants, however, disclosed the weaknesses of RMG professionals in vocabulary,

which acted as a barrier to speaking fluently, as discussed in section 5.2.3, and suggested developing a wider vocabulary for better communication.

Like oral communication, several participants (10) strongly demonstrated the need for vocabulary in written communication as well. They emphasised having enough word stock, or being competent in vocabulary and using the correct words. A marketing person, Ershad, with a background in English literature and five year's work experience in a woven textile industry, reported that the use of words was important as it more readily persuaded business counterparts. He considered that if professionals use the right words in the right place, it might help to influence customers. Interview data reveal that several participants reported they were not always able to use the right words to express their emotions in communication. Surprisingly, no commercial personnel talked about the necessities of vocabulary in written communication, although they are also involved in written communication in English more so than in oral communication. This could indicate that they did not consider the need to widen their vocabulary, because they already had what they considered to be sufficient skill for written communication. This could be because they use similar words repeatedly in their cycle of activities.

Despite having no comment from commercial staff about vocabulary in written communication, marketing and merchandising personnel felt its necessity. As they wrote more e-mails and other written documents in comparison with commercial staff, they felt the need for a good general vocabulary in written communication and suggested having a stock of words and synonyms to bring variety to their writing and impress recipients. It may also help to make communication smooth and convince partners. This finding is consistent with previous research, where having knowledge of a broad general vocabulary is seen as a great competence in successful business

communication. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) contend that professionals in a global business context require adequate vocabulary that empowers communication between interlocutors without considerable effort from both parties. Similarly, the findings suggest that people who engage in international communication in the global business industry must have good knowledge and appropriate use of necessary general vocabulary, as well as proficiency with technical terms frequently used.

5.4.2 Garments speak: Vocabulary, technical terms and abbreviations.

In interview, participants consistently stressed the importance of knowing trade specific English vocabulary along with knowing conventional English words and synonyms. Some participants called this knowhow or “garments’ language” which is essentially needed for communication in this industry. The labelling of new types of English in international business is not new. Aiming to provide a restricted range of vocabulary and language structures without loss of accuracy, 30 years ago Ericsson, Swedish telecommunications titan, created its own version of English to be used worldwide, denoted to as ‘Ericsson English’ (Hollqvist, 1984, p. 93, cited in Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Following analysis of the participants in my study, I have coined the term ‘garments speak’ to indicate the words and language used in the RMG business communication.

Several participants, regardless of their roles in the industry, discussed how RMG business related technical vocabulary plays a significant role in communication. They suggested that RMG business specific technical words are reasonably powerful tools in communication. If a person is less fluent, even not well educated, they may still be able to handle communication activities using technical words frequently used in this sector. These terms were perceived as more important than fluency. No disagreement

was found regarding the necessity of RMG specific jargon. This finding supports previous research into ELF business settings. As discussed in the research literature, business related technical terms or jargon and specific words used in business discourse facilitates communication, even among partners who do not know English so well (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) study establishes that general vocabulary related to business, specific technical jargon and the mastery of relevant genre in BELF are considered ‘highly specialised, and unique to their distinct disciplines and areas of expertise’ (p. 394) (see also Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). Findings also indicate that it is not easy to understand communication of a business community of practice (Wanger, 1998) who have no expertise (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) in vocabulary of the related business field. Accordingly, the current study suggests graduates and professionals, who want to engage or are already engaged in this business, need to learn specific RMG business terms and vocabulary, and use those terms in practical business contexts.

But how and where do RMG professionals learn this business jargon? As an English teacher, my experience tells me that university education usually does not provide the knowledge and skills of learning RMG business terms, or how to use them in the business context appropriately. Then where do RMG personnel learn these terms? The response was reflected in the voices of some merchandising participants (three), who indicated ways in which these technical terms are learnt, referring to place and timing. A merchandiser (Babu) with less than five years’ experience observed that in the RMG workplace, staff learned technical terms used in this sector through the work process. The same participant further added that since the same sorts of words/terms were frequently used in this sector, new professionals were advised to practise those. Agreeing with Babu, another merchandiser (Masum) claimed he had acquired jargon

words in the early stage of his career. Another merchandising person (Aazim) believed that three months is enough for absorbing RMG business jargon, if people have a sound knowledge of English. However, to remember those words or to develop their use people need to practice in situ. This finding suggests that RMG personnel learn these terms in their workplace, usually at the beginning of their career through mostly learning by doing. As they learn these terms in real workplace situations through active participation, it does not take long to acquire this technical vocabulary. However, people who have a good knowledge in English might learn these terms faster than others.

While in interview, participants were talking about the need for technical terms, and I asked merchandising and commercial personnel whether they could identify some of those terms. Interestingly, I observed that except for a few, none of them were able to recall those terms (not more than seven) immediately despite they were accustomed to using RMG terms frequently in their daily communication. However, three participants among merchandisers took me to a display room where many garments were displayed to show customers. They then started pointing out different technical names of parts of garments and accessories. In this way, they were able to utter more technical terms. One was able to point out more than 30 terms. Another participant unfolded a file of Letter of Credit (L/C) and pointed out about 40 technical and business terms. Some examples are given in the figure below using Wordle software.

Along with general vocabulary and technical terms, different abbreviations, both technical and non-technical, are largely used in this sector that RMG personnel perceived they needed to know. In interviews, participants reported only technical abbreviations while e-mail analysis identified a number of both technical and non-technical abbreviations. Of 92 e-mail messages, 71 (77.17%) included abbreviations. while 21 (22.83%) e-mail messages did not have abbreviations. The most prevalent and preferred abbreviations were “Pls/Plz” and “&” that equally accounted for 27.06%. They may be classified broadly into two categories: standard (i.e. “pls/plz” for please, “info” for information), and nonstandard. Nonstandard abbreviations may be classified into two categories such as personalised (i.e. “CNY” for Christmas and New Year) and garments abbreviations (i.e. “CMT” for Cutting, Making and Trimming). Garments abbreviations can also be classified into two categories: inter-official and intra-official abbreviations. Inter-official abbreviations refer to those commonly used, irrespective of any garments industry in a country or in different countries (i.e. “FOB” for Freight On Board/ Free On Board) while intra-official abbreviations denote those used within the garments industry for internal communication (i.e. “Spec” for Specification). Some examples are shown in the table below.

Table 5.3**Abbreviations used in the RMG business**

Standard abbreviations	Personalised abbreviations	Garments abbreviations
Info (Information)	CNY (Christmas and New Year)	Ply (Plying)
Pls/Plz (Please)	Delvy (Delivery)	PO (Purchase Order)
Sep (September)	B/rgds (Best regards)	PI (Proforma Invoice)
FFB/Feb (February)	Comb (combination)	Qnty (Quantity)
Jan (January)	Tks (Thanks)	Lbs (pound)
'11 (2011)	Tele (Telephone)	CMT (Cutting, Making and Trimming)
Pc (Piece), Pcs (Pieces)	Tekstil (Textile)	CM (Cutting and making)
& (and)	Reg (Regular)	Yds (Yards)
CC (Carbon Copy) Courtesy copy	Msg (Message)	Techpack (Technical package)
Ok (Alright)	r (are)	QA (Quality Assurance)
1st (First)	Rgds (Regards)	L/C (letter of Credit)
2nd (Second)	BL (Bill)	Spec (Specification)
Dept. (Department)	CHK (Check)	
ASAP (As early as possible)		
Docs (Documents).		

The data suggests that the use of abbreviations in both spoken and written contexts indicate the style of quick communication. It also illustrates informal and personalised tone and style of interaction. It is assumed that some of these abbreviations are learnt when studying, from daily communication, or through working in the RMG industry. Thus, to work in the RMG sector productively, people need to know these abbreviations. This finding is consistent with other studies on e-mail communication (in general) and cross-cultural communication studies (in particular) (e.g. Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000; Habil, 2010; Kirkgoz, 2010). For instance, analysing 62 e-mails sent by 29 writers to three employees of a large UK insurance company, Gains (1999) argues

that unsurprisingly abbreviations were frequently used in commercial e-mail messages. Likewise, referring to e-mails sent and received around the world in a UK based export-import company, Gimenez (2000) shows that abbreviations were found and many were nonstandard and personalised.

5.5 Pronunciation and accents: “Accent[s] and pronunciation need to be good”

In ELF business communication, pronunciation and accents are seen as crucial elements because unintelligible pronunciation and accents in spoken interaction causes breakdowns in communication among different speakers of English (see Jenkins, 2000; Levis, 2005). This section illustrates the necessities of intelligible pronunciation and accents in the RMG business communication. It was not clear from perceptions of participants as to how they distinguished between pronunciation and accents, or whether they used those notions interchangeably. As they used both terms when speaking, in this section I have accordingly presented both skills in two subthemes.

5.5.1 Pronunciation. Jenkins (2000) argues that pronunciation is the most common cause resulting lack of intelligibility in the use of English as an international language. She found that pronunciation played a role in loss of intelligibility in communication among different speakers of English. Over a quarter of total participants, irrespective of three groups of RMG professionals, acknowledged the necessity of ‘correct pronunciation with intelligibility’ in business communication while others, particularly marketing and commercial staff, ignored the necessity of correct pronunciation and instead prioritised ‘intelligibility over correct pronunciation’. The latter group emphasised the need for intelligible pronunciation, even though it may not be ‘correct’ as spoken by a native speaker of English. Like pronunciation research and pedagogy that have long been influenced by two contradictory principles (*nativeness*

principle and the *intelligibility principle* (see Levis, 2005)); the findings from this research reveal two fundamental, opposite perspectives being voiced by RMG personnel.

The majority of participants who stood for correct pronunciation with intelligibility were all marketing and merchandising personnel. They argued that if pronunciation is not correct, it acts as a barrier to communication. Accordingly, participants suggested that speaking with correct pronunciation is needed. In addition, at the same time, it was suggested that it is important to listen to others' pronunciation carefully (for listening skills, see section 5.6). Conversely, a small number of participants (four), particularly from marketing and commercial personnel, rather than any merchandising workforce, questioned the need for correct pronunciation and argued that it was not necessary in RMG business communication. Instead, they stressed the value of fluency and intelligibility. To them, fluency and mutual intelligibility was more important than native-like correct pronunciation. In the evaluation of native speakers of English, research suggests that intelligibility is equated with fluency (see, Dauer, 2005). As some participants stated:

Well, it is not necessary that pronunciation would be correct. We are not emphasising much on the pronunciation. It is enough if they can explain in simple, easy and short English description. (Harun, a general manager)

If s/he can speak English fluently, it is not necessary to pronounce correctly but if s/he pronounces correctly that is good. It is necessary to make someone understand. (Rumana, a director)

In one of these statements, Rumana appreciated the competency of correct pronunciation in English. Nevertheless, she did not feel that correct pronunciation was an essential requirement for her role. Two commercial participants advocated for correct pronunciation (good pronunciation), particularly for merchandising personnel rather

than for commercial professionals. As discussed earlier, in the RMG industry, commercial people had relatively less oral communication in English with clients in comparison with marketing and merchandising personnel. Accordingly, some of the commercial staff underplayed the necessity of proper native-like pronunciation. Therefore, like oral fluency, as discussed in section 5.2.3, a good level of pronunciation was not needed for all professionals. It is considered more important for those who are frequently involved in oral communication with their international business counterparts: to whom the medium of communication is English, that is, those engaged in merchandising and marketing roles.

While the three groups were discussing the need for correct pronunciation with intelligibility, a few expressed their dissatisfaction regarding pronunciation with RMG personnel. For instance, a merchandiser (Mosharraf) observed that sometimes people assumed they could speak English with correct pronunciation, but in practice they could not. Giving examples, he said that some people pronounced “*kality*” instead of “*quality*” and “*Bhyer*” instead of “*Buyer*”. As such, pronunciation can sometimes cause unintelligibility. Therefore, participants suggested speaking with good pronunciation as Ershad, a marketing executive stated, “...*pronunciation will be very good, must be very good...*” However, he later noted that as participants were aware of the circumstance, they guessed the meaning of words in context. Moreover, when the same pronunciation (even though it was wrong) was repeatedly used between interlocutors, it was perceived as intelligible and acceptable to them and became the norm. This example of forming a new type of pronunciation between interlocutors indicates the creative nature of ELF speakers and this is a classic example of language appropriation. They twist pronunciation to make it simple to pronounce rather than being imposed from ‘above’ (Jenkins, 1998).

As discussed, several participants stressed the importance of “good pronunciation”, but what does “good” pronunciation mean? In response, most participants reported, “*Good pronunciation is good pronunciation*”. In fact, they did not clearly interpret the meaning and criteria of good pronunciation. However, one merchandising participant (Mosharraf) with an education background indicated he regarded native-like pronunciation as good pronunciation from Bangladeshi RMG professionals. Unlike ELF scholars, he considered that this native-like pronunciation was good for mutual intelligibility. Another reason this participant might have argued in favour of the *nativeness principle* as the dominant paradigm in global pronunciation teaching was that this had been the experience he had encountered in his education. There is a vast argument here, particularly from ELF scholars, against acquiring and using native-like pronunciation. Despite huge criticism in the literature against the *nativeness principle* as the global model of pronunciation teaching, still native-like pronunciation is considered as an ideal and deserved model of English learning (see, e.g. Jenkins, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Levis, 2005) in ELF and ESL contexts including Bangladesh. As the perceptions of some of these RMG personnel show, English speakers are still assessed by their pronunciation. These judgements reflect speakers’ cultural identity (see Dauer, 2005; Sifakis, 2004). It would seem that the participant (Mosharraf) viewed native-like pronunciation as ‘the yardstick’ (Golombek & Jordan, 2005, p. 520) against ELF and pronunciation. In a sense, he seemed to be measuring the local pronunciation of English as a deficient form of pronunciation.

However, it was not explicit whether Mosharraf felt native-like pronunciation was an essential element of effective communication or not. Thus the question may arise, which native-like pronunciation (or accents) is needed, given that English is spoken as a native language in many countries? Mosharraf did not elaborate on this

point. A response, however, was offered by a marketing person (Saidul), who suggested RMG personnel should imitate the US pronunciation. He advised knowing how NSE, especially American English speakers, pronounce words. This participant did not explain the reason for suggesting the US pronunciation should be regarded as the native model of pronunciation. However, I assume that as a vast number of RMG products from Bangladesh are exported to the USA, this export activity involved significant communication with US buyers. That is why he may have suggested following American English pronunciation. In regard to the challenges, Jenkins (2000) proposes a third choice that refers to ‘Lingua Franca Core’ (LFC) that derives from the movement of WEs and EIL. Based on her research on intelligibility errors among NNSE, Jenkins’ LFC is a list of features presumably required for intelligible communication among NNSE, and it is also evidently more teachable and learnable regarding pronunciation targets (see Dauer, 2005). Jenkins’ LFC does not solve the debate, but it redefines what counts as an error by broadening the pronunciation target (Dauer, 2005). It also suggests that intelligibility should not be defined exclusively in relation to NSE. Rather the goal of pronunciation should be intelligibility among any speakers of English.

In conclusion, there was no unanimity among RMG professionals with regard to how important pronunciation is. The findings in relation to this issue identify two opposite opinions. Although the majority of participants, irrespective of their roles in the organisation, supported native-like correct pronunciation, all respondents emphasised the importance of intelligibility – it does not matter if it is wrong pronunciation, but intelligibility is a must. In fact, there was no question about the support for intelligibility among participants; but the question was whether it should be native-like correct pronunciation or intelligible pronunciation. Here purpose and context seem important. As the main purpose of communication in this industry is intelligibility,

accordingly intelligibility could be prioritised over correct native-like pronunciation.

Another reason for this emphasis is that being a non-native speaker of English it is quite difficult for Bangladeshi RMG professionals to pronounce native-like English, because research on pronunciation (see Lenneberg, 1967) shows there are some factors (i.e. biological substitute) involved in acquiring the *nativeness principle*. Accordingly, in practice, it is seen that very few people can achieve native-like pronunciation in a foreign language (Levis, 2005).

This complex finding in the current research is partially in agreement with previous research. In a study conducted by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) in Europe, targeted at business professionals involved in interaction with native and non-native speakers of English, demonstrates that survey respondents did not feel that native-like pronunciation is necessary for effective communication in EBLF business settings. However, if a professional has a good level of pronunciation (correct pronunciation), that is appreciable, it brings additional advantages and plays a significant role in communication. It is helpful for “easy” and “good” communication and with business negotiations. If the communication is not good, it needs to be intelligible at least, as Mosharraf expressed, “*Most important thing in this area is making [them] understand. If mutual understanding happens, it’s ok for everybody*”.

5.5.2 Accents. Like pronunciation, some of the participants discussed the role of accents in RMG intercultural business communication because in ELF communication more and more accent varieties have emerged (Jenkins, 2006b) and they also play a role in BELF communication. According to the intelligibility principle, it is recognised that when foreign accents are noticeable, communication can be remarkably successful (Levis, 2005). A small number of non-commercial participants (four) talked about the need for good accents in speaking and they considered that accents were

another important part in successful communication. For example, a merchandising manager (Ahsan), who worked in a foreign buying house, strongly argued for the importance of “proper” accents in speaking and observed “*proper accent is very important*”. Another participant, who was a marketing person, advised people to “*learn proper accent to be competent in English*” (Dulal).

As discussed above, the RMG business is an international trade and accordingly participants argued that professionals needed to speak not only with proper accents for their business counterparts; but also they needed to understand and be aware of the accents of their clients, because different clients from different countries or regions have different accents. It was perceived sometimes as difficult for business professionals to handle customers with diverse accents. Due to the varieties in accent in the business market, one of the marketing personnel (Shibly) suggested learning or being aware of accents of people with whom Bangladeshi professionals do business. ELF literature also suggests that learning different varieties of English facilitates effective communication (see Qiufang, 2012). The same participant also offered a way of understanding accents from different countries. He advised professionals to continue communication practice with customers and such continuous drill would help them gradually understand the accents of their interlocutors. BELF literature also notes that ‘when the business relationship grows older with more frequent contacts, the accents of the business partners would not be considered as challenging any more’ (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 254). Instead, over time, difficulties with foreign accents are minimised because interlocutors become ‘acclimatised to English as spoken by different nationalities’ (Rogerson-Revell, 2007, p.114). This participant further advised people to come to this sector with basic knowledge about the accents and dialects of the market. As he said:

Sometimes we have to handle some British clients whose pronunciation is very difficult to understand. It is also difficult to understand the American accent. Both are very different from each other. Italian and French accents are also difficult to understand. But when you continuously communicate with them, you will find that it is easier to understand their accents than before. It depends on your practice and continuous communication. So it is expected from the new comer when they come to this sector they must come with the basic knowledge about that particular market and accent and dialect of that market. (Shibly, a marketing person)

While some participants engaged in marketing and merchandising roles talked about the importance of proper accents and suggested being aware of accents of international clients, a few did not consider them important. Instead, they argued that although good speaking skills in English are important, good accents are not. They further remarked there was no need to adopt a British or American accent because these accents varied from country to country, like British, American, Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese and so on. They appeared to suggest that due to World Englishes (McArthur, 2001), a Bangla speakers' English accent might be different from that of others, and what is important is communication not adopting a particular form of English accent. The analysis further reveals that whilst these participants reported they sometimes encountered difficulties caused by the variation in accents, they overcame them by understanding communication in context. Other previous studies also revealed that foreign accents occasionally posed particular difficulties in understanding other speakers, both NSE and NNSE (see Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008). As seen in the literature, accents are a challenging factor in BELF communication, yet, it is extremely rare that misunderstandings happen due to unfamiliar accents, because both parties are familiar with the shared business domain (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010).

Hitherto, as discussed in the literature review, to avoid unintelligibility in EFL communication, Kirkpatrick (2007) argues for a focus on regarding accents as a part of the linguistic element in mutual intelligibility (see also Briguglio, 2005; Qiufang, 2012).

5.6 Listening and understanding skills: “Who listens well, can speak well”

This study did not aim to focus on listening skills, yet a number of participants raised this linguistic competency as an important issue. They argued that for good communication, the RMG professionals also needed to have good listening ability, because this is crucial in oral communication. A small group of RMG professionals across all areas of expertise, marketing, merchandising and commerce, suggested listening to their business counterparts with care and replying accordingly was crucial. As discussed earlier, present day business involves direct communication between buyers and sellers without any middlemen; therefore it is perceived important for RMG professionals, particularly for marketing personnel, to listen to their customers carefully. Marketing personnel are a firm’s gatekeepers, who listen and respond to any query. If someone cannot understand his/her customers and the communication has to be repeated, it is not good for communication and rather irritating. As one of the marketing professionals noted:

Marketing people is one of the key persons in this industry. That’s why when a buyer tells something, the RMG professionals should listen carefully to understand what the buyer is asking for. If he cannot understand and asks the buyer ‘Please, I cannot understand and repeat again’ the motivation is not good and approach is very bad. (Ershad, a marketing executive)

Therefore, participants argued that “*listening is more important than speaking to express self-opinions*”. They observed that people replied or responded based on listening. If listening is clear, the reply would possibly be clear and this is particularly

important in the light of the previous discussion (see section 5.5) about the worldwide nature of the RMG business, where people from different countries had different types of accent and styles of speaking in English. A young merchandiser (Pavel), who had worked in a reputed RMG industry for ten years, argued that the way in which a Bangladeshi RMG professional speaks English might be understandable by anyone who knows English. He indicated that speaking skills of Bangladeshis were not too bad. Nonetheless, he further said that it was difficult to understand the pronunciation of an American or European, unless one had high levels of English language skills like them. He called for his colleagues to pay attention to listening skills because “*who listens well, can speak well*” (Pavel). Some of the participants called it “understanding skills” which covers two aspects of communication: ‘to understand and to make someone understand’.

As seen in the previous studies, regardless of the communication channel being utilised in business communication, listening is rated as one of the most important skills (DiSalvo, Larsen, & Seiler, 1976). In a global business setting where people from different language and cultural backgrounds use different Englishes, BELF literature emphasises the importance of listening skills, stating a participant’s quote ‘listen, listen, listen’ as a requirement for successful communication (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 254). Underpinned by both the findings of the current study and previous research, it can be said that to make someone understand largely depends on how one understands their own skills. Intelligibility by careful listening is a vital factor in communication, and misunderstanding due to poor listening skills might cause a loss in business. That is why an experienced and trained commercial manager (Kamrul) urged personnel to make sure that RMG professionals have understood them well. As he said, “*You’ll just need to make sure they understand*”.

5.7 Reading skills: “If we do not understand terms and conditions, it is difficult to have reimbursement”

Like listening skills, this study did not set out to discuss reading skills specifically, and so I did not ask any questions regarding reading skills needed for RMG professionals. However, a few participants, especially commercial personnel, highlighted the necessity for reading skills in this sector. RMG professionals need to read many business documents, their terms and conditions, e-mails, instructions and thus the work of sales, production, delivery and payment is organised accordingly. If they do not have good reading skills, it is quite difficult for them to understand business documents. One commercial executive (Anwar) pointed out that, like other commercial executives, one of his responsibilities was to follow-up reimbursement after exporting garment goods. To do so, he needed to read and “understand terms and conditions” of the legal contract, the Letter of Credit (L/C). Otherwise it was “difficult to have reimbursement”. Similarly, another commercial executive reported there were a number of terms and conditions in a L/C that RMG professionals, especially commercial staff, needed to read carefully and understand. If there was any mistake, or gap, or discrepancy noticed, they then sent it to the buyers to correct. In this instance, if they were unable to understand the terms and conditions by reading the L/C, it could cause a serious problem in business which might result in loss of trade. Therefore RMG professionals, especially commercial personnel, stressed the importance of reading skills in RMG business communication.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the above discussions based on data collected from interviews and e-mail analysis highlight the range of linguistic skills required for oral and written communication in RMG international business, as practised and

perceived by RMG personnel working in different professional management roles in this industry. The analysis of data shows, whilst there are some broad areas of agreement, there are also differences between people and some differences of emphasis. These are possibly related to roles, experience and/or background. Sometimes, it is very hard to have an overall view of participants and whether there are any patterns to their perspectives.

However, the analysis of data reveals that the notion of mutual intelligibility is the main task in this business, as discussed throughout this chapter, in describing different elements of competency (i.e. accents, pronunciation, fluency, and grammar). Mutual intelligibility was emphasised as a common concern among the majority of participants in this research, although the emphasis on how to achieve this varied – some participants emphasised accents, while others emphasised pronunciation or grammatical accuracy or listening perspectives. Overall though, participants argued that ‘to understand and to make business counterparts understand’ are the main goals of business communication and they need to work on them accordingly. Here intelligibility does not have an absolute standard but rather it is relative to the context which is ‘co-constructed’ (Gumperz, 1992). If somebody is able to make someone understand, that is enough. They did not demand much skill in English. In fact, intelligibility is the main focus in this business industry. ‘After all, language is communication, and it is intelligibility that makes communication possible’ (Alptekin, 2007, 267).

In order to achieve intelligibility in RMG business communication, the analysis of this study suggests requiring certain linguistic competences in both spoken and written communication. The findings identified the required areas of linguistic skills and justified the importance of those areas of skills from different viewpoints, because participants’ work roles carried different expectations, depending on whether they were

involved in marketing, merchandising or commercial contracts. The study recognised that the essential linguistic skills for spoken communication are: fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary/words, both general and business jargon, and intelligibility in pronunciation and accents. On the other hand, the identified linguistic skills required for written communication are: grammatical accuracy, vocabulary and jargon, and the ability to write e-mails as fast as they can without making errors in information.

It was also revealed that fluency is the most demanding skill in oral communication. In addition, participants also called for relative grammatical skills in both oral and written communication. However, they mostly emphasised written grammatical accuracy for a number of reasons: smooth communication, avoids confusion and it is a matter of image for communicators and company. However, despite grammatical imperfection, negotiating meaning (interpretability) was usually perceived and factually revealed, where possible. Accordingly, no participant reported any event where miscommunication happened as a consequence of grammatical inaccuracies. Instead, they stressed intelligibility over grammatical accuracy. Nevertheless, grammatical mistakes might impact on image or reputation or prestige of individual communicators and their respective corporate companies.

Which is more important – grammatical accuracy or specific business words and/or terms? BELF literature (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011) suggests that business vocabulary is more important than grammatical accuracy. In this study, I did not ask participants to compare these two elements or skills in terms of relative necessity. However, data suggest that participants did not have any significant disagreement about the need for RMG business terms. Grammatical accuracy however was not perceived as nearly as important as RMG business related vocabulary and jargon. Similarly, as pronunciation and accents have a role in communication,

participants suggested speaking with intelligible pronunciation as much as possible, and speaking with a comprehensible accent. In addition, it is perceived important to listen to interlocutors carefully in order to understand their messages.

However, being competent in linguistic skills (i.e. fluency, accuracy and pronunciation) does not fully ensure that one is also a pragmatic, effective communicator in context (see Björkman, 2011a). Instead, communicative effectiveness takes precedence over linguistic skills. It supports speakers to gain desired outcomes. In order to achieve communicative effectiveness, any speaker needs to understand the cultural aspects of the interlocutors and use language effectively with them. As seen in the literature chapter, in criticising Chomsky's notion of competence, Hymes (1972) points out that language acquisition is not just about acquiring abstract grammatical rules; it also occurs in a social context. Accordingly, both Hymes (1972) and Campbell, and Wales (1970) stress the importance of sociolinguistic competence along with grammatical competence in their proposed broader notion of *communicative competence*. In the conceptual framework for this study, sociocultural competence is one of the components of communicative competence. Based on the lens of sociocultural competence, in the next chapter I discuss what, why and how sociocultural competences are practised and required in spoken and written communication in global business.

Chapter Six

Communicating in the workplace: Sociocultural competences

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was seen that participants recognised English linguistic skills as relatively important elements in RMG international business communication. Drawing on the notion of sociocultural competence of language use as outlined by Canale and Swain (1980), this chapter explores sociocultural aspects perceived by participants as important in RMG business communication. It demonstrates how RMG business professionals use language with counterparts considering sociocultural facets. One of the main concerns of this study was to identify the sociocultural skills required and practised in RMG intercultural business communication. To this end, participants were asked in interview whether or not they needed to consider the sociocultural aspects, in particular, gender, age, status, language, and religion etc. of counterparts in language use in business interaction. If yes, how did they take these aspects into consideration in the choice of words and tone, addressing them and in writing and speaking? If not, why not? On the other hand, e-mail discourse was analysed to see how they practised these sociocultural facets of communication in their written communication. Consequently, this chapter is developed based on the data collected through both interviews and e-mail analysis.

The chapter is organised based on themes – some of which are derived from questions that I posed in interview and revealed through the analysis of e-mails, while some emerged from analysis of data. Here, I present findings on four themes, namely: the importance of considering sociocultural factors in communication; positional factors; personal and social factors; and salutations and greetings. Salutations and greetings are

predominantly influenced by different sociocultural factors presented at the end of this chapter (see section 6.5) in order to show how different social phenomena (i.e. position, age, gender) play a role in the use of salutations. The salutations section can be treated as the application of language considering sociocultural factors. The themes are presented in the above order. It is worthwhile noting here that some themes have subthemes. For instance, positional factors include subthemes such as hierarchy of positions (the senior and junior status), business positions (buyers and suppliers), language positions (native and non-native speakers of English), and geographical positions (Asian and non-Asian). Likewise, personal and social factors include subthemes such as gender, age and religion.

6.2 English itself is a language of courtesy: The need for sociocultural skills in business

While some participants switched across groups in different aspects of sociocultural phenomena, their overall perceptions about the importance and need for sociocultural skills in RMG business communication can be categorised into three groups. Participants among these groups behaved (opined) in different ways but here there was no obvious patterns of behaviour (opinions). While most, regardless of their roles in the RMG industry, acknowledged the necessity for language use in business communication, considering sociocultural aspects of business counterparts, a few discarded its necessity and a minority, particularly from commercial personnel, reported they were not aware of these aspects of communication. In describing the significance of sociocultural skills in business communication, the participants who saw the relevance of taking into account sociocultural aspects of communications pointed out that this was a normal phenomenon in business and habitually practiced in this sector. These participants were mostly involved in marketing and merchandise roles where they

had to interact with people, perceived that a characteristic of a good business person was to bear in mind how to talk and who to talk to, what to talk about and his/her position. In this regard, a marketing person (Monir) believed that courtesy in language use is imperative in this industry. It is necessary to express politeness in communication with counterparts, both in spoken and written contexts.

Monir further reported that politeness in language indicates a “civilised” and polite nation. In his view, “English itself, is a language of courtesy”. This notion about English as a language of courtesy may have several explanations. One of the interpretations can go beyond linguistics: English has non-linguistic manifestations that play out as a powerful tool from the commercial point of view to impress clients by expressing politeness and building rapport. It facilitates greater success in business. As revealed in the aforementioned BELF studies, politeness is the lubricant of social relationships (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 256) that may bring achievement and success in business. This participant (Monir) further provided examples of how to maintain gentility and graciousness in communication with business counterparts in some contexts. As he noted:

We cannot ask a foreigner “Sir, what is your name?” instead of “Sir, your name please”, or “Sir, give me your pen”, instead of “Sir, can I have your pen please?” If not so, my foreign customer might think we are uncivilised. There is a need to maintain goodwill and patience with the customers. Language needs to be polite as well as precisely brief in words while talking to customers. English language has so many courtesies. That’s why English language is so popular and an international language.

A minority group of participants, however, challenged the need for communication following sociocultural attributes of business counterparts. They instead discarded its necessity. They observed business merely as an economic matter rather

than a social matter, and consequently they rejected the necessities and practices of language use in view of sociocultural aspects of business colleagues. Whilst, for the most part, these participants worked in commercial roles where the focus of their job was on written communication and accuracy in contracts and agreements, there was one participant, a marketing person (Sultan), who had worked as a director for less than five years, and found it “irrational/illogical” to consider sociocultural phenomena in the textile business communication, and to use language accordingly. He believed that his work was doing business, rather than bearing in mind with whom or which country he was doing business, and what their sociocultural norms and values were. He even thought that language use considering gender is a form of discrimination and accordingly he could not practise inclusive language in his business communication. He reported, however, that his language only varied in written communication in addressing business counterparts as “Sir” or “Madam” when considering gender. Sultan argued that business practice should be neutral. However, another interpretation might be that his neutral practice may well have tacitly acknowledged and compensated for social differences in order to achieve his aim of business focused, non-discriminatory practices. He said,

I do not think that there is any logic to consider these sorts of aspects. As we are doing business in textile sector, we do not need to consider whether we will do business with Israel or Jordan. We do not discriminate in gender either. Just in written I write “Sir” for male and “Madam” for female.

The above analysis shows the use of language, considering sociocultural facets of business counterparts was, to some extent, an issue which divided participants. The demographic information indicates that participants who supported the need for sociocultural skill in business communication, had more experience in the RMG business communication than participants who marginalised it, and often their work

roles required more direct communication with people from other cultures.

Consequently, it seems that experience might increase insights and skills that could be assumed as vital in business communication. Further discussion on the necessity of practical workplace experience is developed in chapter eight (see section 8.4). Sultan, for example, was the second employee in his RMG business organisation and he had less than five years' experience in business. Before coming to this sector, he was involved in another profession after graduating as an engineer from BUET (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology). Later he came to the RMG business with his elder brother Borhan, who was the head of their industry and experienced in RMG business communication. In mid interview with Sultan, Borhan came to the office and joined this interview as an informal participant. When Sultan opined that he did not consider such sociocultural aspects in communication, his brother strongly disagreed and expressed his perceptions that reflect his intense focus in considering cultural aspects in business communication in this industry.

Along with the above two different opinions, interestingly, as mentioned above, this study also found a small group of professionals, mostly from commercial staff, who appeared to have no idea or little knowledge about speaking or writing with business counterparts by taking account of their sociocultural characteristics. These professionals were not able to say much on this issue. The reason might be they were not aware of this issue in business communication because of their respective roles in the industry. The commercial people just have to make sure the contracts are accurate and fulfilled. They are more process focused, whereas the other two groups have to do more persuading to get sales or buy the right materials and getting orders completed on time to a quality standard. And probably commercial staff did not receive any education or training in this regard.

It can be said that language use in business communication, whether taking sociocultural aspects of communication into account or not with business counterparts, depends on business experience, role and awareness. It is possible that some RMG professionals follow cultural aspects of communication without being aware they are doing so. For example, as previously discussed, Sultan reported he did not communicate with business counterparts about sociocultural issues but he used salutations regarding gender.

Nonetheless, the majority of participants did acknowledge the importance of sociocultural phenomena and their perceptions form the basis for discussion in the rest of this chapter under the following themes: positional factors; personal and social factors; and the use of salutations and greetings in RMG business communication in both spoken and written contexts.

6.3 Positional factors of business counterparts in communication

As discussed in the literature chapter (see section 2.5), Murcia et al. (1995) categorised the elements of sociocultural competence including age, gender, status and power relations. The analysis of data identifies four types of positional factors: hierarchy of positions (senior and junior status); business positions or relationships (buyers and suppliers); language positions (native and non-native speakers of English); and geographical positions (Asian and non-Asian). The following section unpacks the use of language considering these positional factors.

6.3.1 Hierarchy of positions: “Yes, certainly the change occurs but not like the culture we have.” Hierarchy of positions here refers to senior and junior status between interlocutors and this status was perceived as a crucial factor in language use in RMG business communication. More than half of the total participants, irrespective of

their respective roles in this sector, reported they used appropriate language considering the status of counterparts. And one of them (Harun) said, “*We maintain levels in language use...and it [language] varies*”. However, about one-fifth rejected this claim. Those who supported this claim disclosed that when they talked to high officials (e.g. chief executive officers or senior buyers) they used their language “carefully” and “respectfully” so they did not make mistakes. They became “formal”, “polite”, “soft” and “submissive” in their language use, “tone” and the “way of addressing”. In addition, before they spoke to high officials, they prepared themselves on the topic they were going to discuss. On the other hand, when they talked to the same level or junior level business counterparts, their language became “casual” and sometimes reverting to “slang”. In addition, occasionally they needed to “counteract” and “argue” particular points. Thus they did not have to think so much about the topic of discussion and possible questions and answers.

In addition, some participants further observed that such language variation was needed because it “*keeps the work environment good*”. Nonetheless, they did not express clearly how such language variation served the business environment well. It may be assumed that such language use was a kind of decorum and courtesy in the corporate world, as Monir discussed previously (see section 6.2). This approach could maintain a congenial and respectful professional relationship among business counterparts. This variation is perceived as applicable with business counterparts and among staff.

Language use related to status is not only practised in spoken communication but also written communication. And it was perceived that decency, soberness and politeness should be maintained in written communication. A merchandising person (Ajgor) shared how he changed the language in his written communication with

business partners considering their status. Thus it was formal and/or informal. Ajgor also believed that most of the RMG personnel addressed their business counterparts in the same way, and, applicable to both verbal and written communication.

Yes we do. The changes are like this: when I write to someone who belongs to equal position like me, I use “can you send it today”; when I write someone senior to me I use “could you send it today”; again, when I write to owner or to the top management I write “would you send it today”. These sorts of differences I make. I think other people also do these sorts of differences. Same thing is applicable in speaking too.

Hence, the hierarchy of positions mostly influences RMG business personnel to select neutral, informal or formal language to suit their interlocutors. Some also encouraged their team players to communicate following the sociocultural phenomena of interlocutors.

I posit that the national culture might have some influence in affecting how people treat their international counterparts. As a member of the Bangladeshi ‘discourse community’ (Borg, 2003), my experience shows that like many other cultures, Bangladesh people treat senior people in the workplace with respect and politeness. The senior person expects respect from his junior staff. On the other hand, with colleagues at the same level, they can use friendly and informal language. Participants might display the same attitudes in the use of language when they communicate worldwide. Their own cultural orientation and identity influences them. However, if their international business counterparts encourage them not to be so formal with them, or their communication helps them to bond with interlocutors over time, they may use less formal language. In fact, cultural influence in communicative practices is expected

because language and culture are intertwined. In describing the cultural use of English as lingua franca with reference to the Thai academic context, Baker (2009) argues that through ELF, cultural references can be seen in intercultural communication. Thus in the context of ELF, an interlocutor's culture influences the language used in communication with others. The current finding suggests that the use of English is not only inevitably tied to the culture of English native speakers, but also non-native speakers.

Nonetheless, as mentioned above, about one-fifth of the total participants from three groups of personnel disagreed with other colleagues, informing me that they did not make any changes or variations in language use considering the status of their business counterparts. Instead, they always used the same tone with them. They gave different reasons for their stance arguing that *“foreigners are not like Bangladeshis and their culture is different from Bangladesh”*. In Bangladesh, higher administrators regarded themselves as superior and accordingly they expected respect in language use from their junior colleagues as indicated above, whereas foreigners did not “bother” with status in oral and written communication. They were perceived as “free”, “frank” and “simple” partners. Participants believed that international partners considered all people “equally”. They did not mind the way the Bangladeshis talked to them and they did not have any egoism or vanity or pride. Among the cohorts who reported they did not change their language use, some finally remarked that “in [the] case of senior buyers, it is different”. Thus some acknowledged the status of their counterparts.

To conclude this section, it can be said that the findings suggest there is no obvious pattern among participants about the use of language considering hierarchy of position as sociocultural phenomena. It seems problematic to draw a conclusion in this regard because the perceptions of participants are inconsistent, as seen above. The

demographics (i.e. experience, education, age or type of industry) of participants do not support a possible interpretation here. Further research could be useful to explore the possible reasons for such discrepancies among participants regarding this issue.

Nonetheless, this is qualitative research and, as such, I focused on qualitative rather than quantitative data. And yet, the number of participants who used language to respect the position of a counterpart outweighs those who disregarded this approach. Consequently, this suggests that acknowledging position in the hierarchy held by interlocutors is a crucial issue in language use for many RMG professionals.

Nonetheless, one-thirds of participants also reported they used language in relation to their own business position and/or whether their business counterparts were buyers or suppliers. The following section discusses how RMG personnel differentiate their professional discourse considering the position of business counterparts as ‘buyers and suppliers’.

6.3.2 Business positions: “To us the buyer means God.” Business positions refer to buyers and supply relations in the global ‘productive system’ (Felstead, Fuller, Jewson, & Unwin, 2009). This is seen as another factor in the use of language in this corporate sector. As discussed in the previous chapter (see section 4.2.1), RMG professionals in Bangladesh have dual entities in this global production chain, that of: *supplier* and *buyer*. This twofold position in business influences their language use differently. Thinking of the firm as part of the global productive system (Felstead et al., 2009) shows how their position would vary if they were dealing with buyers or suppliers. This factor has emerged through considering participants’ views in relation to their respective positions within their workplaces and within the global supply chain of the industry.

Participants observed that when they talked to buyers, they had to take more “care” and pay more “respect” and they used “sober” language “nicely” in order to avoid any “conflict”. They use “formal language and words” because “to us [the] buyer means God”. For example, if a buyer made a mistake, RMG personnel did not point this out “directly”; rather they treated it positively and indirectly with “sweetness” and “softness” or made polite requests to check if there was anything wrong. With reference to European multinational companies, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) also show that when it is a matter of providing information, whether it is good or bad news, the language should be polite and appropriate and within context, so the recipient feels comfortable. This use of *euphemistic* language with buyer counterparts is common practice according to participants.

The reason for such a respectful attitude towards buyers is the recognition of their higher position in the business chain and for ‘business profit’. That is, buyers place orders for purchasing products and, on the basis of their orders, Bangladesh earns foreign currency. If they stop placing orders, the RMG sector would face severe problems. One of the above participants (Nayeem) further reported that sometimes they are “scared” of their buyers wondering, if “*they do not take ordered products*” or “*if they do not place further order in future any more*”, why that would be the case. Thus being on good business terms with buyers motivates Bangladeshi RMG professionals to always keep their cool with buyers, and use polite verbal and written language.

A small number of merchandisers (three) further reported that although they were respectful to all buyers, their levels of respect were not equal, nor were they the same in their language use with partners. Rather it depended on the “standard” of a buyer. Standard here refers to a “good brand” and the “amount” or “volume” of business that buyers offered. Participants prioritised business clients or countries who

gave them more “orders” and “profits” as expressed in their tone of language. Therefore, the dealings and language use with buyers differed, according to profit margins.

Moreover, buyers who were renowned and big in business size (e.g. Walmart and H&M) usually received more attention from RMG professionals. A merchandising participant, Babu, stated:

Yes, it varies on standard from buyer to buyer and from country to country. Here standard means good brands that they hold and the amount of business or volume that they give us. We give them priority who gives us more profits.

In addition, participants further described their language use with another groups of business counterparts who supplied accessories. Bangladeshi RMG personnel were also buyers of accessories. Participants reported that, being buyers, Bangladeshi RMG professionals considered they were in higher positions than their suppliers and sometimes used harsh language if suppliers made any mistakes or delays were experienced. They were “straightforward” in identifying mistakes and asked suppliers to correct them. They usually did not use “soft”, “polite” and/or “submissive” language, reserved for buyers. They dominated their suppliers because they in turn were dominated by their buyers. Some participants provided examples of their language use with buyers and suppliers to show how they treated two groups of business counterparts differently. Ajgor and Pavel, both merchandisers, mentioned they used “soft” and “harsh” language with their buyers and suppliers respectively.

To a supplier I am a buyer while to a buyer I am a supplier. So our tone is changed considering buyers and suppliers. When I request a buyer I write “please look at this today and give me solution within an hour...” or “would you please look at this today...,” whereas when I write to a supplier, I write “you have to do it or delivery it today...”; I cannot write such type of words for my buyers. So our language that means words and tone become inconsiderate and/or polite depending on suppliers and buyers. (Ajgor)

We dominate suppliers, and for dominating suppliers our language becomes little bit different. For example, when I write to a customer, I write, “please advise” or “can you please inform me” while I write to a supplier, I write “please confirm now,” even sometimes I do not write “please” for suppliers. (Pavel)

The above finding, based on interview data, indicates that buyer–supplier relations in international markets deeply influence RMG business staff with English usage in communication. It does not mean that Bangladeshi RMG professionals are rude to suppliers. Rather, they consider buyers to have higher status and communicate with them accordingly. Conversely, they do not consider suppliers as too high in rank. It would seem that the business ‘[a] world within [a] world’ (see Felstead et al., 2009, p. 18) is connected with the global political economy but interlinked with social relationships formed within the economic system, which equates to power.

The above attitude towards buyers may be associated with the current global economy. Existing competitive local and international business markets have placed buyers in a high position compared to Bangladeshi business professionals. Thus Bangladesh is competing internationally with countries that are comparatively economically sound, for instance, China, and India; however new garments industries are being set up in Bangladesh where RMG industries are competing within the same country. As such, competition on both sides – global and local – has made the RMG market highly competitive and serves buyers. This competition has rapidly increased post the economic recession in the USA and the EU, which has force RMG professionals to use their language skills to convince buyers to place orders and/or continue to place orders. One of the directors termed this type of convincing language as “table talk”. He argued that Indians were better at table talk than Bangladeshis in producing quality product. With their “smart” table talk, Indians convince their buyers. However, while Bangladeshis produced quality garments, they were not as skilled in

table talk. He suggested Bangladeshi RMG professionals need to improve their table talk and secure more orders by convincing buyers to trade with them. Sultan stated:

One of the problems in our country is, the professionals speak less than work. We speak less than Indian professionals. They are expert in table talk and grab many orders. But the end of the day, they cannot execute the orders because they are inefficient in work. When buyers understand it, they do not go there for second time

In order to triangulate the above perceived views, I analysed RMG business e-mails written by both local and international personnel and mixed scenarios were reflected. The finding suggests that sometimes Bangladeshi RMG personal were not as polite as they claimed to be in interview. Such discrepancy suggests that the use of language is context dependent, rather than absolute practice. Some sample e-mails written by both foreigners and Bangladeshis appear below. E-mails were analysed from the perspectives of buyers and the supply chain.

Dear Mr. [name]

I got your name from Mr. [name and identity]. We are interested in apparel production in Bangladesh and we are doing research now.

My name is [name], president of [name of the company, place and country]. We are men's apparel company in Tokyo specializing in men's dress style in Polyester 100%, woo/Poly, Cotton 100%, and Cotton/Poly.

Recently, more companies from Japan are getting interested in Bangladesh because price from our current factories in China are getting higher and higher every season.

Therefore, we would like to seem possibility of making our men's slacks in Bangladesh using local fabric and import fabric. We want to start investigation now and get ready to start business in 2011.

What is you biggest customers (USA, Europe)? Would you please tell me if you have any business relationship with Japanese companies already? What is you CMT (cutting, making and trimming) price? What is your minimum order quantity? What is your production lead time? From Bangladesh, how would you ship product to Japan 9in-land transportation and ocean transportation routing and frequency)? Do you do waist stretch mechanism?

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Figure 6.1: Buyer's e-mail from Japan (E-mail 37)

Dear Mr [name]

Thanks for your mail.

Noted the below information.

Please see the attached file for our company profile.

In the mean time we started business with one Japanese buyer [name of the buyer and their product].

The packing is hanging container with suit hanger.

Regarding CM & packing cost, lead time etc, we need original garment sample, fabric details & packing details for costing.

Please see the attached file & fill it up properly for next step.

Regards,

Figure 6.2: Supplier's e-mail from Bangladesh (E-mail 38)

Hello

I'm looking for some prices/quotation on men's trousers. Who do I send samples to for pricing quotations?

Regards,

Figure 6.3: Buyer's e-mail from the UK (e-mail 40)

Dear Mr. [Name]

It was a nice tele conversation with you right now. Tks.

Our all production lines are booked with our existing buyers. So, we could not include any new buyers/programs.

We are so sorry.

Best regards

Figure 6.4: Reply e-mail to buyer by a Bangladeshi marketing person (e-mail 41)

The above four e-mails give a clear picture of two types of language, tone, formality and attitude as well. From the above e-mail messages, it seems that the Japanese buyer (see e-mail 37 in Figure 6.1) was comparatively very formal in using salutations and closing (i.e. *I am looking forward...*). He was also very soft, polite, patient, detailed and enthusiastic in his e-mail message while the marketing person from Bangladesh was relatively informal in giving thanks (i.e. *Thanks for...*), direct in closing sentence (i.e. *Please see...*). He was more likely to be relatively impatient, used short-cuts in language and was less enthusiastic, less organised, and less structured in e-mail messages. This finding seems to contradict the notion that being suppliers, Bangladeshi RMG personnel become polite to their buyer counterparts. Typically it is observed in a business society that buyers dominate suppliers because buyers have more options for buying goods. And suppliers become submissive and polite. Interview data also reveal this scenario. However, the above e-mail messages reveal different scenarios.

The reason for using such features in their language use might be the lack of interest in taking more orders from buyers (see e-mail 41 in Figure 6.4). It is possible

that I coincidentally collected e-mail messages from marketing personnel from those organisations, which were full with required orders at the time of writing this reply e-mail. Consequently, they did not need and also they were not so interested to accept further order from upcoming new buyers to delivery garment goods. This finding suggests that Bangladeshi professionals do not always treat buyers with great respect, considering them to be in a higher position. Instead, the language used depends on context. The following e-mail (indicates a different context from the one above. The following (see e-mail 7 in Figure 6.5) shows that the merchandiser who sent the email, was waiting for an order from buyers and he reminded the buyer, saying “*Still we are waiting for your confirmation.*”

Hi [Name]

Still we are waiting for your confirmation on below order. If you confirm this order by tomorrow (Sunday) then we can manage capacity for end September delivery with 21,000pcs only otherwise we will book capacity by Monday with others order.

Awaiting your quick response by return.

Thanks & best regards.

Figure 6.5: E-mail sent by a Bangladeshi professional to a buyer (e-mail 7)

This finding suggests that the use of language of a supplier with buyers is relative. It depends on the situation regarding particular needs for orders. Although most of the e-mail analysis reveals that RMG personnel, as suppliers in Bangladesh, were usually informal, straightforward and direct with their buyers; personnel who needed

orders or wanted more orders as business were comparatively less straightforward and direct than other Bangladeshi RMG personnel, who could not fill more orders. It seems that language use with customers may be influenced by the relative need for orders. In interview, as mentioned earlier, one of the marketing participants expressed that “*to him [the] buyer means God*”. His words indicate that he needed more orders or he had newly opened his factory. The demographic information of this participant and his company reflect that his business was small. To increase the size of his business he needed more orders and buyers.

As seen in the abovementioned analysis, on being a buyer of accessories, several participants reported they used little harsh language to suppliers if they (suppliers) made mistakes. The analysis of e-mail discourse supports the above reporting. The language in the following e-mails to a Chinese supplier and his reply to a Bangladeshi buyer indicates how the power of a business position can influence language use in e-mail exchanges.

<p>Dear [Name]</p> <p>This time you are very slow Are you know , this is not a new ... ??? [sic]</p>
--

Figure 6.6: E-mails to accessories suppliers from Bangladeshi RMG person (e-mail 25)

<p>Dear Boss</p> <p>Sorry .. many problem happen infactory ...[sic]</p>

Figure 6.7: Reply from a Chinese supplier (e-mail 26)

It may be inferred from these two e-mails that the Chinese supplier was delayed in supplying accessories. That is why the Bangladeshi RMG person, who was a buyer of accessories, used a slightly harsh tone in his e-mail message (i.e. *This time you are very slow*). In reply, the Chinese supplier expressed his apology saying “sorry” for his delay and he explained the reason for the delay (i.e. *many problem happen infactory*). His reply acknowledges he is in the weaker position.

However, not only business positions are considered as a factor in language use in communication, but having relative language proficiency is also seen as a dynamic in communication. The following section discusses how the native and non-native dichotomy of English language influences RMG professionals in communication.

6.3.3 Language positions: “With native speakers, I have to give my best effort and speak as nicely as possible.” Both business and language positions, particularly English proficiency levels of interlocutors (i.e. native vs. non-native speakers) is seen as another social factor that plays a relatively significant role in the use of English with interlocutors. This section presents the perceptions of participants as to how they use English with their business counterparts from different first language backgrounds when English is used as a common language.

As repeatedly noted above, in RMG international business communication, Bangladeshi professionals need to communicate worldwide. In such global

communication with foreign counterparts, English has become a medium of communication, where some people speak English as their mother tongue while others speak English as a foreign or second language. In other words, the RMG personnel need to speak with both native and non-native speakers of English of Kachru's three circles as previously discussed (see chapter two, section 2.2). As a result, the dichotomy of native and non-native speakers of English has become a factor in using English language with business counterparts. A minority group of participants – all marketing personnel – discussed how they talked to partners in relation to whether their counterparts were native or non-native speakers of English. They made their “best effort” to speak properly with a NSE business counterpart considering their high level of expertise in English. They tried to speak as correctly as possible. The native level of language proficiency in English placed their foreign business counterparts culturally in a higher position. They had a higher level of proficiency and speed in English. Consequently, the NNEs Bangladeshi RMG professionals did their best to cope with NSE business counterparts.

Clearly, participants were aware that different proficiency levels of English created unequal communication situations among different speakers of English (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). This finding does not mean that no effort was made by NSE. Instead, they cooperated to develop mutual intelligibility, but they speak quickly, as per their NS norm. As seen in a previous study in the context of Europe, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) show that NSE ‘occasionally attempted to simplify their language use or slow down their speech rate, [but] they tended to quickly change back to their normal level of complexity and speed’ (p. 390). The finding from my study similarly found that Bangladeshi participants noticed that, despite the initial cooperation of the NSE counterparts who

spoke slowly for the sake of mutual intelligibility, the NSE naturally reverted to their native fluency.

Conversely, participants further reported that when they talked to a non-native speaker of English (NNSE), they usually did not give their “best efforts” as they did with NSE. Instead, they talked to their NNSE business counterparts using the “normal flow” of speaking: neither too fast, nor too slow. They considered them equal communication partners in English language use. The participants sometimes speak “slowly” with “short sentences” and without following proper syntactic structures. For example, if they did not come in contact with a business counterpart for some time, they used “long time no see” instead of using a full sentence syntactically. Short sentences easily communicated the meaning they intended, particularly with Asian business counterparts and especially when they avoided using long sentences with conjunctions. Such long sentences could mean “trouble” for some NNSE to understand. Participants even described needing to use “wrong” and “bad” (poor) English in order to function at the same level of intelligibility as their NNSE business counterparts. It appears that for the sake of intelligibility, they often sacrifice linguistic precision (or ‘correctness’) (see Sifakis, 2004, p. 245). However, such misuse of English was not necessarily useful with all NNSE business counterparts, but worked best with Asians. Further discussion on using English with Asians and non-Asians has been presented in section 6.3.4 below.

Moreover, other participants reported that sometimes they expressed the point of discussion elaborately to make their non-native business counterparts understand. To demonstrate difference in language use with native and non-native speakers of English, a marketing person (Saidul) stated, *“So this is the difference that you have to make. A native speaker of English understands by language. But to a non-native speaker of English intelligibility is more important than language.”*

That above statement signals that alongside oral communication with NNSE, RMG personnel also needed to use other means of nonverbal communication, such as gesture, drawing and so forth, to make their NNSE business counterparts understand. Further discussion on the role of nonverbal communication skills is developed in chapter seven (see section 7.3.1.2).

On the other hand, a minority of participants who were particularly drawn from commercial and merchandising units questioned the idea of applying such differences in language use when communicating with NSE and NNSE in the RMG business. They argued they used their usual language and talked in their own way. They did not adapt their way of speaking in relation to the background of other speakers. Why they would not adapt their language use with different types of speakers was not explicitly explained. Instead, they further noted that they never noticed that people spoke differently to different speakers of other languages. It would appear that they had assumed language use should be natural, varying from person to person.

The above discussion suggests that the variations in language use with native and non-native speakers of English probably depend on professional roles, engagement in business and the participant's language position as Bangladeshi. As marketing personnel are engaged in exploring markets by communicating with both native and non-native speakers of English (see Kacuru's three circles of countries with different proficiency levels of speakers), they felt the necessity of adjusting their language use with both groups of English speakers. Consequently, they revised their sentences, words, tone, speed, accents and pronunciation. As English is the mother tongue of business counterparts from inner circle countries, they are in a better position linguistically and may try to dominate NNSE. By dint of their first language status, NSEs are automatically empowered. As Bangladeshi RMG business personnel from an outer

circle country are not equal to them linguistically, they may feel inferior and try their level best to cope with NSE in interaction. One example of their efforts to cope with NSE is by using “stylish English”, imitating NSE pronunciation and talked smartly, which they did not follow with NNSE. Instead, they considered the latter as equals or on an ‘equal footing’ (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012, p. 267). Thus they did not feel the necessity to give their best effort to communicate with them. Instead, they communicated with NNSE using their natural flow of speaking.

This finding suggests that adopting different strategies (i.e. native-like speaking style, words and pronunciation), NNSE RMG professionals tried to cope with NSE and survive in the context, as also found in a previous study by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010, p. 389) in the context of Europe. The finding reflects the hegemonic power of English as seen in chapters one and two (see sections 1.2. and 2.2 respectively). This hegemony of English seems to cause not only linguistic or communicative inequality; in addition the lower levels of proficiency on the part of non-native English speaking people such as the RMG personnel causes feelings of anxiety and insecurity (i.e. losing orders) (see Tsuda, 2008).

In some circumstances, the above finding contradicts earlier studies (e.g. Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). In the context of Scandinavian countries, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), for example, show the perceptions of global business professionals in communication with native and non-native speakers of English, and it was found that business professionals felt more comfortable in communication with NSE than NNSE (see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). With native speakers of English, they were more natural and fluent than with non-native speakers. However, in my study, the RMG global professionals were perceived as more natural in oral communication with NNSE than

NSE. The reason might be that participants of Kankaanranta and Planken's (2010) study were more competent in English than the participants in my study. This finding suggests that the proficiency level of business professionals plays a role as an index to see how they would treat other professionals with comparatively different levels of proficiency.

In the analysis of e-mail messages, nevertheless, it was found there was no significant noticeable difference in writing e-mail messages by Bangladeshi RMG professionals to their native and non-native counterparts. Rather they wrote to both groups of business counterparts following their normal style of writing. This finding is in parallel with the study conducted in Europe by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), who identify less conspicuous difference in written communication to NSE or NNSE compared with oral communication. The differences between written and spoken communication with native and non-native speakers of English may well be due to the effects different accents and pronunciation of English have on spoken communication. In spoken communication, RMG personnel needed to speak and listen instantly, thus they were required to make more effort in spoken communication with their business counterparts, especially NSE. However, in written communication, both senders and recipients had enough time to write and read e-mail messages. Thus, like accents and pronunciation in speaking, they did not need to make extra effort or any changes in language use in their written communication. Rather, they write e-mail messages in their normal and usual flow of communication (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010).

This native and non-native speaking dichotomy in communication is very much related to a geographical phenomenon as well. Here geographical position refers to the place counterparts come from, in particular whether they are Asian or non-Asian in a broader geographical sense. The following section discusses how RMG personnel use

their language in communication according to the geographical position of their business counterparts.

6.3.4 Geographical positions: “We have to go to their level for talking.”

The voices of participants reveal the use of language considering the geographical region of counterparts. As discussed before, Bangladesh is engaged in doing business with people from different geographical zones (i.e. Asia, Europe, USA) who have different accents and styles of speaking due to sociocultural reasons, which largely impact language use in business communication “*to understand and to make people understand*” (see also Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002).

About one-third of the total participants, regardless of three groups of RMG professionals, mentioned they altered their way of speaking according to the geographical location of their counterparts and they used a number of strategies to make their communication easier. However, this variation in speaking and language use differed from region to region with international business counterparts. They reported they diversified “speed”, “words”, “accents” and “pronunciation” in their speaking, considering people from different global regions. In addition, they mixed and switched codes. In this context, most participants talked about East and South Asian regions, especially China, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and India. Several participants informed me they talked to people from East Asian regions, particularly Chinese business counterparts, “slowly” with “simple” English and without “hard vocabulary”; sometimes they spoke with “broken” English and “word-to-word” English instead of “full sentences”. In communication with people from East and South Asia, Bangladeshi RMG personnel did not usually concentrate on grammar, rather they paid more attention to conveying messages by ‘just using words’. Moreover, participants further reported that, to talk to the East Asian people, they sometimes needed to speak with a “lower

standard” of English in order to make their counterparts understand. East Asians were not so good at English and they were weaker in using English than the Bangladeshi RMG workforce. That is why RMG personnel said they spoke slowly with them and it was also comfortable for them (East Asians) to listen slowly. However, some of the participants did not like to generalise and suggested that all RMG personnel from East Asia were weaker English users than Bangladeshi RMG personnel. I assume this impression is based on their considerable experience in dealing with people from East Asia.

In addition, participants also faced problems with understanding English from the East-Asian region. They claimed they considered the accents of their partners from East-Asian regions as challenging. Earlier research also identified that European business professionals also consider the accents of their Chinese and Indian colleagues challenging (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). However, Bangladeshi professionals did not regard the Indian English accent as challenging as that of the Chinese. To understand the messages of their Chinese partners, Bangladeshi professionals claimed they needed to ask them repeatedly, using different expressions (i.e. “sorry”, “pardon”, “excuse me” and so on). Further discussion about expressions not understood has been developed in chapter eight (see also section 8.4).

According to participants, their international partners’ English pronunciation had the “flavour” of their own mother tongue. In the case of those workers from China, Bangladeshi personnel thought this was difficult to understand. In this situation participants stated they sometimes decoded meaning by “guessing” based on the context, because context was familiar to them. In fact, the analysis indicates that linguistic and cultural differences seem to lead to communication difficulties among ELFB speakers (see also Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002) because participants rely on their own

cultural norms and language to interpret meaning (Cogo, 2010). As Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002) noted, in oral communication in a multinational corporation, people from different parts of the world use different “Englishes” and therefore different accents are particularly difficult to understand. Despite communication difficulties due to different accents, they attempted to overcome misunderstandings by accommodating and developing some pragmatic strategies (see chapter eight). The above example of guessing the meaning from the context is one of them. Smith (1992) argues that if members of the English speech community are familiar with each other’s cultural backgrounds, the increasing number of varieties of English would not increase the problem of intelligibility across cultures.

On the other hand, several participants, regardless of their role in the industry, also expressed slightly different views about non-Asian business counterparts, particularly American and NNSE European. They described how they used language with them. They said they talked “fast” and “thoroughly” with European and American clients considering their high level of speaking skill (see, Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005a to see the reason for high standard of English in Scandinavia, p. 402, see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Participants reported that, as Europeans and Americans talked fast, accordingly Bangladeshi RMG personnel also tried to deal with them by speaking fast. Bangladeshi RMG personnel enforced speaking to their non-Asian business counterparts “nicely”. They also discussed that Western people were very “polite” and they were not “rough” and “tough”. In addition, some RMG personnel suggested their fellow colleagues maintain politeness and use simple language.

It is argued in the literature that because of geopolitical development of countries, particularly as a consequence of colonisation by the British, generally speakers of English from Kachru’s outer circle countries (e.g. India, Bangladesh) are

more proficient than speakers of English from expanding circle countries (e.g. China), even in some contexts, their proficiency levels were like inner circle speakers of English (i.e. USA) (Levis, 2005). Consequently, when RMG personnel talked to their partners, they considered where their partners came from. The following statements reflect how they speak to partners from different regions (or circles):

...we have to communicate with different types of people from different regions. When we talk to the people of a Western or European country, we must talk nicely so that they can understand what we want to say. Then we also have to communicate with the people of East Asian region, for example, China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Thailand and Singapore, etc. Whilst communicating with them we have to go below the Standard English. We have to communicate with the people of both zones as we export our materials in western countries and import raw materials and machineries [sic] from South and East Asian regions. So we cannot exclude any region. (Saidul, marketing professional)

However, a small number of participants acknowledged the poor use of English by people from East Asian countries, particularly with the Chinese, but that was gradually changing and the language spoken was improving. The Chinese were becoming more proficient. These participants believed that Chinese employers were now recruiting people who were good at English. Accordingly, some participants considered that East Asian RMG personnel were not so bad in English.

Unsurprisingly, given the finding that most participants showed an awareness of the cultural and linguistic background of those they were doing business with; only two participants, both marketing personnel, described they used Hindi and English language, as code-switching in business communication, when they talked to Indian business counterparts (see also section 7.3.1.3). Such code code-switching was perceived as very effective for exchanging ideas. Additionally, similar English pronunciation and accents in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh was recognised as helpful

for understanding one another's English. Not only language, but also 'cultural similarities' facilitated mutual understanding with other partners, is argued by one participant. In this regard, it is worthwhile mentioning Kirkpatrick's (2011) arguments. He observes, 'When speaking to people who share the same linguistic background, they will naturally code-mix. This is an important way of displaying a shared identity' (p.219). The finding suggests that linguistic and cultural ties with code mixing and understanding across cultures respectively play a significant role in communication in a shared business workplace.

However, a minority of participants, particularly a group of merchandising and commercial officials, reported they did not modify anything in communication. A merchandiser (Mafin) reported they tried to use "friendly words" with customers so they would feel "comfortable". He also said that although "*different buyers from different countries have different types of speaking styles (i.e. fast, slow) we speak to them as we are – neither fast nor slow. We speak slowly if our business counterparts cannot understand us*" (see also section 7.3.4). He further observed that most buyers liked using humour and their senior people addressed them accordingly. Another merchandiser (Pavel) also reported they sometimes talked to buyers using humour – it did not matter to them and they could understand it. Nevertheless, they commented that using words that were meant to be funny made it difficult for the Chinese to absorb because to understand English was a difficult task for them, but humour was beyond understanding.

This finding about the Chinese is similar with the study conducted by Kankaanranta and Lu (2013), who show that oral communication practice of the Chinese is conventionally indirect. Giving examples of Finnish perceptions of Chinese BELF communication, they established the indirect nature of Chinese oral discourse

where it is quite difficult to understand whether Chinese partners understood or not. They needed to ask them repeatedly, to check and ensure their understanding. The above study further reveals that it is also difficult to understand Chinese business counterparts' intended meaning through their oral discourse. This indirectness is seen as a consequence of inadequate language skills (Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013).

As well as making variations considering the regions of partners, interview data further suggest that RMG personnel from Bangladesh changed the lexical choices in their communication regarding the geographical areas in the world and how this affected their communication. For example, although pantaloons, trousers and pants were used interchangeably, Bangladeshi RMG personnel usually did not use those words for all geographical regions. Rather pantaloons were used for Germany and France while trousers and pants for the USA. Similarly, tank top, t-shirt, polo-shirt and singlet were used in the EU and Canada while sleeveless blouse was used in the USA. Again, blouse and lady's shirt were used in the USA while jogging suit was used in the USA and the EU and tracksuit was used in the EU.

Like spoken communication, in comparing sample e-mail messages, it was found that there were also differences in e-mail discourse among those who emailed from different regions. The Chinese frequently used more ellipsis in e-mail messages than others and this could be a personalised writing style. Again in sentence writing, data reports that the Chinese made more mistakes in grammar than senders from other geographical regions. E-mail analysis further reveals that Japanese buyers were more polite and formal in their language and tone than those from other geographical regions who used e-mail communication (see e-mail 37 in section 6.3.2).

Not only region or position but also personal and social attributes such as age, gender and religion of business counterparts were perceived as factors that motivated RMG professionals to use their English in communication with their clients. The following section discusses how these factors play a role in language use in the RMG business context.

6.4 Personal and social factors in rapport management

This section discusses three personal and social factors perceived to be comparatively influential in language use in business communication with RMG business counterparts. The three most prominent factors were: gender, age and religion. In sociocultural competence, as suggested by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), gender and age are considered as social contextual factors (see section 2.5). Although, I acknowledge this is not an anthropological or sociological study of the garment industry, but rather a study on language use considering different personal and social factors, nevertheless non-linguistic factors played a role in determining how participants used English in communicating with their counterparts.

6.4.1 Gender: “I feel interested to talk to a young woman.” Participants were asked specifically, if they made any variation in language use when they communicated with male and female business counterparts. Regardless of three different groups of RMG professionals, one-fifth of the total participants expressed the view that they varied their language use when they talked to female counterparts. It is worthwhile reminding readers that with the exception of one participant, this study featured male participants. In this sense, the views expressed here are naturally male dominated. The finding could be slightly different if more female participants were incorporated here, but due to the limited existence of female participants in executive roles, I could not recruit more female participants, as stated in the methodology chapter

(see section 3.5). When several participants acknowledged the changes in language use, recognising the gender of counterparts, a question was raised: what sort of variation in language use occurs? Some of these male participants described (with *smiling* and *shyness*) that they loved talking to female business partners, especially those that were young or of a similar age, rather than older women. Other male participants informed me that they tried to be “romantic”, “humorous” and “casual” with female counterparts when they talked to them. In addition, they noted they made fun with them as well.

It was observed in interviews that when male participants were talking about the gender issue in communication, they blushed with shyness. They also reported that such “easygoing” business communication with female counterparts depended on their (counterparts’) “relationship status”, “age” and “position”. These participants were young and their ages ranged between 25 to 35 years. They also held midlevel positions in their respective RMG businesses. Some explained the reasons for such a “flexible” manner as a part of human behaviour, while others explained it as a means of “rapport building and taking advantage” in business. Ripon and Ahsan, a senior merchandiser and merchandising manager respectively stated:

When I talk to a young woman, there variation happens. I feel interested to talk to a young woman rather than an old woman. It is part of human behaviour.

(Ripon)

(laugh...)It [considering gender in communication] depends on relation. I usually become casual and funny type with a female counterpart to build up a rapport so that I can take advantage from them. Good relationship helps to take advantage. Relationship helps to do a work quicker. I am not the only one vendor to her, she has other vendors. If I maintain a good rapport with her, she may do my work faster than others. (Ahsan)

Hence, the analysis of data suggests that being young motivates male business professionals to talk to young women casually, with humour and sometimes romantically. Business professionals, who are serious in business, are opportunistic in easy-going relationships with women while others view this interaction as entertaining. Whatever is going on in the minds of participants, language is considered as an important tool for constructing trust and rapport building that enhances organisational credibility (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, 2012). Rapport and trust also minimises power and makes players equal in the global business setting (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Global business professionals need to build rapport with counterparts (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Rhetorical abilities play a role in building relationships in global professional communication contexts (Melton, 2009). This can be called ‘rapport management’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p. 12) through language use in ELF business society or a business community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This rapport management and trust building through language use is taken for granted in global business communication, to enhance the possibility of communicative success.

Nevertheless, there was also another group of participants who considered gender issues in language use with business counterparts but their treatment of women counterparts was different from the above group of RMG personnel. This group of professionals, regardless of the three cohorts in this study, expressed that when they communicated with a lady, especially in oral communication, they were mindful that they were talking to a lady and remained very “gentle” with them. They did not use any strict language as they did sometimes with male counterparts, especially if they got something wrong. Nor, they did not make “humorous comments” with women as some colleagues did. The participants who expressed such experiences were mostly older men

and their age range was over 36 years. These findings indicate that age plays a crucial role in language use in communication with female business counterparts. Being young encourages male professionals to be relaxed with their female business counterparts while being older makes people more mature and gentle in their language use.

While several male participants claimed they used different language forms in communication with female business counterparts, a quarter of the total participants across the three cohorts challenged the idea of making differences in their language use considering the gender of their business counterparts. Instead, regardless of gender, they treated counterparts alike. In addition, participants also provided explanations for their arguments. One of the interesting arguments that one marketing participant (Nayeem) candidly showed is that *“in this business there is no flexibility (in Bangla khatir) with women... it is not our main concern that who is male and female – we do not differ or discriminate”*. Nayeem used a Bangla colloquial word *“khatir”* which denotes an act of kindness or favour to someone. He believed that language use when considering females was one kind of favour to them. It implies that he had presumed that when a man talked to a woman, he usually used soft language in order to show a favour or act of kindness. Based on this presupposition, he observed the RMG sector as a place of business rather than a place of extra support or favour or kindness. He further noted that language use considering gender was a kind of “discrimination”. That is why he argued that RMG personnel avoided it, and irrespective of male and female, they considered all of them as their “business clients” and treated them “equally” in communication. However, another marketing person expressed that, although the use of language was not changed due to gender, their behaviour changed. But he did not explicitly mention how his behaviour changed.

The analysis of data further shows there was a small number of participants, particularly, from commercial personnel, who informed me that they did not have any idea about the use of language from the point of gender differences. They had not thought about this issue before. Why they had not thought about it before was explained by one of the participants, a commercial manager, who noted that he had never encountered any woman business counterparts: *“No, it [change in language use] didn’t happen. I never faced any women buyers”* (Shariar). Analysis indicates that unless facing a particular situation, a business person probably does not have this experience. As previously discussed, since commercial personnel were not so frequently in direct contact with their business counterparts, particularly female, they did not have much knowledge and experience in communication with women.

Nevertheless, some participants further discussed that they differentiated their written language due to gender; for males they use “Dear Sir” whereas for females they use “Dear Madam”. Some other participants dismissed such difference in salutations in terms of gender. They argued that writing “Dear Sir” for male and “Dear Madam” for female counterparts was “old fashioned”. Instead, they wrote “Dear Sir” irrespective of male or female if they were senior personnel, and they were comfortable with this usage. Further discussion on salutations and greetings will be addressed in section 6.5.

In the analysis of e-mail messages, no differences were found in linguistic choice and tone considering gender. Yet, it was observed that a few Bangladeshi commercial personnel used salutations considering gender. When they wrote e-mails to females, they used “Dear Madam” or “Dear Ms X”. Such differences not found in e-mail messages sent by RMG personnel from other countries. Instead, they used the name of the recipient.

In concluding this subsection about gender and grounded in the above findings, language use considering whether the counterpart is male or female is a complex but interesting issue. The above finding is from the male perspective. Yet, the finding suggests that more participants considered that gender is not an important issue in adapting language in interaction than those who supported it. The roles of participants, in particular marketing and merchandising roles, did not play a significant part in their perceptions. Therefore it is very difficult to draw a conclusion in this regard. However, it seems that age is an important factor in the use of language considering gender. Because of age, some but not all young male professionals love to communicate with young female professionals. From a professional point of view, such an attitude seems unprofessional and, from a gender point of view, it probably looks odd.

I acknowledge that this analysis raises some further interesting questions about the gendered structure of the professional side of the RMG industry in Bangladesh, compared with the textile and retail garment industry in some other countries. While in many countries and even in different sectors in Bangladesh many females work in professional roles, but in the garment sector female roles are in the main as workers rather than professionals. The place of women in the garment sector in Bangladesh may play a role in the language use of male professionals with female counterparts from abroad.

Thus gender and other personal attributes, such as age and religion, were seen as somewhat important in language use in communication for some participants. The following two sections discuss how age and religion create pressure on language use in communication with business counterparts.

6.4.2 Age: “Actually we don’t use language considering age.” Age is

sometimes seen as a factor in language use in RMG business communication.

Participants conveyed mixed opinions about language practice in business communication, bearing in mind age as an issue. Several participants (seven) from the three groups of RMG professionals discussed they also considered age of a business counterpart when they talked or wrote to them. In their reporting, with an older person, they usually talked slowly so their counterparts could listen properly. In addition, they tried to show honour by being polite and gentle with them. Their respect was sometimes reflected in their salutations and greetings. With senior people in terms of age, they usually used “Mr” as a greeting, but with juniors they called them by name. The detailed discussions on salutations and greetings have been presented later in this chapter in section 6.5. Even, if an older person did something wrong that was bad for business, RMG personnel became displeased but did not shout at them. Rather they adopted an alternative positive strategy. As one merchandiser said:

It varies from person to person. Suppose, I’m supplying goods to someone who is elder to me but he is not dealing to me in due time, then it will be bad for us. So, maybe I have to be rude to him. But we try to avoid that and we talk to the higher authority that he is senior so we cannot be rude/bad to him, so what can we do? So, then we might arrange a meeting and warn him but we don’t shout to him. (Shamim)

The above analysis indicates that there might be some reasons for considering the age of business counterparts as a social factor of communication, and accordingly RMG personnel communicate with them. One of the possible reasons is Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) that typically manifested in business communication. Moreover, an elder person usually holds a higher position or rank.

While the above participants offered their opinions about acknowledging age as a factor in language use in RMG business communication, a small number from the three cohorts of RMG professionals rejected it. Age was not a factor in language use in the RMG business communication, according to them. As Arif, a director in a medium-sized woven industry argued, *“No actually we don’t use language considering age...”* These participants noted that the way they talked to an older person, is the same way they talked to a younger person. Instead, position or status of a person was much more important. The reason for not considering age in communication might be the medium of communication. Participants noted that most communication was conveyed by e-mail or telephone. Consequently, it might be difficult to guess or ask about age of business counterparts at least initially. In some cases even throughout the conversation the age of a counterpart is not obvious at all. In such cases, it is not a variable, it does not matter.

However, in analysing e-mail messages, no changes were found in linguistic choices and tone considering age because it was quite difficult to infer the age of the sender. Thus, being a researcher, I did not pay attention to the ages of e-mail senders.

Along with age, a small number of participants stressed religion in language use in communication and the following section discusses how religion influences RMG professional in language use with their business partners.

6.4.3 Religion: “It works when we are in the same religion.” As a researcher, I posed the question about whether or not religion was a factor in language variation in communication. Most reported that they did not consider religion as a facet in communion when they communicate with their business counterparts. They argued they *“treat all buyers in the same fashion”* and *“religion does not have any influence”*. While some participants challenged the consideration of religious aspects in business

communication, a minority argued that *“it works when we are in the same religion”*.

They informed me that they addressed their clients following their religion, particularly in greetings. When they talked to a Muslim business counterpart, for example, they started with “salaam” while they used “hello”, “good morning”, “good evening”, “how are you” when they corresponded with people from other religious backgrounds. It seems that religion only influenced greetings with Muslim and non-Muslim business counterparts and it was not so important in other communication. However, in analysing e-mail messages, no visible changes were evident in linguistic choice and tone considering religion.

Data also further shows that apart from positions and personal attributes there are also some other sociocultural phenomena that play a role in language use in business communication. Among these relationships, the target person and situation are worthwhile. The following section discusses these social factors.

Remarkably, participants noted repeatedly that their language use considering sociocultural phenomena of their business counterparts was influential in their choice of salutations and greetings when they used spoken and written communication. The subsequent section illustrates how different positions, personal attributes and additional sociocultural phenomena affected language use in salutations and greetings.

6.5 Salutations and greetings in business communication

It is very common in business communication to greet business counterparts both in oral and written communication – in business letters and e-mails or over the telephone or in face-to-face meetings. Greetings and salutations are important in both verbal and written communication. Any improper greeting may make a business client annoyed, shocked or hurt. This section first illustrates the use of salutations written by

e-mail senders and focuses on types of greetings used by the three groups of RMG professionals that reflect flexibility and personalised nature. Then based on interview data, it discusses how participants feel about the use of salutations in communication, and how they use salutations considering their counterparts, both in spoken and written communication.

The analysis of business e-mails discourse identified 17 types of salutations used in sample e-mail messages as opening greetings. A frequently used opening salutation was “Dear Mr [name]” (30.43%), followed by “Dear [name]” which accounted for 21.73%. In addition, 9.78% messages had “hi [name]” salutations, while 8.69% of the messages had none. The use of different salutations written in e-mails can be classified into different categories (see Figure 6.1). While other studies classified solutions into ‘formal’ and ‘less formal’ or ‘personalised’ (e.g. Joinson & Reips, 2007), this study classified the different salutations used in three categories: ‘formal’, ‘informal/personalised’ and ‘very informal/personalised’. Formal salutations in this thesis refer to accepted standard forms of salutation using formal language, which expresses etiquette with inflexible and official notion appropriate for established hierarchy, procedure or set of specific behaviours (e.g. Dear Mr X; Dear Sir; Dear Madam; Dear Ms X). Informal salutations, however, denote personalised and flexible ones such as Dear X. On the other hand, when salutations are much more flexible and informal they are too personalised or too informal such as “Hello”, “Hi”, “Name only”, “Dear Boss” or no salutation.

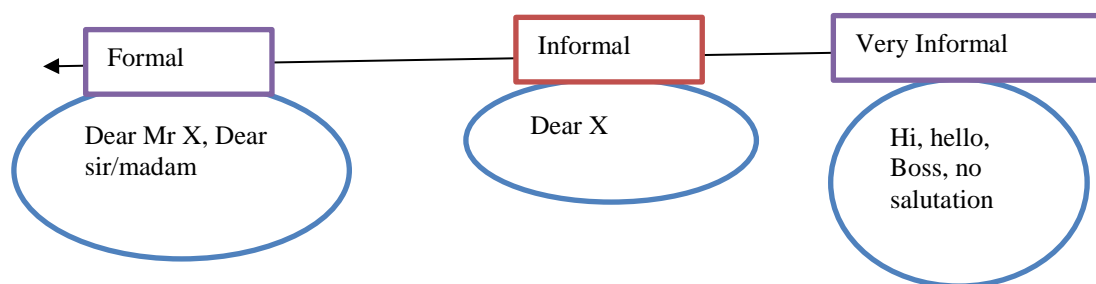


Figure 6.8: Types of salutations by formality

The analysis of data reveals that mostly used salutations were formal (39.13%) followed by very informal (32.61%); and informal (28.26%). Within group, the analysis also revealed that the salutations used by marketing personnel were mostly very informal (38.89%), while salutations used by merchandising and commercial professionals were formal, which accounted for 40% and 75% respectively. Opening greetings used by different groups of RMG personnel are given below.

Table 6.1

Greetings used by three groups of RMG professionals (percentages)

SL	Position of RMG personnel	Formal N (%)	Informal N (%)	Too Informal N (%)	Total N (%)
1	Marketing	5 (27.78)	6 (33.33)	7 (38.89)	18
2	Merchandising	18(40)	12 (26.67)	15 (33.33)	45
3	Commercial	6 (75%)	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	8
4	Supplier	7 (33.33)	7 (33.33)	7 (33.33)	21
	Total	36 (39.13%)	26 (28.26%)	30 (32.61%)	92 (100)

The analysis indicates that merchandising and commercial personnel were more likely to use formal salutations than marketing personnel. As noted earlier, a marketing person is usually an owner or part owner of a company while a merchandiser and commercial officer are employees. They (merchandiser and commercial officers) might have not wanted to jeopardise their employment working relationship or business partnership by making any mistakes, or showing any dishonour to their business

counterparts including the use of salutations. That is why they may have tried to use formal more than informal and too informal salutations.

However, although the analysis reported that merchandisers used less informal and too informal salutations in e-mail messages than marketing personnel, it does not mean that merchandisers did not frequently use informal and too informal salutations with their business counterparts in e-mail messages. Evidence revealed that merchandisers also used informal 12 (26.67%) and very informal 15 (33.33) salutations, mostly with merchandising counterparts. It is noted that merchandisers usually deal with other merchandisers, who hold more or less equal positions in their company, which might be a reason for using informal and very informal salutations in their e-mail messages. Also merchandisers from both sides have worked for a long time with each other. Communication over time can lead to friendly business relations which provokes them to use informal and very informal salutations with their business partners. Nonetheless, commercially personnel used mostly 62.5% formal salutations with their sea freight agent business counterparts, perhaps in recognition of the higher professional status of their counterparts.

I am now turning to interview data. As a follow-up question in in-depth interviews, participants were asked how they address their business clients. In response and in addition to describing language considering different sociocultural phenomena, participants constantly mentioned salutations and greetings in communication. A complex response has come out from participants. They reported a variety of salutations they used in spoken and written communication including “Hi”, “Dear”, “Mr”, “Miss”, “Ms”, “Mrs”, “Hello” “Boss” and “Brother”. Notably, the salutations “Boss” and “Brother” were more informal and very colloquial. They used these for “junior” and “intimate” customers and this also depended on the “situation”. Except for these two

examples, when other salutations were used, it was the name followed by the salutation, for example, “Hi Catherine” or “Dear Mark”.

While some of the participants argued they used “Hi” and “Hello” for oral greetings, others reported they were used in both verbal and written communication, and business clients were not discontent with these salutations. They believed that many “flexible people” were entering this profession who might prefer “Hi”, “Hello” or their “nickname” as a greeting. However, it was also reported that some business clients did not like “Hi” as a salutation but rather they liked very formal forms such as “Mr”, “Ms” and “Mrs” followed by the recipient’s name. Otherwise, it might cause trouble and create an uncomfortable situation for respective RMG professionals. This uncomfortable feeling in language use indicates David Li’s (2002) notion of ‘pragmatic dissonance’ (cited in Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 24). One of the commercial personnel (Sayeed) shared an uncomfortable experience observed in his office. He stated:

Once, one of our executives sends an e-mail to a buyer without writing “Mr” or Mrs or Ms or Madam at the beginning of the buyer’s name. Then the buyer sent an e-mail to the executive asking question “Are you my friend?” Therefore, we ask commercials to consider the recipients when they write to them. We write to a buyer with care. We do not like to make our buyer angry. (Sayeed)

While the above statement supports the use of “Mr” or “Mrs” or “Ms” as formal salutations, a number of participants reported that they did not use these to greet their business clients. They further noted that with friendly people, they wrote “Dear” and to closer acquaintances, they wrote “Hi” or “Hello” followed by their first names. Similarly, two participants (Mojibur and Arif) reported they usually used “Hi” with those business counterparts, who became “intimate” for long-term business dealings, or who were of a similar age. Even if intimacy was “deeper”, they did not write any

salutation, but conveyed the information. In e-mail analysis it was found in some e-mails there were no salutations. The reason might be intimacy between e-mailers.

The analysis further shows that the use of the salutations “Sir” and “Madam” is quite complex. Their acceptance varies from person to person including their choices. Some merchandisers used “Sir” or “Madam” for male and female business counterparts respectively, instead of their names. However, other merchandisers did not write “Sir” or “Madam” but rather they wrote their names after salutation, for instance, “Dear Philip”. In addition, it was also reported that while some business clients felt proud if they were addressed as “Sir”, others took it negatively. Mosharraf, a senior merchandiser in a sweater industry, shared both types of experiences. When he started his job, people in his office valued “Sir” but after understanding its meaning, many considered it like other normal words. He also reported that he faced problems with some Sri Lankan people. They did not like “Sir”. Therefore this salutation among clients and its use by RMG staff is somewhat problematic and complex. Yet one-fifths of participants, irrespective of marketing, merchandising and commercial personnel, reported that they wrote ‘Dear Sir’ for male and ‘Dear Madam’ for female clients while for closer acquaintances they wrote the salutation followed by the recipient’s name, for instance, “Dear Clouse” and “Hi/Hello Clouse”.

To summarise the section, the analysis of both interview and e-mail data indicates that salutations are a very multifaceted, slippery and to some extent risky aspect of business communication, especially if the wrong term is used. It can be formal, informal, or very informal. It could be quite flexible, individualistic and personalised. The use of salutations depends on a number of factors including the role of professionals in the industry, mutual understanding, relationships, intimacy, status and gender. In addition, personalised habits play a role. Over time, as the relationship

develops between business counterparts, salutations become less formal and differences are not so obvious (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Consequently, the use of salutations becomes less significant. Likewise, Kirkpatrick (2007) argues that the register of greeting is a part of cultural convention because language and culture are interrelated. He shows that although British, Americans and Australians are NSE, there are differences in their ways of greeting. People mostly depend on context including the type of people involved and the relationships between them (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Therefore, the conventions of salutation use in the RMG industry cannot be bound by any set rules. Rather, it depends on mutual understanding.

6.6 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to see whether or not RMG professionals, who were engaged in the global supply chain, recognised sociocultural phenomena as important aspects that needed to be considered in ELF business communication. If yes or no, what are the reasons for and against their stance? How does language play a role in considering sociocultural aspects in their interaction? And how do RMG personnel adapt their language with business counterparts who come from different linguacultural backgrounds? The reason for such queries is the conceptual framework for this study where sociocultural competence, as discussed in chapter two (see section 2.5), requires knowledge and understanding of social contexts in which language is used (Pica, 1988). Such competence also suggests using appropriate language considering different sociocultural factors such as roles, status, gender of interlocutors, etc.

As discussed in the findings, with the exception of a minority group, most respondents, regardless of their respective roles in the RMG business setting, acknowledged the necessity of sociocultural facets as normal and a habitual trait that should be maintained when communicating with business counterparts. It was seen as a

business courtesy and needed to be practised as an intercultural business skill. However, not all sociocultural aspects were equally discernible but rather some were prioritised over others. This chapter has explored different positional, social and personal factors that play significant roles in language use in business communication. These factors form a *language frame* and people move between this frame with language codes and strategies to main a level playing field.

As seen in the findings (e.g. hierarchy of positions (see section 6.3.1)), business position in buyer–supplier relations was recognised as an important factor in language use with counterparts (see section 6.3.2). This finding confirms that *business is power* within the global ‘productive system’ (see Felstead et al., 2009, p. 18) is reflected in language use among counterparts. Like business, language is also power (see Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2001; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999b) and in the RMG global business context, the dichotomy of native and non-native speakers of English was discovered as discussed under the subtheme of language positions (see section 6.3.3). As seen, several participants considered NSE as more powerful players in terms of language hierarchy in this business context than NNSE. Consequently, with powerful players, participants used language with care but with less or equal players they used language in their usual way. Participants regarded greater language proficiency as increasing their power. In the RMG business discourse, there were imbalances at proficiency levels among its members, causing inequality and power imbalance as seen in previous research (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

It was also found that Chinese business counterparts were considered weak in English by Bangladeshi participants, while Americans and Europeans were seen as expert users of English. These perceptions might be linked to ethnocentrism. Based on their own language skill and communicative performance as a yardstick, as discussed

above (see section 6.3.3), RMG personnel assessed other language and communicative performance. Accordingly, it cannot be said that ELF is neutral and cultureless as discussed in the literature. As ELF is not without culture, when members of the ELFB discourse community communicate with one another, they are influenced by their own culture as noted above. Their mutual interaction forms a ‘third cultural’ form (Holden, 2002, cited in Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005) which is a *hybrid*. In this third culture, members of ELFB negotiate meaning through taking a pragmatic and flexible approach rather than depending on linguistic correctness (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Despite differences possibly attributable to their own culture, there was little or no evidence of non/misunderstanding in negotiating meaning in BELF discourse practices (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Like other scholars (e.g. Holden, 2002, cited in Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005), this research suggests accepting and acknowledging cultural differences in business as resources rather than constraints. Communicative practices in ELF cultural settings probably form new cultures and identities.

Similar to positional factors, personal and social factors (i.e. gender, age and religion) were seen as determinants, to some extent, in language modification in RMG business interaction. Gender was considered slightly more important than age and religion. Two significant reasons were identified for adapting language with female counterparts. First, young RMG personnel were humorous with younger or similar aged female counterparts. The second reason is rapport building in order to take advantage in business. How different sociocultural factors (i.e. status, gender, and age) play a role in adapting language with different counterparts is prominently manifested in the use of salutations and greetings that range from more formal to more informal or colloquial. Along with different sociocultural factors, relationships over time given the

situation/context can alter this pattern and more formal salutations can become quite informal.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that language use in the RMG business setting is context based and different factors play a role. The use of language cannot be confined to specific rules. Instead, business professionals adapt their language for a specific social context, thereby supporting the arguments from previous research (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Thus RMG professionals in Bangladesh use language appropriately as per the need of the business social setting. The inability to use appropriate language considering sociocultural phenomena of interlocutors causes breakdown in communication.

As can be seen from conceptual framework of the study, along with having sociocultural competence, that is, language use appropriately considering sociocultural phenomena of the counterpart, communicators also need to ensure that language is used in such a way that it can be effective for smooth progression of meaning in respective social settings. Negotiating meaning (interpretability) is perceived as the main target of communication. In the next chapter, we will see how participants recognised and enact different ways of negotiating meaning. These ways can be categorised into two broader strategies: ‘discourse strategies’ (see McKeown, 1985) – the patterns of language use that make spoken and written texts meaningful; and negotiating meaning through ‘pragmatic strategies’ (see Björkman, 2011b; Cogo, 2010) – verbal and nonverbal strategies used to compensate the breakdown of communication and negotiate meaning.

Chapter Seven

Communicating in the workplace: Discourse and pragmatic competences

7.1 Introduction

As indicated at the end of chapter six, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss two broader themes: ‘discourse strategies’ and ‘pragmatic strategies’ recognised as necessary in RMG business communication. In describing discourse strategies this chapter will focus on spoken and written discourse and stylistic features of English language used by RMG personnel. These discourse features are identified from self-reporting experience of participants through interviews without posing any explicit query and through discourse analysis of e-mail messages. The pragmatic strategies discussed refer to both verbal and nonverbal practices. These are used to overcome difficulties when communication breakdown occurs due to limitation of one or more competences (see section 2.5). Pragmatic strategies were observed through in-depth interviews, e-mail analysis plus observation and field notes.

This chapter first discusses features of spoken and written discourses where short, simplicity, politeness and hybridity are emphasised as themes. Following the elements of strategic competence Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), different pragmatic strategies used to achieve communicative goals in RMG global business settings will be discussed. These pragmatic strategies are classified into five major themes discussed below in section 7.3.

7.2 Simple, short and easy: Professionals' perceptions of spoken and written language at work

In interview, participants from all three groups of professionals spontaneously described the nature of language, both spoken and written, used in RMG global business communication. They perceived that language used in oral communication ought to be “simple”, “easy”, “short” and “concrete”, even better, in a “single sentence”. In explaining the reason for simple language in both spoken and written communication, participants reported that RMG business was a busy sector where professionals counted every single moment. There was no scope for longer talks with customers. Companies conducted business with numerous customers, whom they needed to deal with regarding different issues. They also had to solve internal problems. Consequently, RMG professionals did not have much time to talk beyond what was absolutely necessity. Likewise, nobody was interested in wasting time reading and writing long e-mails and letters. Sometimes a message needed to be forwarded to someone who might not be proficient in English, and they needed to interact with business counterparts ‘as easily as possible’. Therefore, for “easy understanding” or communication, RMG professionals needed simple, short, easy, and concrete language so that everybody, including those with a minimum level of English, would clearly understand. Research literature on English in business supports the above findings in various business settings. For instance, Holliday (1995) observes that professionals in an oil company in the Middle East suggested improving language use in oral communication, particularly the need to speak slowly and concisely, avoiding the use of colloquial terms, slang and modifying accents.

As they did with spoken language, participants also raised the issue of y lengthy sentence structure, difficult levels of language, choice of words, politeness and hybrid

features with written language. In describing lengthy written communication, participants underscored that, like spoken interaction, written communication should be “short”, “brief”, “in gist” and with “fewer words” as revealed in previous research (see also Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Participants were of the view that e-mails ought to be “precise” and “definite”. *“If the recipient clearly understands a message, that’s all”*. Two marketing participants described their current writing practice regarding this aspect, stating: *“I write short e-mails mostly with four to six lines”* and e-mails should be *“within 20-30 words, neither too long, nor too short”* (Ershad). The analysis supports the views of these participants in that most e-mail messages were short. Even the sentence length was short. About one-third of e-mail messages (32.61%) comprised only one sentence, while 17.39% were two sentences, 16.22% were three sentences and the rest (34.78%) comprised more than three sentences. The shortest e-mail contained only two words (i.e. *Plz confirm*). The maximum sentence length was 47 words while minimum length was one word (i.e. *Ok*). Such short e-mails and sentences were perceived as very helpful for understanding messages.

This finding is in accord with previous research that demonstrates sentence length has an influence on understanding a text message. Hence, limiting sentence length to about 20 words is recommended (Guffey, 2010). With reference to the American Press Institute, Guffey (2010) showed a correlation between sentence length and the rate of comprehension. For example, if the sentence length is 8 words, the rate of comprehension is 100%, for 15 words (90%), for 19 words (80%) and for 28 words comprehension is 50% (p. 59). It can be seen, then, that longer sentences reduce the level of comprehensibility for readers. Other scholars (e.g. Munter et al. 2003) suggest using short lines, short sentences and/or short paragraphs to help readers grasp the meaning of messages quickly. These studies, therefore, support the finding of the

current study: that short messages with short sentences are very effective for ease of understanding.

However, a small number of participants questioned the specific length of written communication, particularly e-mails – the main medium of communication. They contended that the appropriate length of an e-mail depends on the situation. If the situation that needs explanation is important, it is necessary to write ‘elaborate’, whereas short e-mails are appropriate – even using a single word like “Ok” – if the purpose of the e-mail is served. Therefore, it can be said that the length of an e-mail or a letter in RMG business communication depends on context and cases, but a brief writing style is preferable. Previous business research supports this finding and suggests using language that is ‘brief, and to the point’ (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 256).

Regarding the difficulty level of language used in written communication, some of the participants argued that this should be ‘simple’ and ‘transparent’ so there is no need to write it again, or to call a sender to provide further explanation. Here, ‘transparent’ refers to not using language in a complex way, so recipients can easily understand the message, for example, “*a buyer may think that the dealer is just in front of him*”. They suggested not using ‘complex words’ or ‘out of fashion language’; rather it should contain ‘simple words’. It seems that “*the easier the fashion of conveying is, the better it is*”. In addition, participants particularly stressed not using the same words repeatedly, because it makes writing boring. Instead, they recommended variety in chosen words so as to make a good impression. In this case, RMG professionals advocated having a good knowledge of vocabulary. This recommendation is consistent with the finding revealed through e-mail analysis described below.

The analysis of e-mail messages showed that the difficulty level of e-mail language was low. The messages were written succinctly in simple and plain language (i.e. *pls contact our senior merchandiser for style/order request*), focusing on the main information and direction, so recipients could understand the message without confusion. Some senders even used fragments instead of full sentences (e.g. *Otherwise more problems will happen*) but the expressions were plain. Long sentences did not complicate or become confused messages because the words that senders usually used were familiar to recipients. There was no use of flowery language (i.e. language with similes, metaphors). However, e-mail messages where technical terms (e.g. *Dk. Indigo*) or measurements (e.g. *5.00-oz*) were used were quite difficult for outsiders to comprehend, being unfamiliar with such terms and measurements. Similar results were found in other, previous studies (see Gimenez, 2000; Kirkgoz, 2010). Kirkgoz's (2010) study reveals that e-mail messages are brief and compact, using simple sentences focusing on the necessary information and urgency of the work. Similarly, Gimenez (2000) shows that, in business e-mail messages, business professionals have a liking for short sentences over long and elaborate ones. A contributor to *The Economist* suggests using internet language to 'get to the point' and to not use flowery language (Anonymous, 1996).

The analysis of interview data further shows that one of the marketing people (Dulal) indicated how best to commence written communication. He reported that unlike in the past, today there is no need to start a letter or message using "with due respect" or "humble submission" or other such old-fashioned language. Instead, writing should be straightforward and direct. This participant advised against using, in business correspondence, language that reflects colonial subservience that is still taught in primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh. However, due to innovative technology

and exposure to other cultures and globalisation through the Internet; in the workplace professionals very quickly adapt to the new writing culture and are able to get rid of colonialist language and expressions. In examining the opening sentences in e-mail messages, it was found that 70 (76.08%) e-mail messages launched straight into the desired communication purpose, such as providing required information or a request, in the first sentence (i.e. *Samples sent today*). The previous research supports this finding and with reference to Finland-based corporations, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) rank three factors in successful international communication, where “directness” is one of the prominent characteristics.

Another feature that some participants asserted is to use “polite” language in writing that might attract customers. According to them, if the language was not polite, then people would not be able to “make a buyer happy”. The analysis of e-mail messages shows that most messages (70.65%) had different types of politeness such as “please/pls/plz”, “would like to”, “could”, “request”, “look forward to”, “sorry”, “kindly”, “Thank you very much”, and “we will appreciate for”. In characterisation of successful international communication, previous literature also shows that politeness is an important factor for effective business communication (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Interestingly, one of the prominent discourse features of RMG language is its “hybridity”. Albeit no participants reporting in interviews said they used a “hybrid” (see Munter et al., 2003; Rowe, 2010) form of language in communication; in email messages, however, it was found that language was hybrid in nature. Hybrid form here is used in the sense that the e-mail is a written genre, but its language style is conversational. Although literature (see Brown & Yule, 1983b; Bygate, 1987; Cutting, 2011; Gimenez, 2000; Habil, 2010; Munter et al., 2003) suggests there is a difference

between spoken and written language, e-mail language is very similar to spoken rather than formal written discourse. Following the spoken features outlined by Cutting (2011), analysis of this study has identified the following spoken features in e-mails displayed in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1
Types of spoken features in written discourse

SL	Types of colloquial expressions	Number of e-mails 92	Examples
1	Using Abbreviations (standard, nonstandard, and intra-official)	71	Info, CMT, tekstil, Chk
2	Giving informal thanks	5	E-mail 20: <u>Thanks</u> for your cooperation.
3	Initial clausal ellipsis	20	E-mail 61: <u>Noted.</u> <u>Waiting</u> for your confirmation
4	Contraction	10	E-mail 21: We are worried with this order and <u>don't</u> want to waste time in no case.
5	Low initials	18	E-mail 56: <u>do</u> (sic) you already have an overview of the total in stock please?
6	Improper punctuation	34	E-mail 28: Day time I should work in factory ...[one space, then two dots, no period at the end]
7	Deixis determiners	2	E-mail 80: <u>This</u> style is to be part of the campaign.
8	(Too) Informal expressions	5	E-mail 15: <u>Hope</u> you are fine.
9	Discourse Markers/ fillers	10	E-mail 22: <u>By the way</u> , Pls clear me final decide of 48/48 /4..
10	Improper space in writing	4	E-mail 30: We are still working on it ...[after space three dots]
11	Vague quantifier	1	E-mail 25: He need [sic] to do <u>lot of</u> work for production.
12	Informal salutations	30	E-mail 28: Dear <u>Boss</u>
13	No punctuation	1	E-mail 45: Samples sent <u>today</u>
14	Capitalisation	11	E-mail 75: ALSO NOTE FINAL ORDER QTY IS 9,300 YDS FOR THE STYLE.
15	Word omission	35	E-mail 53: yes [I] understood.
16	Vernacular grammar/ Syntax	10	E-mail 36: You below mentioned delivery schedule is workable even it is tight.
17	Paralanguage	17	E-mail 63: So pls follow submitted swatch for color <u>±</u> quality

The data presented in the table above demonstrates that abbreviations, ellipses, word omissions, using short names, contractions, and discourse markers are quite common and customary in e-mail texts used in RMG business communication. These features are considered to be linked with informal and unplanned written discourse. At the same time, the above stylistic features are also fairly analogous to colloquial language, which is far from the language used in formal business letters. Although the use of abbreviations and colloquial or conversational expressions are markers of poor and non-standard language used in formal written communication, those are quite acceptable in e-mail communication (Gimenez, 2000). The register and stylistic preference in language use depends on an established relationship between the sender and recipient of e-mail messages (Gimenez, 2000). This 'hybrid' form is not only reflected through a mix of spoken and written genres but also through formality and informality in e-mails in writing the subject in the subject-line (i.e. *Fatigue sweater color standards*), opening and closing greetings and salutations (i.e. *hi; rgds*), and writing opening and closing sentences (i.e. *Sorry for late; Thanks for your cooperation*). However, such hybrid forms of language did not hamper negotiating meaning, but negotiating meaning rather it facilitated the normal progression of meaning.

As seen in the literature chapter (see section 2.4), there are some contextual features of BELF, such as simplified English and hybrid discourse practices, that are worth mentioning here. The participants in this study repeatedly stressed the importance of using simple English in business communication discourses, both spoken and written. The e-mail discourse reflects this easy, simplified English comprising short sentences and simple words, rather than complex words or complex language and long sentences. The finding also demonstrates some grammatical mistakes in communication but these have little consequence. Similar findings were revealed in the study in Europe

conducted by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), who showed that interviewees constantly emphasised the value of using simplified English with fellow NNSE. They hardly used idiomatic expressions, complicated phraseology and complex sentence structures (see also Qiufang, 2012 from ELF teaching perspective). This language use indicates *clarity* (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) of communication plays a role as the most important factor of successful communication in BELF settings (see also Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Although in the previous chapter we have seen that participants showed greater linguistic competence with NSE compared to NNSE, their ultimate efforts was to convey messages as simply as possible regardless of native and non-native speakers of English. Previous research further shows that with particular partners, politeness is more important than clarity, and even with some audience directness should rank first (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Thus, the above language features are necessary, but the comparative prominence is contextual and situational.

In conclusion, this section has so far discussed discourse features as perceived and practised as appropriate and suitable for both spoken and written communication in the RMG business sector for negotiating meaning. The findings stress simple, easy, and short language that is easily understood. However, the question is posed, if people lack sufficient skills in language, or if communication breakdown happens for any reason, what do people need to do to continue communication and negotiate meaning? In this instance, ELF speakers apply “pragmatic strategies” (see Björkman, 2011b; Cogo, 2010). As mentioned earlier (see section 2.4.2), the pragmatic strategies are termed as strategic competence – a component of communicative competence. The subsequent sections will discuss pragmatic strategies used by RMG personnel in oral communication, in particular, and provide some evidence that strategies are also used in

written communication to facilitate or keep communication channel opens when communication breakdown happens, as a consequence of limitation of language proficiency, or for some other reason.

7.3 Pragmatic strategies in intercultural business communication

The identified strategies can be classified into five themes: 1) achievement strategies 2) time-gaining and self-monitoring strategies, 3) interactional and collaborative strategies, 4) tempo of speech and 5) proactive strategies. The first three strategies have been suggested by the concept of strategic competence outlined by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), as discussed in the theory chapter, while others (i.e. tempo of speech, proactive strategies) emerged from the collected data. It is noted here that some of the strategies, in particular elements in speech events, occur simultaneously, but for the purpose of discussion these strategies are considered separately.

7.3.1 Achievement strategies Achievement strategies are perceived as the most commonly used pragmatic strategy in the RMG international business communication. These strategies ‘involve manipulating available language to reach a communicative goal and this may entail compensating for linguistic deficiencies’ (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 27). It includes circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means, restructuring, word-coinage, literal translation from L1, foreignising, code-switching and retrieval (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). The different achievement strategies that were practised and perceived as required in the RMG business communication are discussed below.

7.3.1.1 Approximation. Analysis of interview data shows that approximation was the first step that RMG business professionals applied to continue communication. Approximation refers to ‘using a term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical

item as closely as possible' (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991, p. 18). A large number of the participants from all three groups of the RMG professionals (marketing, merchandising and commercial) stated they used "synonyms" or "similar words", "alternative words", "substitute words" or "phrases" to explain something to their foreign counterparts when they (RMG professionals in Bangladesh) could not find appropriate words and terms. For example, a participant said, "*I use similar words; for instance, I use word 'sensitive' instead of 'meticulous' "*" (Masum).

However, whilst others did not give examples, a small group of participants thought that alternative words should be used in such situations to continue communication. They presented the following rationale to explain how they dealt with the issue of having only a limited vocabulary in a foreign or second language. For example, a marketing person (Saidul) said,

When a person cannot recall any word in a conversation, he must try to find out alternative words because everyone doesn't know every word of English. So, in that case, he should use the word which has the nearest meaning to the word and which will express the meaning properly.

Another participant argued that as English was not their mother tongue, it was essential for them to 'prepare' adequately for communication with counterparts. Despite being well prepared, if communication breakdown occurred due to insufficient competences or performance variables, alternative words could always be used.

Such self-reporting reflects that approximation use in different forms, such as synonyms, similar words, alternative words and phrases, were frequently used as a pragmatic strategy in RMG business communication and played a role in communicative effectiveness. It seemed that professionals who were engaged in business communication needed skills in approximation to overcome communication

breakdowns. Analysis of data further indicates that to apply approximation as a strategic competence, RMG personnel needed to be sound in vocabulary, synonyms and phrases so they could deploy these to prevent miscommunication. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Cogo (2010), who showed that the closest expression (approximation) is often used as an effective pragmatic strategy in an ELF context.

7.3.1.2 Nonverbal/Non-linguistic skills. The need for nonverbal or non-linguistic means of communication is well-established in intercultural and business communication literature (e.g. Ferraro, 2010; Lustig & Koester, 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010), and recognised as a part of successful business communication (Ferraro, 2010). These skills involve ‘a subtle set of non-linguistic behaviours’ (p. 198) which are a part of the communication process (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Hall (1959) refers to nonverbal communication in business as a ‘silent language’.

Analysis in this study reveals that non-linguistic means were widely used in RMG business communication. A number of participants from all three groups of RMG professionals reported they applied a range of non-linguistic means of communication to convey messages when necessary. Among these non-linguistic means were: pointing, showing real objects, drawings sketches, writing on paper, showing pictures, gestures and giving examples. Pointing was perceived as one of the important strategies which greatly supported oral communication. One of the participants reported that when a buyer talked about “shoulder stitch”, he pointed to a shoulder stitch, which clarified the meaning. Another example was given by a marketing person (Ershad) about how one of his colleagues, who had been working in their company in quality management for more than 25 years, used to explain an issue by pointing. He was not skilled in English but skilled in technical knowledge. He used to explain technical aspects of garment goods to customers by pointing with little English: “this point”, “that problem” and so

on. His pointing strategy meaningfully aided him in successful communication with customers and compensated for his limited English skills.

In addition to pointing, sometimes real objects were shown to explain something specifically. Several participants, particularly professionals engaged in the merchandising role, stated they could communicate with customers by showing real products/objects as samples to give clearer understanding during oral communication. In addition, sometimes they also needed to draw a sketch to show a topic or write a message on paper to clarify. This mostly happened regarding quality aspects. Participants further explained they sometimes used pictures to illustrate a complex issue relating to a garment while talking to partners face-to-face or on Skype. Also, gestures were used to support their verbal communications. As one of the merchandising participants (Mafian) explained, different verbal and nonverbal means of communication are used in RMG business communication:

When we talk in a meeting with buyers, we usually talk about a sample or a product. If we are not able to retrieve any word from our memory, we show our sample or product and explain them what we mean. Sometimes, we use gesture to make them clear. It is not necessary to talk to them with a decorated language.

One of the participants commented that occasionally they used examples to explain a context or situation or abstract idea to their business counterparts when essential. A merchandiser, for example, explained to his customer the reasons for a delay in delivery of a shipment due to political unrest, which is a common feature in Bangladesh. This participant once faced difficulty in explaining to his buyers the reason for a delayed delivery. He was able to remind his business counterpart about what had happened in the previous year. Through this example, he wanted to convey that this year

the shipment would also be delayed due to *hartal* (strike) in the country. Hence, this worked as an innovative strategy to communicate with business counterparts.

The strategies of using nonverbal skills to aid communication applied in spoken and written discourse. In e-mail analysis, RMG personnel were found to be using some nonverbal means of communication that can be termed ‘paralanguage’. Of the 92 e-mails analysed, in 17 (18.48%) e-mail messages paralanguage was found. The types of paralanguage used included dots (...), a slash (/), question marks (???), a plus sign (+), hash sign (#) and <> sign. Examples of paralogues used in written discourse are shown below in Table 7.2. Because of the shared knowledge in the RMG industry, in most cases the meanings of such paralogues are quite obvious, for instance, hash sign (#) signifies number.

Table 7.2
Nonverbal means of communication in e-mails

SL	Examples
1	E-mail 6: Please note our best price \$10.08/pc (Without any commission).
2	E-mail 24: We are looking on it for delivery ...
3	E-mail 25: Are you know , this is not a new ... ???
4	E-mail 47: ...one for care and the other with factory ID #,
5	E-mail 63: So pls follow submitted swatch for color + quality
6	E-mail 88: Consignee (if to <<order>> please indicate) address should be in your all BL draft.

The above analysis in fact reveals that pointing, drawing sketches, showing pictures and displaying objects in oral communication plus paralanguage in written communication were commonly used as non-linguistic means of communication in the RMG business along with other forms of communication. Indeed, these non-linguistic/nonverbal skills are inseparably linked with verbal skills. These findings are consistent with Ramsey’s (1979) claim that, ‘Verbal and nonverbal behaviours are

inextricably intertwined' (p. 111) to compensate for breakdown in communication.

Some of the above findings are also consistent with other studies (e.g. Björkman, 2010; Björkman, 2011b) which show that pointing is a pragmatic feature when used in the ELF environment.

7.3.1.3 Code-switching, restructuring and circumlocution. ELF literature (e.g. Cogo, 2009; Jenkins, 2008; Klimpfinger, 2009) suggest that code-switching is a common phenomenon in ELF settings. While code mixing and code-switching are seen as interference errors, in ELF contexts these are seen as bilingual resources (Jenkins, 2008). As discussed earlier (see section 2.4), ELF scholars (e.g. House, 2012; Jenkins, 2008) contend that ELF speakers are innovative in English in that they use their multilingual resources, along with English, to create their preferred forms for communication. Similarly, Cogo (2010) demonstrates that translation or code-switching is often used as a pragmatic strategy in the ELF context.

Compared with other 'compensatory' strategies, code-switching to L1, restructuring, and circumlocution or paraphrasing was used in business communication as pragmatic strategies. Two participants, a merchandiser and commercial officer, reported that when they were not able to remember appropriate words in English, they would instinctively use Bangla words while speaking. However, when they realised that their counterparts did not understand Bangla, they stopped talking Bangla, switched to English and started restructuring sentences using similar or 'easier' words. In their opinion, the frequency of such situations was not common and they consciously avoided it, considering international partners' inability to understand Bangla.

Interestingly, a somewhat different experience was reported by a female marketing participant. She reported that she sometimes used Hindi along with English

with Hindi speaking Indians as discussed earlier (see also section 6.3.4). When they used Hindi simultaneously with English as a *temporary shared code*, it was not uncommon to mix and switch codes because both parties were familiar with both types of codes/languages. Accordingly, she reported that code mixing and switching was frequent in conversation with her Indian partners. This finding indicates that she deliberately used code-switching and mixing with partners with whom they shared a common linguistic heritage. It appears that participants used code mixing with partners as multilingual resources as Jenkins (2008) observed, and it can be considered as a hybrid form of communication that is influenced by both English and the interlocutor's own mother tongue (see, e.g. Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Interestingly, while Hindi is the mother tongue of many Indians, many Bangladeshis use both English and Hindi) as foreign languages. This forms a type of 'hybrid' language in which their mother tongue is entirely absent. The reason behind using Hindi with English, rather than Bangla, was possibly to please counterparts and build rapport.

Although interview data reflects that code-switching to L1 is a little used pragmatic strategy in RMG business communication, code mixing and switching are common phenomena for Bangla speakers in their daily communication, in both spoken and written contexts, both in and out of the workplace. They frequently use English codes with Bangla language as hybrid varieties (see Alam, 2009; Banu & Sussex, 2001a). Banu and Sussex (2001a) have researched the nature and extent of business names and descriptions in code-switching from English into Bengali. It was observed that even in interviews conducted as part of this study, participants were using different English codes – both technical and intermixed randomly with Bangla. The reason for infrequently (rather than frequently) using code mixing to L1 with partners might be conscious avoidance. They were aware that their partners did not know Bangla,

however, when they spoke to native speakers of Bangla, so they mixed English with Bangla.

Another pragmatic strategy that participants indicated was the use of circumlocution – the use of more words than necessary to express an idea or to say something. As a merchandiser Aazim said, *“If I have to say ‘front pocket’, but I cannot remember it, in this situation, what I say to indicate pocket, is ‘between these two sleeves’”*. When they used circumlocution, they also used nonverbal means of communication to facilitate meaning.

The above findings show that despite a limited scope in code mixing, code-switching, restructuring and circumlocution, they used those pragmatic strategies to continue communicating. Most importantly, the finding shows that ELFB speakers do not cease communication as a consequence of limitations in competence; rather they find ways to keep oral communication going and ensure meaning.

7.3.2 Time-gaining and self-monitoring strategies. Stalling or gaining time during conversation is seen as another pragmatic strategy that assists in overcoming communication breakdown. Among these strategies are fillers, hesitation devices, gambits, self and other repetition. The self-reported practical experience of participants, regardless of functional roles performed by the three groups of RMG personnel, shows they sometimes gained time by using strategies such as fillers, short silences or pausing to continue their communication with counterparts. A filler is a widely used strategy to gain time in communication and avoid a breakdown in communication in the RMG business setting. In their oral communication, both face-to-face and over the telephone, they used different types of fillers such as “you know”, “like this”, “ya... aaa...” “I

mean”. A minority of participants in marketing and merchandising acknowledged that they used fillers mainly due to their limitations in English language skills.

In addition to fillers, self-repetition, that is, ‘speakers [who] repeat their speech in ways that can enhance the clarity of expression’ (Kaur, 2012, p. 593), was widely used in conversation, particularly in ELF talk (see Cogo, 2009; Cogo, 2010; Kaur, 2012). From my observations during interviews, I noticed that participants who gave interviews in English repeatedly used fillers and self-repetition in their oral communication. These were used not because of ‘tension’ or pressure, but rather because of limitation in English proficiency, particularly for not finding appropriate words and limited fluency at the time of conversation. Some examples of fillers and self-repetition used in a telephone conversation with international counterparts are shown below. This telephone conversation between a marketing person and a German buyer, in English at the time of interview, was digitally recorded with the permission of respective participants.

1 ...we are checking also...checking also, let you know, let you know.

2 L/C was not open yet, yet, but...but

===== [conversation of an international partner]

3. No...no...no...no need.

4. We will submit amendment..aaaaaaaaa

5. Mr Rahman (Pseudonym) is coming...he will talk to.

===== [conversation of an international partner]

6. So...but...yes...yes...

7. yeah...yeah...last time you told me...

8. I understand....I-I-I will see see the inquiry.
9. Did you send it to me by e-mail...please send e-mail
- ===== [conversation of an international partner]
10. Ok...ok...ok...brother.

The above telephone conversation reflects numerous self-repetitions (i.e. *let you know, let you know; but...but; No...no...no...no; Ok...ok...ok* etc.) made by the Bangladeshi professional to continue the conversation. Such repetition is occasionally used to clarify expressions and enhance interpretability. This finding is parallel with Kaur (2012) study, where she demonstrates that self-repetition or saying something over and over again enhances clarity in ELF talk and plays a crucial role in meaning. The above conversation also reflects the use of fillers (i.e. *aaaaaaaaaaaa*) to plug conversation gaps and give feedback (i.e. *yeah*) (see Cogo, 2010; Cogo & Dewey, 2006) and show attentiveness in communication. Along with fillers, some participants reported they used short silences or paused to gain time to find suitable or alternative words to continue the communication. One participant (Shariar) shared his experience of how he took a short pause to remember a word in order to continue. He explained:

Well, I pause or keep silent, then try to generate the idea to fix the word in the sentence. Then I try to manage the situation saying “I will try to make you understand that ...”, in the meantime I generate the words and manage the situation.

Another component of strategic competence is the self-monitoring strategy, which includes self-initiated repair and self-rephrasing (over-elaboration). Two participants demonstrated using self-monitoring strategies. A merchandising participant (Mredul) remarked, “*In these cases I try to use another simple word that he will*

understand or I explain a bit on that topic. If that also does not work then he tells me to e-mail him to explain”.

The above narrative also indicates that e-mails are another pragmatic strategy used to support negotiated meaning because it permits more processing time as compared to speaking. Most participants, irrespective of their position in the industry, reported that if anything was wrong or unclear over the telephone, they would communicate by e-mail. They believed that communication depended on many things. If the speaking of one person did not match with the understanding of others, the communication would not be effective. In that case, they thought, it would be easier if a person communicated in writing because people have different accents in different regions for oral communication that occurs instantaneously, causing breakdown in intelligibility. However, they were unlikely to encounter problems with the written form because they gained more ‘processing time’ to construct their language. An example from a merchandiser (Mosharraf) illustrates this point. He explained that sometimes he continued his conversation by saying “*Ok, no problem, I’ll send you e-mail*” and later he explained his point to them electronically. Sometimes counterparts also asked RMG professionals to send them an e-mail to make the point or convey the message.

Moreover, in order to avoid misunderstanding, after each meeting and discussion, they exchanged e-mails, checked and re-checked messages and confirmed. They termed it “meeting recap”. If they did not understand any points in the message, they asked for clarification. This suggests that asking for clarification is a pragmatic strategy, not only in oral communication, but also in written communication. This finding accords with the findings in a study conducted in the BELF context by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), who show global business professionals’ practice of checking and re-checking for understanding and confirming by e-mail after

meetings. Also sometimes they confirm issues with subsequent phone calls. Ensuring intelligibility by clarifying meaning in both spoken and written messages seems to be crucial in business communication.

Among these strategies, it seems that fillers were strategies that gave the speaker a small amount of time to comprehend and communicate while sending an e-mail or making a phone call are strategies for gaining a greater amount of time. Analysis also suggests that sending an e-mail or making a phone call were often the last options to compensate for any communication breakdown. Another point revealed from the analysis is that regardless of gaining time, RMG professionals had to devise unique means to compensate for any communication breakdown in the interests of their business. Similarly, self-monitoring strategies are also used, but not as much as strategies used to gain time.

7.3.3 Interactional and collaborative strategies. Interactional strategies are a component of strategic competence that includes appealing for help and negotiating meaning. The latter includes making requests for repetition, clarification, confirmation, expressions of non-understanding, interpretive summary, rephrasing and comprehension checks (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). This section discusses the interactional strategies that participants employed in RMG business communication with their business partners.

Most of the participants reported that it was not uncommon that sometimes they were not able to understand the words of their business counterparts. In such situations they asked them to repeat the point. How did they make these requests and what types of language did they use when they requested repetition? Participants stated that they usually made the request by saying: “pardon” or “sorry”. Sometimes, they added other

words to express their misunderstanding, for instance, “pardon me”, “excuse me”, “sorry, I don’t understand”, “sorry I did not get you”, or “I did not get it clearly”.

Analysis also reveals that several participants were comparatively direct in making requests to their business counterparts to repeat unclear messages in conversations. In their requests they also used a variety of expressions such as: “*sorry, please explain this*” or “*sorry, please tell again*”, “*again please*”, “*please say again*”, “*would you please tell me again*”, “*can you please explain it again*”, and “*please rephrase it*”. Alongside these requests, some participants reported they sometimes used “*sorry boss*” or “*excuse me, boss*” that reflects informal expressions in the business setting. It also reflects a colloquial language. A few participants reported they also asked for confirmation of meaning. If they did not understand any of the words used by their business partners, they sometimes rephrased words of their business counterparts and requested their confirmation, saying “*Did you mean that?*”

Similarly, a request for clarification is another interactional strategy often practised in RMG business communication for negotiating meaning. Participants explained they mostly faced difficulty with understanding accent and pronunciation with their Asian business counterparts, particularly with the Chinese and Koreans as discussed earlier. To overcome this barrier they would present their request for clarification to their Chinese business counterpart by merely repeating their questions. A merchandiser (Masum) said that he needed to ask a Chinese partner a minimum of three to four times to be clear about his point, or use a clarification query or a request such as, “Why did you take this?”, “Why didn’t you do this?” “What would be the change?” and so forth. Nonetheless, in spite of these examples, it did not mean that Bangladeshi RMG professionals always faced such a challenge with all Asian partners.

Instead, with people from some countries, they did not have to face such challenges as frequently.

In addition, a small group of participants, particularly commercial and marketing professionals, reported that in some cases, if they were unable to manage any of their customers or if they experienced difficulties in coping with their clients, they asked for help from their colleagues, or referred the problem to a senior, more experienced colleague. It would appear from this finding that communication with international counterparts must be kept open at all costs, even accepting help from others or referring the customer to a more expert colleague. Along with internal support from colleagues for communication, mutual efforts from customers and buyers were also seen as a rational, collaborating strategy that supported mutual understanding between participants (Cogo, 2010). A number of them, particularly marketing and merchandising personnel, expressed their satisfaction with the cooperation of their counterparts. They reported that their counterparts were always cooperative in communication and they helped to retrieve words or terms and supported them to understand a message. As one participant reported “...we [both groups] are cooperative to each other to make sense of a message”.

Thus it can be seen that participants emphasised “mutual efforts from both sides” because both parties aimed to do business by selling and buying garments, rather than displaying their “credentials” in English. They tried to minimise their ‘language barriers’ (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b) across different work contexts through effective dialogic exchange. Both parties try to understand each other, being aware of each other accents and pronunciation. They ensured mutual intelligibility through active collaborative negotiations and ‘cooperative principles’ (Widdowson, 1990, p. 108).

While both parties helped each other to get the sense of a message, some participants felt that the main responsibility in making sense was always with the dealers. Yet, if there was any mistake, it could be easily solved by communicating mutually, as it was related to business and profit issue. They considered that making mutual intelligibility was not a big deal.

The above analysis suggests that asking for repetition, clarification and collaborative support are common pragmatic strategies as far as achievement of understanding is concerned. Both ELF and BELF studies have shown that in ELF communication these interactional and collaborative strategies are used in negotiating meaning (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011; Widdowson, 1990).

Apart from different strategies discussed above, participants also pointed out certain additional strategies that potentially facilitated overcoming communication breakdown. These strategies emerged as new from the findings of the current study. Among these strategies are tempo of speech and proactive strategies. While tempo of speech is followed during oral communication, proactive strategies are followed as pre-planned steps *before* communication to prevent problems of understanding between interlocutors. The subsequent section discusses these strategies in more detail.

7.3.4 Tempo of speech. Tempo of speech refers to an ‘appropriate’ rate of speech and is employed as a pragmatic strategy to ensure intelligibility between interlocutors. The analysis reveals that deliberate slow speech was seen as a strategy in RMG business communication, which assisted in preventing breakdown in communication and supported smooth communication with counterparts by increasing intelligibility and negotiating meaning. About one-fifth of total participants reported they usually spoke slowly to their business counterparts, irrespective of whether they

were native or non-native speakers of English, but tempo was especially important with non-native East Asian customers. It is noted that participants believed that if the conversation went slowly, the Chinese people would feel more comfortable and be able to gain meaning. Similarly, other non-native speakers, particularly from European countries, such as French and Spanish customers, were also considered as ‘slow’ but clear speakers of English (see also section 6.3.4). Participants believed that ‘fast’ speaking caused difficulty for these EU partners to understand a message. Indeed, many NSE, particularly from the UK and the USA, can speak English but it could be too fast to understand. In fact, people from different countries had different levels of speaking fluency or speed, proficiency and style. Yet, for reciprocal understanding, most participants believed they spoke slowly with their partners who came from different language and cultural backgrounds. However, it was also reported, as discussed earlier (see section 5.2.2), they observed the level of fluency of their counterparts and accordingly talked to them as per expectations and needs of partners. Overall, the tempo of speech used by RMG personnel indicates that the speed (slow/fast) they use in conversation is relative, and largely dependent on context.

7.3.5 Proactive strategies. Proactive strategies – taking steps in *advance* to deal with an expected difficulty, are also often used to avoid breakdowns in communication and to facilitate the communication process. Proactive strategies that also can be termed ‘proactive work’ (see Björkman, 2011b; Mauranen, 2006) include employing skilled manpower, being linguistically skilled in English, engaging an interpreter to aid communication and also working in teams. Recruiting skilled manpower, a policy that is widely practised in successful business communication, can be seen as a proactive strategy. Several participants, particularly marketing and merchandising personnel, argued that for international communication with foreigners

the management of RMG industries employed those people who were skilled in communication. It was applicable not only for industry from Bangladesh, but also for industries from foreign countries. A marketing person (Seraj) argued that over time the communication skills of RMG personnel have generally improved, so that now most people who were employed could understand English well. Both local and international business industries employed skilled professionals to handle customers. This finding also indicates that being mindful of the needs of the global competitive business market, RMG industries try to employ those people who are ready to communicate in an increasingly globalised world. As such, a recruitment step can be a precautionary proactive strategy in and of itself.

Unsurprisingly, a minority group of participants considered that to manage buyers in the international communication one or two experts were enough (Harun). However, some others dismissed this argument as discussed earlier (see section 5.2.3) and instead argued that RMG business was expanding and becoming more competitive. Consequently, employing one or two expert English language executives or manpower was not enough for international communication. In addition, departments in the RMG sector were interconnected. Therefore, the business organisation required more people who were proficient in English. That is why marketing personnel reported that when recruiting and selecting new employees, employers scrutinised the prospective employees' expertise by assessing their English communication skills as well as previous experience.

Teamwork is another proactive pragmatic strategy that facilitates understanding and communication in business. Participants reported that they worked in a team in business negotiation meetings. If someone in the team failed to understand their counterparts, other persons in their group, who understood, explained it to the rest. This

finding reveals that RMG personnel viewed business communication quite professionally while working in teams. Accordingly, they took prior steps to prevent breakdowns in communication. Working in a team and employing expert professionals in communication reflect their professionalism as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

The final proactive strategy is employing an interpreter. At least two participants reported they sometimes employed an interpreter for communication between interlocutors from two different language backgrounds. This interpreter might be a Bangladeshi or a foreigner, worked as a middleman to convey the message to both parties. A participant (Hirok) said, “...*We have some Japanese buyers; they don't say even 'yes' or 'no'.*” *They bring interpreters and depend on them*”. However, they acknowledged that resorting to engaging an interpreter was rare. To them, since English is widely used in global business communication, most business professionals know English. Yet, engaging an interpreter was seen as an alternative option of last resort. Studies have reported that in cross-cultural business communication the use of an interpreter or mediator is common practice, according to Welch, Welch, and Piekkari (2005). The finding from this research, however, suggests that conducting business negotiations through engaging an interpreter or translator has become an outdated strategy in this industry, and accordingly, hiring an interpreter, keeping them ready and engaging them in communication is regarded as an infrequently used proactive strategy in cross-cultural business communication.

7.4 Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with two major themes: discourse strategies and pragmatic strategies that are used and required in the RMG business setting for negotiating meaning as part of effective communication. The discourse strategies focus on how to

use language and what type of language needs to be used in both oral and written communication, while pragmatic strategies highlight the use of different verbal and nonverbal means of communication that facilitate communication and provide support to keep the communication process open.

In discourse in both spoken and written communication short, simplified and hybrid forms of language and politeness are revealed as the predominant and preferred features of RMG business discourse. The above analysis also suggests that ELFB communication is a shared repertoire of linguacultural resources used in RMG business communication for mutual understanding through active engagement in a business community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Although professionals used their strategies in their own way, both parties in the business community engage in these practices to help understanding (see, e.g. Cogo, 2010).

This study also identified a number of pragmatic strategies to keep the communication channels open at times of difficulty in ELFB contexts. Among these strategies some are used to explain a message to counterparts while others are used to understand messages from counterparts. On the other hand, some are used at both ends – buyers and suppliers. In light of the above discussions, it can be said that achievement or compensatory strategies, and gaining time and self-monitoring strategies are used to clarify a point or message to business counterparts while interactional strategies, tempo of speech, and proactive strategies are used for both – to clarify and to understand a message.

There is no doubt that ELFB speakers in this case study research are highly innovative and creative (e.g. House, 2012) as discussed earlier (see section 2.4.2). It also supports the notion that ELFB speakers used multiple strategies along with

linguistic skills in meaning making. The notion of communicative competence suggests that linguistic competence is not separate from strategic competence; rather both are inextricably intertwined and only a combination of the both competencies can facilitate effective communication. It also suggests that limited linguistic skills cannot be a barrier to intercultural business communication. Even when people have such limitations, the requirements of the business are such that they have to find ‘ways around’ their limited skills. The needs of the business in context instigate business professionals to find alternative or supportive ways for communication that may contribute to new knowledge. In this study as well, it was found that RMG personnel used a range of innovative nonverbal (i.e. pointing) and proactive strategies (i.e. working in a team) to overcome communication breakdown.

In this study, while the previous chapters discussed the specific language used, this chapter has shifted the focus to pragmatic strategies that compensate for weak language skills. The types of strategies identified and the adeptness with which these are used, suggest that being able to operate in the RMG business requires people who can easily switch language but also be adaptive; arguably these are the skills or attributes associated with professions and professionals (see definition by e.g. Evetts, 2006). I will discuss the RMG business, from the perspective of what the people regard as the professional skills needed in this industry for business communication, in the following chapter.

Chapter Eight

Communicating in the workplace: Professional skills and their Development

8.1 Introduction

Business communication is a complex process which requires an intricate set of skills. As analysis and investigation advanced, it became apparent that participants were distinguishing different but interrelated skills: English skills and professional skills. The analysis suggests that RMG personnel develop or have knowledge specific to the profession, along with expertise and experience, which makes them communicate more effectively. Although this chapter focuses on professional skills, I acknowledge that they cannot be considered separately from English communication (i.e. linguistic, sociocultural, discourse and strategic skills), because they relate to professional performance displayed through the use of English. Thus both professional and language skills together play a significant role. They can be termed ‘professional and career skills in English’ – a set of skills that facilitates a professional to be successful in his/her professional and career development. English skills alone seem insufficient because English is merely the medium of communication in the professional world of globalised business.

Drawing on analysis from interview data collected through open-ended interviews, the purpose of this chapter is twofold: 1. to outline professional skills that participants deemed as crucial for RMG business communication and 2. present them as three sub-themes: *interpersonal*, *business specific knowledge*, and *workplace experience skills*. Another purpose of this chapter is to describe how, and how far, university education equips graduates (as prospective professionals) with the necessary communication skills that meet the needs of RMG business as perceived by participants.

This latter purpose addresses the third research question: How do RMG professionals perceive the congruence between university education of English and the English communication skills required in the workplace? (see section 1.3). This chapter starts with describing professional skills and follows with participants' perceptions of university education as preparation for professional employment in a global business.

8.2 English in interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills refer to personal attributes of a professional to interact in order to 'get a job done'. It is a set of abilities to work in collaboration with other people as part of a team or as a team leader. Participants recognised that persuasion skills, confidence and courage, negotiation skills, presentation skills, attitudes and manners and skills management are necessary for RMG business communication. I categorise these skills as interpersonal skills that are seen as vital in business communication (Giunipero & Percy, 2000) and they are interrelated. In the following subsections, I discuss three interpersonal skills as they relate to business (i.e. persuasion, confidence and negotiation) that appear most prominent in the voices of participants.

8.2.1 English in business persuasion. In any business communication, persuasion is seen as powerful and decisively important (see DiSalvo et al., 1976). It also greatly helps to motivate others. The need for persuasion skills is increasing more than ever before in today's business world (Conger, 1998). Persuasion is an interactive process rather than an event; it is 'widely perceived as skill reserved for selling products and closing deals' (Conger, 1998, p. 86). Having been persuaded is the end result of the persuasive process in which the forms of expression are critical (Bülow-Møller, 2005). The aim of this section is to describe how persuasion plays a role in business communication and how English contributes to convincing clients to sell goods without deception. Some scholars see persuasion as synonymous with convincing, while some

other does not (e. g. Gilsdorf, 1986). I have used both terms synonymously because participants in this study used both terms in interview when discussing these processes.

Like many other business organisations, in the RMG corporate sector, professionals identified convincing or persuading skills as important communication tools. As this sector needs to explore markets for its garments worldwide, RMG personnel need to persuade business counterparts in relation to a range of business tasks including getting orders, reordering, increasing price rates and so forth. Moreover, if they face unforeseen problems (e.g. a shipment delay or changing the date of delivery), they need to communicate with customers and convince them that the business process will be completed. In such situations, “convincing skills” or “convincing power” is considered indispensable. Among the three groups of the RMG personnel, marketing staff placed more emphasis on persuading skills in the RMG business communication because of their role in the industry. For example, in emphasising the importance of convincing skills, a marketing person (Ershad) stated, “*There is no other way but to convince buyers ...we try our level best to convince them with our language*”. Therefore, convincing a buyer is a vital factor in RMG business communication and language skills play an important underpinning role.

In illustrating the role of language in convincing business counterparts, participants suggested being “chatty” and “eloquent” with customers along with other skills. One of the marketing participants considered convincing skills as a kind of *Chapa* [Bangla word], which refers to illocution. However, it was also observed that not all buyers had the same or similar personalities and traits. They reported that some liked ‘chatty’ talk while others did not. Therefore, participants suggested RMG professionals needed to gain some understanding of their counterparts first by observing them for a

certain period of time, and accordingly communicate with them using appropriate language to be effective and persuasive.

Speaking with correct English was seen as another important tool to convince customers as discussed earlier in chapter five (see section 5.3.1). Although it was shown that several participants did not consider grammar to be an important matter, as long as messages were conveyed effectively. However, when it came to a more sophisticated level of communication or when the focus of communication was on convincing someone, grammar was seen to be important. A merchandising manager (Ahsan) working in a foreign buying house believed that correct English helped “*to convince buyers – being confident that what I say about my product will help buyers to understand*”. He indicated that grammatical accuracy (in speaking) increases the level of confidence that others have and this increased confidence in turn supports him in convincing buyers. Here the position of the English user in the industry is important. For instance, marketing personnel are involved in convincing buyers; therefore, not surprisingly, more than other types of personnel, marketing personnel perceive that grammatical accuracy is more important for persuading buyers.

This finding reflects the hegemonic power of English. The participants perceived that those who speak English well feel superior to others who speak English with less accuracy, and this empowers them to be persuasive with his/her interlocutors. This influence is particularly manifested in the RMG business setting. However, it does not mean that only language skills play a role when convincing buyers. Ahsan added that language skills along with quality product motivate RMG professionals to persuade their customers. Therefore, a marketing person (Dulal) recurrently reported that people who had convincing skills along with other skills had good prospects in this industry.

The other skills mentioned by Dulal and quite a few other participants were approach and presentation skills. A company may produce a quality product but if the approach of its professionals is not good, it may not attract customers. Instead, there is a possibility of existing customers leaving that company and placing their orders elsewhere. Style of approach is undoubtedly helpful for building rapport with clients and it is an asset in running business for the long term. That is why several merchandisers emphasised approach and presentation skills and urged personnel to learn them. Previous studies recognised presentation skills as an essential facet in the workplace and suggested higher education curriculum includes the teaching of such skills (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Pittenger, Miller, & Mott, 2004)

Convincing skills were seen as essential, not only in spoken, but also in written communication. More than a few participants, regardless of their role in the industry, explained that professionals needed to have convincing skills in their written communication as well. According to them, the RMG sector required a good level of writing skills where convincing skills played an important role. It was their belief that language could play an important role in convincing buyers and hence using convincing language in written communication. One of the merchandisers shared his experience of troubleshooting with one of his customers by using convincing language (persuasion):

Once I faced a problem and I wrote the respective person saying that ‘you are so cooperative...’. It is a convincing language. Then I wrote the problem and sought her cooperation to overcome the problem. My convincing language helped me to get her supports to overcome the problem. (Ajgor)

To summarise, the above arguments show that language is considered as a potential instrument that can motivate customers. Such a finding is supported by previous studies (see Gilsdorf, 1986; Giunipero & Percy, 2000). For instance, to

identify a set of skills necessary for a world class purchasing/supply management professional and to ascertain which of these skills are most important, Giunipero and Percy (2000) reveal that influencing or persuasion is one of the top ten skills in the world class skillset. As RMG is a global business, it is therefore, necessary for its professionals, in general, and marketing personnel, in particular, to learn how to persuade customers with the power of *correct English*, simultaneously producing and reinforcing the quality of garment products.

8.2.2 English in establishing confidence in business. Confidence in this study can be seen as feeling or believing in one's ability to speak without hesitation and/or with conviction. As discussed previously (see section 5.3.1), there is a relationship between grammatical accuracy and confidence. If people are afraid of making mistakes, it is difficult to be a confident speaker fluently (Jones & Alexander, 2000). Fluency is seen as an indicator for measuring personal confidence (Collins, 2009). Likewise, lack of confidence acts as a barrier to speech (Songsiri, 2007). Business literature also suggests the need for being confident at an appropriate level – neither too little nor too much in business communication, because too little confidence causes nervousness and over-confidence produces negative reactions (e.g. Krizan, Merrier, Logan, & Williams, 2010). Here I demonstrate how participants perceived the need for confidence in RMG business communication, where language proficiency is a factor.

The analysis of data shows that several participants, particularly those from marketing and merchandising groups, were mindful of the significance of having confidence in speaking English in RMG business communication. They expressed their concern about this dynamic by using different expressions such as “courage is important to deal with buyers”, “self-confidence to speak English is needed”, “he [RMG professional] should have confidence...” and so on. Analysis also reveals that level of

confidence can be developed in two ways: 1. building knowledge and skills in using accurate English with fluency in communication, and 2. having experience over time in the workplace. But both are inseparable. A marketing person (Asraf) described how experience over time facilitated confidence in speaking English.

Initially we felt shy, uneasy and anxiety [sic] to speak to foreigners thinking that if my language was right or wrong. If some knows better English than me, he might laugh at me. Now I am confident to talk to foreigners. I do not consider whether I am using wrong English.

It may be common for RMG professionals to have less confidence in communication with foreigners at the early stage of their careers, as they did not face these issues in student life at university. My observation, as a lecturer at a public university in Bangladesh, shows that a large number of Bangladeshi graduates from different universities are not fluent in speaking English due to lack of confidence rather than their knowledge of English. This may be a consequence of current practices of English language teaching in the classroom. A further study would need to be conducted to explore this conjecture fully. Nevertheless, I am well aware that in most of the education institutions from primary to tertiary level in Bangladesh, it is perceived that English language teaching is “examination oriented” where the emphasis is on writing rather than speaking. And the English curriculum does not encourage students to speak English because there is no speaking assessment. As a result, students feel shy when they start speaking. It is due to lack of confidence and courage. When these graduates come to industry as professionals, they bring their long practised conventions (i.e. they should not speak unless fluent) with them, and this makes them shy or lacking in confidence and courage. However, after coming to the RMG sector, they acquire more confidence in using English, especially in speaking English through experience in the workplace. Hence, it could be argued that the educational institutions should support

this transition to a professional level and work in global businesses by encouraging students to practise speaking skills that may help them in their future professional life. If people become more skilled, they become more confident communicators (Kelly & Watson, 1989).

8.2.3 English in business negotiations. The core activity in a business context is negotiating business deals (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Negotiation is a special type of social interaction (Jensen, 2009), which can be defined as a ‘communication process, characterized by the exchange of information, arguments and strategic manoeuvres’ (L. L. Putnam & Jones, 1982, p. 172). Negotiation abilities in business are increasingly acknowledged as essential skills in the workplace (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1988). This becomes problematic when negotiation takes place in language other than the speakers’ language. What aspects do they need to consider in business negotiation through English? How do participants regard the importance of these skills?

A small number of participants demonstrated the need for negotiation skills to negotiate with buyers and suppliers. One of the marketing personnel (Dulal) stated that RMG professionals had to “have capabilities in price negotiation” because the skill in price negotiation was perceived as a significant factor in business profit. A minor variation in negotiation can make a big difference to profit and loss in business. Participants, particularly marketing and merchandising, suggested negotiating with customers very carefully and identified some techniques. The use of language and understanding clients’ psychological point of view were recognised as influential factors in business negotiations. Giving examples, Masum observed that Japanese buyers expected praise, “oily words” and behaviour. On the other hand, the UK buyers were seen as not expecting such types of words and manners. He commented that with UK buyers, there was no room for emotion and emotional talk; instead they focused on

the working relationship and task at hand. This finding appears problematic because it is quite challenging to generalise the cultural behaviour of a nation based on perception of one participant. However, the view expressed reveals that language in negotiation should be used following psychological expectations and cultural phenomena of counterparts.

In this regard, Ghauri (2003) shows three variables in business negotiations: background factors, process factors and atmosphere factors. Process factors have three dimensions: cultural aspect is one of them and language as a part of culture plays a significant role in business negotiations and varies from culture to culture. Consequently in business negotiation, the RMG business professionals need to use language considering cultural aspects of counterparts as discussed in chapter six.

To summarise this section, it can be said that a set of interpersonal skills, such as persuasion, negotiation and confidence, are necessary in communication in RMG professional performance. All these skills are achieved through practise and experience. While marketing people emphasised consistently the importance of convincing skills, managing skills, business attitude, manner and negotiation skills, merchandising personnel stressed presentation and negotiation skills. On the other hand, commercial personnel put much more emphasis on attitudes and manners. The skills that marketing personnel emphasised are very much related to their job responsibilities. They need to negotiate, convince and manage buyers. For successful communication with buyers such interpersonal skills are necessary and the nature of this is dictated by what they do or their positions. Finally, people's job responsibilities work as a determinant factor for selecting skills and competencies needed for communication with business counterparts.

8.3 Business specific knowledge and skills in English

Apart from language skills, a small number of participants (five), particularly marketing personnel, emphasised the need for business specific knowledge and skills. They explained that language skills alone are not enough unless RMG personnel have knowledge of a product and business context, which is supposed to be expressed through their verbal and written language. From the viewpoints of participants, it seems that business specific knowledge and skills refer to knowing the names of different garment goods; individual parts of each product; skills in calculating cost and profit; the business environment; and finally technical terms/jargon words used in this sector. This section discusses the first two aspects: business specific knowledge and calculation skills, while technical terms/jargon used in this sector were previously discussed (see section 5.4.2).

Participants who perceived that business specific knowledge and skills were needed alongside language skills in order to be effective in this field gave a number of different reasons as to why these skills aided their professional role. One reason was the combination of both English skills and RMG business specific knowledge and skills that could make RMG professionals more able to deal with customers efficiently. They observed there were many people who knew English very well and could explain something to someone, but if they did not know the product, it was very difficult for them to talk and communicate in this industry. Thus technical knowledge of the product along with language skills made a person a good RMG professional. Consequently, participants suggested being experts in the product before talking about manufactured goods to a customer. These participants were describing what others in the literature have termed ‘know-how’ (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). The term refers to knowledge of business, knowledge of the organisation and knowledge of the

issue that is an element necessary for global business communication. In my study, participants reinforced the finding of the literature that there is no scope for professionals to avoid learning this soft skill, ‘know-how’.

Another aspect of technical skills is calculation skills or numeracy skills. Calculation in this context refers to the ability to estimate expenses on different aspects of garment products including cost of accessories, labour and freight, and accordingly to guess profit. Thus it is a cost and profit calculation in English. One of the marketing personnel (Dulal) considered this skill as a part of business skills and underscored this attribute as a factor for success or failure in business. Dulal observed, “*In merchandising, two things are very important: one is English, another one is calculation ability*”. He further reported that in a simple calculation, people may lose or gain 50 cents per item, which becomes a huge amount of money if the whole deal is considered. Therefore, he suggested having good skills in calculation. It was also reported that in the RMG sector merchandisers were usually engaged in calculating costs and profits. If they made mistakes in calculation, this can cause severe loss in business. Therefore, loss and profit calculation largely depend on merchandisers and they “should be good in calculation”. Sometimes, they need to calculate quite fast, even in a meeting or in front of a buyer. Hence, they need to be careful in calculation and in translating their calculations into English, making no errors with the use of numbers.

Despite the technologised world of the 21st century, it was interesting to note that language and technical skills were more emphasised by participants than practical computer skills. Previous research suggests that having computer literacy is an important competence in the ELF business setting (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010), but no participants in this study explicitly reported the need for computer skills. I assume they might think that in today’s business world, to have computer skills is *taken*

for granted for global business. Accordingly, it was not necessary for them to mention the need for computer skills. Rather participants went beyond computer skills and highlighted the importance of writing for different purposes and recognising different types of e-mails and how to use appropriate language in e-mails as discussed in chapter seven (see section 7.2).

The finding in this section indicates that for successful communication with customers along with language skills; RMG professionals also need to have a sound knowledge about garment goods and calculation skills and overall knowledge of the specific business context. It is also noted that although several participants emphasised the need for technical knowledge and skills of products and different issues, marketing personnel accentuated technical skills. The reason might be their experience as a key person in the industry. Overall, RMG business specific knowledge is imperative in effective communication in this industry. These results are consistent with those of other studies (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010) as discussed earlier in the literature chapter (see section 2.4.4) and suggest mastering business-related issues that form the grounds of business effectiveness. Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) argued that if both parties have a shared knowledge about the area or topic of business, it makes BELF communication smooth. Accordingly, the current research maintains that like any other business context, the RMG business community need to be experts in their respective business domains.

The question is how do people learn these business specific knowledge and technical skills? All participants acknowledge that gaining practical experience through work is the main source and the base of these aspects of learning. The ensuing section discusses how participants evaluated practical experience in RMG business communication.

8.4 Practical experience as a great factor

While I was interviewing, regardless of their position, participants were constantly emphasising practical experience. They argued that experience is a valuable soft skill that greatly facilitates business communication. While many of the participants argued that good knowledge in English is sufficient to handle international customers, irrespective of their native and non-native speaking, others challenged this claim. They believed that a person with a good level of English language skill in speaking but inexperienced in the RMG corporate sector is not so effective in communication, while a person with average levels of English language skill in speaking but experienced in RMG business is much more effective. That is why a commercial manager (Mojibur) said, *“I think having knowledge about English is not enough, experience is a big factor”*.

How and why experience is important and valuable in RMG business communication was explained by many participants. They reported that experience facilitated them to become used to dealing with different accents and pronunciations of people from different countries with different languages. As one participant said *“...the more experience one gains, the more easily he can understand the different accents of foreigners”* (Hasnat). How experience is supportive in managing a business counterpart was explained by a merchandiser (Masum). He observed:

Merchandisers need to know how to approach to a buyer technically, how to be easy with them [buyers] and make them easy in a situation, how to make good relation with them. Of course this will not come over a night. Gradually it will come through experience.

In addition, lack of experience might cause loss in business. Yakib, a marketing person with more than 16 years' experience in RMG business communication pointed out that sometimes lack of experience acted as a barrier to understand client's

instructions and vice versa, which caused loss in business. He indicated that although English is necessary in business communication, without experience, communication can be hampered and the outcome may not be positive. Thus, experience is a crucial part of this business to ensure success. As Yakib continued:

Sometimes, due to lack of experience, they [business counterparts] cannot understand what we want to make them understand and without understanding they give us topsy-turvy decisions which sometimes cause loss in this business.

To overcome such situations, along with accents and pronunciation, some participants suggested RMG professionals need to become familiar with jargon words and abbreviations used in the RMG sector, as discussed earlier in chapter five (see section 5.4.2). To them, a person having garments speak could understand what others said about garment related matters. It was difficult for novice staff to understand garments language, for instance, what is meant by “front drop” or “back drop? However, when a buyer asked an experienced counterpart about these aspects, he would easily understand. Participants argued that it was not a language problem, but rather a technical problem which was gained through experience. Owing to the importance of experience in RMG business communication, employers usually required experience from job seekers in the RMG industry and checked the job seeker’s prior performance where he worked before. Consequently, one of the marketing professionals (Asraf), also an employer, suggested constant practise of speaking English through work that would increase experience, and experience would facilitate good communication.

While several participants highlighted experience as a valuable communication tool, one of the merchandising staff (Hirok), with more than six years’ experience in the RMG sector, challenged that experience alone could not make people skilled in communication. He observed there were many people in the RMG sector with much

experience and who technically were very strong, yet they were not able to communicate orally. He indicated having at least a minimum level of English language skills along with experience to communicate effectively. Similarly, a marketing person (Harun) argued that experience would not lead to effective learning without educational qualifications. In his opinion, on the one hand, the RMG professionals needed to have experience; on the other hand, they needed to have academic qualifications that developed English skills. The combination (English skills plus experience) made them skilled in communication for this global business.

Grounded in the above analysis, an argument can be drawn that practical experience is undoubtedly a valuable skill in communication and it is very supportive for interaction with business counterparts. More experience develops more skills in communication in this sector. However, in a workplace that has global engagement, it is difficult to see English skills and experience as separate in ensuring successful communication. Instead, as a safeguard for effective communication in the RMG business setting, it is necessary to combine both skills and apply them in context. It is not an issue to combine both skills in order to achieve effective communication. A relationship between university and industry can play a significant role in preparing work ready professionals with required English skills and experience. Apart from this, educational qualifications along with communication practice in the workplace can integrate both skills and ensure fruitful communication in the RMG business industry. How RMG professionals learn and develop their professional skills and use of English at work is discussed next.

8.5 Workplace learning: An approach to professional skills development

As discussed in the literature review chapter, workplace learning (WPL) is an important trend for organisations (Matthews, 1999) to develop knowledge and skills of

staff. It is regarded as quite different from university or formal school or college learning (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003; Tynjälä, 2008; Tynjälä, Välimaa, & Sarja, 2003). It provides functional and procedural knowledge relevant to professional understanding, and equips students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in relevant contexts (Smith & Betts, 2000).

Participants from three groups of professionals (marketing, merchandising and commercial) reported that they learn and develop their English communication skills informally in the workplace following the learning approach of ‘learning by doing’ or ‘learning through doing’ under the cooperative guidance of senior colleagues rather than through formal training. Participants termed such training as “on-the-job training” (OJT), or “Home-site training”. One of the merchandising participants said: *“I personally have not received any formal training from my organisation. I have learned through working...day by day”*. This finding suggests that everyday practice help them to develop their communication skills. The results of this study will now be compared to findings from previous research. As discussed in the literature chapter, workplace learning may happen both formally and informally, but in the case of this business sector, workplace learning was mostly informal in nature (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003). As discussed previously (see section 2.6), researchers of WPL have identified that learning happens at workplace in a number of different ways and everyday experience enriches each worker’s competence and skills (Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003).

New graduates to the RMG sector were treated rather like apprentices and received informal training, as was explained by a number of participants (see Figure 8.1). A merchandiser in a buying house reported that his company managers did not usually engage a newcomer in communications with buyers initially. Instead, they provided the graduate with a few months’ informal training in learning to understand a

buyer's case-load and roles by keeping the graduate in the communication loop, both verbal and written, taking place between the experienced buyer and their suppliers.

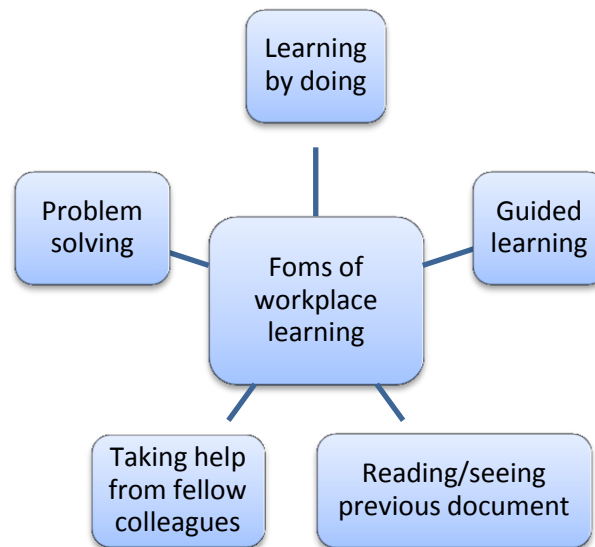


Figure 8.1: The existing forms of workplace learning in the RMG industry

This informal training and guidance of new entrants to the sector by more experienced colleagues resembled a form of OTJ apprenticeship learning. How novice employees or ‘apprentices’ were kept in the loop and being trained about dealings with business counterparts was illustrated by participants. A merchandiser reported that when management arranged a buyer meeting, they ensured the attendance of newcomers at the meeting so they could learn how conversations and negotiations took place. Similarly, when the management sent an e-mail to a buyer, they sent Bcc to the newcomer and later asked him what he had understood. After a certain period, when it was deemed that the apprentice was ready to communicate, they were engaged in communication with their counterparts.

Some of the participants described how they paired-up newcomers with a senior colleague, who showed them how to communicate, how to deal, how to write and how

to converse with a buyer. A marketing person (Monir), a director in a RMG industry, described how he trained his employees through a form of grooming:

When my employees send a mail to someone officially, they send me a CC. I check their language and ask them to correct it. My people are not expert in everywhere like grammar, sentence etc. Sometimes, before sending mails they show me their draft mails. Though merchandisers, or employees or commercial personnel make a lot of mistakes, and I have to correct them all, in such, I provide a form of informal training to them. It is one sort of sharing that for the sake of my business, for the sake of our future.

A group of participants, especially commercial personnel, described how a commercial executive learned about work expectations in the early stage of their career. They explained that commercial personnel learned their role and activities by observing how experienced personnel performed these tasks, accepting help from other commercial executives, and reading previous documents. They reported that a new commercial executive would observe how his senior colleagues wrote letters, e-mails, filled out different forms, and how they talked to different people and organisations. Accordingly, newcomers tried to write, talk and fill out forms in similar ways. If they faced any problems, they initially tried to solve that problem by themselves with their wisdom and skills. If the case was beyond their control, or if they did not understand a case, they sought the help of senior colleagues. Likewise, previous documents of communication also helped them to know how to work and how to communicate with people. Usually all documents were filed on a computer storage system or in a manual file. The newcomer visited and read the previous documents and learned how to work. A commercial manager (Sayeed)) described the process of workplace training to his new junior colleagues. He reported:

When a newcomer comes, we teach him everything. If I give him a template [of different documents such as commercial invoice, L/C, bank certificate, forwarding letter etc.], he will not be able to work alone. We have to give him hands-on training. They learn through work.

This finding suggests that apart from university education, workplace learning and training play an important role in communication skills development of beginner employees in the RMG sector. In this way, a newcomer gradually becomes skilled in communication and in dealing with customers.

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), two of the most well-known proponents of a social learning theory applied to workplaces, describe how apprentices learn through socialisation in a community of practice. Through the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation', Lave and Wenger (1991) focus on the relationship between learning and social engagement. Learning takes place in social situations through socially situated activity. In the later work, 'Community of Practice', Wenger (1998) demonstrates how a 'community of practice' enables a learner to gain knowledge and skills in close interaction with and guidance from more experienced and expert workers. When new work begins, a novice remains in a peripheral position in terms of access to the community of practice and engagement and an understanding of accepted knowledge and skills being practised. Over time, through working, observing, imitation, sharing experience-based stories and active participation in a community of practice under the guidance of expert workers, s/he becomes a competent member of the community. Being a member of the community of practice, they experience how other members talk, walk, work, interact, do, and what they need to learn to be a 'full practitioner' (p. 95).

The above discussion indicates that RMG workplaces have conventions to train their employees, especially newcomers at work, through learning by doing under the supervision of a senior colleague who helps them to learn how to write to a customer, how to converse in a meeting, and above all how to deal with a customer, both in verbal and written in English. If these professional ‘apprentices’ make any mistakes, they receive feedback from their senior and fellow colleagues. In addition, they learn by seeing previous documents. Such member guidance in the community of practice greatly helps these ‘apprentices’ to develop their English communication skills gradually. Participants viewed such empowerment of all members of the work community through skills development as a process of capacity building of the organisation for its future (Senge, 1990, cited in Tynjälä, 2008).

However, several participants were not interested in preparing their novice employees and providing training. They pointed to some issues that did not motivate them to provide workplace training. One of the reasons they gave was job rotation of employees after receiving workplace training. Participants reported that many freshers do not stay in the company after receiving training. Rather they switch to another company where they perceive they have better opportunities to advance, once they have gained industrial experience. A senior commercial manager (Shariar) in a woven textile industry expressed his dissatisfaction with these job switching practices. He noted:

Our experience says that over smart people do not stay here. They come here, learn how to work, and then go. It is not a training centre that we will train up the people and after receiving training they will move from here at the time of getting work from them. If it continues, it is not good for my company, rather we will always face problem.

This senior commercial manager’s remarks indicate there is no certainty that novice employees will stay in the same industry after receiving workplace training.

Such absence of certainty discourages many organisations to train their newcomers. Rather it motivates them to hire work-ready employees who are already skilled. Being an owner in a RMG industry, a knit industry director described himself as “selfish” in this context.

However, one of the directors disagreed with other participants, who expressed their dissatisfaction with employees who switch to another company after receiving training. He considered it was not necessary for employees to stay in the training provider institution after receiving training. He supported the right of newcomers to stay or switch to another RMG industry and in contrast to other directors, he acknowledged that workplace training turns a novice employee into a resource for the industry as a whole. Whereas some directors regard the unexpected switch to be a resource loss, which has a deep influence on demotivating employers to train up novice employees.

One more reason for not providing training to employees was “lack of passion and time”. A director in a woven garment industry argued that before, her company informally provided workplace training to their fresher employees on some basic topics including communication skills. Now, they have stopped such training, especially training on language or communication skills due to lack of “passion and time”. She also pointed out that her company needed people who already knew the required tasks. That means her company was interested in recruiting skilled manpower rather than training freshers to build human resources.

Some participants stated they train new employees and hire trained employees as well. It really depends on their needs. When they recruit people for entry level, they train them after recruitment. However, if it is a matter of needing highly skilled employees, they hire those with the required high skills.

This finding refers to the learning environment of workplace organisations to examine how that environment facilitates or restricts opportunities for learning. Fuller and Unwin (2004) describe two diverse forms of learning environment which they conceive as the “expansive–restrictive continuum”. Some RMG industries provide more opportunities for workplace learning than others. The organisations that provide more learning opportunities for participation in a ‘community of practice’ provide an expansive learning environment in the workplace that encourages employees to share their knowledge and practice (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). However, some employers are not interested in providing workplace training for different reasons. Instead they provide a restrictive learning environment at work with limited room for participation, and developing knowledge and skills. Despite the presence of such organisations, a large number do provide expansive learning environments.

In conclusion, the above discussion indicates that workplace learning in the RMG sector has been playing a critical role in communication skills development of new employees from the outset. However, as this is time consuming and requires patience plus the practice of apprentices switching jobs to another industry after training, some employers are not interested in continuing workplace training for novice employees. Rather they demand more work-ready manpower. At the same time, in Bangladesh, there is a scarcity of formal training institutions, such as BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT), to equip graduates with adequate communication skills for RMG business communication.

It is commonly seen that universities play the main role in communication skills improvement and overall professional skills development of graduates (see, Elias & Purcell, 2013). Universities are becoming more active globally than ever before in preparing job-ready graduates with the necessary skills. Researchers (Cooper et al.,

2010; Patrick et al., 2009) contend that while the purpose of higher education is to produce work-ready graduates with high information and skills, by combining theory and practice in learning, industry requires work-ready manpower. Similarly, students expect to be employable with the requisite attributes and employable skills obtained through work experience. The interest of these three stakeholders stimulates universities to produce graduates to meet the evolving demand for skills and knowledge linked to the changing professional structure of the job market and industry. A question then arises: to what extent is higher education in Bangladesh preparing graduates with the necessary communication skills, as per the need of job markets in general, and RMG industry, in particular? To what extent is university education able to meet the needs of the RMG industry? I will address these questions in the following section.

8.6 Perceived congruity between university and industry in English communication skills development of professionals

The relationship between university and industry in skills development and its industry needs is well established in the literature (e.g. Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini, 2004; Slotte & Tynjälä, 2003). Universities are assumed to provide their students with knowledge and skills that take into account the needs of society and the market for employment. Participants in this research using an open-ended question were asked to identify how they perceived the congruence between university and industry in developing skills through English course(s) needed for RMG business communication. In other words, how, and how far, do knowledge and skills normally inculcated and developed in university education, and particularly through English courses, reflect the needs of the RMG industry? In response participants had a diversity of views that related to their experiences of type of university, medium of instruction, discipline, environment, family background, spoken versus written communication and so forth. It

would seem that participants were not limited to expressing their opinions within English courses taught at university; rather they went beyond English courses and addressed different issues they perceived as closely connected to their understanding of communication skills development. Their diverse views were summarised in three sub-themes/groups in terms of a broader understanding.

Group one argued that what universities provide to graduates matches the needs of the RMG industry and the university has no further role. However, the second group challenged the opinions of their colleagues and contended there is a huge gap between university and industry in terms of developing communication skills necessary for RMG workplaces. This group also identified that the skills graduates acquire at university are not sufficient for RMG workplaces. Interestingly, the third group was relatively more forgiving in their opinions, attempting to harmonise (balance) opinions of the other two groups and contended that acquired skills were neither sufficient nor insufficient. They identified some factors that influenced the construction of these dichotomies about whether or not university education can meet the needs of the RMG industry. In order to make the arguments of the three groups of opinions distinct, the following three subsections present their opinions under these sub-themes.

8.6.1 Education meets the labour market: Examining matches and sufficiency. As indicated above, several participants, particularly some merchandising personnel, did not find any incongruities between university and industry in English communication skills taught at university and those required for the RMG industry. One of the merchandising participants (Ahasn) stated: *“Yes, there is [a] match. I do not find [a] mismatch.”* They argued that what they had learned at university, they applied to the RMG workplace. For instance, a merchandiser (Pavel), who studied in a private university where the medium of education was English, stated: *“...My MBA at a private*

university was fully in English helps to use English in this sector.” This participant indicated that English as a medium of instruction in his higher education facilitated him to be competent in English, and this later supported him in this business to communicate and work with counterparts. Not only Pavel but some of the other participants also expressed similar views and prioritised English as the medium in education in private universities and business courses, particularly the BBA and MBA. This study found that most participants strongly believed that such education generally prepared better graduates with English communication skills than that in public universities and Bangla medium education.

The analysis further shows that among the participants in this group, particularly merchandisers, they added that although their achieved English communication skills at university helped them to work in the RMG industry, they could not fully apply those skills in context. They indicated they were able to use only a certain amount of language skills learned at university in their workplaces. Some described their operational skills, quantifying with percentages (i.e. 20%, 50% and 60%). It is problematic to quantify acquired language skills and their uses in industry. Yet, as per their professional tendency, participants quantified their serviceable skills in the industry, giving some idea about how much their language skills acquired at university could apply in their respective workplaces.

Moreover, they explained the reasons for the inability in applying their full skills to industry. Although this study acknowledges that university education does not solely prepare graduates with communication skills, rather its role is beyond that. One of the important purposes of university education, for example, is the creation and transmission of new knowledge (Young, 2007, cited in Elias and Purcell, 2013). One marketing participant (Ahsan) indicated flaws in transmission of knowledge at

university due to his inability to learn, or lack of understanding or personal problems plus lack of resources. These findings suggest that students' self-effort and resources play an important role in English communication skills development and proper utilisation in workplaces in professional life. I assume that if the focus was all skills, maybe there is an issue about being in the "right" job or the employer's knowledge in how to utilise graduates.

Along with describing the role of university in preparing graduates with communication skills that correspond to RMG needs, two participants in this group argued that the garments sector in Bangladesh did not need a high level of English skill. Instead, if they could explain to a buyer as well as they could understand participants' messages; this was enough for the industry (c.f. intelligibility). In their consideration, university graduates were able to do this task. They believed that English skills provided by universities were enough for students. In this regard, a marketing person (Harun) with much experience in RMG business communication stated: "*...what they [universities] are teaching is enough... university has nothing to do.*"

The findings about consistency and congruity between university and industry in preparing graduates with necessary knowledge and skills corresponding to needs of the RMG industry was challenged by several participants. The following section discusses these arguments.

8.6.2 Education does not meet the labour market: Examining mismatches and insufficiencies. More than half of the total participants from the three groups of RMG professionals reported there were incongruities between university and industry in preparing graduates with the necessary communication skills required for this industry. Placing emphasis on practical experience; some criticised the courses taught in both public and private universities. They claimed that these courses were designed in a

theoretical mode and were far from practical. Theoretical and practical knowledge are not the same. They considered it a problem when graduates came to this sector.

As graduates did not gain practical experience in their university study, they had difficulties handling international communication in workplaces. In relation to this point, a commercial participant (Rahman) stated, “*Students learn many things at university except experience. Experience is very important. If they gain experience at university they will do better in their professional life*”. Their experience could complement institutional knowledge and the combination of both gained knowledge and gained experience functioned effectively for this sector. As seen in the literature chapter (see section 2.6), researchers (e.g. Cooper et al., 2010) suggested adopting a collaborative strategy which developed knowledge workers for society and the workplace through making them competent with a wide range of skills and with interconnecting theoretical, practical and general knowledge and life experience. Consequently, participants of this study suggested designing courses to accommodate both types of skills required for this sector.

This finding can be related to the notion of Gibbons et al. (1994) in regard to the modes of knowledge that need to be developed in universities. Although they wrote about this issue approximately 20 years ago, it still has relevance today. Gibbons et al. (1994) recognise two modes of knowledge: Mode 1 (formal) and Mode 2 (applied). Mode 1 is largely academic, generated by a specific interest in community. It is disciplinary, characterised by the hegemony of theoretical knowledge and homogeneity. By contrast, Mode 2 is transdisciplinary, carried out or generated through application. It is characterised by heterogeneity and more socially accountable and reflexive than Mode 1. Some have argued that social participatory learning provides opportunities to bring together Mode 1 and Mode 2 to form a new hybrid knowledge: Mode 3 (see

Figure 8.2) (Malcolm, Hodgkinson, & Colley, 2003). The finding of the current study derived from the perceptions of RMG professionals indicated the need for hybridised or Mode 3 knowledge for the RMG business industry. This finding also suggests a need for university preparation of graduates with both theoretical knowledge and practical experience connected to the RMG industry.

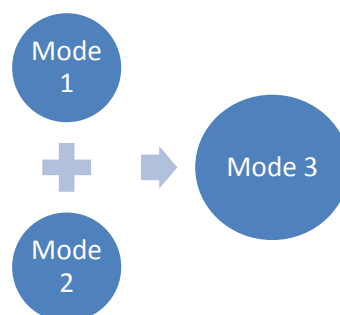


Figure 8.2: The new production of knowledge: Mode 3

In describing the discrepancy between university and industry practices, a commercial participant (Shariar) questioned the whole education system in Bangladesh from the point of developing English communication skills. He explained that in present-day banking and shipping lines – everywhere communication was conducted in English – whereas the education system, particularly the public system of Bangladesh, emphasised learning through Bangla. He suggested the need for education providers to enhance English communication skills along with respective subject knowledge. This participant indicated that the aim of higher education should be not only to provide subject knowledge using Bangla (Bangla is a medium education in most general universities), but higher education also needs to focus on preparing graduates for evolving competitive workplaces with communication skills including English language skills.

Building employability skills into the higher education curriculum was a need identified by Fallows and Steven (2000). They observed the insufficiency of knowledge about academic subjects to meet the changing economic situation, and suggested graduates need to increase their skills to enhance their prospects of employment. The current study finding suggests that the language skills of students in higher education cannot meet the needs of the RMG market, which is dominated by English (see chapter four). This is not an unexpected finding, given the direction of global education policy development (see also, The Economist, 2014). In this globalised world, while English is widely used and needed in workplaces because it has become part of daily life for its direct or indirect international connection, education policy in Bangladesh, as some participants observed, has not reflected these changes and is still not focusing on English as needed in globally connected workplaces.

Concurrently, describing incongruities between university and industry, participants explained that skills that both spoken and written graduates achieve at university are not sufficient for RMG business communication. Giving examples, they described that graduates were not fluent enough to deal with buyers and what they wrote did not convey a clear message. A merchandiser (Mafian) shared his experience as a former university graduate and business professional in the RMG sector:

Well, I don't think it's enough though I don't have much idea about all the universities. As a student of [the] National University, I think it is not sufficient. We really need to focus on fluency. We learn English but we cannot speak or write correctly – even students from [the] English department. What we learn at a university in English course does not reflect practical life needs. When I was a student at the National University, there was an English course of 100 marks and this course was grammar based. It may be changed now. It cannot fulfil my needs in my job anyhow. The course should develop students' fluency. This course cannot do so. Therefore, what [the] university teaches is not sufficient.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, the National University (NU) is the largest in Bangladesh (in terms of student numbers) rather than the best in quality. In this study, most participants graduated from NU. They expressed their frustration with the English course, the teaching and learning process and the environment, which was not deemed suitable for proper development of English communication skills for graduates. According to them, the English course was very ‘traditional’ – memorising grammatical rules and passing examinations. Participants therefore did not perceive the course as an English skill development program. They further added that the university was not the best environment to enable them to minimise their inertia and fear of speaking English fluently.

This finding suggests that the aim of English language learning from the students’ perspective (to pass the exam) is quite different from the curriculum perspective (to develop communicative competence) as discussed in chapter one. As a lecturer in English, I pointed out my concerns in that chapter: that although the English curriculum is rooted in CLT and the aim is to achieve communicative competence, the positioning of English courses within the learning culture of the university encourages students to be motivated to simply pass the examination, rather than use language in real-life practice. This finding confirms my observations and misgivings as a lecturer. Consequently, participants observed that when graduates came to the RMG workplace (or any other workplaces after graduation), many faced difficulties in managing communication, both verbal and written, with their international counterparts.

Along with expressing dissatisfaction, some participants, particularly marketing personnel, expressed their profound dissatisfaction with English communication skills taught in universities in general. Among them a marketing person (Zahid), who was a school teacher in the early stage of his career and became a manager in a RMG

enterprise, contend that the language students acquired in higher education could not fulfil the needs of any sector. He pointed to the education structure in Bangladesh, where emphasis was on quantity rather than quality of education. As Zahid stated:

Quality is falling in education. Their language skill is not sufficient not only for RMG sector but also for no sectors. Many students have honours masters degrees but their language standard is not at the level of lower secondary students. There is fault in education. Our country puts emphasis on quantity, not on quality in education.

The recent report on higher education in Bangladesh accords with this finding and suggests that despite the opportunity of higher education having increased in Bangladesh, there is a question about its quality (The Economist, 2014).

Why is the current university education not sufficient to meet the needs of the RMG industry? The response was reflected in the voice of two highly educated marketing participants (Shibly and Saidul). One had a double degree both in English and Business while the other was qualified in Business and engaged in two professions simultaneously – in the RMG sector and university teaching. They both mentioned that preparing graduates by looking at the needs of the RMG industry was not taken into consideration. And further, the graduates who came to this sector did not have any knowledge of this sector. They may have had language skill but they were not work ready because the aim of education was not to prepare them for the RMG industry.

This finding echoes previous research. In classifying the knowledge society in the UK, Elias and Purcell (2013) contended that in higher education, different institutions and courses were concerned with providing knowledge and skills with different ratios and complexities. Consequently, with one or two exceptions, no higher education institution in Bangladesh prepared graduates for the RMG industry. These

participants further suggested that through English courses, students needed to be equipped with skills for practical and professional life (e.g. how to write a letter to an unknown person). This finding shows there are gaps between what the RMG sector requires and what is taught at university. In this regard, a marketing person (Monir) with an English literature background said: *“There is a huge gap between what is learnt at universities and what type of job or practical experiences the people are getting here [the workplace]. It is always mismatching”*. He explained the lack of human resource planning as the main reason for such a discrepancy. He suggested placing the right people with the best knowledge and skills in the job, so they could use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the country.

Monir and other participants raised this issue, pointing to the mismatch between university and industry and questioning how knowledge of social sciences was suitable for the RMG workplace. They suggested reviewing the education system in Bangladesh, introducing professional education that would develop the skills required for respective workplaces. This finding suggests that participants’ opinions were not confined to language skills in highlighting gaps between university and industry; rather they went beyond language and underscored some relevant issues that play determining factors in preparing skilled graduates with required communication skills.

The third group of participants, who fell between the above two groups, argued there is no clear-cut answer as to whether university education corresponds to the needs of industry in terms of English communication development. Rather it depends on certain factors that work as determinants.

8.6.3 Skills are neither sufficient nor insufficient. The third group consisted of quite a few participants from RMG marketing, merchandising and commercial. They

were sceptics in expressing their opinions and wanted to express neither their satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with university education for the RMG sector. To them, it varied from industry to industry and varied from case to case. They identified different determinants and presented their arguments based on these as dichotomies. These participants believed that whether or not students graduated with sufficient English communication skills largely depended on the quality of university education. They argued that with graduates who received quality English teaching, their communication skills were sufficient and they did well in workplaces. However, they acknowledged that all universities did not maintain quality in education, which varied from university to university. According to them, the quality depended on whether the institution was public or private. In addition, participants observed the medium of instruction and family backgrounds as variables to determine how, and how far, university education could prepare graduates for the RMG industry.

As discussed in chapter one (see section 1.4.1), Bangladesh higher education is divided into two sectors: public and private. While some participants expressed their satisfaction with private universities, as quality education providers that prepare graduates for the RMG industry, others described their happiness with public universities. Concurrently, in expressing their satisfaction with private universities in developing an acceptable level of communication skills, some questioned the quality of education in developing communication skills for graduates at public universities. One of the marketing personnel (Arif) stated:

I am somehow quite satisfied with the quality of the students from private universities. Except some highly preferable subjects such as English or MBA from IBA [Institute of Business Administration] from Dhaka University, I am very much disappointed with public universities in terms of their quality or standard.

Despite his dissatisfaction with language skills in particular, and education in general of graduates from public universities, this participant, as a director of his industry, had recruited some graduates from public universities in his company. They were considered exceptional in their English communication skills. This may be because of personal or family efforts rather than a consequence of university education. A merchandiser (Masum) said: “...*If family background is strong, English skills will be good.*” It shows that alongside universities, families are also perceived as important social institutions that can and do play a role in developing communication skills in English. These findings also suggest that developing communication skills is not the responsibility of a university alone – the family also has a role.

In the above statement, Arif expressed his contentment with students of English departments from public universities and MBA graduates from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) at the University of Dhaka, which is a public university. In spite of his satisfaction, he was sceptical in generalising about all private universities in Bangladesh in delivering quality education and developing the required English communication skills graduates need. Like Arif, other participants did not generalise about all private universities as high quality education providers. Instead, they indicated a small number of private universities provide students with quality education including English communication skills.

Some participants considered the quality of graduates from private universities, among them Mojibur, a commercial manager, who expressed his dissatisfaction:

The situation is worse at private universities which are very much commercial. They focus on selling certificates, not on education. One graduate from a private university works at my company. I am doubtful of his education that he received from a private university.

Concurrently, in expressing reservation with graduates from private universities, two participants articulated their contentment with students from public universities. For example, a marketing person (Harun) reported that the skills taught in English public universities, especially the University of Dhaka, were enough for students to gain work in the RMG sector. It would seem that within the public university sector, some courses and students are better than others.

Another dichotomy that participants raised is English medium vs. Bangla medium education. As discussed earlier, the media of instruction or the media of teaching and learning contributes to English communication skills development. Some participants raised this issue in response to whether English communication skills taught at university are sufficient. They reported that students who studied in the English medium, possessed good communication skills for the RMG sector. A commercial participant (Shariar) observed that students who studied in the English medium were much more advanced than their Bangla counterparts. At the same time, some of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with students of Bangla medium. A marketing person (Arif) said: *“I am sorry to say that I am really disappointed with the students from Bangla medium”*. In this respect, students felt there was a big problem. To them, the Bangla medium made their students weak in English. They also questioned the curriculum and syllabus and teaching/learning process. As a result, the skills Bangla students acquire from their universities were perceived as not helpful for the RMG industry. A commercial participant (Shariar) noted:

If everybody is like me, the situation is very bad. I brought up in Bangla medium. What I have learned at university, I did not find applicable in my workplace... I had fear of English from which I got rid of with the help of my coaching teacher who used to practice me speaking English.

This view shows Shariar is dissatisfied with English skills he learned from Bangla medium education. It can be noted here that in most of the public universities in Bangladesh the medium of instruction is Bangla. And students from almost all departments are taught in Bangla, except students from English departments and some specific departments. For him, Bangla as a medium of instruction did not significantly help graduates to be skilled in English communication skills but rather acted as a hindrance. Consequently, the communication skills Bangla medium graduates develop do not seem to be sufficient for international communication in the RMG sector.

However, Ahsan, who studied at BUFT, a specialised university for the RMG sector that offers professional courses for its graduates, argued that the problem might not be a consequence of the syllabus. He believed the syllabus was probably up-to-date but the problem might be the resources, that is, the “right” teacher. Similarly, Arif argued that those who had used university resources, rather than institutions like the British Council, were clearly at a disadvantage. Ahsan added that students could also be the problem, and they needed to take some responsibility for their learning. In student life, they did not understand the importance of English communication skills; instead, they only came to understand this importance when they entered a workplace. Finally, he believed that although the knowledge gained at university was not sufficient, there were many opportunities for improvement.

A small group of participants raised another dichotomy between English communication skills development and preparation for successful work in the RMG sector: general disciplines vs. specialised disciplines. Over the decades, it is noticeable that in this international trade, professionals came from diverse disciplines such as social sciences, business studies or science backgrounds. Yet, most were either from social science disciplines or business studies. The discipline or subject was seen as an

important factor in developing a student's communication skills. Several participants, particularly merchandisers, argued that graduates from business studies, especially graduates with BBA and MBA, had sound levels of communication skill and were doing comparatively well in this industry. Participants considered in business studies, particularly the Bachelor of Commerce, helped them to develop their English communication skills. Many graduates in Bangladesh complete the MBA as a filler (supplementary) course, which provides them with more opportunities in professional and career development than graduates from other disciplines.

This third group of participants, who had mixed opinions, expressed their frustration with students from general disciplines. They observed they were not as well prepared for the industry as business graduates unless they had sound vocabulary and knowledge of English. They argued that when these graduates came to this sector, initially they faced difficulty in working in the RMG sector because their acquired knowledge was different from the knowledge needed for this industry. Participants added that graduates needed training after coming to this sector. Through training they could utilise their existing knowledge and skills achieved in universities.

The above finding indicated that RMG is an open access job market in Bangladesh, where graduates from any discipline can work as RMG professionals. Not only in the RMG sector, but also in many other job sectors, there was absence of subject/knowledge based job placement. In the existing practice of recruitment of professionals, there is no compulsion for graduates to have RMG specific knowledge and skills to win an RMG job. However, employers demand English communication skills, as stated previously; therefore, recruitment practices in hiring a wide range of graduates appear to be mismatched to the job market in general and the RMG industry, in particular.

As was discussed earlier, in the RMG sector, both spoken and written communication is required. Some participants expressed their satisfaction with written skills over verbal skills. They observed many graduates became confused when they spoke to someone. However, they acknowledged the skills level of students differed. Conversely, two participants expressed their satisfaction with verbal but not written communication skills. They observed many graduates were not able to write an application in English and they were slow in writing, but they were good in speaking, because nowadays they can complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and/or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Based on the discussion above it is quite difficult to draw conclusions. However, the overall impression derived from the analysis suggests that a large number of graduates, particularly average universities, were perceived as relatively not well equipped with the skills necessary for efficient communication in the RMG industry. There are different reasons and factors behind such skill shortage. Despite university education perceived as not preparing graduates with sufficient communication, university education was observed as the foundation for developing skills. That is why some participants considered it “50:50” and suggested further training to improve skills at work. This finding is consistent with a previous study analysing satisfaction levels of Silicon Valley employers with both written and spoken communication skills of newly recruited college graduates. Employers believed that graduates needed to improve their business communication skills.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on professional development of participants in the RMG sector. The analysis revealed that professionals need both English and specific professional skills because they engage in the global business profession. The

integration of such skills can ensure success in RMG global business communication.

Professional skills can be developed in two ways: 1. through formal institutional education, and 2. through practical work in workplaces. While university provides graduates with disciplinary expertise and knowledge in the pre-employment stage, workplaces develop professional skills through active participation at work. Although participants did not question workplace skills development in terms of quality and adequacy, some identified weaknesses in the role of higher education to prepare graduates for the workplace. Participants mostly did not value language skills development provided by universities for the language needs of RMG business communication. Consequently, these findings show gaps between university and industry in developing such skills.

They also identified that some universities better prepare their graduates in developing English skills than others. For instance, to some extent, private universities are perceived as working better for English teaching than public universities, in part because the medium of teaching is English not Bangla. But it does not mean that all private universities are perceived to be doing better in preparing graduates for industry. Rather some private universities are doing better than some average public universities. Similarly, within universities, English and business courses better prepare graduates than some general courses. As the RMG sector recruits its professionals from all types of universities and courses, some graduates were found to be better prepared than others although these choices remain arbitrary.

Still, regardless of type of courses and universities, graduates mostly graduate from higher education without practical experience. The main reason is the lack of collaboration between industry and university. Also, general university education in Bangladesh does not prepare graduates for a specific industry. For instance, while the

RMG industry is a large employment sector in Bangladesh, general higher education does not prepare graduates targeting this specific industry with both theoretical and practical experience. However, it is well established in the literature that professional competence requires both theoretical knowledge and practical experience (Leinhardt, Young, & Merriman, 1995). In this circumstance, most RMG workplaces, but not all, take the initiative in providing training to their novice employees by active participation in communities of practice, where newcomers are treated like professional ‘apprentices’ and who develop their skills through cooperation, interaction and guidance of more experienced colleagues or co-workers, as Lave and Wenger (1991) discussed. The RMG industry itself takes responsibility for addressing the skills shortage for these professionals. The industry provides practical experience with experienced employees, in addition to the theoretical knowledge of English gained at university at the pre-professional stage.

So far the thesis has advanced a number of arguments from the findings about the English skills needed for professionals in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. In the final chapter these arguments are pulled together to reach a conclusion and identify further implications considering the research questions this study set out to address. Furthermore, because the previous five chapters (including this chapter) discuss the findings of the thesis, combining data analysis with interpretation and discussion in relation to the literature in this field of study; in order to avoid repetition, I have written the concluding chapter focusing on the main arguments of the thesis that may contribute to new knowledge and indicate avenues for future research.

Chapter Nine

Summary, implications and conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this concluding chapter is to revisit the research questions, summarise the findings and critically discuss salient findings presented in previous chapters. The study began with a critical analysis of the need for English communication skills as required for successful communication in a business workplace. Literature suggests that to run an international business effectively, professionals need to have competence in English communication. As discussed earlier, while English is the dominant language of international communication, previous research suggests that the current proficiency levels of graduates in Bangladesh is unable to meet the needs of the employment market with regard to communication skills in English (Khan & Chaudhury, 2012). The RMG business in Bangladesh has evolved into a large industry over last three decades, where English functions as the main medium of communication, but the RMG sector lacks skilled professionals with necessary communication skills (see Mizan, 2013). By applying a conceptual framework based on communicative competence and English as a lingua franca, this study has sought to answer some research questions about understandings of the role and use of English in the RMG globalised business workplace, and what communication skills are required in these corporate settings. This chapter discusses findings from this study in light of the international literature, and highlights how this study can contribute to new knowledge, educational policy and pedagogy.

The chapter is organised in the following order. First, it summarises the findings as revealed through different chapters (chapters four to eight), it then discusses findings

in the light of the global literature, and shows how insights derived from this study can add to new knowledge and improve our understanding of what communicative competence entails in the context of a global business located in Bangladesh. The chapter moves on to more localised findings and implications for education policy and practice in Bangladesh, and other policy and practice implications as well as limitations and future directions for research.

9.2 Revisiting the research questions

Earlier research shows that in international business when business communication happens across cultures, limited language skill often acts as a barrier (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b). This research also demonstrates that the possession of required language skills can be a powerful facilitator in communication flow. This thesis is about English communication skills perceived as necessary in the RMG business for its professionals to work at a global level. As stated in chapter one, the study outlined a set of research questions to achieve the aim of this investigation. One of the research questions was: *How do RMG business professionals view the role of English in the RMG international business setting?* This question looked at the position of English in the RMG global business setting in Bangladesh. Findings revealed that whatever names people in the business setting were given to the English they employ, such as an international language or common language or second language, English is extensively used with international partners for both oral and written communication. English is thus seen as an indispensable tool for communication, documentation, and technological and terminological application in the RMG industry in different contexts and for communication practicalities (see chapter four).

This recognition of the importance of English results in identifying five distinct but interrelated ‘clusters of communication skills’ that encompass the core areas of

linguistic skills, sociocultural skills, discourse skills, pragmatic skills, and professional skills (see chapters five to eight) that address the second research question: *What communication skills do RMG business professionals perceive are required in the RMG global business communication?* In order to engage in successful communication in the RMG business at a global level, the above sets of skills are perceived as required for RMG professionals in integrated practice.

In addition to identifying the required English communication skills necessary for RMG business dealings, this research explored how RMG personnel perceived the relationship between university and industry in developing the communication skills necessary for the RMG industry. The study reveals a complex scenario that suggests potential gaps between university and industry in inculcating and developing graduates with the necessary communication skills that correspond to the needs of the RMG industry. This finding addresses the third research question: *How do RMG professionals perceive the congruence between university education of English and the English communication skills required in the workplace?* Further questions can be raised in relation to these findings. For example: How can these findings contribute to new knowledge? What are the implications of these results? The following sections address these queries.

9.3 English as garments speak: Forms, function, skills and challenges

In light of the global literature, this section critically discusses the findings in which the focus is given to forms and function of English as a garments business lingua franca, and to the communication skills necessary for effective business interactions. In this discussion, mutual intelligibility in the broad sense, known as interpretability, has emerged as the target of communication.

9.3.1 Linguistic intelligibility as communicative effectiveness. In the findings (see chapter four), it was revealed that in an international business, language, particularly English language, is a significant matter because ‘Only language can enable individuals and companies (and countries) to communicate’ (Charles, 2007, p. 261). The level of proficiency in English plays a role as a determinant in different contexts such as representing an individual and company, career success and failure in employment, dominance in business communication, and creating inequality in communication between native and non-native speakers of English. Proficiency in English is a valuable skill as discussed in the literature (see chapter one) and revealed in this research. No way can this hidden ‘soft skill’ (Andrews & Higson, 2008) known as ‘soft capital’ in business communication be ignored. Interestingly, despite the massive use of English in the RMG industry, no participants in interview reported that English was officially declared a corporate language. However, in practice, English is by *default* a corporate language in the RMG business sense. Consequently, proficiency in English has a high level of economic and social value in a global corporate setting and it is an asset indeed for an industry like RMG.

Dowling Jr (2009) argues that in today’s globalised business world, as not only English speaking countries but also non-English speaking countries have accepted English as their official language, fluency in English is necessary for employees engaged in global communication. Among the identified set of skills for RMG business communication, linguistic skills were recognised as the most prominent and fluency was perceived as the most well reported competence. RMG professionals reported that they *must* have fluency in speaking. They often referred to fluency as speed that indicates an understanding in the narrow sense – an element or a skill of spoken proficiency, rather than in the broad sense – the highest level of language proficiency.

The literature with regard to fluency discusses both narrow and broad understandings (see, Lennon, 1990). However, although most of the participants in this research recognised fluency as narrow, they did not recognise it in the broad sense and more likely were not aware of these distinctions. This might indicate that people in Bangladesh, being members of an outer circle (Kachru, 1992) country colonised by British rule, perceived fluency differently from the results of studies based elsewhere. Although participants might indicate fluency in a narrow sense, it functions to supplement other components of oral proficiency (Lennon, 1990).

As seen in the findings (see chapter five), although there was disagreement among participants about the required level of fluency and what stage of career fluency is needed, all stakeholders perceived the urgency of fluency. Thus accordingly they required this attribute as an essential element of communication, especially in oral communication in the RMG business context. None of the participants disagreed about the importance of this competence in the spoken context. The finding also suggests that the levels of fluency of Bangladeshi professionals engaged in RMG business communication are not as good as they would like. Rather they admit to stammering and stuttering and constructing support for their lack of fluency by adopting different pragmatic strategies. As I have shown, participants demonstrated their ability as pragmatic (House, 1996) and/or dialogic fluency (Hüttner, 2009) rather than fluency as the highest level of language proficiency, as explained in chapter five (see section 5.2).

As discussed in the literature review, the main element of communicative competence is grammatical/linguistic competence. The literature chapter also noted that Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) stress grammatical skill as one of the components of communicative competence. Likewise, the English teaching literature also shows that for effective communication in different life situations, grammatical

knowledge and skill is a must (e.g. Batstone, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 1991; Kress, 2010; Nunan, 1991). It can also be said that ‘Bad grammar is like bad breath’ (Booher, 2009, p. 11). This research, however, shows that grammar is not so important in negotiating meaning (interpretability) but it has other overall impacts in interaction, particularly more so in written than spoken communication (i.e. it is an indication of standards, and a signifier of the image of an industry and a professional). This finding suggests that the necessity of grammatical accuracy in ELF business communication has been compromised by a greater emphasis on intelligibility. The contemporary global trend of communication via the internet and other mobile technologies also makes grammar less important (Gains, 1999) for intelligibility, and this trend was also reflected both in the perceptions of RMG participants and in their e-mail discourse. This finding questions or modifies Canale and Swain’s (1980) prioritising of grammar in the framework for communicative competence.

In international business communication, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) stress the importance of macro and micro phenomena, arguing that communication activities of globally operating business organisations are assessed at the micro and macro level. While the former refers to communication of individual employees engaged in cross-border day-to-day business activities, the latter level denotes the organisation’s formal and function based communication. Both are intertwined, and construct and demonstrate the image of the company through the use of language. ‘Corporate language’ is the macro level issue while individual employees’ variety of language use to ‘get the job done’ is the concern at micro level. In relation to intelligibility, perfection in grammar is not necessary for a business professional, but from the perspectives of image or reputation (of self and company) at both the micro and macro level, grammatical accuracy matters. In fact, it demonstrates the company’s

reputation and establishes the fitness of a communicator. In other words, it demonstrates professionalism or smartness that, as a member of a global operating business, a professional should have. As Mredul, a young merchandiser states: “...*and people should be smart, damn smart*”. Therefore this finding supports existing research that suggests the need for grammar is highly situated (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

The finding also recognised that vocabulary, both general and RMG business specific, terms and acronyms are important elements in both oral and written communication and play a vital role in effective business interaction in the RMG industry. RMG professionals, particularly marketing and merchandising personnel, perceived the need for having at least a minimum level of vocabulary to get the communicative work done, which is in line with the findings of Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) and Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) in a European context. However, if RMG personnel become well equipped with more than a minimum vocabulary including a sufficient number of words, synonyms, awareness of constant changes, borrowing words, and above all, the appropriate use of words in context, it could be an additional support for effective communication. Accordingly, those who are employed in communication in RMG business, but not well equipped with sufficient vocabularies, are advised to develop their lexical competence.

This finding also prioritised business terms over grammatical correctness and fluency because these terms play a major role in intelligibility. As was shown, one participant reported that communication can be executed through business terms. This finding is in accord with previous research where business specific terms and jargon were prioritised over grammatical correctness (see, Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Consequently, after entering this

industry, a novice employee starts learning these domain specific words through the RMG workplace and keeps practising and retaining those words to reach the level of skill needed for this work environment. A list of identified RMG words, terms and acronyms specific to business is attached in Appendix 4.

While the literature on communicative competence indicates that different pronunciation is a crucial factor in intelligibility (Jenkins, 2000), this research nevertheless reveals that because of familiarity with context and experience in business, different pronunciation is not so great an issue for intelligibility. As discussed earlier, RMG business is an intercultural trade where people from different linguacultural backgrounds interact. They have different levels of proficiency and pronunciation. Although several participants expected correct and to some extent native-like pronunciation, most however stressed the importance of intelligibility arguing that it does not matter whether pronunciation is right or wrong but *intelligibility is a must*. Subsequently, different pronunciation does not play a particularly negative role in RMG international communication.

The finding also indicates that some participants are aware that different countries and regions have different English accents. When people communicate, they usually follow their own accent. Although accents are another important factor to understand another's English, recognising diversity in accents, participants argued, is not mandatory to communicate clients' accents in English. Munro and Derwing (1999) cited in Levis (2005) argue there is no clear correlation between accents and understanding. Accordingly, it is argued that 'certain types of pronunciation errors may have a disproportionate role in impairing comprehensibility' (Levis, 2005, p. 370). If RMG professionals have any intelligible accents in speaking, they indicated it is acceptable for communication. As shown in the literature, English is no longer a

property of native speakers of English. It is no more an ‘imperial tongue’ either (Bisong, 1995, p. 131). Instead, we now have *English for all*. All speakers of English have ownership of English. ELFB incorporates all Englishes, such as standard, dialect, national, regional, creole, hybrid or broken, but it needs to be intelligible. For successful communication, RMG professionals need to be aware of the accents practised in their respective markets and need to communicate accordingly. Because of different ‘Englishes’ used by different speakers of English in business settings, BELF literature also stresses the importance of understanding different accents (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011).

Earlier, in this thesis, I presented a theoretical discussion of the concepts ‘communicative competence’ and ‘English as a lingua franca’, from the standpoint of ELF, and the findings have provided some insight. They reveal that English as a lingua franca in RMG business is widely functional in communication with both native and non-native speakers of English from any of the concentric circles of Kuchru (1992) as discussed earlier (see section 2.2). For the purpose of effective communication and mutual intelligibility, RMG professionals produce, practise and legitimise unique forms of English (i.e. garments English or garments speak). They achieve this by negotiating with interlocutors and transforming linguistic and cultural resources (Cogo, 2012) to make English suitable in context. In the RMG business, interaction occurs among people from different linguacultural backgrounds; interlocutors use their own style and form of syntactic structures, pronunciation and accents because of the influence of their culture. This study has found that RMG people try to follow the styles of native speakers, but it is difficult, and like Cogo (2012), they localise their English and use their own mother tongue and culture.

The above finding about following native speakers' styles and localising English indicates and reconfirms that for effective international communication, a native speaker model of English use is not necessary for intelligibility and negotiating meaning in a global operating business communication. To reach their communication goal, RMG personnel keep trying to understand their interlocutors by engaging in negotiating such meaning with their own language style in English using supplementary pragmatic strategies and media. And finally they achieve their communication target – intelligibility and negotiating meaning (interpretability) in context. This finding implies that, despite criticisms in the literature about native speakers' models of language use in communication as an out-dated model (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010), non-native speakers still have the desire to be native-like because they believe that people are judged by their level of language proficiency. The finding that native-like speaking is an identity marker in business communication, playing a significant role in business negotiation and persuasion in the RMG global sector, provides a more nuanced understanding of the form of language localisation practised by RMG personnel from Bangladesh.

The findings of the study also show that as RMG interlocutors use their own varieties of English in communication, their practices are contributing to the spread of different varieties of English worldwide. Business globalisation is playing a major role in spreading different varieties of English and facilitating people from different diversities of English, interacting together, leading to the formation of new varieties of English through hybridising and fluidising different, multilayered Englishes. Accordingly, this is driving debates about whether ELF is a variety or a set of varieties. Although the focus of this research has not been explicitly to examine this issue, my understandings from both the literature and from this study are that ELF is both a

variety (see, e.g. House, 2012; Jenkins, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Mauranen, 2003) and a set of varieties (see Saraceni, 2008). In RMG business communication, whether ELF is a variety or a set of varieties, is not a significant matter. Rather, in this industry, what was important and influenced ELF communication used by RMG personnel, was whether interlocutors are native or non-native speakers of English. Overall, mutual intelligibility was considered comparatively more important than the type of English and the type of English speakers RMG personnel were in communication with. Accordingly, they made whatever effort and language practice was required to ensure mutual intelligibility.

Participants required all the above skills in an applied form rather than only theoretical knowledge. Their notion is not that people would merely have theoretical understanding of the above discussed linguistic skills, but rather they must have applied linguistic skills in the RMG global business context in communication with customers. Being integrated, these skills play a successful role in communication with partners. In other words, these competence are ‘taken for granted’ (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, p. 253) in a successful global business setting. Although these linguistic skills in applied form are necessary for communication, all linguistic skills are not equally important.

Finally, it can be said that the skills discussed in this section are required in an integrated rather than segregated form and altogether indicate proficiency in English as required in RMG business communication. English language proficiency is associated with personal and professional identity and success of a business person. If the proficiency level is good with correct language use, fluency and pronunciation, it supports business communication. Otherwise, this could potentially affect personal and professional effectiveness and identity. Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) show that

Finnish business professionals admitted that lack of proficiency in English affected personal and professional identity of some business professionals. Similarly, in order to explore business communication competencies desirable by employees, as observed by business faculty and business professionals at Central Missouri, Waner (1995) observed that basic English skills (i.e. grammatical accuracy, effective business vocabulary, proper punctuation and so forth) are seen as supporting skills in the academic world and those of business communication.

Alongside the above skills of communication for intelligibility, the findings presented in chapter seven suggest additional ways of achieving mutual intelligibility or negotiating meaning. ELF and its focus on communication mean that all types of mechanisms will be deployed and the focus is not on pure native-like English. This research shows two ways of negotiating meaning: discourse strategy and pragmatic strategy. Discourse strategies have semantic implications; they not only involve connectedness of text or discourse (Bublitz, 2011) but also stylistic attributes of language use such as sentence structure, forms, length and level of difficulty. It was found that short, simplified and hybridised forms of language and politeness are revealed as the predominant and preferred features of RMG business discourse. As seen in the ELF literature (see section 2.4), the function of ELF is communication that avoids complex words and structures. It is a ‘linguistic masala’ (Meierkord, 2002), as discussed in the literature chapter, in which a mixture of interlocutors’ language and their cultural norms and used language are reflected so that discourse is a dynamic ‘communicative hybridity’ (Meierkord, 2002, p. 124). In RMG business communication, the way in which professionals use language can be seen as simplified, hybridised and polarised English, because this is perceived as containing the most effective language features for intercultural communication. It does not follow Standard English norms but embraces

cultural norms and linguistic backgrounds of ELF speakers and includes context specific requirements that accelerate negotiating meaning.

As previously discussed, RMG business is an international trade. As such, professionals need to understand every aspect of their trade, and the words of their counterparts in other countries. If they misunderstand or partially understand, there is the potential for miscommunication with counterparts, leading to a breakdown in the business relationship. Either one or both parties can be the loser/s. However, as RMG business in Bangladesh usually operates on a *win-win* business relationship, it is necessary for them to understand the words of their counterparts. If they do not, they should not follow avoidance or let-it-pass (Firth, 1996b) strategies such as topic avoidance or message abandonment. Instead, they try their level best to increase understanding in business communication. They consider making language mistakes as normal practice, like make-it-normal (Firth, 1996b) and they focus on the content or message of speakers. Yet, if negotiating meaning is hampered for any reason, they adopt different pragmatic strategies to solve the problem. To RMG personnel, running the business is the prime objective and mutual intelligibility is the main focus of business communications.

This finding is consistent with ELF and BELF studies that identify different pragmatic strategies in ELF interaction in different settings (e.g. Björkman, 2011b; Cogo, 2009, 2010; Mauranen, 2006) as reported earlier (see section 2.4). In the BELF context, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) show that some business professionals in five global operating Finland-based companies use paralanguage, paraphrasing and communication checking strategies to overcome communication challenges. It can be said that the people employed in RMG business communication need to be aware of

these pragmatic strategies and, if necessary, they might apply them to avoid communication breakdowns and to achieve their communicative target.

9.3.2 Intercultural skills in a business setting. As one of the purposes of this research was to identify how RMG professionals use language, considering sociocultural aspects of business counterparts, the study focused on intercultural skills in the business setting. The study also recognised the relative necessity of appropriate language use, considering the sociocultural aspects of a business counterpart, where different personal (age, gender) and impersonal factors (i.e. positions) play a role because language and culture are intertwined and influence one another. As seen in the literature chapter (see section 2.5.), previous research argued that business communication is an intercultural communication (Beamer & Varner, 2001) and business professionals need to have intercultural communication skills for effective communication in an intercultural business setting. Business professionals need to maintain various business protocols to initiate business relationships (Samovar & Porter, 2001).

It was found that while some professionals in the RMG sector were conscious of the sociocultural context, others were not. In addition, not all sociocultural phenomena play an equal role in language use. Most prominently, the hierarchy of positional factors, including business, language and geographical positions, play a role in language variation. Findings suggest that the position of buyer-suppliers in RMG business plays a significant role in language use to some extent, though there were exceptions. Both buyers and suppliers mutually use language forms, conjointly accepted by both groups. Nonetheless, the priorities of business, whether these be securing a sales order or dealing with mistakes in supply can cut across normal sociocultural protocols and thus play a crucial role in breaking down language and tone with both buyers and suppliers

as reflected in chapter six (see section 6.3.2). In addition, findings revealed that the brand name of a company and making profit play a vital role in language use with counterparts. With well-known brands, higher levels of respect are shown. Likewise, more profit, more honour. While literature on sociocultural competence of communication suggests using language, taking into consideration different sociocultural phenomena, these phenomena are not limited in any set of elements. Instead, over time, these elements are increasing. Business professionals need to be aware of new or changing social phenomena in a global business environment.

This finding also shows that the dichotomy of native and non-native speakers of English is an important determinant for some professionals in spoken rather than written language use in RMG business communication. While native speakers of English are afforded higher status because of their native English, non-native speakers are perceived as equal. RMG personnel's perception of the status of their interlocutors plays a role in the way they vary their language use in terms of speed, syntax, correctness and effort. This finding suggests that English as a lingua franca divides speakers of English. Although Firth's (1996a) definition of ELF (see section 2.4) suggests that lingua franca does not provide necessary linguistic advantages to any speaker of English, Kirkpatrick (2011) expressed his doubt about Firth's implicit notion of English as a lingua franca, that is, neutral. He argued that 'of course, this is not the case when English is used as a lingua franca between L1 speakers of English and others' (p. 213). He referred to Phillipson's (2008) concern of ELF. Considering the global promotion of English, particularly European integration and globalisation in terms of the project, the product, and processes, Phillipson (2008) satirises *lingua franca* as *lingua frankensteinia*. Likewise, Rogers (1998) argued, English divides people. While some of us possess English as a mother tongue, others do not. This division promotes communication

equality between different speakers of English including RMG non-native speakers of English. It also promotes a feeling of anxiety among some RMG professionals in terms of losing orders, or not managing an order because of their language inferiority complex.

The finding that language used by these RMG personnel varied according to their geographical location, as well as the position of their interlocutors as NSE or NNSE, suggests knowledge or awareness of regional varieties of English language, especially in the market where RMG professionals work. This knowledge of regional varieties helps Bangladeshis to communicate with their business counterparts easily. As seen in the literature, both ELF and World English researchers are agreed that instead of learning one variety of English, it is necessary to be aware of multiple varieties of Englishes, their similarities and differences, and the implications of these variations for developing mutual intelligibility (Jenkins, 2006a).

Overall, this study demonstrates that language use in the RMG business setting is highly contextual based on where different factors play a role. The use of language in the RMG business setting cannot therefore be confined by any specific rules. Instead, the business professionals adapt their language to make it suitable for specific contexts. They use language appropriately as per the need of the business social setting. They emphasise the importance of interpretability rather than standardising English in communication.

9.3.3 Professional skills and challenges for professional preparations. In addition to identifying different communication skills in English necessary for the RMG global communication, this research has also recognised professional skills as a decisive factor in professional success in RMG business communication. English and professional skills involve a cluster of competences where interpersonal skills, business

knowledge and skills, and practical experience are most conspicuous. This finding also suggests that interpersonal skills and business knowledge and skills are achieved through work in the RMG industry. Therefore, the professional skills required for personnel in the RMG industry mostly come from practical experience in the real workplace.

The importance of practical work-related experience is evident in the literature (see, Andrews & Higson, 2008). Although the finding strongly emphasised the importance of work-related experience for successful communication, in Bangladesh the preparation of university graduates (people recruited to work in professional roles in the RMG industry) through the majority of the disciplines, do not offer work-related experience in a form of ‘internship’ or any form of work placement (in any setting) during their university study. Consequently, a large number of graduates do not have opportunities to develop their professional skills needed for work in Bangladesh. This lack of experience hinders their professional work until they gain experience through practical engagement in the workplace. Informal workplace learning has been identified as valuable, because it works as an induction to the workplace, and the roles and job responsibilities of new employees provide them with the opportunity to attain and hone work-related skills (Andrews & Higson, 2008). However, this result also reveals that workplace experience alone cannot ensure success in RMG business communication; rather the RMG professional needs a combination of experience and English communication skills because both play an effective role in RMG business communication.

As the thesis has argued, while experience comes from practical work in the industry, English communication skills are usually inculcated in education institutions. Yet, the finding in relation to the preparation of graduates for employment in a global

business shows the relative limitation of higher education in preparing graduates with the necessary communication skills in the RMG industry. While some participants' views about the matches between university and industry in communication skills development and industry requirements show that university education is adequate preparation for the RMG industry; the majority of views identified a mismatch and highlighted a wide range of problem areas: the English course does not reflect real-life needs, does not support the development of fluency, and there is too much stress on Bangla in the education system whilst the corporate sector requires English. In addition, the traditional and theoretical nature of English courses, and lack of practical experience in using English in a setting are included in these mismatches. Moreover, people with the right knowledge and skills do not come to this sector. Consequently, the majority of participants considered that university education, to some extent, does not meet the needs of the RMG industry.

This finding is consistent with previous research about university education in general, rather than English courses in particular. Scholars have criticised universities' roles for not developing skills as needed by the employment market. Recent studies in both global (e.g. Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1996; Tynjälä, 2008) and local (e.g. Economist, 2014) contexts show there is a gap between the knowledge and skills that workplaces require and those of universities through their formal education system. Researchers have argued that university provides predominantly theoretical knowledge whereas a workplace requires practical experience and skills. The Economist (2014) reported that the higher education of Bangladesh is not market-oriented, but rather it is aimless, which is creating a number of educated unemployed in the country.

A question may then arise about how RMG personnel build or improve themselves as skilled human resources with the required communication skills when

university education has flaws in preparing job-ready graduates. Some participants also believed that the RMG industry requires different communication skills that are difficult for formal education systems to cover. As one of the marketing professionals stated: *“Only institutional education is not sufficient for this profession”* (Zahid). In this situation, participants indicated receiving further training. It could be formal or informal, and in an educational institution or workplace. Workplace learning as a community of practice plays a significant role in RMG business communication. The ongoing workplace learning and training is seen as a way of filling the gaps in communication skills shortage and preparing RMG novice professionals to become competent communicators. What are the implications of these findings and discussions? The following section summarises the possible implications and lessons that can be inferred from the above findings and discussion.

9.4 English for change for a better tomorrow

This research might have potential lessons and directions for university, industry, government, researchers, educators and career counsellors. The insights derived from this research provide an important addition to local and global knowledge. These insights are described here from different perspectives in light of the findings.

9.4.1 Specific businesses require specific communication skills. As discussed in the literature review, in an international business where English is used as the main medium of communication, key skills that workplaces require are communication skills. But what communication skills are required and how English is used for doing business is a matter of debate. There is no specific agreement about the skill set necessary for international business as discussed in chapter one (see, i.e. Chew, 2005; Chia-Jung, 1991; Stevens, 2005). Instead, it depends on the context and the specific industry. In a global context to date, little research is evident (e.g. So-mui &

Mead, 2000) about what kind of English communication skills are required for a global garments industry. Similarly, to my knowledge there has been no research conducted on this issue in the South Asian context, particularly in Bangladesh. In addition, there has been limited research on the analysis of written communication in business contexts, particularly e-mail discourse analysis in the RMG corporate setting, both in local and global contexts, in contrast to the analysis of e-mails in educational contexts (e.g. Gordon & Luke, 2012). To this extent, this study will make a significant contribution to both local and global knowledge.

This study recognised a set of communication skills and knowledge perceived as important and practised in both spoken and written contexts in RMG business communication located in Bangladesh in southern Asia. The identified communication skills overlap. In each country the need for communication skills in a growing business market is shaped by its professionals' expectations and perspectives. The RMG professionals, both employers and employees who participated in this study, had different experience, educational backgrounds and levels of involvement in communication. Given the differences in roles, experience, their expectations, observations and requirements I acknowledge that I found some differences, but within a broad continuum they were remarkably similar. It is very challenging, even sometimes impossible, to run such a business or be engaged in business communication without having identified communication skills. Before being involved in communication, a RMG professional must have or develop the identified set of communication skills, either through formal or informal education, or through both.

This study could be helpful for both NS and NNS of English about how business discourse happens in ELFB settings, how NNS use grammar, pronunciation, accents, pragmatic strategies and so on to create meaning in context: how they write e-mail

messages in their daily work and the discourse features of those messages. Different ELFB settings have both common and different discourse features and communicative practice. These are different from ‘standard English’ or native English communication. Consequently globally operating corporations may offer training on understanding, awareness and accommodation for discourse patterns, conventions and practices that occur in a specific ELFB setting.

9.4.2 Pedagogical implications: Lessons for ELF syllabus design. A major contribution here lies in providing a direction to English language teaching, especially at university level in Bangladesh. Given that the study was located in the field of English language teaching, and taking that into account, the study indicates a pedagogical framework for what is needed to teach English as a lingua franca speakers in ELF settings, that would allow for effective communication across linguacultural boundaries. A number of studies have been conducted in the area of ELF. However, there has been scant research (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2007; Qiufang, 2012) focused on what components/contents students should be taught through ELT for developing English communication skills for ELF communication, and what communication skills in English students should be equipped with for successful and effective communication in ELFB settings. As discussed earlier, English is the world *lingua franca* for communication, and this study has sought to fill the gap in our understanding of what students should be taught for ELFB settings by revealing the practices of lingua franca for business. The research has identified what learning is needed in at least four strands: linguistic elements, intercultural aspects, discourse components and pragmatic components. Linguistic elements include accents, pronunciation, grammar and frequently used general words that play a role in mutual intelligibility rather than native-like performance. As Pan, Scollon, and Scollon (2002) state:

...the long insistence that the ability to speak English is enough to be able to work anywhere does not suffice, for the reason that there isn't just one *English*. There are many *Englishes* in use throughout the world, and the fact that one might grow up speaking "English" in Iowa is no guarantee that he or she will understand a word of a conversation in London's East End, much less in Sydney, Hong Kong or New Delhi. (p. 4, cited in Briguglio, 2005, p. 22).

The findings of my study challenge existing ideas and practices of learning one standard variety of English (i.e. USA or UK), and suggest learning or being aware of multiple varieties of Englishes. Having awareness of such varieties, particularly Englishes of respective business counterparts, would be supportive for business professionals to understand Englishes of their clients. The literature suggests that the awareness about the diversity of English may help develop confidence of ELF speakers in their own English varieties; however, it may break the notion of learning and using native-like proficiency (Jenkins, 2006a). Moreover, for professional communication in an ELF context, professionals need to know words that are specific to their profession, including terms and acronyms along with other components as stated above.

The second component of ELF pedagogical content is the intercultural elements that embrace knowledge and awareness of interlocutors' sociocultural phenomena, which enables communicators to use appropriate language with people from different cultures. In other words, how to use and teach language appropriately and effectively with members of different cultures and being aware of and considering their position, gender, age, language and geographical backgrounds. As discussed earlier, language and culture are intertwined and because of English language and globalisation, cultures are travelling (Clifford, 1992) so that the global is shaping the local and vice versa. As seen in the finding about language use, taking into consideration sociocultural aspects of interlocutors, English is not only inevitably tied to the culture of its native speakers, but

also its non-native speakers. This supports other findings (e.g. Baker, 2009).

Accordingly, culture in global contexts is viewed as hybrid, diffuse and deterritorialised in form (see, Canagarajah, 2005, p. xvii). The implications are that when students are taught the use of English, they need to be exposed to the recognition that ELFB needs to be understood from a view of fluidity and hybridity of languages, cultures and identities (Baker, 2009). In addition, professionals need to understand shared professional cultures, for instance, RMG business professionals need to understand the communication culture practised in the RMG workplace.

The third component of ELF pedagogical content is discourse elements. The findings indicate that discourse elements practised in ELFB comprise short, simple, comprehensible and hybrid language in both spoken and written communication. In addition, pragmatic aspects of communication are the final components of the ELF pedagogical framework, where the goal is to compensate for the breakdown of communication and facilitate communication through using different pragmatic strategies (i.e. achievement strategies, tempo of speech, proactive strategies). In business discourse where language plays an important role in negotiation of human relationships, pragmatics is a worthwhile instrument in business communication. Through language teaching, Thomas (1983) suggests helping students to understand pragmatic principles that function in other cultures. The above pedagogical framework neither avoided native variety nor accepted it as a sole model. Instead, the pedagogical model embraces different varieties of English and gives space to ELF speakers, regardless of their type of English.

The findings of this study may inform teaching English for business purposes or business communication courses. As mentioned earlier, there is no business English course offered in higher education in Bangladesh. Business communication courses, in a

sense, are treated as a business English course. As a consequence, specific business-oriented skilled manpower with the required communication skills are not being developed as per need. In order to prepare graduates with strong English communication skills, English for business in general and English for specific business in particular (i.e. garments business) can be introduced. The curriculum should be planned in such a way that it can meet the needs of the global business market. The curriculum can incorporate the necessary contents as pointed out earlier.

As discussed in the findings in chapter eight (see section 8.6.3), English as a medium of education was observed as a determining factor as to whether or not a university is preparing graduates with the necessary communication skills. This finding indicates that English as a medium of education plays a significant role in developing English communication skills of graduates. The education policy of Bangladesh also encourages providing higher education in English. But in practice, English as a medium of instruction in higher education, particularly in the public university, is largely ignored (Rahman, 2005). Consequently, Bangladeshi higher education graduates, particularly Bangla medium graduates, were assumed to be less fluent in English than that of English medium graduates. In order to make graduates more fluent in English, higher education can offer English as education policy suggests. This initiative of English as a medium of higher education also could be a sign of internationalisation of higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008).

9.4.3 From workplace learning to work integrated learning: Preparing job-ready graduates. One of the major implications of this study has been the recognition of the role of industry in building professional skills through WBL. Given the limitations identified in some university preparation for the workplace, one future development to support the transition of graduates to employment in global businesses,

such as the RMG sector, could involve building partnerships between university and industry in professional skills development. As the findings have shown, participants reported the limitation of the teaching-learning process in higher education. They argued that university teaching was largely theoretical whereas this corporate sector requires practical skills and experience. This finding (see section 8.5) also indicates that workplace learning in the RMG sector has been playing a critical role in communication skills development of new employees since this industry began.

However, it was also revealed that workplace training is time consuming and requires patience. And since this is also an industry with the widespread practice of apprentice employees switching jobs to another company after training, some employers are not interested any longer in continuing to support workplace training for novice employees. Rather they demand more work-ready manpower. At the same time, in Bangladesh, there is a scarcity of training institutions to prepare graduates with adequate English communication skills for RMG business communication. If all employers stopped workplace training, how would newcomers develop their skills? It is necessary to consider the issue deeply and find an alternative. It does not matter whether it is formal or informal.

In this circumstance, the government and higher education institutions need to be proactive rather than reactive, and they need to reorganise the education syllabus and curriculum by building partnerships to prepare job-ready graduates with the required English communication skills determined by market demands, both present and future, and local and global. The conclusion of this analysis is that universities should introduce Work Integrated Learning (WIL) through cooperation between education and business in order to prepare job-ready graduates with the skills required for the workplace. WIL is a relatively new term in higher education that focuses on

‘intersection and engagement of theoretical and practical learning’ (Cooper et al., 2010, p. xiii) and prepares graduates for work and careers (McLennan & Keating, 2008). It is a potential teaching and learning approach that offers a rich, active and contextualised learning experience through engaging students in learning (McLennan & Keating, 2008). In WIL students would learn theoretical knowledge at the university while practical experience can be gained through workplaces adopting the strategies of workplace learning. Another suggestion is that, as Bangladesh has limited government jobs, universities as public bodies should take responsibility for maintaining liaison with industry, as foreign universities do.

9.4.4 Theory shifting: Reconsidering communicative competence in ELF business settings. One of the significant insights developed from this research is the use of communication competence in a different setting. As discussed in chapter two (see section 2.5), the concept of communicative competence outlined by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) described the idea of first language acquisition. Later it was transmitted to second language and foreign language acquisition and teaching. This research used this concept of language acquisition for identifying communication skills in the RMG business setting. As discussed in chapter two (see section 2.5), communicative competence highlighted four areas of competences and if people develop competences in these four areas they would be able to communicate effectively in a real-life context.

The findings of this study, however, challenge this notion and contend that an international business setting is more complicated than everyday communication for daily living. Consequently, the four elements of communicative competence cannot ensure the success of a business professional. Instead, a global business setting requires more skills and competences to enable professional success. Because of the forces of

market demand as a consequence of globalisation, more competencies are required. Professional knowledge and skills are needed along with the four communicative competences. This understanding encourages some rethinking and reconsideration of communicative competence from the perspective of international business communication, and contributes to the theory of communicative competence through proposing and constructing a revised theory informed by these different perspectives. The revised or proposed theory would not be completely new, but an extension of communicative competence and its application to a business setting where English is used as business lingua franca (see Figure 9.1).

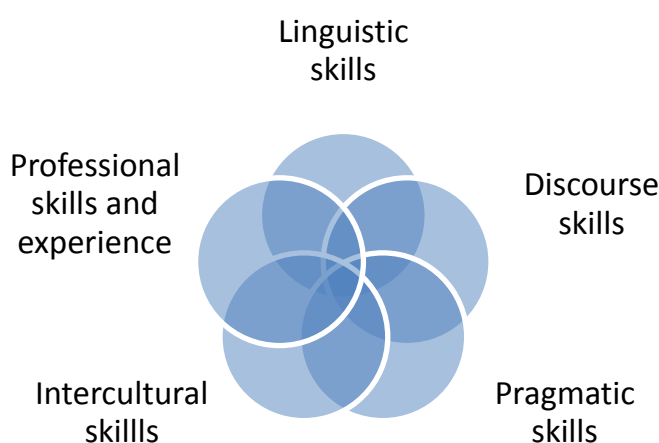


Figure 9.1: Model of ELFB skills

This communication model can be called ‘ELFB skills’ that denotes the skills of using English effectively and appropriately in a lingua franca business setting. The components of this model are not separate, but overlap. In underlining the contribution of the proposed model to the existing model of communicative competence, it can be said that this model highlights the necessities of communicative competence used today in professional communication in ELF business settings. However, this also indicates that forms of communicative competence required in the ELF business context are slightly different from those required in language learning and teaching.

9.4.5 Policy implications. In addition to pedagogical and theoretical implications, policy implications in this study are at macro and micro levels. At the macro level, evidence suggests that the government of Bangladesh lacks proper national human resource planning (see, Economist, 2014). Consequently, university education in Bangladesh cannot keep pace with local and global demands for graduates with English communication skills (ibid). In this circumstance, the government needs to reconsider its human resource planning, looking at the demand of the market, both local and global, at the same time, present and future, because the employment market is dynamic and constantly changing. Government needs to take into account this issue – the dynamic labour market – and take steps in introducing proper manpower planning, accordingly providing guidance to prepare graduates at university with the necessary skills.

As revealed in this research, while RMG is a giant industry in Bangladesh, which contributes significantly to the socioeconomic development of the country, this sector has not been prioritised in higher education (Economist, 2014) and this problem is reflected in the existence of only one RMG-specialised higher education institution. The preparation of qualified skilled human resources for this sector has not received much attention by government or policy makers (Economist, 2014). Consequently, there is a shortage of qualified, skilled human resources that leads to employers hiring foreign experts/professionals with higher salary packages (see Mizan, 2013) in order to fill the skills shortage and run their business. However, this allows graduates to enter the industry without relevant expert knowledge and experience.

In this context, simultaneously introducing proper human resource planning and accordingly plans to improve the development of human resources for the RMG industry are timely. The findings from this thesis support existing evidence that shows a shortage of appropriate graduates for this industry (see Economist, 2014; Mizan, 2013).

Therefore one implication is that the government needs to prioritise the RMG sector and prepare qualified, expert graduates in required numbers through either establishing more RMG specific universities, and/or also introducing RMG business related departments and courses (i.e. BBA, MBA and Diploma) in existing universities. By establishing more RMG specialised universities and introducing courses, this will create human resources with specialised knowledge and skill for this competitive business market and make the supply line appropriate for the industry. And this will employ more local graduates in this sector rather than hiring professionals from abroad.

Another policy implication is that in order to develop human resources with the necessary language skills alongside English, the government should emphasise the importance of other foreign languages in demand in the global market. As shown in the findings, while English was revealed as the most important language in RMG business interactions, because of globalisation as an economic ideology, there is also a demand for other languages, such as Mandarin, French and Hindi, in this global business market. Some participants even expressed their interest in learning Mandarin to communicate with Chinese counterparts because it has a positive impact in business communication and rapport management. The finding demonstrates that if a business professional speaks in the language of the respective business market, that is, in the customers' own language, it works as a great support in building rapport with interlocutors. As this business is growing gradually, it is difficult to run such a big industry on interpreters; rather it needs to prepare its own professionals with skills in more languages in demand in this business world. Also global socioeconomic transformation has led to the imposition of 'competitiveness' as a core value (Piller & Cho, 2013, p. 23) and RMG business is getting more competitive at all three levels – local, regional and global. As

such, this industry should develop professionals with all the necessary skills including expertise in multi-languages.

However, currently the garments industry in Bangladesh uses English at a global level while it uses Bangla at a local level, because the industry has very limited numbers of multilingual professionals, but there is a demand. In this regard, other mechanisms could be used to encourage employees to invest in their own learning, such as employers paying the costs or giving time to employees to learn an additional language; in this way the industry itself may encourage employees to learn more languages for the business market. Education institutions can also play a role by teaching more languages rather than confining themselves to teaching English only. In this respect, government needs to be more open and look beyond the policy focus on one foreign language in Bangladesh (i.e. English), and recognise the need to emphasise other foreign languages (i.e. Chinese, French, Hindi and Arabic) considering their necessity in the current and future global and local labour markets, because ‘language exerts hidden power, like a moon on the tides’ (Brown, 1997, p. 54). More languages thus make people more powerful in communication.

At the micro level, the thesis suggests introducing a well-planned mechanism to attract bright brains as professionals with expert knowledge and skills to the RMG sector. The demographic information of participants and the findings from this study reveal that the RMG sector is an open access employment market for all graduates, irrespective of disciplines and educational qualifications. Most of the professionals come to this sector without specific garments education or training or experience. To achieve better performance from employees, it is necessary to recruit those graduates who have related qualifications and skills in this area of business. The *“right people with right knowledge have to be put in the right job field so that they can use their*

knowledge in the proper development of their sector for the benefit of the country”

(Monir). In this case, both the government and university can play a dual role in changing the negative attitudes of graduates toward working in the RMG industry, and can attract the bright graduates to this sector with relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

One implication for the people working in this sector is that because of its growth and the lack of qualified graduates, the open access policy means that people are not recognised as professional as defined by the old style professionals, such as medics or engineers controlled by professional associations with preparation through specific education routes (Evetts, 2006). In a knowledge economy which assumes competition among graduates, education and professional qualifications become even more important. Brown, Lauder, and Ashton (2011) argue there is global competition among professionals and people are using university education to distinguish themselves, for the time being. These professionals will go on being employed whilst there is a skills shortage in Bangladesh, but if they do not get the qualifications as well as the experience, they will struggle to retain roles or move to other places, as new players in other countries come into the sector, or better qualified people from outside move in and take the jobs.

9.5 Limitations of the study and future direction

This study has limitations just as any typical qualitative study might have for its rigid structures and questions (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). One of the limitations of this study is the number of participants. This study was conducted based on the perceptions of 43 interviews, whereas a large number of professionals are engaged in international business communication worldwide. Accordingly, it can be said that although the findings in this study provide a richly representative account from

the professionals working in RMG firms in Bangladesh, these companies can only provide a glimpse of a large group of global professionals. Another limitation is that this study is conducted in one corporate sector in Bangladesh. No doubt the questions I asked, the findings reached and implications drawn, would be necessarily applicable or valid for other global operating corporate sectors located in Bangladesh.

The limitation of a study creates avenues for further study. Thus this research recommends conducting further studies. More research can be conducted on other global operating business sectors in Bangladesh, for example, call centres, banking and pharmaceuticals.

A possible indicator for comparative analysis is between public and private universities in preparing graduates with required communication skills needed for job markets. Although participants in this study perceived that private universities are doing better than public universities in preparing graduates for work in global businesses, what are the possible reasons behind these perceptions? Likewise, this finding reveals that a large number of Bangladeshi graduates are not confident enough to speak fluently. After 12 years of English learning, why are graduates not as fluent as they are supposed to be? Wherein lie the cause of this problem – in curriculum, in materials or in classroom practice – this issue also needs to be investigated.

9.6 Conclusion

In this research I attempted to explore the communication skills required for RMG business communication operating globally, where the status of English is the lingua franca. This research project viewed communication skills from the lens of communicative competence, but it also viewed the use of English in the RMG global business setting from the lens of ELF. Integrating both communicative competence and

ELF, this study constructed a conceptual framework and identified the skills necessary for productive communication in RMG international business. The study reveals that language, particularly English language, is not a minor matter; rather it is a crucial skill that plays a role in successful communication. The study identified a series of skills related to English language that personnel in the sector perceived as indispensable competences for communication among business professionals. These professionals came from different linguacultural backgrounds and interacted to achieve a certain business goal. To develop the identified skills, both university and industry play a role, and where university is perceived as not fully preparing graduates for professional employment, workplace training and learning fills the gaps in professional skills development. This study also showed possible alternative ways to better equip graduates with the necessary skills.

In this study, the skills that RMG professionals have and practise are suitable for *getting the job done*. These skills can be termed ‘communication skills masala’ – hybridising of different skills of communication. It does not matter whether language use is linguistically appropriate or not. A communication skills masala focuses on whether language is mutually intelligible and interpretable in its social context. For communication purposes, professionals working in the RMG sector in Bangladesh produce their own unique version of English, and life goes on.

However, as the world is constantly changing and becoming more competitive, the need for communication skills is being reviewed and has become more complex. The professionals engaged in a global communication need to upgrade their competence from merely getting the job done to ‘get the job done in detail’. In order to support both individual and national development, there is a need for more competent professionals being equipped with up-to-date skills to cope with the changing world. This calls for a

change of *mindset* of business professionals as far as the role of English is concerned in this business setting. They need to understand how English is used and should be used in an international business communication setting with native and non-native speakers of English.

Finally, I can say that this study has changed my understanding and provided me with answers to questions I raised at the beginning of this research. As it is a constructive study, based on RMG professionals' experience and understanding, and based on their communication work (e.g. e-mail writing), I understand how English is used in RMG business communication; the skills required for different groups of RMG business professionals engaged in communication with people from Kachru's (1992) three concentric circle countries, who have different levels of English language proficiency; and how university education and the RMG industry play a role in developing the communication skills of graduates and professionals respectively. This study has also given me insights about different areas of knowledge: form, function and varieties of English; the reasons for and consequences of the global spread of English; and the different status of English and how English language is used in business in different names and functions. In addition, a theoretical understanding of communicative competence, workplace learning, work-integrated learning and so forth enlightened me. I assume that this study will provide a guide for RMG entrepreneurs and related concerns about how English works in the RMG industry.

I will end this thesis with an expectation. When I went to retail shops, such as K-mart, Target and Woolworths in Melbourne, I found that the cheapest garments product was made in Bangladesh, but comparatively the most fashionable product was made in China. This trend indicates that at present buyers prefer China to Bangladesh when selecting manufacturers to make their best products. Therefore at present China holds its

place as first in the ranking of manufacturers in the global garments business chain. My hope is that in future Bangladesh will overtake China, and rank first in this global garments business, not only on competitive price as a supplier but also in relation to the quality of the product. My contention is that becoming a first rank industry is dependent in part on global professional skills, of which communication skills will be an imperative and integral part.

References

- Absar, S. S. (2009). Problems surrounding wages: The ready made garment sector in Bangladesh. *Labour and Management in Development*, 2(7), 1-16.
- Ahmed, N. (2009). Sustaining ready-made garment exports from Bangladesh. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 39(4), 597-618. doi: 10.1080/00472330903076891
- Ahmed, N., & Peerlings, J. (2009). Addressing workers' rights in the textile and apparel industries: Consequences for the Bangladesh economy. *World Development*, 37(3), 661-675. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.06.003>
- Alam, S. (2009). Code-mixing in Bangladesh: A case study of non government white-collar service holders and professionals. *Asian Affairs*, 28(4), 52.
- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 56(1), 57-64. doi: 10.1093/elt/56.1.57
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The Internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4), 290-305. doi: 10.1177/1028315307303542
- Andrews, J., & Higson, H. (2008). Graduate employability, 'soft skills' versus 'hard' business knowledge: A European study. *Higher Education in Europe*, 33(4), 411-422. doi: 10.1080/03797720802522627
- Anonymous. (1996). The coming global tongue. *The Economist*, 341(7997), 37-39.
- Babcock, R. D., & Du-Babcock, B. (2001). Language-based communication zones in international business communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, 38(4), 372-412. doi: 10.1177/002194360103800401
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, W. (2009). The cultures of English as a lingua franca. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(4), 567-592. doi: 10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00187.x
- Bamgbose, A. (2003). A recurring decimal: English in language policy and planning. *World Englishes*, 22(4), 419-431.
- Banu, A. (2009). Problems and misconceptions facing the primary language education in Bangladesh: An analysis of curricular and pedagogic practices. *BRAC University Journal*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Banu, R., & Sussex, R. (2001a). Code-switching in Bangladesh. *English Today*, 17(2), 51-61.
- Banu, R., & Sussex, R. (2001b). English in Bangladesh after independence: Dynamics of policy and practice. In B. Moore (Ed.), *Who's centric now? The present state of post-colonial Englishes* (pp. 122-147). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F., & Nickerson, C. (2003). Intercultural business communication: A rich field of studies. *Journal of International Studies*, 24(1), 3-15. doi: 10.1080/07256860305789
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F., Nickerson, C., & Planken, B. C. (2007). *Business discourse*: Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke.
- Batstone, R. (1994). *Grammar*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Bax, S. (2003). The end of CLT: A context approach to language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 57(3), 278-287. doi: 10.1093/elt/57.3.278
- BBS. (2012). Bangladesh data sheet. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
- Beamer, L. (1992). Learning intercultural communication competence. *Journal of Business Communication*, 29(3), 285-303.

- Beamer, L., & Varner, I. (2001). *Intercultural communication in the global workplace* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw- Hill/ Irwin.
- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1996). Rethinking learning. In D. R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *The handbook of education and human development: New models of learning, teaching and schooling* (pp. 485-513). London: Blackwell.
- Bhatia, V. K., & Bremner, S. (2012). English for business communication. *Language Teaching*, 45(04), 410-445. doi: doi:10.1017/S0261444812000171
- Binder, C. (2003). Doesn't everybody need fluency? *Performance Improvement*, 42(3), 14-20. doi: 10.1002/pfi.4930420304
- Bisong, J. (1995). Language choice and cultural imperialism: a Nigerian perspective. *ELT Journal*, 49(2), 122-132. doi: 10.1093/elt/49.2.122
- Bjørge, A. K. (2007). Power distance in English lingua franca email communication1. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(1), 60-80. doi: 10.1111/j.1473-4192.2007.00133.x
- Björkman, B. (2010). So you think you can ELF: English as a lingua franca as the medium of instruction. *Hermes-Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 45, 77-96.
- Björkman, B. (2011a). English as a lingua franca in higher education: Implications for EAP. *Ibérica: Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos (AELFE)*(22), 79-100.
- Björkman, B. (2011b). Pragmatic strategies in English as an academic lingua franca: Ways of achieving communicative effectiveness? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(4), 950-964. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.07.033>
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1986). Shifts of cohesion and coherence in translation In J. M. House & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlingual and intercultural communication: Discourse and cognition in translation and second language acquisition studies* (pp. 17-36): Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Board of Investment (2014). Bangladesh at a glance. Retrieved 23/4/2014, 2014, from <http://www.boi.gov.bd/index.php/about-bangladesh/bangladesh-at-a-glance>
- Bolton, K. (2004). World Englishes. In A. Davies & C. Elder (Eds.), *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 367–396). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bolton, K. (2008). English in Asia, Asian Englishes, and the issue of proficiency. *English Today*, 24(02), 3-12. doi: doi:10.1017/S026607840800014X
- Booher, D. (2009). Language and leaders: What is the link between them? *Leadership Excellence*. P. 11.
- Borg, E. (2003). Discourse community. *ELT Journal*, 57(4), 398-400.
- Bottery, M. (2000). *Education, policy and ethics*. London: Continuum.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp0630a
- Briguglio, C. (2005). *The use of English as a global language in multinational settings and the implications for business education*. (PhD), The University of Western Australia, Western Australia.
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983a). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983b). *Teching the spoken language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Brown, P., Lauder, H., & Ashton, D. (2011). *The global auction: The broken promises of education, jobs, and incomes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, R. M. (1997). The passive voice, or the secret agent. In C. Logan (Ed.), *Counterbalance: Gendered Perspectives on Writing and Language* (pp. 53-57). Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. (2002). *World English: A study of its development*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (Third ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bublitz, W. (2011). Cohesion and coherence. In J. Zienkowski, J. O. Östman & J. Verschueren (Eds.), *Discursive pragmatics* (pp. 37-49): John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bülow-Møller, A. M. (2005). Persuasion in business negotiations. In H. Halmari & T. Virtanen (Eds.), *Persuasion across genres: A linguistic approach* (pp. 27-58). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism*. New York: Routledge.
- Bush, T. (2007). Authenticity in research: Reliability, validity and triangulation. In A. R. J. Briggs & M. Coleman (Eds.), *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (pp. 91-105). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bygate, M. (1987). *Speaking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon Hall: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Cairns, L., & Malloch, M. (2011). Theories of work, place and learning: New directions. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans & B. N. O'Connor (Eds.), *The sage handbook of workplace learning* (pp. 3-16). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Cameron, D. (2002). Globalization and the teaching of 'communication skills'. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 67-82). London: Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (2005). Communication and commodification global economic change in sociolinguistic perspective. In G. Erreygers & G. Jacobs (Eds.), *Language, communication and the economy* (pp. 9-24). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Campbell, J. S., & Wales, R. (1970). The study of language acquisition. In J. Lyons (Ed.), *New Horizons in linguistics* (pp. 242-260). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Canagarajah, S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2005). *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice*. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Canagarajah, S. (2006). Negotiating the local in English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 26, 197-218. doi: 10.1017/S0267190506000109
- Canagarajah, S. (2007). Lingua franca English, multilingual communities, and language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91, 923-939. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00678.x
- Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In C. R. Jack & W. S. Richard (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 2-28). London: Longman.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.

- Canary, D. J., & Spitzberg, B. H. (1989). A model of the perceived competence of conflict strategies. *Human Communication Research*, 15(4), 630-649.
- Carnevale, A. P., Gainer, L. J., & Meltzer, A. S. (1988). Workplace basics: The skills employers want. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor and the American Society for Training and Development.
- Casady, M., & Wasson, L. (1994). Written communication skills of international business persons. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 57(4), 36-40. doi: 10.1177/108056999405700407
- Casale, D., & Posel, D. (2011). English language proficiency and earnings in a developing country: The case of South Africa. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 40, 385-393.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). Grammar pedagogy in second and foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(3), 459-480. doi: 10.2307/3586980
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2007). Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching. In E. A. Soler & M. P. S. Jordà (Eds.), *Intercultural language use and language learning*. Dordrecht, the Netherlands Springer
- Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 5-35.
- Chalaby, J. K. (1996). Beyond the prison-house of language: Discourse as a sociological concept. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47(4), 684-698. doi: 10.2307/591080
- Chambers, F. (1997). What do we mean by fluency? *System*, 25(4), 535-544. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(97\)00046-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(97)00046-8)
- Charles, M. (2007). Language matters in global communication: Article based on ORA lecture, October 2006. *Journal of Business Communication*, 44(3), 260-282. doi: 10.1177/0021943607302477
- Charles, M., & Marschan-Piekkari, R. (2002). Language training for enhanced horizontal communication: A challenge for MNCs. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65(2), 9-29. doi: 10.1177/108056990206500202
- Chaturvedi, P. D., & Chaturvedi, M. (2006). *Business communication: Concepts, cases, and application*. Delhi: Pearson Education.
- Chen, G.-M., & Starosta, W. J. (2008). Intercultural communication competence: A synthesis. In M. K. Asante, Y. Miike & J. Yin (Eds.), *The global intercultural communication reader* (pp. 215-238). New York: Routledge.
- Cheney, R. S. (2001). Intercultural business communication international students, and experiential learning. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 64(4), 90-104.
- Chew, K.-S. (2005). An investigation of the English language skills used by new entrants in banks in Hong Kong. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24, 423-435.
- Chia-Jung, T. (1991). English communication skills needs of professionals in Taiwan's high-technology industries. *Professional Communication, IEEE Transactions on*, 34(2), 79-82. doi: 10.1109/47.87616
- Chiswick, B., & Miller, P. (2010). Occupational language requirements and the value of English in the US labor market. *Journal of Population Economics*, 23(1), 353-372. doi: 10.1007/s00148-008-0230-7
- Chiswick, B. R., & Miller, P. W. (1995). The endogeneity between language and earnings: International analyses. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 13(2), 246-288.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of theory of syntax*. Cambridge, Mass: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Choudhury, R. K. (2010). *Appropriateness and relevancy of communicative language teaching (CLT) for Bangladesh: A perspective from Bangladeshi rural*

- secondary school English teachers*. (Ed.D. 3400655), Teachers College, Columbia University, United States -- New York. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/230970158?accountid=12528> ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT) database.
- Chowdhury, R., & Farooqui, S. (2011). Teacher training and teaching practice: The changing landscape of ELT in secondary education in Bangladesh. In L. Farrel, U. N. Singh & R. A. Giri (Eds.), *English language education in south Asia: From policy to pedagogy* (pp. 147-159). New Delhi, Cambridge University Press.
- Ciortescu, E. R. (2012). Teaching communication skills in business English classes: An overview. *Cultural and Linguistic Communication*, 2(3), 219-223.
- Clifford, J. (1992). Traveling cultures. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & L. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp. 96-116). New York: Routledge.
- Cloke, P., Cook, I., Crang, P., Goodwin, M., Painter, J., & Philo, C. (2004). *Practising human geography*. London: Sage Publications.
- Coffey, A. A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Cogo, A. (2009). Accommodating differences in ELF conversations: A study of pragmatic strategies. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (Eds.), *English as a lingua franca: Studies and findings* (pp. 254-273). Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Cogo, A. (2010). Strategic use and perceptions of English as a lingua franca. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 46(3), 295-312. doi: 10.2478/v10010-010-0013-7
- Cogo, A. (2012). English as a lingua franca: concepts, use, and implications. *ELT Journal*, 66(1), 97-105. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccr069
- Cogo, A., & Dewey, M. (2006). Efficiency in ELF communication: from pragmatic motives to lexico-grammatical innovation. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 5(2), 59-93.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K., & Morrison, K. R. B. (2007). *Research methods education*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Collins, P. (2009). *Speak with power and confidence: Tested ideas for becoming a more powerful communicator*. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Incorporated.
- Colucci, E. (2008). On the use of focus groups in cross-cultural research. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Doing cross-cultural research: Ethical and methodological perspectives* (pp. 233-252). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Conger, J. A. (1998). The necessary art of persuasion *Harvard Business Review*, 76(3), 84-95.
- Conrad, D., & Newberry, R. (2011). Identification and instruction of important business communication skills for graduate business education. *Journal of Education for Business*, 87(2), 112-120. doi: 10.1080/08832323.2011.576280
- Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Correspondent, S. (2010, 10 November, 2010). RMG workers in Ashulia strike for hiked bonus. *The daily Star (Online)*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=162044>
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1999). Introduction. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research*: SAGE Publications.
- Crebert, G., Bates, M., Bell, B., Patrick, C. J., & Cragnolini, V. (2004). Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment:

- graduates' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(2), 147-165. doi: 10.1080/0729436042000206636
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. New Jersey: Pearson Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (Third ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2
- Crosling, G., & Ward, I. (2002). Oral communication: The workplace needs and uses of business graduates. *English for Specific Purposes*, 21, 41-57.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. St Leonards, NSW, Australia: Sage Publications.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (Second ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2004). The past, present and future of world English. In A. Gardt & B. R. Hüppauf (Eds.), *Globalization and the future of German: With a select bibliography* (pp. 27-46). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cutting, J. (2011). Spoken discourse. In K. Hyland & B. Paltridge (Eds.), *The continuum companion to discourse analysis*. NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Daniels, J. D., & Cannice, M. V. (2004). Interview studies in international business research. In R. Marschan-Piekkari & C. Welch (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for international business* (pp. 185-206). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Dauer, R. M. (2005). The lingua franca core: A new model for pronunciation instruction? *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 543-550. doi: 10.2307/3588494
- Dechert, H. W. (1983). *How a story is done in a second language* C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 175-195), London, Longman.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2008). Introduction In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative Inquiry* (Third ed., pp. 1-43). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Dhir, K. S., & Savage, T. (2002). The value of a working language. *International Journal of Sociology of Language*, 158, 1-35.
- DiSalvo, V., Larsen, D. C., & Seiler, W. J. (1976). Communication skills needed by persons in business organizations. *Communication Education*, 25(4), 269-275. doi: 10.1080/03634527609384640
- Dörnyei, Z. (1995). On the teachability of communication strategies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 55-85. doi: 10.2307/3587805
- Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1991). Strategic competence and how to teach it. *ELT Journal*, 45(1), 16-23. doi: 10.1093/elt/45.1.16
- Dowling Jr, D. C. (2009). English is not a multinational company's exclusive language. *Labor & Employment Law*, 37(2), 5-10.

- Dudley-Evans, T., & John, M. J. S. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dustmann, C. (1994). Speaking fluency, writing fluency and earnings of migrants. *Journal of Population Economics*, 7(2), 133-156. doi: 10.1007/BF00173616
- Dustmann, C., & Fabbri, F. (2003). Language proficiency and labour market performance of immigrants in the UK. *The Economic Journal*, 113(489), 695-717. doi: 10.1111/1468-0297.t01-1-00151
- Edwards, J. A. (1993). Principles and contrasting of discourse transcription. In J. A. Edwards & M. D. Lampert (Eds.), *Talking data: Transcription and coding in discourse research* (pp. 3-31), New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ehrenreich, S. (2010). English as a business lingua franca in a German multinational corporation. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 408-431. doi: 10.1177/0021943610377303
- Elias, P., & Purcell, K. (2013). Classifying graduate occupations for the knowledge society (Vol. 5). The UK: Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Erling, E. J. (2005). The many names of English. *English Today*, 21(1), 40-44.
- Erling, E. J., Seargeant, P., Solly, M., Chowdhury, Q. H., & Rahman, S. (2012). Attitudes to English as a language for international development in rural Bangladesh. London: British Council.
- Erling, E. J., & Walton, A. (2007). English at work in Berlin. *English Today*, 23(01), 32-40. doi: 10.1017/S026607840700106X
- Evans, S. (2010). Business as usual :The use of English in the professional world in Hong Kong. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29, 153-167.
- Evans, S. (2013). Perspectives on the use of English as a business lingua franca in Hong Kong. *Journal of Business Communication*, 50(3), 227-252. doi: 10.1177/0021943613487073
- Evetts, J. (2006). Short note: The Sociology of professional groups: New directions. *Current Sociology*, 54(1), 133-143. doi: 10.1177/0011392106057161
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power*, London: Pearson Education.
- Fallows, S., & Steven, C. (2000). Building employability skills into the higher education curriculum: A university-wide initiative. *Education & Training*, 42(2/3), 75-83.
- Felstead, A., Fuller, A., Jewson, N., & Unwin, L. (2009). *Improving working as learning*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Ferguson, C. A. (1983). Foreword. In B. B. Kachru (Ed.), *The other tongue: English across cultures* (pp. vii-xi). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Ferraro, G. P. (2002). *The cultural dimension of international business* (4th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Ferraro, G. P. (2010). *The cultural dimension of international business*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Finch, G. (2005). *Key concepts in language and linguistics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Firth, A. (1996a). The discursive accomplishment of normality: On 'lingua franca' English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26, 237-259.
- Firth, A. (1996b). The discursive accomplishment of normality: On 'lingua franca' English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26(2), 237-259. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(96\)00014-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(96)00014-8)

- Fishman, J. A. (1982). Sociology of English as an additional language. In B. B. Kachru (Ed.), *The other tongue: English across cultures* (pp. 15-22). Illinois: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.
- Forman, J., & Damschroder, L. (2008). Qualitative content analysis. In L. Jacoby & L. A. Siminoff (Eds.), *Empirical methods for bioethics: A primer* (Vol. 11, pp. 39-62). AE Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Elsevier Ltd.
- Francis, N., & Ryan, P. M. (1998). English as an international language of prestige: Conflicting cultural perspectives and shifting ethnolinguistic loyalties. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29(1), 25-43. doi: 10.2307/3196100
- Fredriksson, R., Barner-Rasmussen, W., & Piekkari, R. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual organization: The notion of a common corporate language. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 11(4), 406-423.
- Freihat, S., & Al-Machzoomi, K. (2012). The picture of workplace oral communication skills for ESP Jordanian business graduate employees. *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology*, 2(1), 159-173.
- Friedrich, P., & Matsuda, A. (2010). When five words are not enough: A conceptual and terminological discussion of English as a lingua franca. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 4(1), 20-30. doi: 10.1080/19313150903500978
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Free Press.
- Fuller, A., & Unwin, L. (2004). Expansive learning environments: Integrating organizational and personal development. In A. Fuller, A. Munro & H. Rainbird (Eds.), *Workplace Learning in Context* (pp. 127-144). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Gains, J. (1999). Electronic mail-a new style of communication or just a new medium?: An investigation into the text features of e-mail. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18(1), 81-101.
- Gatbonton, E., & Segalowitz, N. (2005). Rethinking communicative language teaching: A focus on access to fluency. *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne Des Langues Vivantes*, 61(3), 325-353.
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (Third ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Georgakopoulou, A., & Goutsos, D. (2004). *Discourse analysis: An introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gerrish, K., & Lacey, A. (Eds.). (2010). *The research process in nursing*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gerritsen, M., & Nickerson, C. (2009). BELF: Business English as a lingua franca. In F. Bargiela-Chiappini (Ed.), *The handbook of business discourse* (pp. 180-192). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Ghuri, P. N. (2003). A framework for international business negotiations. In P. N. Ghauri & J. C. Usunier (Eds.), *International business negotiations* (pp. 3-22). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London Sage Publications.
- Gill, R. (2000). Discourse analysis. In M. W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook for social research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Gilsdorf, J. W. (1986). Executives' and academics' perceptions on the need for instruction in written persuasion. *Journal of Business Communication*, 23(4), 55-68. doi: 10.1177/002194368602300406

- Gimenez, J. C. (2000). Business e-mail communication: Some emerging tendencies in register. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19, 237–225. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(98\)00030-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(98)00030-1)
- Gimenez, J. C. (2002). New media and conflicting realities in multinational corporate communication: A case study. *IRAL*, 40(4), 323-344.
- Gimenez, J. C. (2006). Embedded business emails: Meeting new demands in international business communication. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25, 154-172.
- Giunipero, L. C., & Percy, D. H. (2000). World-class purchasing skills: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 36(4), 4-13. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-493X.2000.tb00081.x
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory : strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Gnutzmann, C. (2000). Lingua franca. In M. Byram (Ed.), *The Rurledge enclypedia of language teaching and learning* (pp. 356-359). London: Routledge.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8, 597.
- Golombek, P., & Jordan, S. R. (2005). Becoming “Black Lambs” not “Parrots”: A poststructuralist orientation to intelligibility and identity. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 513-533. doi: 10.2307/3588492
- Gordon, C., & Luke, M. (2012). Discursive negotiation of face via email: Professional identity development in school counseling supervision. *Linguistics and Education*, 23(1), 112-122. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2011.05.002>
- Graddol, D. (1997). *The future of English?* London: The British Council.
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English next*. London: British Council.
- Graddol, D., Leith, D., & Swann, J. (1996). *English: History, diversity and change*. USA: Routledge.
- Grady, M. P. (1998). *Qualitative and action research: A practiioner handbook*. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Greenbaum, S. (1982). *What is grammar and why teach it?* Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English, Boston.
- Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2006). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change*, London: Sage Publications.
- Griffith, D. A. (2002). The role of communication competencies in international business relationship development *Journal of World Business*, 37, 256-265.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco: Jessy-Bass.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigm in qualitative research In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Guffey, M. E. (2010). *Essentials of business communication* (D. Loewy Ed. Eighth ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage learning.
- Guion, L. A., Diehl, D. C., & McDonald, D. (Producer). (2006). Conducting an in-depth interview. Retrieved from <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FY/FY39300.pdf> access on 4 June, 2014
- Gumperz, J. J. (1992). Contextualization and understanding. In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon* (pp. 229-252). New York : Cambridge University Press
- Habil, H. (2010). Functions and strategies of email communication at the workplace In R. Taiwo (Ed.), *Handbook of research on discourse behavior and digital communication: Language structures and social interaction* (pp. 479-489). Pennsylvania: Hershey, Pa., IGI Global.

- Hager, P. (1998). Understanding workplace learning: General perspectives In (Ed.), Current issues and new agendas in workplace learning. In D. Boud (Ed.), *Current issues and new agendas in workplace learning* (pp. 31–46). Springfield, VA: NCVER.
- Halcomb, E. J., & Halcomb, E. J. (2006). Is verbatim transcription of interview data always necessary? *Applied Nursing Research*, 19, 38-42.
- Hall, E. T. (1959). *The silent language* (Vol. 3). New York: Doubleday New York.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Hamid, M. O. (2010). Globalisation, English for everyone and English teacher capacity: language policy discourses and realities in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in language Planning*, 11(4), 289-310. doi: 10.1080/14664208.2011.532621
- Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B. (2008). Will CLT bail out the bogged down ELT in Bangladesh? *English Today* 95, 24(3), 16-24.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Hassan, F. (2010). Market diversification for growth sustainability 21st BATEXPO 2010, 39-43.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford Oxford University Press.
- Hill, P., & Zyl, S. v. (2002). English and multilingualism in the South African engineering workplace. *World Englishes*, 21(1), 23-35. doi: 10.1111/1467-971X.00229
- Holliday, A. (1995). Assessing language needs within an institutional context: An ethnographic approach. *English for Specific Purposes*, 14(2), 115-126. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906\(95\)00006-D](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906(95)00006-D)
- Holliday, R., & Retallick, J. (1995). *Workplace learning: Module 2 – The workplace as a place of learning*: Open Learning Institute, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.
- Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2009). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare*. West Sussex, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell
- Hollqvist, H. (1984). *The use of English in three large Swedish companies*. Uppsala University, Stockholm.
- Honna, N. (2012). The pedagogical implications of English as a multicultural lingua franca. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 1(1), 191-192. doi: 10.1515/jelf-2012-0012
- Hossain, T., & Tollefson, J. W. (2007). Language policy in education in Bangladesh. In A. B. M. Tsui & J. W. Tollefson (Eds.), *Language Policy, Culture, and Identity in Asian Contexts* (pp. 241-258). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- House, J. (1996). Developing pragmatic fluency in English as a foreign language: Routines and metapragmatic awareness. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18(02), 225-252. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100014893>
- House, J. (1999). Misunderstanding in intercultural communication: Interactions in English as a lingua franca and the myth of mutual intelligibility. In C. Gnutzmann (Ed.), *Teaching and learning English as a global language* (pp. 73–89). Germany: Tübingen : Stauffenburg
- House, J. (2002). Communicating in English as a lingua franca. *EUROSLA Yearbook*, 2, 243-261.
- House, J. (2003). English as a lingua franca: A threat to multilingualism? *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(4), 556-578. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9841.2003.00242.x
- House, J. (2012). English as a lingua franca and linguistic diversity. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 1(1), 173-175. doi: 10.1515/jelf-2012-0008

- Hu, G. (2005). 'CLT is best for China'— an untenable absolutist claim. *ELT Journal*, 59(1), 65-68. doi: 10.1093/elt/cci009
- Hurn, B. J. (2009). Will international business always speak English? *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 41(6), 299-304. doi: 10.1108/00197850910983884
- Hüttner, J. (2009). Fluent speakers—fluent interactions: On the creation of (co)-fluency in English as a lingua franca. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (Eds.), *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and findings* (pp. 274–297). Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Illeris, K. (2011). Workplaces and learning. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans & B. N. O'Connor (Eds.), *The sage handbook of workplace learning* (pp. 32-45). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Imam, S. R. (2005). English as a global language and the question of nation - building education in Bangladesh. *Comparative Education*, 41(4), 471-486. doi: 10.1080/03050060500317588
- Islam, A. (2012). Industry strengths. Retrieved 23 August, 2013, from <http://www.bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/Strengths>
- Islam, M. (2011). A pragmatic language policy in relation to English: Bangladesh contexts. *Language in India*, 11(12), 47-57.
- Islam, S. (2010). Message. *21st BATEXPO 2010*, 16.
- Jahan, A. (2008). Teaching speaking skills at the tertiary level in Bangladesh: An Empirical investigation *Daffodil International University Journal of Business Economics*, 3(1), 155-171.
- Jenkins, J. (1998). Which pronunciation norms and models for English as an International Language? *ELT Journal*, 52(2), 119-126. doi: 10.1093/elt/52.2.119
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2006a). Current perspectives on teaching world Englishes and English as a lingua franca. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 157-181. doi: 10.2307/40264515
- Jenkins, J. (2006b). Global intelligibility and local diversity: Possibility or paradox. In R. Rubdy & M. Saraceni (Eds.), *English in the world: Global rules, global roles* (pp. 32-39). London: Continuum.
- Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a lingua franca: Attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2008). *English as a lingua franca*. Paper presented at the JACET 47th Annual Convention, Waseda University, Tokyo. Powerpoint presentation retrieved from http://www.jacet.org/2008convention/JACET2008_keynote_jenkins.pdf
- Jenkins, J. (2009). English as a lingua franca: Interpretations and attitudes. *World Englishes*, 28(2), 200-207. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.2009.01582.x
- Jenkins, J. (2011). Accommodating (to) ELF in the international university. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(4), 926-936. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.05.011>
- Jenkins, J. (2012). English as a lingua franca from the classroom to the classroom. *ELT Journal*, 66(4), 486-494. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccs040
- Jenkins, J., Modiano, M., & Seidlhofer, B. (2001). Euro-English. *English Today*, 17(4), 13-19.
- John, M. J. S. (1996). Business is booming : Business English in the 1990s. *English for Specific Purposes*, 15(1), 3-18.

- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational research quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* Los Angeles: Sage.
- Joinson, A. N., & Reips, U.-D. (2007). Personalized salutation, power of sender and response rates to Web-based surveys. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(3), 1372-1383. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2004.12.011>
- Jones, L., & Alexander, R. (2000). *New international business English updated edition teacher's book: Communication skills in English for business purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). The power and politics of English. *World Englishes*, 5(2-3), 121-140. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.1986.tb00720.x
- Kachru, B. B. (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures* (Second ed.). Illinois: University of Illinois.
- Kachru, B. B. (1996). South asian English: Toward an identity in diaspora. In R. J. Baumgardner (Ed.), *South Asian English: Structure, Use, and Users* (pp. 9-28). Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (2005). *Asian Englishes: Beyond the canon*. Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Kong Kong University Press.
- Kamaluddin, M. (2008). English teaching in Bangladesh. *Star Campus*, 2.
- Kankaanranta, A. (2005). *Hej Seppo, Could you pls comment on this!" Internal email communication in lingua franca English in a multinational company*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Kankaanranta, A. (2006). "Hej Seppo, Could You pls Comment on This!"—Internal email communication in lingua franca English in a multinational company. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69(2), 216-225. doi: 10.1177/108056990606900215
- Kankaanranta, A., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2007). Business communication in BELF. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 70(1), 55-59.
- Kankaanranta, A., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2010). "English? – Oh, it's just work!": A study of BELF users' perceptions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29(3), 204-209. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2009.06.004>
- Kankaanranta, A., & Lu, W. (2013). The evolution of English as the business lingua franca: Signs of convergence in Chinese and Finnish professional communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*. doi: 10.1177/1050651913479919
- Kankaanranta, A., & Planken, B. (2010). Belf competence as business knowledge of internationally operating business professionals. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 380-407. doi: 10.1177/0021943610377301
- Kaur, J. (2012). Saying it again: enhancing clarity in English as a lingua franca (ELF) talk through self-repetition. *Text & Talk*, 32(5), 593-613. doi: 10.1515/text-2012-0028
- Kelly, L., & Watson, A. K. (1989). *Speaking with confidence and skill*: University Press of America, Incorporated.
- Khan, R., & Chaudhury, T. A. (2012). The Bangladeshi employment sector: Employer perspectives concerning English proficiency *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 116-129.
- Khosla, N. (2009). The ready-made garments industry in Bangladesh: A means to reducing gender-based social exclusion of women? *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(1), 289-303. <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol11/iss1/18>
- Kiang, N. Y. (2003). A discourse analysis of e-mail messages in a Malaysian business community *GEMA: Online Journal of Language Studies* 3(1), 37-46.

- Kilpatrick, R. H. (1984). International business communication practices. *Journal of Business Communication*, 21(4), 33-44. doi: 10.1177/002194368402100404
- Kirby, S. L., Greaves, L., & Reid, C. (2006). *Experience research social change: Methods beyond the mainstream*. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press.
- Kirkgoz, Y. (2010). Analyzing the discourse of e-mail communication. In R. Taiwo (Ed.), *Handbook of research on discourse behavior and digital communication: Language structures and social interaction* (pp. 335-348). Pennsylvania: Hershey, Pa., IGI Global
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes: Implications for international communication and English language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). English as an Asian lingua franca and the multilingual model of ELT. *Language Teaching*, 44(02), 212-224. doi: doi:10.1017/S0261444810000145
- Klauda, S. L., & Guthrie, J. T. (2008). Relationships of three components of reading fluency to reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(2), 310-321. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.100.2.310
- Klimpfinger, T. (2009). 'She's mixing the two languages together'-Forms and functions of code-switching in English as a lingua franca. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (Eds.), *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings*. (pp. 348-371). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kossoudji, S. A. (1988). English language ability and the labor market opportunities of Hispanic and east Asian immigrants men. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 6(2), 205-228.
- Kostova, T., & Roth, K. (2003). Social capital in multinational corporations and a micro-macro model of its formation. *Academy of Management Review*, 28(2), 297-317. doi: 10.5465/amr.2003.9416356
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited.
- Kress, G. (2010). A grammar for meaning-making. In T. Locke (Ed.), *Beyond the grammar wars: A resource for teachers and students on developing language knowledge in the English/literacy classroom* (pp. 233-253). Oxon: Taylor & Francis.
- Krizan, A. C. B., Merrier, P., Logan, J. P., & Williams, K. (2010). *Business communication* (Eighth ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Lan, J. (2007). Research on intercultural business communication. *Canadian Social Science* 3 (2), 87-89. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.3968%2Fj.css.1923669720070302.014
- Lan, L. (2000). Email: A challenge to Standard English? *English Today*, 16(04), 23-29. doi: doi:10.1017/S0266078400000511
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lehtonen, T., & Karjalainen, S. (2009). Workplace language needs and university language education - do they meet? *European Journal of Education*, 44(3), 412-420.
- Leinhardt, G., Young, K. M., & Merriman, J. (1995). Fusing experience and theory: The structure of professional knowledge. *Learning and Instruction*, 5(4), 401-408. doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/10.1016/0959-4752(95)00025-9
- Lenneberg, E. H. (1967). *Biological foundations of language*. Oxford, England: Wiley.
- Lennon, P. (1990). Investigating fluency in EFL: A quantitative approach*. *Language Learning*, 40(3), 387-417. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-1770.1990.tb00669.x

- Levis, J. M. (2005). Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronunciation teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 369-377. doi: 10.2307/3588485
- Li, D. C. (2002). Pragmatic dissonance: The ecstasy and agony of speaking like a native speaker of English. *Discourses in Search of Members. In Honor of Ron Scollon. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America*, 559-595.
- Li, N. (2001). WTO entry to open investment floodgates *Business Weekly*, November, 13-19.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. California: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences In Y. S. Lincoln & E. G. Guba (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: sage.
- Locker, K. O., & Kaczmarek, S. K. (2009). *Business communication: Building critical thinking* (fourth ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Long, T., & Johnson, M. (2000). Rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing*, 4(1), 30-37. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1054/cein.2000.0106>
- Loos, E. (2000). Language choice, linguistic capital and symbolic domination in the European Union. *Language Problems & Language Planning*, 24(1), 37-53. doi: 10.1075/lplp.24.1.04loo
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Charles, M. (2006). English as the lingua franca of international business communication: Whose English? What English? In J. C. palmer-Silveira, M. F. Ruiz-Garrido & I. Fortanet-Gomez (Eds.), *Intercultural and international business communication* (pp. 27-54). Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., Charles, M., & Kankaanranta, A. (2005). English as a lingua franca in Nordic corporate mergers: Two case companies. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24(4), 401-421. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.02.003>
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Kankaanranta, A. (2011). Professional communication in a global business context: The notion of global communicative competence. *Professional Communication, IEEE Transactions on*, 54(3), 244-262.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Kankaanranta, A. (2012). Language as an issue in international internal communication: English or local language? If English, what English? *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 262-269. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.12.021>
- Lustig, M. W., & Koester, J. (2003). *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Lustig, M. W., & Koester, J. (2010). *Intercultural competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Mallon, R., & Oppenheim, C. (2002). Style used in electronic mail. *Aslib Proceedings*, 54(1), 8-22. doi: 10.1108/00012530210697482
- Marlina, R. (2012). *Teaching English as an international language in Indonesia: Possibilities and challenges*. Paper presented at the Invited guest lecture for "Teacher Learning & Empowerment Week", The Faculty of language and Literature & language Training Centre, Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Indonesia.
- Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999a). Adopting a common corporate language: IHRM implications. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(3), 377-390. doi: 10.1080/095851999340387
- Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999b). In the shadow: The impact of language on structure, power and communication in the multinational.

- International Business Review*, 8(4), 421-440. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0969-5931\(99\)00015-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0969-5931(99)00015-3)
- Matsuda, A. (2003a). Incorporating world Englishes in teaching English as an international language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 719-729.
- Matsuda, A. (2003b). The ownership of English in Japanese secondary schools. *World Englishes*, 22(4), 483-496. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.2003.00314.x
- Matthews, P. (1999). Workplace learning: Developing an holistic model. *The Learning Organization*, 6(1), 18-29.
- Mauranen, A. (2003). The corpus of English as lingua franca in academic settings. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(3), 513-527. doi: 10.2307/3588402
- Mauranen, A. (2006). Signaling and preventing misunderstanding in English as lingua franca communication. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 177, 123-150.
- Mauranen, A., Hynninen, N., & Ranta, E. (2010). English as an academic lingua franca: The ELFA project. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29(3), 183-190. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2009.10.001>
- Mauranen, A., & Ranta, E. (2005). Introduction *English as a lingua franca: Studies and findings* (pp. 1-7). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- McArthur, T. (2001). World English and world Englishes: Trends, tensions, varieties, and standards. *Language Teaching*, 34(01), 1-20. doi: [doi:10.1017/S0261444800016062](http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800016062)
- McArthur, T. (2004). Is it world or international or global English, and does it matter? *English Today*, 20(03), 3-15. doi: [doi:10.1017/S0266078404003025](http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0266078404003025)
- McKay, S. (2002). *Teaching English as an international language: Rethinking goals and approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McKay, S. (2003). Teaching English as an international language: The Chilean context. *ELT Journal*, 57(2), 139-48.
- McKeown, K. R. (1985). Discourse strategies for generating natural-language text. *Artificial Intelligence*, 27(1), 1-41. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0004-3702\(85\)90082-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0004-3702(85)90082-7)
- McLaren, M., & Hills, P. (1987). Introduction - the teaching of communication skills across the world. In P. J. Hills & M. McLaren (Eds.), *Communication skills: An International Review Volume 1*. New York: Croom Helm.
- McLennan, B., & Keating, S. (2008). *Work-integrated learning (WIL) in Australian universities: The challenges of mainstreaming WIL*. Paper presented at the ALTC NAGCAS National Symposium, Melbourne. <http://140.159.100.18/vucollege/LiWC/resources/NAGCASpaper-final10June08.pdf>
- Meierkord, C. (2002). Language stripped bare'or 'linguistic masala'? Culture in lingua franca conversation. In K. Knapp & C. Meierkord (Eds.), *Lingua franca communication* (pp. 109-133). Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang.
- Meierkord, C. (2006). Lingua franca communication past and present. *International Journal of the Sociology of language*, 177(1), 9-30.
- Meierkord, C., & Knapp, K. (2002). Approaching lingua franca communication. In K. Knapp & C. Meierkord (Eds.), *Lingua franca communication* (pp. 9-28). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.
- Melton, J. (2009). Going global: A case study of rhetorical invention, packaging, delivery, and feedback collection. *Professional Communication, IEEE Transactions on*, 52(3), 229-242.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*: Sage Publications.
- Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research*, California: Sage Publications.
- Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2009). *Encyclopedia of case study research*, California: Sage Publications.
- Ministry of Education. (2010). National education policy 2010. Dhaka: Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- Mirza, M. G. H., Mahmud, K., & Jabbar, J. (2012). Use of other languages in English language teaching at tertiary level: A case study on Bangladesh. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 71-77.
- Mizan, Z. H. (2013, 20 May). গার্মেন্ট শিল্পে ভারতীয় আধিপত্য. *Noya Digonto*.
- Mlachila, M., & Yang, Y. (2004). The end of textile quotas: A case study of the impact on Bangladesh (Vol. IMF Working Paper, WP/04/108). Washington DC: Policy Development and Review Department, International Monetary Fund.
- Mollin, S. (2006). English as a lingua franca: A new variety in the new expanding circle? *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 5(2), 41-57.
- Morrison, K., & Lui, I. (2000). Ideology, linguistic capital and the medium of instruction in Hong Kong. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 21(6), 471-486. doi: 10.1080/01434630008666418
- Moss, G. (2012). Wise words from experienced managers. *Human Resources Magazine*, 17(4), 20-21.
- Mufwene, S. S. (2012). English as a lingua franca: Myths and facts. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 1(2), 365-370. doi: 10.1515/jelf-2012-0023
- Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Munro, M. J., & Derwing, T. M. (1999). Foreign accent, comprehensibility, and intelligibility in the speech of second language learners. *Language Learning*, 49, 285-310. doi: 10.1111/0023-8333.49.s1.8
- Munter, M., Rogers, P. S., & Rymer, J. (2003). Business e-mail: Guideline for users. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 66(26), 26-40.
- Murshedy, A. S. (2010). Forwarding with new prospects and goals: Bangladesh RMG. *21st BATEXPO 2010*, 32-37.
- Nation, P. (1989). Improving speaking fluency. *System*, 17(3), 377-384. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X\(89\)90010-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(89)90010-9)
- NCTB. (1995). Curriculum and syllabus. Dhaka: National Curriculum and Textbookboard.
- Neeley, T. (2012). Global business speaks English *Harvard Business Review*, 90(5), 116-124.
- Nelson, C. L. (1995). Intelligibility and world Englishes in the classroom. *World Englishes*, 14(2), 273-279. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.1995.tb00356.x
- Nelson, C. L. (2012). English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity by Jennifer Jenkins. *World Englishes*, 31(1), 139-141. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.2011.01746.x
- Nickerson, C. (2005). English as a *lingua franca* in international business context. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24, 367-380.
- Nickerson, C. (2012). English for business. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Hoboken, N.J: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

- Nickerson, C., & Camiciottoli, B. C. (2013). Business English as a lingua franca in advertising texts in the Arabian Gulf: Analyzing the attitudes of the Emirati community. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*. doi: 10.1177/1050651913479930
- Nielsen, M. E. (2005). The politics of corporate responsibility and child labour in the Bangladeshi garment industry. *International Affairs*, 81(3), 559-580. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2346.2005.00469.x
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific Region *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 589-613. doi: 10.2307/3588214
- Osland, G. E. (1990). Doing business in China: A framework for cross-cultural understanding. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 8(4), 4-14.
- Padgett, D. (1998). *Qualitative methods in social work research: Challenges and rewards*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Pakir, A. (1991). *Contribution to workshop on endangered languages*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Hawaii.
- Pakir, A. (2009). English as a lingua franca: analyzing research frameworks in international English, world Englishes, and ELF. *World Englishes*, 28(2), 224-235. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.2009.01585.x
- Pan, Y., Scollon, S. W., & Scollon, R. (2002). *Professional communication in international settings*. Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Pang, J., Zhou, X., & Fu, Z. (2000). English for international trade: China enters the WTO. *World Englishes*, 21, 201-216.
- Patrick, C.-j., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2009). The WIL [Work Integrated Learning] report: A national scoping study [Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report]. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Paul-Majumder, P., & Begum, A. (2000). The gender imbalances in the export oriented garment industry in Bangladesh. *The World Bank, Development Research Group/Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, Washington, DC*.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Pennycook, A. (2007). ELT and colonialism. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching : Part one* (Vol. 15, pp. 13-27): Springer.
- Peterwagner, R. (2005). *What is the matter with communicative competence?: An analysis to encourage teachers of English to assess the very basis of their teaching*. Vienna: Lit-Verlag.
- Phan, L. H. (2008). *Teaching English as an international language: Identity, resistance and negotiation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (2001). English for globalization or for the world's people? *International Review of Education*, 47(3/4), 185-200.

- Phillipson, R. (2008). Lingua franca or lingua frankensteinia? English in European integration and globalisation. *World Englishes*, 27(2), 250-267. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971X.2008.00555.x
- Phillipson, R. (2012). Imperialism and colonialism. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 203-235). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pica, T. (1988). Communicative competence and literacy. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 27(3), 1-15. doi: 10.1080/19388079809557939
- Pickering, L. (2006). Current research on intelligibility in English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 26, 219-233. doi: doi:10.1017/S0267190506000110
- Pickett, J. M., & Pollack, I. (1963). Intelligibility of excerpts from fluent speech: Effects of rate of utterance and duration of excerpt. *Language and Speech*, 6(3), 151-164. doi: 10.1177/002383096300600304
- Piekkari, R., Vaara, E., Tienari, J., & Sääntti, R. (2005). Integration or disintegration? Human resource implications of a common corporate language decision in a cross-border merger. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(3), 330-344. doi: 10.1080/0958519042000339534
- Piller, I., & Cho, J. (2013). Neoliberalism as language policy. *Language in Society*, 42(01), 23-44. doi: doi:10.1017/S0047404512000887
- Pitney, W. A., & Parker, J. (2009). *Qualitative research in physical activity and the health professions*. Champaign, IL Human Kinetics.
- Pittenger, K. K., Miller, M. C., & Mott, J. (2004). Using real-world standards to enhance students' presentation skills. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 67(3), 327-336.
- Pölzl, U., & Seidlhofer, B. (2006). In and on their own terms: The "habitat factor" in English as a lingua franca interactions. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*(177), 151-176. doi: 10.1515/IJSL.2006.009
- Putnam, L. L., & Jones, T. S. (1982). Reciprocity in negotiations: An analysis of bargaining interaction. *Communication Monographs*, 49(3), 171-191. doi: 10.1080/03637758209376080
- Putnam, R. (1993). The prosperous community: Social capital and public life. *The american prospect*, 13(4), 35-42.
- Qiufang, W. (2012). English as a lingua franca: A pedagogical perspective. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 1(2), 371-376. doi: 10.1515/jelf-2012-0024
- Rahman, M. (1996). *Problems, innovations and solutions: A case study of English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh*. (MA), Memorial University of Newfoundland. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=djdBQwAACAAJ>
- Rahman, M. (2009). *Improving the relevance of humanities higher education in Bangladesh*. (PhD), Monash University Melbourne: Australia.
- Rahman, S. (2005). Orientations and motivation in English language learning: A study of Bangladeshi students at undergraduate level. *Asian FEL Journal*, 7(1), 1-25.
- Rahman, S. (2014). *Broken promises of globalization: The case of the Bangladesh garment industry*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Ramsey, S. J. (1979). Nonverbal behavior: An intercultural perspective. In M. K. Asante, E. Newmark & C. A. Blake (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural communication* (pp. 105-143). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Rashid, M. A. (2006). *Rise of readymade garments industry in Bangladesh: entrepreneurial ingenuity or public policy*. Paper presented at the Workshop on Governance and Development, Dhaka: Bangladesh.

- Raupach, M. (1984). Formulae in second language speech production. In H. W. Dechert, D. Mohle & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Second language productions* (pp. 114-137). Tübingen: Narr.
- Rhee, Y. W. (1990). The catalyst model of development: Lessons from Bangladesh's success with garment exports. *World Development*, 18(2), 333-346. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(90\)90057-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(90)90057-5)
- Rice, R. P. (1995, 27-29 September, 1995). *The rhetoric of e-mail: An analysis of style*. Paper presented at the Professional Communication Conference, Savannah, GA.
- Richard, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (Eds.). (2002). *Longman dictionary of teaching and applied linguistics* (Third ed.). London: Longman.
- Richards, J. C. (2005). *Communicative language teaching today*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Rivera-Batiz, F. L. (1990). English language proficiency and the economic progress of immigrants. *Economics Letters* 34, 295-300.
- Roberts, P., & Canagarajah, S. (2009). Broadening the ELF paradigm: Spoken English in an international encounter. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *English as an International Language: Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues* (pp. 209-226). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Rogers, P. S. (1998). National agendas and the English divide. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 61(3), 79-127.
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2006). Using English for international business: A European case study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26, 103-120.
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2007). Using English for international business: A European case study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26(1), 103-120. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.12.004>
- Rogerson-Revell, P. (2008). Participation and performance in international business meetings. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(3), 338-360. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2008.02.003>
- Roshid, M. M. (2009). Performance of teachers in implementing the communicative approach in English classes at the secondary level : An evaluative study. *Teacher's World* 33-34, 177-186.
- Roshid, M. M., & Chowdhury, R. (2010). *Globalization and English Language: Impact on Employment of Bangladeshi University Graduates in Australian Job market*. Paper presented at the INTED conference, Valencia, Spain
- Roshid, M. M., & Chowdhury, R. (2013). English language proficiency and employment: A case study of Bangladeshi graduates in Australian employment market *Mevlana International Journal of Education*, 3(1), 68-81. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13054/mije.13.06.3.1>
- Rossmann, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2011). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (Third ed.): Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Rowe, C. (2010). Status and email construction in three Hong Kong workplaces. In R. Taiwo (Ed.), *Handbook of research on discourse behavior and digital communication: Language structures and social interaction* (pp. 18-38). Pennsylvania: Hershey, Pa., IGI Global.
- Rylatt, A. (1994). *Learning unlimited: Transforming learning in the workplace*. Sydney: Business and Professional Publishing.
- Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E. (2001). *Communication between cultures* (Forth ed.). Australia: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Saraceni, M. (2008). English as a lingua franca: Between form and function. *English Today*, 24(02), 20-26. doi: [doi:10.1017/S0266078408000163](http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0266078408000163)

- Savignon, S. J. (1983). *Communicative competence: Theory and classroom practice texts and contexts in second language learning*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Schmidt, R. (1992). Psychological mechanisms underlying second language fluency. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 14(04), 357-385. doi: doi:10.1017/S0272263100011189
- Schmidt, W. V., Conaway, R. N., Easton, S. S., & Wardrope, W. J. (2007). *Communicating globally intercultural communication and international business*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Schrage, M. (2001). Beyond babel: why the babble below will matter Less. *Fortune*, 143(6), 214-214.
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry a dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(4), 465-478. doi: 10.1177/107780049900500402
- Seidlhofer, B. (2001). Closing a conceptual gap: The case for a description of English as a lingua franca. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 133-158. doi: 10.1111/1473-4192.00011
- Seidlhofer, B. (2004). 10. Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 209-239. doi: doi:10.1017/S0267190504000145
- Seidlhofer, B. (2005). English as a lingua franca *ELT Journal*, 59(4), 339-339. doi: 10.1093/elt/cci064
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2010). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach* (Fifth ed.). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Selmier Ii, W. T., & Oh, C. H. (2012). International business complexity and the internationalization of languages. *Business Horizons*, 55(2), 189-200. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.11.006
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday Currency.
- Shields, M. A., & Price, S. W. (2002). The English language fluency and occupational success of ethnic minority immigrant men living in English metropolitan areas. *Journal of Population Economics*, 15(1), 137-160. doi: 10.1007/PL00003836
- Sifakis, N. C. (2004). Teaching EIL—Teaching international or intercultural English? What teachers should know. *System*, 32(2), 237-250. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2003.09.010
- Silver, R. E. (2005). The discourse of linguistic capital :Language and economic policy planning in Singapore. *Language policy*, 4(1), 47-66.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education or worldwide diversity and human rights?* N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Slater, T., & Li, J. (2012). Grammar in language teaching and education *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Slotte, V., & Tynjälä, P. (2003). Industry–university collaboration for continuing professional development. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16(4), 445-464. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1363908032000093058
- Slotte, V., Tynjälä, P., & Hytönen, T. (2004). How do HRD practitioners describe learning at work? *Human Resource Development International*, 7(4), 481-499. doi: 10.1080/1367886042000245978

- Smith, L. E. (1976). English is an international auxiliary language. *RELC Journal* 7(2), 38-43.
- Smith, L. E. (1982). English as an international language via drama techniques. *World language English*, 1(2), 102-107.
- Smith, L. E. (1992). Spread of English and issues of intelligibility. In B. B. Kachru (Ed.), *The other tongue: English across cultures* (pp. 73-88). Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Smith, R., & Betts, M. (2000). Learning as partners: Realising the potential of work-based learning. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 52(4), 589-604. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13636820000200141>
- So-mui, F. L., & Mead, K. (2000). An analysis of English in the workplace: the communication needs of textile and clothing merchandisers. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19(4), 351-368. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(99\)00011-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(99)00011-3)
- Songsiri, M. (2007). *An action research study of promoting students' confidence in speaking English*. (Doctor of Education), Victoria University, Melbourne. Retrieved from <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/id/eprint/1492>
- Sowden, C. (2012). ELF on a mushroom: the overnight growth in English as a Lingua Franca. *ELT Journal*, 66(1), 89-96. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccr024
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). Rapport management: A framework for analysis. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures* (pp. 11-46). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal communication competence*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Stahl, S. A., & Heubach, K. M. (2005). Fluency-oriented reading instruction. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 37(1), 25-60. doi: 10.1207/s15548430jlr3701_2
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Stevens, B. (2005). What communication skills do employers want? Silicon valley recruiters respond. *Journal of employment counseling*, 42, 1-9.
- Tainer, E. (1988). English language proficiency and the determination of earnings among foreign-born men *The Journal of Human Resources* 23 (1), 108-122
- Tanaka, H. (2006). Emerging English-speaking business discourses in Japan. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 16(1), 25-50.
- Taylor, B. C., & Trujillo, N. (2000). Qualitative research methods. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 161-194): Sage Publications.
- Teichler, U. (2005). Research on higher education in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 40(4), 447-469.
- The Economist (2014). High university enrolment, low graduate employment: Analysing the paradox in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The UK: An Economist Intelligence Unit.
- Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 91-112. doi: 10.1093/applin/4.2.91
- Tsuda, Y. (2008). The hegemony of English and strategies for linguistic pluralism: Proposing the ecology of language paradigm. In M. K. Asante, Y. Miike & J. Yin (Eds.), *The global intercultural communication reader* (pp. 215-238). New York: Routledge.
- Tsui, A. B. M., & Tollefson, J. W. (2007). Language policy and the construction of national cultural identity. In A. B. M. Tsui & J. W. Tollefson (Eds.), *Language*

- policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Tynjälä, P. (2008). Perspectives into learning at the workplace. *Educational Research Review*, 3(2), 130-154. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2007.12.001>
- Tynjälä, P., Välimaa, J., & Sarja, A. (2003). Pedagogical perspectives on the relationships between higher education and working life. *Higher Education*, 46(2), 147-166.
- Ulinski, M., & O'Callaghan, S. (2002). A comparison of MBA students' and employers' perceptions of the value of oral communication skills for employment. *Journal of Education for Business*, 77(4), 193-197. doi: 10.1080/08832320209599070
- Van Ek, J. A. (1987). *Objectives for foreign language learning: Volume II levels*. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Victor, D. (1992). *International business communication*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Virkkula-Räisänen, T. (2010). Linguistic repertoires and semiotic resources in interaction: A Finnish manager as a mediator in a multilingual meeting. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 505-531. doi: 10.1177/0021943610377315
- Wächter, B., & Maiworm, F. (2008). *English-taught programmes in European higher education: The picture in 2007*. Bonn: Lemmens.
- Waner, K. K. (1995). Business communication competencies needed by employees as perceived by business faculty and business professionals. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 58(4), 51-56. doi: 10.1177/108056999505800410
- Wardrope, W. J. (2002). Department chairs' perceptions of the importance of business communication skills. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65(4), 60-72. doi: 10.1177/108056990206500406
- Wardrope, W. J., & Bayless, M. L. (1994). Oral communication skills instruction in business schools. *Journal of Education for Business*, 69(3), 132-135. doi: 10.1080/08832323.1994.10117670
- Weir, S. (1940). *History's worst decisions: And the people who made them*. New York: Pier 9.
- Welch, D., Welch, L., & Piekkari, R. (2005). Speaking in tongues: The importance of language in international management processes. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 35(1), 10-27.
- Weldy, T. G., & Icenogle, M. L. (1997). A managerial perspective: Oral communication competency ss most important for business students in the workplace Jeanne D. Maes. *Journal of Business Communication*, 34(1), 67-80. doi: 10.1177/002194369703400104
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wharton, G. (2002). Faculty perceptions of communication skills and needs of business school undergraduates in Singapore. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65(4), 39-54.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377-389. doi: 10.2307/3587438
- World Bank (2012). Bangladesh. from The World Bank <http://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh>, access on 20 May, 2014
- Yano, Y. (2001). World Englishes in 2000 and beyond. *World Englishes*, 20(2), 119-132. doi: 10.1111/1467-971x.00204

- Yasmin, F. (2005). The critical period hypothesis and age issue in Bangladeshi ELT. *Dhaka University Studies*, 62(1), 43-62.
- Yee, W. C., & Andrews, J. (2006). Professional researcher or a 'good guest'? Ethical dilemmas involved in researching children and families in the home setting. *Educational Review*, 58(4), 397-413. doi: 10.1080/00131910600971859
- Yin, R. K. (1989). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Fourth Ed. 4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Young, M. (2007). *Bringing knowledge back in: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*. London: Routledge.
- Zaid, O. A., Abraham, A., & Abraham, A. (1994). Communication skills in accounting education: Perceptions of academics, employers and graduate accountants. *Accounting Education*, 3(3), 205-221. doi: 10.1080/09639289400000020
- Zia, B. K. (2010). Message. *21st BATEXPO 2010*, 8.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedule for RMG professionals

English Language Needed for Communication Skills in a Corporate Setting in Bangladesh¹

Questionnaire for RMG professionals

The researcher is giving you full assurance that the information provided in this questionnaire will be confidential, and will be used only for the purpose of research.

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.

A. General Information

A.1 Name of the organization: -----

A.2 Location: -----

A.3 Post/position of the respondent: -----

A.4 Gender (1= Male 2 = Female)

A.5 Age: A < 25 E 41 – 45
 B 25 – 30 F 46 – 50
 C 31 – 35 G > 50
 D 36 – 40

A.6 Academic Qualification (at university level): -----

A.7 Educational Institution(s):-----

A.8 Professional Training(s) and name of institution(s):-----

A.9 Total years of working experience:

 A < 5 E 21 – 25
 B 6– 10 F 26 – 30
 C 11– 15 G > 31
 D 16– 20

A.10 Length of experience in this organization:

 A < 5 E 21 – 25
 B 6– 10 F 26 – 30
 C 11– 15 G > 31

¹ The title, as well as some of the objectives of this project changed since the original

D 16– 20

A.11 Level in this organization:

- A. Entry level (less than 5 years working experience)
- B. Mid-level (5 to 10 years working experience)
- C. Senior-level (More than 10 years working experience)
- D. Owner/Director of the company

A.12 Is the company you are working for...

- A a Bangladeshi-owned company
- B a foreign-owned company
- C a joint Bangladeshi-foreign-owned company

A.13 Is the company you are working for...

- A a small company (less than 5 thousands workers work)
- B a medium-sized company (5-10 thousands workers work)
- C a large company (more than 10 thousands workers work)

A.14 Does the company deal in-

- A. Internationally
- B. Locally
- C. Internationally and locally both

A.15. With which countries does your company conduct business?

- 1.-----
- 2.-----
- 3.-----

A.16. What is the official language of your organization?

- A. English
- B. Bengali
- C. Both English and Bengali

A.17 Type of industry...

- A. Knit
- B. Woven
- C. Sweater

A.18 Are you interested in participating in further activities of this research (e.g. follow up interview), if it is necessary?

Yes ☐No ☐

B. About English communication skills in RMG sector

B.1 What is the importance of English in RMG sector?

B.2 Do you think English language skill is a capital? If yes, how? If not, why not?

B.3 To what extent do you think that English is used in RMG industry for business communication? Please put a tick in the appropriate box in the table.

Area of professionals in RMG	Not at all (0%)		Minimally (Less than 30%)		Significantly (between 30% and 60%)		Much (between 60% and 80%)		Very much (More than 80%)	
	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken
Marketing										
Merchandising										
Commercial										

B.4 Who do RMG business professionals speak English with?

B.5 Who do RMG business professionals do written communication in English with?

B.6 What are the occasions/situations/contexts of English language use in RMG industry which you have experienced?

B.7 What types of speaking skills in English are needed for communication in RMG industry?

B.8 How important do you think grammatical accuracy in spoken and written communication in English in RMG industry is? Please place a tick in ONE of the boxes below for each of speaking and writing.

Importance of grammatical accuracy	In speaking situation	In writing situation
Very important		
Important		
Not so Important		
Little bit important		
Not at all		

Give reasons for your choice of answer above: -----

B.9 How do RMG business professionals handle or manage the situation with native or non-native speakers of English who have a different accent and pronunciation?

B.10 Does a different accent and pronunciation create any problem in communication in terms of understanding the message? If yes, could you please specify with an example? If not, why not?

B.11 Do RMG business professionals need to consider the socio-cultural norms and values (for example, gender, age, status, language, religion, etc.) of business counterparts in communication?

B.12 If the answer to the above question is YES, how are the socio-cultural norms and values considered in the nature of communication in terms of language use in written and spoken (such as, choice of words, tone, addressing to show honour, style of writing and speaking etc.)?

If your answer is NO, write your reason/s?

B.13 What do business professionals do **or** how do they handle the problems in conversation when they do not find the appropriate word(s) or technical term(s) or any problems in retrieving a particular item from memory to continue the conversation?

B.14 If business professionals don't understand any certain point of business partner, what do they do?

B.15 What are the documents needed to write in RMG business?

B.16 What are the English written channels/media of communication in RMG industry?

B.17 What types of English writing skills are needed in RMG sector for communication?

B.18 Do you think the knowledge of writing skills graduates learn from university is sufficient for RMG business? What are your reasons behind your stance?

B.19 Does your organization train up employees formally or informally for developing their writing skills?

B.20 Do RMG business professionals face any problems in written communication with native or non-native speakers of English? If yes, what types of problems do they usually face?

B.21 What additional English speaking and/or writing skills do RMG business professionals need to improve for better workplace communication?

B.22 What is your level of satisfaction with English speaking and writing skills of your employees/ fellow workers?

B.23 Have you found any changes in the role of English communication skills since starting work and or through your experiences in RMG sector? If yes, please explain.

B.24 Have you learned anything at your workplace related to speaking or written communication that you did not learn before at university? If yes, please specify.

B. 25 Do you think that the English communication skills graduates get from university is effective for business communication internationally?

B.26 What type of match/mismatch do you find between the language and communication course you did at university and its relation with corporate life?

B.27 What kinds of English skills do you expect from the graduates who want to come to RMG sector as business professionals in future?

B.28 What are your suggestions for universities for developing English language skills of the students to make them more skilled in communication for business purposes especially in RMG sector?

Appendix 2: Demographic information of the participants

Demographic criteria		Marketing (%)	Merchandising (%)	Commercial (%)	Total (%)
Gender	Male	14 (93.33)	17 (100)	11 (100)	42 (97.67)
	Female	1 (6.67)	-	-	1 (2.33)
Level in organisation	Senor	14 (93.33)	5 (29.41)	6 (54.54)	25 (58.13)
	Mid	1 (6.67)	10 (58.82)	4 (36.36)	15 (34.89)
	Entry	-	2 (11.76)	1 (9.09)	3 (6.98)
Age	25-30	0	6 (35.29)	2 (18.18)	8 (18.60)
	31-35	3 (20)	7 (41.18)	5 (45.45)	15 (34.89)
	36-40	2 (13.33)	4 (23.53)	1 (9.09)	7 (16.28)
	41-45	6 (40)	-	2 (18.185)	8 (18.60)
	46-50	1 (6.67)	-	1 (9.09)	2 (4.65)
	>50	3 (20)	-	-	3 (6.98)
Academic qualifications	Masters with honours	8 (53.33)	3 (17.65)	1 (9.09)	12 (27.91%)
	Masters without honours	1 (6.67)	7 (41.18)	4 (36.35)	12 (27.91)
	Bachelor with honours	1 (6.67)	3 (17.65)	1 (9.09)	5 (11.63)
	Bachelor without honours	5 (33.33)	4 (23.53)	5 (45.45)	14 (32.56)
Areas of study	Business	5 (33.33)	8 (47.06)	3 (27.27)	16 (37.21)
	Arts and Social science	9 (60)	5 (29.41)	8 (72.73)	22 (51.16)
	Science	1 (6.67)	4 (23.53)	-	5 (11.63)
Educational institutions	Public	13 (86.67)	12 (70.59)	11 (100)	36 (83.72)
	Private	2 (13.33)	5 (29.41)	-	7 (16.28)
Professional training	Yes	1 (6.67%)	4 (23.53)	0 (0)	5 (11.63)
	No	14 (93.33)	13 (76.47)	11 (100)	38 (88.37)
Working experience	<5	3 (20)	2 (11.76)	-	5 (11.63)
	6-10	1 (6.67)	14 (82.35)	5 (45.45)	20 (46.51)
	11-15	4 (26.67)	-	3 (27.27)	7 (16.28)
	16-20	3 (20)	-	2 (18.18)	5 (11.63)
	21-25	2 (13.33)	1 (5.89)	1 (9.09)	4 (9.30)
	26-30	2 (13.33)	-	-	2 (4.65)
The ownership of the organisation	Bangladeshi	15 (100)	14 (82.35)	10 (90.90)	39 (90.70)
	Foreign	-	3 (17.65)	-	3 (6.98)
	Joint	-	-	1 (9.09)	1 (2.32)
The size of the company	Small	7 (46.67)	8 (47.05)	2 (18.18)	17 (39.53)
	Mid	8 (53.33)	8 (47.05)	8 (72.72)	24 (55.81)
	Large	-	1 (5.88)	1 (9.09)	2 (4.65)
Type of Industry	Knit	5 (33.33)	4 (23.53)	2 (18.18)	11 (25.58)
	Woven	6 (40)	6 (35.29)	6 (54.54)	18 (41.86)
	Sweater	-	2 (11.76)	-	2 (4.65)
	Knit-woven	1 (6.67)	1 (5.88)	-	2 (4.65)
	Knit-sweater	-	-	-	-
	Wove-sweater	2 (13.33)	1 (5.88)	2 (18.18)	5 (11.63)
	Knit-woven-Sweater	1 (6.67)	3 (17.65)	1 (9.09)	5 (11.63)

Appendix 3: Participants' individual profiles

SL	Role of Participants	Participants' profile
1	Marketing	<p>Nayeem</p> <p>In between 41-45 years of age. Has a master's degree in political science from a public university. He joined a RMG industry as a commercial staff member. After gaining practical experience for more than 15 years in how to communicate with clients and run this trade effectively, he started a self-owned RMG business by opening a small-sized woven goods industry. He has been working as a managing director in his own company for more than 6 years. His industry primarily exports woven products to European countries.</p>
2		<p>Seraj</p> <p>In between 41-45 years of age. He worked as a managing director in a small-sized RMG industry that produces different types of knit, woven and sweater goods. He has been running the current industry for less than five years. Before this, he worked as an employee in several RMG industries. His total experience in the RMG sector is more than 11 years. He graduated from a public university. His area of study was business.</p>
3		<p>Harun</p> <p>More than 50 years of age. One of the oldest RMG professionals who worked as a general manager in a medium- sized woven industry over more than 25-years. Also, he was one of the participants who did not switch his job from one RMG firm to another. He graduated from a public university in the discipline of social science. He worked in a senior level position in the industry. In this study, he was considered as a marketing person.</p>
4		<p>Asraf</p> <p>In between 41-46 years of age. As a managing director in a small-sized woven goods industry, he has led his firm for less than five years. However, he has between 6-10 years of experience in this industry. He was a middle-aged person. He graduated from a public university.</p>
5		<p>Arif</p> <p>In between 36-40 years of age. He was a marketing person who worked as a director in a medium-sized woven goods industry for more than ten years. He has a master's degree in social science from a public university. He joined his family-owned RMG business. Although he graduated from a public university, he praised the quality of education offered at private university.</p>
6		<p>Dulal</p> <p>More than 50 years of age. An executive director who worked as a marketing professional in a medium-sized woven goods industry. He was one of the experienced professionals in this industry. He graduated from a public university in the area of business. His industry mainly produced woven and sweater goods exporting these to the USA and EU. He was one of the participants who stressed the importance of business-specific skills in the industry.</p>
7		<p>Monir</p> <p>In between 36-40 years of age. A marketing participant having an English literature, rather than linguistics or TESOL background, in his academic</p>

qualifications. He worked as a director in an industry of knitted products. He was the only participant, whose interview was in English from the beginning to the end. He was fluent and confident in English while he was talking. In the interview, some of his responses were different from those of the others interviewees. Moreover, he did not confine his perceptions to the use of English language skills: instead, he went beyond that and focused on the role of education policy and workplace learning in preparing employees with the communication skills necessary for the RMG industry.

8

Liton

In between 41-45 years of age. He was the chairperson of a medium-sized industry of knitted goods that exported its products (knitting goods) mostly to the USA, EU and Australia. He had between 16-20 years of experience in this industry. He was a graduate from a social science discipline.

9

Shibly

In between 41-45 years of age. He was educated being from a public university in the area of a business discipline. He has been involved in this industry for 16-20 years. He was a unique participant in this study in the sense that, on one hand he was the chairperson of an export-oriented knit and woven industry while, on the other hand, he was a teacher in a business faculty at a renowned public university. Based on his active engagement in both academic and business settings, he provided insightful perceptions about communication skills taught and, communication skills required, in this industry, identifying gaps between these two factors and ways to overcome these gaps.

10

Yakub

In between 41-45 years of age. He was the chairperson in an industry of knitted products for more than 10 years. Before becoming the chairperson of this export-oriented knit industry, he worked as an employee in his family-owned handmade garments business. His total experience in the RMG industry is more than 16 years. He graduated in a business discipline.

11

Rumana

In between 31-35 years of age. She was the only female participant in this study. She worked as a director in her family-owned RMG business for more than one decade and was engaged in communication with buyers mostly from the UK, US and India. She joined this business, after being awarded an MBA degree from a private university.

12

Ershad

In between 31-35 years of age. He worked as a marketing executive in a medium-sized woven goods industry. His total experience in the RMG business sector was less than 5 years gained with his current organisation. He was one of the three participants who had graduated in English literature. Later on, he received two additional academic qualifications: one was a course from the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB) and the other was a diploma in merchandising from BGMEA Institute of Fashion and technology (BIFT).

13

Sultan

Aged in between 41-45 years. He worked as a director in a small-sized industry that produced knitted goods industry in Dhaka. He was the second person in charge in his industry. His experience in the RMG industry was less than five years. He had been awarded a bachelor degree with honours in engineering from a public university.

14		Saidul	Aged in between 31-35 years. He was a new entrepreneur in the RMG business. His under-graduate and post-graduate qualifications were from India in English literature rather than TESOL or linguistics. Later, he was awarded an MBA degree from a private university in Bangladesh. Having academic qualifications in English and business, he provided in-depth information about the use and need for English communication skills in the RMG industry which was a distinctly different response from many others, as seen in the case of Monir.
15		Zahid	He was more than 50 years of age. He was a graduate in the field of social science. He had RMG business experience of more than 26 years. Before joining as a RMG professional he worked as a teacher in a primary school. Although he was not a director or owner of an industry, he worked at senior level in the current woven and knit industry. In this research he was considered as being marketing professional.
16	Merchandising	Babu	A young merchandiser, aged between 25-30 years. He worked at a mid-level position in a small-sized knit industry for less than 5 years. After graduating in social science from the National University, he started working in this industry.
17		Masum	In between 31-35 years of age. After graduating in apparels merchandising from BIFT, he started working in the RMG sector. He has worked as a senior merchandiser in a woven goods industry for less than 5 years although he has between 6-10 years of experience in this sector.
18		Hirok	A young professional who worked as a senior merchandiser in small-sized industry that produced knitted goods and exported garments to the USA, Europe and Asia. Although he has more than 6 years of experience in RMG business communication, he was employed in the current knit industry for less than 5 years. Academically, he graduated in apparels merchandising from BIFT.
19		Aazim	Aged in between 31-35 years. He worked in a foreign-owned buying house that exported woven garments to the USA and EU. His was a senior merchandiser with more than six years of experience in RMG business communication. After his graduation in commerce, he started working in this sector. Despite having no training in this trade, he held a middle-level position in this company. I found him very enthusiastic in providing relevant information related to this study.
20		Pavel	In between 31-35 years of age. He worked as a senior merchandiser in a well-reputed large sweater industry for more than six years. Obtaining an MBA from a private university, he started working at entry level in this industry.
21		Ajgor	In between 31-35 years of age. He worked at mid-level position in a RMG industry which exported knit, woven and sweater goods mainly to the UK and France. He graduated as a student of business from the National University. His total experience in the RMG sector was between 6-10 years which was gained while working for this medium-sized firm. He was the participant who provided the longest interview, the length of time

being more than 2 hours.

22

Mafian

In between 25-30 years of age. This participant was employed as a senior merchandiser having more than six years of experience in a medium-sized woven industry. He had graduated in a business discipline from the National University.

23

Sarwar

In between 25-30 years old. This participant worked as a merchandiser in a small-sized industry that produced knitted products for less than five years although he had between 6-10 years of total experience in the RMG business sector. He gained a master's degree in business from the National University.

24

Mortuza

In between 36-40 years of age. He was engaged in communication as a merchandiser in a medium-sized woven goods industry. His experience in the current industry was i between 16-20 years but his experience in this business sector is more that. He did a master's course in the area of social science.

25

Kamal

In between 31-35 years of age, and engaged in RMG business communication between 6-10 years. At the time of interview, he worked in a mid-level position in a medium-sized woven goods industry. He did his MBA at a private university and also was awarded a diploma in Apparel Merchandising from BIFT.

26

Ahsan

In between 25-30 years of age. He was a merchandising manager in a foreign buying house and had between 6-10 years of experience in RMG business communication. He worked at mid-level position. Having a Bachelor of Science (Honours) from BIFT, he was doing MBA at a public university when he was interviewed. He was one of the participants who strongly criticised Bangla as a medium of education in higher education.

27

Ripon

In between 31-35 years of age. He had worked in the woven and sweater industry for less than five years although his total experience in the RMG sector was between 6-10 years. He graduated from the National University in the area of social science.

28

Mosharraf

In between 36-40 years of age. He had worked as a senior merchandiser in the sweater industry for less than five years. He held a Master of Education from a public university. His total experience in the RMG business sector was between 6-10 years.

29

Khusru

In between 36-40 years of age. He graduated in political science from the National University. He had started working in this particular RMG industry for more than 6 years. He held a mid-level position in a woven industry at the time of the interview.

30

Mahfuz

In between 31-35 years of age. His total experience in the RMG business sector is between 6-10 years. He never switched industries; rather from the start of his career he worked in the same industry that produced knitted goods,. He was a business graduate from the National University and also

gained a diploma in Apparel Merchandising from BIFT.

31

Mredul

He was one of the youngest participants, aged between 25-30 years. He did his Master of Commerce with the National University and then started working at an entry level position in a foreign-owned RMG industry less than five years ago.

32

Shamin

In between 36-40 years of age. He worked in a knit and woven industry for between 6-10 years. He was awarded a Master of Science in Mathematics from a public university. He worked at a senior level position.

33

Commercial

Shariar

In between 25-30 years of age. He worked in a medium- sized woven goods industry for in between 6-10 years. He had a master's degree in accounting from the National University. He was one of the participants who strongly criticised the current pedagogical practices of English as a general course run by the National University.

34

Kamrul

In between 31-35 years of age. He worked as a commercial manager in a woven and sweater products industry. He worked for the industry for between 11-15 years. He was a business graduate from the National University.

35

Rahman

In between 31-35 years of age. He worked in a medium-sized knit, woven and sweater goods industry for between 6-10 years. He received a Master of Commerce from the National University.

36

Rafiqul

In between 31-35 years old of age. He worked as a senior commercial executive in an industry of knitted goods for less than 5 years, although he had between 6-10 years of RMG business experience. He graduated from the National University in the field of social science.

37

Shajahan

In between 41-45 years of age. He worked in a medium- sized woven goods industry for between 6-10 years. However, he had between 16-20 years of total experience in the RMG business sector. He graduated in the field of social science.

38

Mojub

In between 31-35 years of age. He graduated in a discipline of social science from the National University. His total experience in the RMG business industry was more than 11 years while in the current knitted and woven goods industry his total experience was less than 5 years. His position was assistant commercial manager.

39

Anwar

In between 25-30 years of age. He worked as a commercial manager at senior level in a small woven goods industry. His total experience in the RMG industry was between 6-10 years. He was a graduate in social science from the National University.

40

Rafique

In between 31-35 years of age. He was a graduate of the National University in the field of social science. His total experience in the RMG business sector was 6-10 years gained in his current medium-sized woven

products industry. He held a position as a commercial executive.

41

Shafiqul

In between 46-45 years of age. He graduated in law from a public university. He then started working in the current woven industry where he has been for more than 16 years. His current position in this medium-sized industry is as a commercial manager.

42

Hasnat

In between 36-40 years of age. He worked as a senior commercial officer in a medium-sized woven industry. He has a Master of Arts degree. His total experience in RMG business is between 16-20 years while he has been with his current organisation between 11-15 years.

43

Sayeed

In between 41-45 years of age. He worked as a commercial manager in a medium-sized knit industry. He is a social science graduate. While his experience in the current knit industry is less than 5 years, his total experience in the RMG sector is between 21-25 years.

Appendix 3: A list of technical vocabulary, terms and acronyms used in RMG business

Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviation	Elaboration	Words related to	Places of using words
CMT	Cutting, Making and Trimming	Production	Production
YUP	Yards per unit	Fabric	Custom, and BGMEA , bank)
GSM	Gram Per Square Meter	Measure fabric thickness	Bank, BGMEA, Custom
GG	Gigagram	Measure thickness of yarn	Custom
EL	Export Licence	Custom	Custom
DEPZ	Dhaka Export Processing Zone	Custom	Custom
CEPZ	Chittagong Export Processing Zone	Custom	Custom
UD	Utilization Declaration	BGMEA and Custom	BGMEA and custom
ETE	Export Tax Equivalent	Tax related	Custom
U/P	Utilization Permission	Custom	BGMEA and Custom
GSP	Generalise System of Preference	Tariffs	Bank and EPB
FOB	Freight On board/ Free On Board	Shipping of goods	Shipping
CIP	Carriage and insurance paid	Shipping	Shipping
CPT	Carriage Paid to	Shipping	Shipping
CNF	Clearing and forwarding	Shipping Agent	Shipping
C&F	Cost and freight	Shipping	Shipping
CNI	Cost and Insurance	Shipping	Shipping
BL	Bill of lading/ Shipping bill	Shipping	Shipping
ABP	Acceptance bill purchase	Custom/seaport	Shipping
EDA	Expected/Estimated Date of Arrival	Shipping	Shipping
ETD ETD	Expected/Estimated Time of Delivery	Shipping	Shipping
ETA	Expected/Estimated time of Arrival	Shipping	Shipping
AWB	Air Waybill	Shipping document	Shipping
HAWB	House Airway Bill	Shipping	Shipping
CIF	Cost, Insurance and Freight	Shipping	Shipping
F/V	Feeder Vessel	Shipping	Shipping (Internal use)
M/V	Mother vessel	Shipping	Shipping (Internal use)
PRC	Processing Realization Certificate	Bank and L/C	Bank and L/C
PI	Pro forma Invoice	L/C language, Bank,	L/C and Bank

		Marketing	
FBC	Foreign Bill documents purchase collect	Banking language	L/C and Bank
FOC	Free of Cost	Shipping	Shipping
B/B	Back to Back	L/C and Bank	L/C and Bank
FD	Foreign Document	L/C, bank	L/C
CM	Cost of making/Cutting and Making	Production/factory	L/C
PO	Purchase Order	L/C	L/C
L/C	Letter of Credit	Bank	Bank
FBP	Foreign Bill Purchase(d)	L/C, Bank	Bank
IC	Inspection Certificate	Marketing	Marketing
FCA	Free career	Shipping	Shipping
T/P Tech-pac	Technical Package	Production	Factory/production term (Internal Use)
Spec (Internal use)	Specification	Production	Production
PL	Packing List	Accessory, Bank	Production/factory
MC	Measurement Chart	Production	Factory/Production
C	Costing	Production	Production/factory
GPQ	Guideline of production quality	Production/Factory	Production, factory (internal language)
TP	Transfer Print	Production/Factory	Production/Factory
CO	Country of origin/Certificate of Origin	EPB	EPB
PP	Purchase Price	L/C	L/C
AOP	Annual Operating Plan	Production	Production
PFD	Prepared-for-dye	Production	Production

Vocabulary and terms

Words	Words related to	Words	Words related to
Credit number (L/C number)	L/C	Net weight	Shipping
Bales	Shipping	Quotation	Marketing
Schedule	L/C	Out source	Marketing
Confirm, confirmation	L/C	Book, booking, booked	Shipping
Buyer/Customer	L/C	volume weight	Factory
Price/Best price	L/C	Time loan	Factory
Sales, sell	L/C	Presentation (Internal)	Official
Prohibited	L/C	Received	Bank

Transferable	L/C	Discount	Bank
Destination (Port of delivery)	L/C	Cancelled	Bank
Applicant	L/C	Green seal, Red seal	Production/Factory
Consignee	L/C	Leather case	Production/Factory
Commercial Invoice	L/C (back to back L/C)	Production	Production/Factory
Accessories	L/C	Production report (Internal)	Production/Factory
Fabric, fabric packing, approved fabrics, fabric import	L/C (back to back L/C)	Inspection, Online inspection	L/C and Production/Factory
Shipping documents	L/C	Checking	Production/Factory
Percent	L/C	Finished/finished goods	Production/Factory
Value	L/C	Output	Production/Factory
Details	L/C	Alter	Production/Factory
Logistic	L/C	Skipping	Production/Factory
Arrival Date	L/C	Costing	Production/Factory
Departure date	L/C	Quality control	Production/Factory
Tracking, Tracking number	L/C	Quality parameter	Production/Factory
Shade	BTB L/C (fabric)	Neatness of a product	Production/Factory
Beneficiary	Export L/C	Needle cut	Production/Factory
Solid, Solid colour description of fabric	BTB L/C (written in invoice)	Oil spot	Production/Factory
Export L/C, Irrevocable L/C, Revolving L/C	L/C	Fabrics default	Production/Factory
Mode	L/C	Strike off	Production/Factory
Import	L/C	Bulk fabric	Production/Factory
Goods	L/C	Lay out	Production/Factory
Order, Purchase Order (PO) contacts, sales order, Order sheet, Order request	L/C	Pattern	Production/Factory
Pricing	L/C	Bond License	Custom
Sketch	L/C	Pass book	Custom
Measurement	L/C	Export order	Custom and BGMEA
Sewing thread	L/C	Consumption	BGMEA and custom
Terms and condition	L/C	Issued	BGMEA and Custom
Container	L/C	Style	Factory and L/C
At sight	BTB L/C	Quantity, Order Quantity	L/C and production
Additional condition	L/C	Sample, product/production/conformity/gold	L/C and production

		seal/sealing sample (internal)	
Notify party	Export L/C	Clothes	L/C and production
Supplier	BTB L/C	Sized	L/C and Production
Kg	BTB L/C	Sample comments	Production/Factory
Meter	BTB L/C	Size	Production/Factory
Yards	BTBL/C and production	Capacity	Production/Factory
Produced	L/C	Lead time	Production/Factory
Description	L/C	Space	Production/Factory
Remarks	L/C	Gauge (To measure of the fineness of woven or knitted fabric)	Production/Factory
Expire	L/C	Design	Production/Factory
Negotiation	L/C	Load	Shipping
Tolerance	L/C	Unload	Shipping
Category number	L/C	Gross weight	Shipping
Code number	L/C	Charge	Custom and Bank
Style number	L/C	Shipping line, Shipment, Transshipment, Partial shipment	Custom and L/C term
Inventory	L/C and factory	Amendment	Custom and BGMEA
Amount	L/C	Delivery, Delivery date, On time delivery	Custom and L/C
Contact	L/C	Air Bill/ Airway bill/ Air freight charges	Airways bill
Collect	L/C	Lien bank	L/C and bank
Bank certificate	L/C and bank	Value increase/decrease	Bank and L/C
Acknowledge	L/C and Bank	Authentication	Bank
Currency	L/C and Bank	Acceptance	Bank
Dollar	L/C and bank	Lien bank	L/C and bank
Advising bank	L/C and bank		

Washing and cleaning related vocabulary and terms

Words	Words related to	Words	Words related to
Normal wash	Production	Dry cleaning	Production
Pigments wash	Production	Temperature	Production
Bleach wash	Production	Rinsing	Production

Stone wash	Production	Hand wash	Production
Acid wash	Production	Spinning	Production
Enzyme wash	Production	Cool down	Production
Caustic wash	Production/	Tumble drying	Production

Description of garments/wearing apparels

Words	Words related to
Blouses	Shorts/ boxer shorts/ Swimming trunk
Jacket/Hood jacket/ Padded jacket/ Reversible jacket/ Snow-white jacket	Children dress
Night wear/ Night gown	Trousers/Pantalon
T-shirt/ Tank-top/ Singlet/ Vest/ Polo shirt	Skirts
Under wear	Slacks
Payjama set/Jogging set/ truck suit	Basic tank
Socks	Cardigan/sweater
Cap	Wind breaker/ Wind wear
Shirt (Long-sleeved and sleeves less)	

Trims and accessories

Words	Words	Words	Words
Sticker	Twill tape	Collar stay	Recco
Polybag	Stopper	Cord bell	Elastic thread
Labels	String/draw cord	Buckle	Belt
Button	Piping Cord	Weaving belt	Adjuster
Zipper	Emblem	Hook and Eye	Eyelet
Interlining	Logo print	Velcro tape	Thread
Down	D-ring	Seam sealing tape	Shoulder pad
Elastic	Swivel Hook		

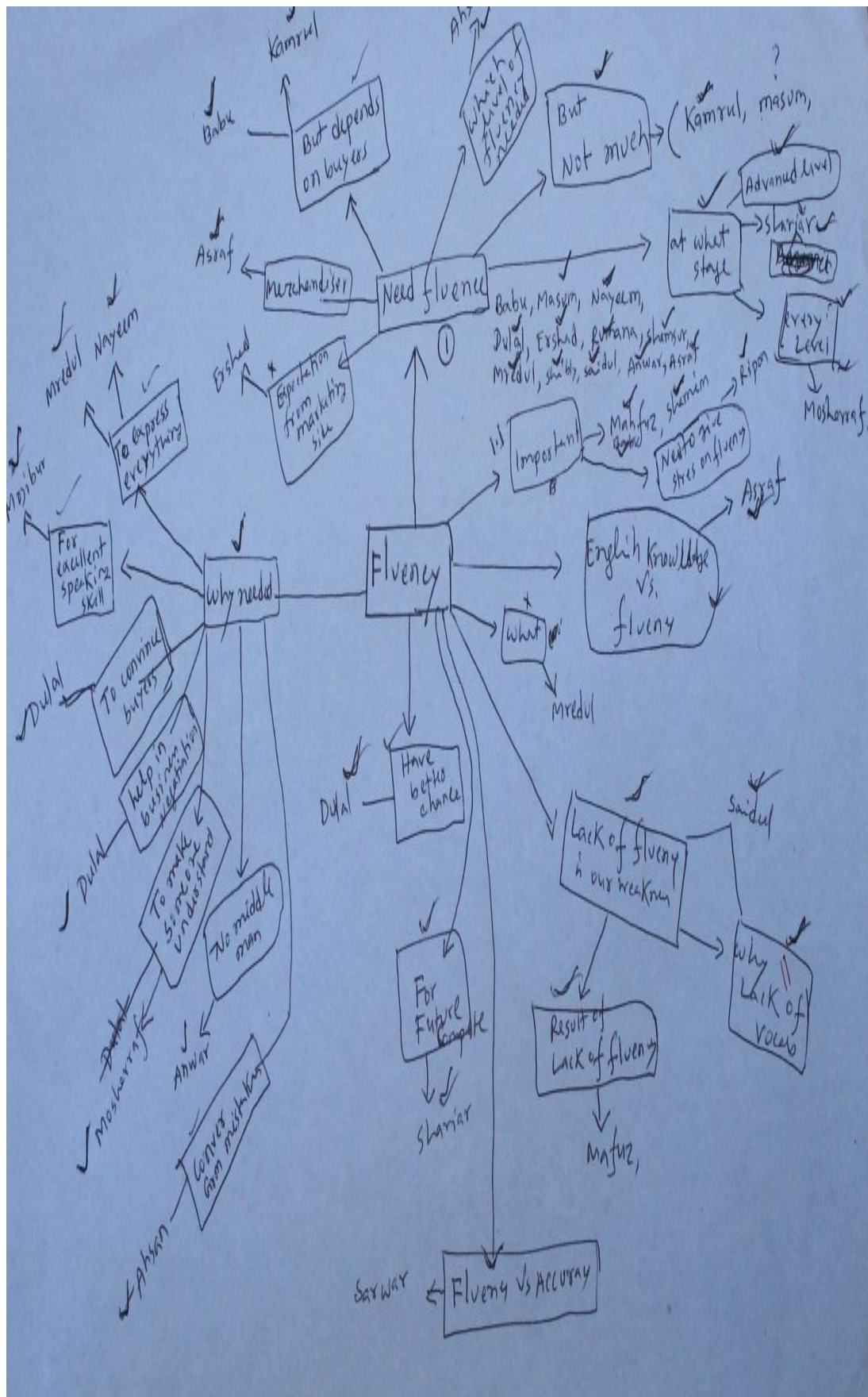
Appendix 4: NVivo coding screenshot

The screenshot displays the NVivo 10 software interface. The top menu bar includes File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, and View. Below the menu is a ribbon with various tools for workspace, item, clipboard, format, paragraph, styles, editing, and proofing. The main window is titled "My PhD study.nvp after problem (NVivo 10).nvp - NVivo".

The left sidebar shows a tree view of the project structure, including Nodes, Case Nodes, Relationships, and Node Matrices. The main pane displays a list of nodes with the following columns: Name, Sources, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By. The nodes are organized into a hierarchical structure, with some nodes expanded to show sub-nodes.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Area of commercial work	4	4	11/10/2011 3:31 PM	MR	12/10/2011 6:34 PM	MR
Buyers' countries	10	13	5/09/2011 12:58 PM	MR	1/11/2011 5:34 PM	MR
Changes noticed in language use	35	56	26/08/2011 4:26 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
Channels of communication	33	58	23/08/2011 7:29 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
Do you give training and ways of workplace learning	34	59	25/08/2011 3:25 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:35 PM	MR
Documents need to write	29	40	27/08/2011 3:57 PM	MR	13/10/2011 5:19 PM	MR
Any format for document writing	6	11	11/10/2011 7:11 PM	MR	18/10/2011 3:03 PM	MR
how to handle conversation when forget appropriate words	35	38	26/08/2011 3:57 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
How to handle or manage native or non-native speakers of English	35	59	25/08/2011 3:29 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
Perception about native and nonnative speakers of English	28	62	27/08/2011 3:43 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
Strategic competence	8	13	25/08/2011 3:34 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
Importance of English in RMG business	29	52	23/08/2011 6:55 PM	MR	13/10/2011 5:07 PM	MR
Context of English use	35	73	23/08/2011 7:02 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
English is an international language	19	22	23/08/2011 6:59 PM	MR	27/10/2011 11:19 AM	MR
Importance of communication skills	1	1	14/09/2011 6:12 PM	MR	14/09/2011 6:13 PM	MR
Uses of English in marketing merchandising and commercial	2	3	1/10/2011 1:15 PM	MR	13/10/2011 3:19 PM	MR
Why is English important	36	66	23/08/2011 6:57 PM	MR	27/10/2011 11:19 AM	MR
Importance of grammatical accuracy	34	78	25/08/2011 3:21 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:11 PM	MR
a negative effect in our sector	2	2	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	31/10/2011 11:57 AM	MR
commercial do not so need to communicate with buyers orally	1	1	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:48 PM	MR
Fluency in important not accuracy	1	1	31/10/2011 2:21 PM	MR	31/10/2011 2:22 PM	MR
Foreigners do not bother grammar	2	2	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 11:08 PM	MR
Grammar is not so demanding in language	1	1	31/10/2011 12:06 PM	MR	31/10/2011 12:06 PM	MR
Grammatical accuracy does not create business problem	2	2	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:56 PM	MR
Grammatical accuracy in Speaking	0	0	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:27 PM	MR
Important	5	5	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	31/10/2011 12:05 PM	MR
Little bit important	3	3	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	31/10/2011 2:21 PM	MR
Neutral or Not so important	5	7	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	31/10/2011 2:19 PM	MR
Not at all	1	1	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:46 PM	MR
Very important	0	0	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:26 PM	MR
Grammatical accuracy in writing	0	0	30/10/2011 11:14 PM	MR	30/10/2011 10:27 PM	MR

Appendix 5: A sample of thematic mind map



Appendix 6: A checklist of e-mail analysis

Number		Items
1	E-mail features	E-mail number
2		Date
3		Type of E-mail
4		Sender's country
5		Position
6		Recipient's country
7		Number recipient: single or multiple
8		Gender of sender
9		Gender of recipient
10		Subject of the e-mail in the subject line
11		Purpose/function of e-mail
12		Opening salutation
13		Opening sentence
14		Topic reference
15		Body of e-mail
16		Closing sentence
17		Closing salutation/Complementary close
18		Contact details as a signature
19	Grammatical competence	Graphemes (Number)
20		Spelling conventions
21		Punctuations
22		Common vocabulary
23		Meaning of idioms in the context
24		Common phrases
25		Common sentences
26		Choice of lexical items (colloquial expressions)
27		Abbreviations
28		Words missings/omissions
29		Capitalisation
30		Low initials (Small letters)
31		Garments language/Jargon
32		Grammatical mistakes
33	Sociolinguistic competence	Geographical sender
34		Geographical recipient

35		E-mail from Buyer/supplier
36		Native/non-native
37		Register (Features of language)
38		Contraction
39		Politeness marker
40	Discourse competence	Lexical cohesion device in context: repetition of same words or using synonyms
41		Profession of meaning
42		Ellipses/ Omission (Incomplete sentence)
43		Paragraphing
44	Strategic competence	Fillers
45		Discourse markers
46		paralanguage/nonverbal symbols
47		Using L1

Appendix 7: Explanatory statements

MONASH University



5 December, 2010

Explanatory Statement - For business professionals of RMG industries (Group 1, 2 and 3)

Title: English Language Needed for Communication Skills in a Corporate Setting in Bangladesh

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Mohammad Moninoor Roshid and I am conducting a research project with Dr Margaret Gearon a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education towards a PhD degree at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book. I have funding from Monash University for scholarships to undertake this research.

Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?

I am looking for 25 participants among these 5 are HRD officials and 20 are business professionals or employees of RMG industries to understand their interpretation of English communication skills needed for RMG industries in Bangladesh. I obtained a list of RMG industries' contact details from Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) database in the hope of finding volunteer HRD officials and business professions for this study. From these

responses, I will seek volunteers to participate in Phase 2 of this project which requires in-depth interviews.

The aim/purpose of the research

The aim of this study is to identify the kinds of English communication skills in a corporate setting in Bangladesh for business purposes. More specifically the study aims to explore communicative competence which underpins communication skills. The research will identify:

- a. the kinds of linguistic competence (grammatical forms, language functions and vocabulary) that are needed both in verbal and written for business communication in the RMG industry.
- b. the elements of socio-linguistic competence that appear most frequently in spoken and written communication for employees in the RMG industry.
- c. the sorts of verbal and written texts which are most common in the RMG industry.
- d. the language elements of cohesion and coherence that are needed to work with verbal and written texts.
- e. the elements of strategic competence that business professionals in the RMG industry need to cope with verbal communications.

Possible benefits

The proposed research project aims to give the participants an opportunity to express their views on English communication skills that today's RMG business professionals need to work in international business contexts efficiently in this ever changing competitive global market. Stakeholders in Bangladesh will be benefited from

this research getting insights about the current understanding of English communication skills are needed in workplaces which help them to find out the better English language teaching and learning policy and courses that are expected to prepare students with good communication skills for their career, especially in RMG business organizations where has increasing demand for communication skills.

What does the research involve?

This research involves questionnaire and interview of participating HRD officials and business professionals/employees of RMG industries. The HRD officials and business professionals/employees of RMG industries will be invited to respond to the questionnaire. Then I wish to interview of 2 HRD officials and 8 business professionals/employees (selected from the respondents to the questionnaire).

How much time will the research take?

The time needed to complete the questionnaire is up to one hour. The interview will require 40-60 minutes.

Inconvenience/discomfort

I do not anticipate any level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. The participants can avoid answering questions in the questionnaire or interview which are felt too personal, sensitive or uncomfortable to them.

Payment

No payment will be offered to the respondents.

Can I withdraw from the research?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to the questionnaire being submitted and at any time in Phase 2 (the interview phase).

Confidentiality

Collected information, such as individual HRD official or business professional's response will not be communicated to anyone else. Participant's identity will not be disclosed in writing a thesis or a book or a journal article. Pseudonyms or codes will be used in such reporting.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publications, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The data will not be used for any other purposes.

Use of data for other purposes

The data will not be used for any other purposes. If it is used for other purposes, it is anonymous data, nobody will be named and they will not be identified in any way.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Mohammad Moninoor Roshid [REDACTED]

The findings are accessible for one year after submission of the thesis.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research CF10/2174 – 201000124 is being conducted, please contact:
---	--

Dr Margaret Gearon xxxxxxx	Mariam Begum xxxxxxx
-------------------------------	-------------------------

Thank you.

Mohammod Moninoor Roshid

Appendix 8: Consent form

Consent Form - for business professionals/employees (Group 1, 2 and 3)

Title: English Language Needed for Communication Skills in a Corporate Setting in Bangladesh

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to complete questionnaires asking me about English language needed for communication skills in RMG industries ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw prior to the questionnaire being submitted in Phase 1 (the questionnaire phase) and at any time in Phase 2 (the interview phase) without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview / questionnaire for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the questionnaire/ interview/transcript/audio-tape will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

Appendix 9: Approval letter from the gatekeeper

**Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers
& Exporters Association**

ABDUS SALAM MURSHEDY
PRESIDENT



12 October 2010

Mr. Mohammad Moninoor Rashid
PhD Research Fellow
Faculty of Education
MONASH UNIVERSITY
Melbourne, Australia

Subject: **English Language Needed for Communication Skills in a
Corporate Setting in Bangladesh**

Dear Mr. Rashid,

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from Ready-made Garment Industries for the above-named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research CF10/21742010001224 and hereby giving permission for this research to be Conducted.

Yours Sincerely,


(Abdus Salam Murshedy)
President, BGMEA