

ENGLISH AS A BUSINESS LINGUA FRANCA IN DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A DISCOURSE-ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ASIAN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION



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Abstract

The expansion of digital entrepreneurship in Asia has intensified the use of English as a shared medium for online entrepreneurial communication, particularly on social media platforms. While English used for international business communication has been extensively examined in corporate and institutional settings, limited discourse-analytical research has explored how English functions in digital entrepreneurial contexts using secondary social media data. This study investigates the linguistic and pragmatic patterns of English used in digital entrepreneurial communication in Asian online environments. The analysis is based on a secondary dataset comprising 800 English-language business- and technology-oriented social media texts. A qualitative discourse-pragmatic approach was employed to examine lexical, pragmatic, and discourse features. The results show a high frequency of business-related lexical items, with terms such as *technology* (35 occurrences) and *business* (33 occurrences) appearing most prominently. Pragmatic analysis reveals frequent use of modal verbs for stance-marking, particularly *could* (29 occurrences) and *should* (27 occurrences), indicating a preference for mitigated and inclusive communication. Persuasive engagement strategies were also prominent, with calls-to-action such as *join* and *discover* each occurring 29 times. At the discourse level, the findings demonstrate consistent construction of entrepreneurial identity through inclusive language and solution-oriented messaging. Overall, the study shows that English is used flexibly and functionally in digital entrepreneurial communication, with communicative effectiveness and audience engagement prioritized over formal linguistic accuracy, thereby extending research on English used for international business communication into social-media-based digital entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Digital entrepreneurship, Business communication, English linguistics, Discourse analysis, Social-media

1. Introduction

The phenomenal growth of digital technologies has radically altered the nature of entrepreneurship, changing the way business is developed, marketed and maintained in the modern economies. The digital platforms now allow business owners to connect with more people around the world, create scalable business models, and are involved in more and more integrated ecosystems (Zahra et al., 2023). The digital age of entrepreneurship is no longer about formal organization but is becoming more deeply integrated into the online environment where self-branding, promotion, and interaction forms the main entrepreneurial activity (Paul et al., 2023). The rise in the social-media-based entrepreneurship is especially acute in the Asian setting, as the rise in digital exposure, demographic shift, and the economic involvement of the platforms has led to the development of this new business type (Zhang et al., 2022). These processes have escalated the role of language as a key resource in business communication at the multilingual and transnational contexts.

In this changing digital environment, English has been seen to become the leading language in cross-border entrepreneurial communication. It is now possible to understand the use of English in international business using the concept of English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF), which conceptualizes English as a communicative resource instead of a native-speaker norm (Kirkpatrick and Schaller-Schwaner, 2022). BELF focuses on communicative competence, flexibility, and goal-oriented communication, and puts more emphasis on intelligibility than grammatical correctness. The longitudinal studies of knowledge work in the world also indicate that English is a pragmatic business and professional language within long business careers, especially in digitally mediated ones (Räsänen and Kankaanranta, 2024). The particular relevance of such functional application of the English language is particularly evident in the context of the communication of entrepreneurs, where the discourse should target a wide range of audiences with different linguistic backgrounds.

Digital entrepreneurship inherently is discursive and it depends on language to create entrepreneurial

identities, project expertise and to communicate with audiences. Digital platforms do not only serve as the channels of dissemination but are also the location of meaning-making determined by the platform affordances, interactional norms, and communicative practices (KhosraviNik, 2022). Digital communication research has shown that online communication favors brevity, persuasion, and engagement, which is an indication of not only technological limitations but also audience anticipations (Strauss et al., 2024). English is also likely to be mixed with other languages in Asian online space, which results in the hybrid linguistic practices that still reflect the localized norms but keep global coverage (Leuckert et al., 2025). Such dynamics make the digital entrepreneurial discourse an important location to explore the process of adapting and mobilizing English in multilingual environments.

Although literature on BELF and digital discourse is growing, a lot of the literature available is based on corporate or institutional communication. Research on BELF in multinational businesses has helped to understand better the role of language in the workplace and language policy yet has little knowledge of how English is used in decentralized, informal, and platform-based entrepreneurial settings (Rajprasit et al., 2022; Salo, 2025). Equally, the study of online metadiscourse has focused on the engagement strategies of professional and scientific communication, which is why entrepreneurial social-media discourse is yet to be studied linguistically (Luzón, 2023). The latter is especially noticeable in discourse-analytical research using large-scale secondary digital data.

Moreover, the literature on digital entrepreneurship has majorly considered technological, managerial, and economic aspects of digital entrepreneurship, which sometimes ignores the communicative processes that support the existence of entrepreneurial activity (Kumar, 2024). Although conceptual discourses recognize that communication is an facilitating element, there is a dearth of empirical studies on how language operates in the real world in digital entrepreneurial settings (Kumar and Lakshminarayana, 2024). To overcome this gap, language-sensitive studies that combine the discourse analysis with the perspectives offered by the digital entrepreneurship researches are required (Walker, 2024).

It is against this backdrop that the present research explores the role of English as a Business Lingua Franca in the process of communicating in digital entrepreneurial activities using a discourse-analytic analysis of social-media texts that were created in Asian settings. The analysis of the naturally occurring digital discourse, which the study does, helps to comprehend the application of linguistic, pragmatic, and interactional strategies in self-presentation and

interaction with the audience in the entrepreneurial setting.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the main lexical and grammatical peculiarities which are used to define the English-mediated digital entrepreneurial communication in the social-media discourse created in the Asian contexts
2. To analyze the pragmatic and discourse strategies used in online entrepreneurial self-presentation, specifically, persuasion, position, and engagement
3. To examine the role of the English language as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) in reducing the communication barriers in multilingual Asian online entrepreneurial settings

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

The research method is a qualitative discourse-analytical approach, which is placed in the framework of applied linguistics and business communication studies. It is a suitable design to study linguistic, pragmatic, and discourse patterns on naturally occurring digital texts, and interpret meaning-making in a way other than just quantitative frequency counts. The research design is founded on the secondary data analysis methodology, which is a well-established research methodology in discourse and corpus-assisted linguistics, especially when it comes to studying a large-scale digital communication.

2.2 Dataset Description

The data was extracted in a publicly available social-media sponsorship and engagement dataset on Kaggle, (Omenkj, 2024) an open-access platform that is often utilized in academic studies. The data comprises of naturally occurring digital text created on various social-media platforms and has metadata like language, content type and location of audience. Even though the dataset was not designed to be used in linguistic studies, it is text-rich and authentic, which is why it is appropriate to conduct a discourse-pragmatic analysis. By using secondary data, the real-world communication of the entrepreneurship in multilingual Asian online is accessed and transparency, replicability, and feasibility of the ethical aspect are guaranteed.

2.3 Data Selection and Filtering

The original dataset has more than 52,000 social-media posts in various languages and content types. Relevance and methodological rigor were ensured through the application of a systematic filtering process.

To begin with, the English texts were only retained to help keep the focus on the English linguistic practices. Second, filtering was done to remove lifestyle, entertainment, and non-commercial

content and only business-, technology-, and commercially oriented posts were used. Third, the entries with substantive textual information were filtered out, and the content descriptions and the chosen commentary texts were analyzed as the former domain offers the most abundant linguistic information.

After this process, a final set of 800 texts on digital entrepreneurial activities in the English language were extracted. This amount of data was deemed enough to discover common patterns of discourse and it was also manageable to analyze qualitatively.

2.4 Analytical Framework

This analysis is based on the paradigm of Business English as a Lingua franca (BELF) that perceives English as a functional and adaptive tool to be employed as a means of communicative competence and not as a tool of conformity to native-speaker norms. An analytical framework of discourse-pragmatic was used to analyse the use of language in a strategic way in digital entrepreneurship.

The analysis focused on four main categories:

1. lexical and phraseological, especially of business- and promotion-related lexis;
2. modality and stance, such as hedging, evaluative language;
3. promotional discourse and persuasion, e.g. calls-to-action;
4. Interactive positioning and audience involvement, which are relation building, credibility building.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

This research meets the ethical guidelines of research based on secondary digital information and

open-source material. Any data and software used was sourced publicly and was under the MIT License that allows use, modification and distribution with proper attribution. It used the material as is and without any warranty and without any suggestion that it was endorsed by the original authors. All texts analyzed were open access, and user identifiable information was anonymized. Since the research did not require any human subjects or confidential information, the formal approval of the ethical aspects was not necessary.

3. Results

The section provides the results of discourse-pragmatic analysis of 800 texts in the English-language digital entrepreneurship. Using a corpus-based qualitative method, the findings incorporate quantitative disposition and qualitative language patterning to explain the use of the English language in online entrepreneurial communication. The results are grouped into four subsections.

3.1 Lexical and Grammatical Features

The analysis shows a high level of concentration of business- and technology-oriented lexical items, which proves the entrepreneurial and commercial nature of the dataset. The lexical choices were mostly functional and solution-oriented and the words *technology*, *business*, *growth*, *service*, *strategy*, and *market* were often mentioned. These products were used as semantic anchors to whom the entrepreneurial messages were built. Technology-related words were a bit more frequent than the traditional business terminology, as it can be seen in Table 1, which indicates the prevalence of the digital and innovation-driven discourse.

Table 1. Frequency of Business and Technology Lexis

Lexical Item	Frequency
technology	35
business	33
growth	26
service	23
strategy	22
market	19

This lexical distribution is visually presented in Figure 1, which illustrates the relative frequency of key business and technology terms across the dataset.

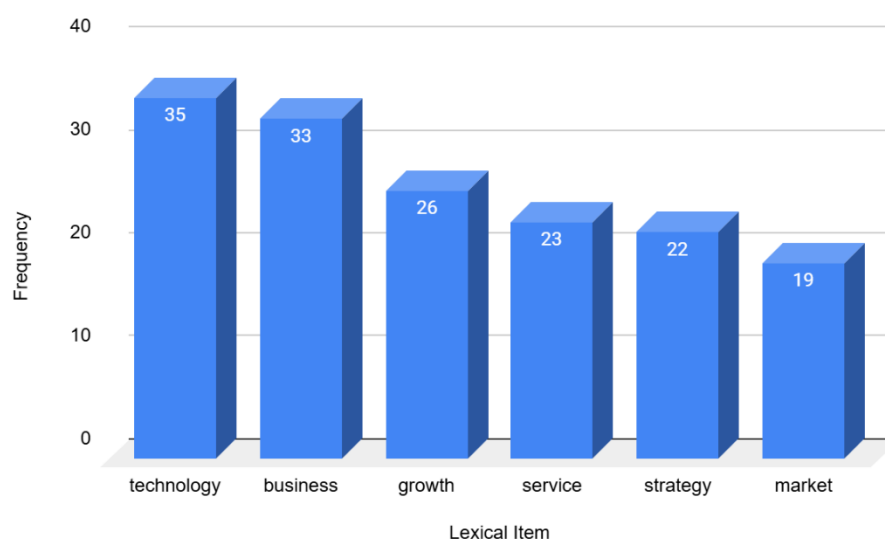


Figure 1. Frequency of Business and Technology Lexis in Digital Entrepreneurial Texts

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of the chosen business- and technology-related lexical items in the data set of 800 texts in English languages that deal with entrepreneurship. The prevalence of such terminology as *technology*, *business*, and *growth* shows the solution-oriented and innovation-oriented character of the discourse of digital entrepreneurship, which is why functional and domain-specific lexis play the central role in the English-mediated online business communication. The texts are grammatically simplified with a tendency towards simple declarative clauses and absence of subordination. The use of repetitive formulaic phrases like “we offer”, “our solution

empowers”, and “helping businesses grow” were very common implying digital entrepreneurial discourse to be conventionalized.

3.2 Pragmatic Strategies in Digital Entrepreneurial Communication

One of the salient characteristics of the dataset is the widespread application of pragmatic strategies that are focused on persuasion, mitigation, and alignment to the audience. To make claims soft and to make a statement that was possible, writers extensively used modal verbs. Table 2 presents the summary of modal verbs that were used rather frequently: *could*, *should*, *may*, *might*, and *can*.

Table 2. Frequency of Modal Verbs

Modal Verb	Frequency
could	29
should	27
will	25
may	24
might	24
can	22

The overall distribution of these modal verbs is presented in Figure 2, demonstrating a clear preference for tentative and inclusive stance-

marking. This pragmatic pattern aligns with politeness-oriented communication commonly associated with BELF contexts.

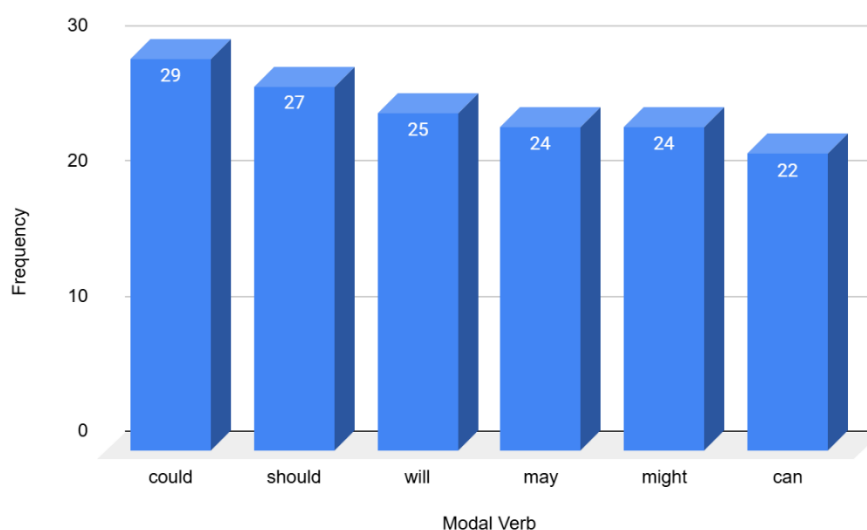


Figure 2. Distribution of Modal Verbs for Stance-Marking

Figure 2 demonstrates the frequency distribution of modal verbs to mark the stance in the digital texts on the entrepreneurship. The overuse of modals like *could*, *should*, *will*, and others points to a pragmatic focus on the possibility, recommendation and forward-looking orientation as opposed to obligation. This trend indicates a tendency of mitigated, all-inclusive, and audience-oriented

communication in English-mediated digital entrepreneurial speech.

Also, the persuasion was supported by the frequent use of *calls-to-action*, including *join*, *discover*, *learn*, and *check*, which were an invitation to the audience explicitly. These calls-to-action are shown at frequencies as shown in Figure 3.

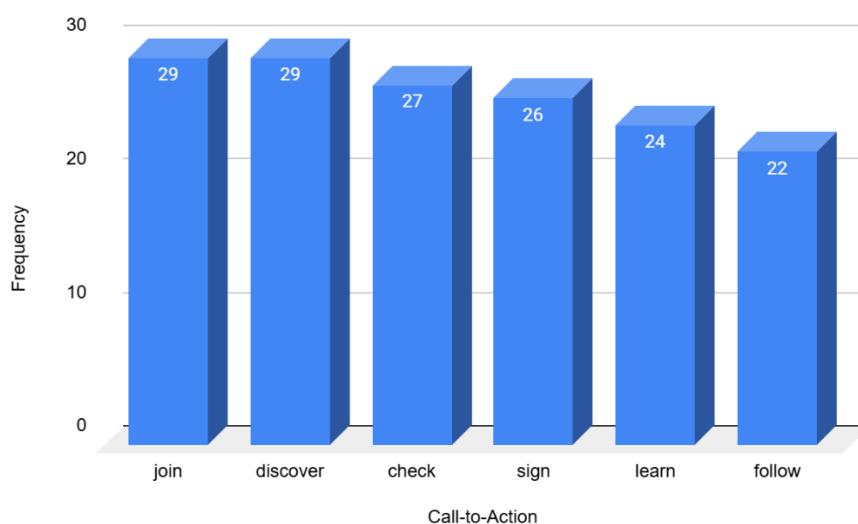


Figure 3. Frequency of Calls-to-Action in Digital Entrepreneurial Texts

Figure 3 shows the common calls-to-action frequency distribution of the English-language digital entrepreneurial communication. The popularity of such terms as *join*, *discover*, *check*, and *sign* underscores the persuasive and interaction-focused character of the entrepreneurial language where authors are very active to engage the audience and involve them in the online business processes.

3.3 Discourse Strategies of Entrepreneurial Self-Presentation

The discourse level shows that the texts have the same strategies of entrepreneurial self-presentation, in which authors develop identities as skilled, creative, and reliable players. This has been done by using the first-person plural pronouns (*we*, *our*), future tense language and evaluative language that focuses on experience and influence. Table 3 presents a summary of the prevailing discourse strategies of the dataset.

Table 3. Dominant Discourse Strategies in Digital Entrepreneurial Communication

Strategy	Linguistic Realization
Entrepreneurial identity	"we help," "our mission," "our platform"
Credibility positioning	expertise claims, solution framing
Audience engagement	inclusive language, direct address

These strategies emphasize relationship-building and trust formation rather than purely transactional communication.

3.4 BELF Characteristics in Digital Contexts

These results give good reasons to believe that Business English as a Lingua franca (BELF) features in online entrepreneurial communication. The use of the English language was flexible and simplified grammatical constructions and some non-standard forms that did not obstruct meaning were employed.

Influence of the multilingualism was seen in the lexical and syntactic decisions, which were based on the hybrid linguistic behaviors as a result of the local contexts. These differences notwithstanding, there was always communicative clarity and accessibility. Such a focus on communicative efficiency is even further justified by Figure 4, which gives the distribution of sentence length across the dataset. The figure indicates high inclination towards the use of concise sentences, which supports the functional orientation of the usage of English in digital entrepreneurial context.



Figure 4. Sentence Length Distribution in Digital Entrepreneurial Texts

Figure 4 shows how the sentence length was distributed among the English-language digital entrepreneurial texts. Most of the sentences are in a moderate range of word-length which suggests the use of to-the-point and easy wording. This distribution is characteristic of functional orientation of digital entrepreneurial communication in which clarity and communicative effectiveness are valued in the context of multilingual online communication.

4. Discussion

The results of the research show that digital platforms contribute substantially to the development of the English language in the context of entrepreneurial communication, including, but not limited to, promoting concise, persuasive, and audience-focused discourse. The focus on simplified syntactic patterns, formulaic phrases, and business-oriented lexis is a representation of the affordances

of social media spaces, where immediacy, visibility and engagement are valued. These trends are echoed by larger trends in online conversation, in which the efficiency of communication can tend to override the correctness of the language (Esposito and KhosraviNik, 2023). English, in this regard, is a flexible communicative tool that is adjusted to platform-specific constraints and opportunities instead of a linguistic system that is bound by norms. The pragmatic plans outlined in the dataset, in particular, the high frequency of modality, hedging, and calls-to-action, point to the functional occurrence of English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) in digital entrepreneurial practices. All these signs point to the liking of softened and inclusive communication which allows the writers to advertise services and ideas without making firm obligations to a wide and multilingual audience. These results are consistent with the idea of BELF-oriented

reconceptualizations of international business communication, focusing on intelligibility, relational congruence, and goal-oriented interaction instead of the norms of native speakers (Dedović-Atilla & Dubravac, 2022). The prevalence of persuasive and engagement-oriented language also confirms the opinion that the digital-based entrepreneurship is strongly dependent on the discourse practices aimed at creating the interaction and co-presence instead of the transactional exchange.

The results in comparison with the past research are congruent with and expand on existing research concerning digital and professional discourse. The strategic application of engagement markers and evaluative language to direct the audience interpretation and response has been similarly observed by previous studies on metadiscourse in online advertisements (Al-Subhi, 2022). But, contrary to conventional business communication in corporations, in which there is a strong tendency to predict institutional authority and formal register, the discourse under consideration has the more conversational and relational orientation. This difference implies that entrepreneurial communication via social media is a hybrid genre in that it combines promotional purpose with interpersonal positioning and thus does not follow the acceptable corporate communication rules (Hardy and Thomas, 2014).

The entrepreneurial self-presentation discourse tactics identified in the study are also similar to the studies on identity construction and affiliation in the Web. The high frequency of the use of inclusive pronouns, address to the audience, and value-focused communication can be seen as the efforts to achieve communal alignment and trust, but not as the efforts to provide information. These practices are reminiscent of the literature on social tagging and affiliation in social media discussion where language is spoken to bring the common values and interests into agreement (Zappavigna and Martin, 2017). Simultaneously, the comparative lack of openness (im)politeness or antagonistic expressions differentiates the discourse of an entrepreneur and other types of interaction on the Internet, including crisis-related or political communication (Tsoumou, 2023).

Theoretically, the study builds on the BELF research by showing that it can be applied to the context of social-media-based digital entrepreneurship. The identified linguistic patterns prove the point that BELF is useful in decentralized, informal, and technologically mediated settings and, thus, expands the range of its analytical focus. Furthermore, the combination of discourse-pragmatic analysis and secondary data of social media provides the study with a methodological contribution to the study of digital discourse, as the corpus-supported qualitative methods of analysis of large-scale online communication prove their worth (Vásquez, 2022).

These results also overlap with the wider debates around discourse, materiality, and social practice and point to the way in which linguistic decisions are determined by digital infrastructures and communicative purposes (Hardy and Thomas, 2014). The implications of the results are also significant in practical sense. In the case of Business English and English as a Specific Purpose teaching, the results highlight the significance of the shift to the norms of native speakers and concentrating on the functional and audience-oriented communication strategies. Better preparedness of learners to the real world of entrepreneurial communication would be achieved through a focus on pragmatic competence, intercultural awareness, and digital genre conventions (Peltonen and Hu, 2025). The pedagogical orientation is in line with the recent recommendations of language education that goes beyond classroom and interacts with real digital practices (Reinders et al., 2022). Moreover, entrepreneurial training can be improved by more awareness of how the linguistic preferences determine the interactions, trust, and value co-creation in the online business setting (Shoukat and Ramkissoon, 2022). The findings, combined, support the primary part that English plays in the modern field of digital entrepreneurship as a flexible and adaptive resource that can work at the crossroads of language, technology, and global communication (Baker, 2022; Baker, 2024).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the role of English as a Business Lingua Franca in digital entrepreneurial communication by using a discourse-analytical approach to study social-media texts written in Asian settings. The results demonstrate that the digital entrepreneurship discourse is marked by the systematic use of business- and technology-related lexis, limited grammar, and repetitive phrases, which are oriented towards clarity and simplification. Pragmatically, the discourse is based on modality, hedging, and calls-to-action that are persuasive, which are oriented towards the audience, mitigation, and relational orientation, instead of authoritative assertion. At the discourse level, entrepreneurs build competent, innovative, and trustworthy images through the use of the inclusive language, positioning the future, and solution-focused messages. These trends, on the whole, indicate that the English language is applied flexibly and functionally, where the effectiveness of communication prevails over the compliance with the norms of native speakers, thus, representing the key features of Business English as a Lingua Franca in the online environment. The linguistic contribution of the study is evident in the fact that it addresses the topic of BELF research to the realm of the social-media-based digital-entrepreneurship and shows how English is adapted to informal and decentralized communicative

context. In terms of methods, it contributes to proving the usefulness of secondary publicly accessible digital data as the subject of discourse analysis as a replicable method of analyzing large-scale online communication. Meanwhile, the research has its shortcomings. The use of secondary social-media data limits access to interactional negotiation and participant views and it is limited in its analysis to platform-specific affordances that influence discourse practices. These constraints indicate that further studies are possible in a number of directions, such as platform-specific comparative studies, longitudinal studies of the development of entrepreneurial discourse, and cross-regional comparisons of Asian and Western digital entrepreneurial communication. This type of research would also contribute to the knowledge of the way English is becoming a dynamic linguistic tool in developing global digital business settings.

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