

EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF ECONOMISTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE ACTIVITY OF ENTERPRISES

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Abstract. Economic transformation and intensified international competition increase the demand for specialists capable of operating across linguistic and cultural borders. This study examines how employers in Ukraine assess economists' English language competence and how they relate it to enterprise innovation. The aim is to explore employers' evaluations of economists' English skills and their perceived contribution to innovation-related activities and overall company performance. The analysis is based on a quantitative survey of 50 employers from the IT, financial, service, and production sectors who evaluated selected economist employees using five-point Likert scales. The questionnaire captures three groups of indicators: perceived level and use of English at work, perceived impact of English on individual performance, and perceived impact of English on enterprise development. Descriptive statistics show that employers rate initial English proficiency at 3.6 points on average, frequency of use at 3.9, and quality of English-mediated task performance at 3.7, which indicates regular use with considerable room for improvement. Employers also give high scores to the impact of English on communication with partners and clients (4.6) and on overall work effectiveness (4.4), while they rate its contribution to participation in new or international projects at 4.1. At the enterprise level they rate the contribution of English to partnership expansion at 4.0 and to entry into new markets at 3.8. In result, employers treat English not as a marginal asset but as an integral element of professional competence that supports innovation-related communication, project work and external relations. The findings offer practical guidance for revising economics curricula and aligning language training with workplace expectations, while also indicating the need for deeper, multi-source studies of the link between language competence and innovation capacity.

Keywords: human capital, linguistic capital, employability, internationalization, business communication, innovation capacity, workplace language demands, graduate skills, professional communication.

JEL Classification O44, O15, L25, M53, J24

1. Introduction

The digital transformation of the economy, intensifying competition in global markets, and wartime challenges for Ukrainian businesses make the issue of enterprises' innovation activity and their international engagement particularly pressing. For companies striving to maintain or increase their competitiveness, English becomes

not only a means of accessing information but also an everyday working tool in negotiations, partnership projects, and entry into new markets. At the same time, university programs for training economists (despite the formal presence of courses such as "Foreign Language for Professional Purposes") often do not ensure a level of English-language competence that meets employers' expectations.

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Most existing studies in this field focus on the content and methods of foreign-language training for students, analysis of ESP and CLIL approaches, self-assessment of language skills, or general indicators of graduate employability. Much less attention is given to employers' perceptions of how well young economists' actual level of English proficiency matches the needs of enterprises. Even fewer empirical data exist on how employers link economists' English-language competence with innovation-relevant aspects of company development – the expansion of partnerships, participation in new or international projects, entry into new markets, and improvement of overall performance. For Ukraine, where many enterprises are forced to change sales markets, build new international cooperation channels, and search for additional sources of growth, this gap is especially significant.

Thus arises the research problem: it remains insufficiently clear how employers in Ukraine assess economists' English-language competence and how they associate this competence with innovation-oriented enterprise development and competitiveness. In this study, innovation development and competitiveness are considered through a set of perceptual indicators available to employers: the influence of English on employees' participation in new or international projects, on the expansion of partnerships, on entry or increased presence in new markets, as well as on the company's overall performance. These variables are used to operationalize innovation-oriented development within the study.

Accordingly, the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) How do employers from different economic sectors assess economists' English proficiency, the frequency of its use, and the quality of task performance requiring English? (2) To what extent, in employers' views, does economists' English-language competence influence individual job effectiveness, participation in new or international projects, and key perceived indicators of enterprise development – partnerships, entry into new markets, and overall performance? (3) What consistent patterns emerge between employers' assessments of English proficiency and its use, and their assessments of innovation-oriented outcomes within the company?

Thus, **the object of the study** is employers' assessments concerning the role of economists' English-language competence in enterprise operations, and **the subject** is the relationships revealed in these assessments between characteristics of English proficiency and indicators reflecting innovation activity and competitiveness in employers' perceptions.

2. Theoretical Background

The issue of enterprises' innovation development is traditionally described through a combination of

technological, organizational, and human factors. In the classical works of J. Schumpeter, innovation is interpreted as a process of "creative destruction" that transforms market structures and relies on the ability of economic agents to absorb new knowledge and combine it in non-trivial ways (Schumpeter, 1934, 1950). Evolutionary approaches to the firm, developed by R. Nelson and S. Winter, highlight the role of routines, learning, and knowledge accumulation as foundations of long-term differences in enterprise performance (Nelson & Winter, 1982). The dynamic capabilities framework by D. Teece emphasizes that sustainable superior growth is possible only when a firm systematically develops organizational abilities to sense change, integrate new knowledge, and reconfigure resources (Teece, 2007). M. Porter's conception links competitive advantages directly to access to information, the quality of interactions within clusters, and the intensity of international ties (Porter, 1985, 1990), while B.-Å. Lundvall's approach to national innovation systems shifts the focus to interaction networks between businesses, universities, research institutions, and the state (Lundvall, 1992). Across all these approaches, communication and knowledge exchange serve as implicit conditions for innovation activity, even though the language component is rarely specified in detail.

Within human capital theory, education and competencies are viewed as investments that increase workers' productivity and adaptability (Becker, 1964, 1993; Schultz, 1961, 1971). From this perspective, English-language proficiency forms part of human capital that expands access to knowledge, markets, and career trajectories. Sociological approaches to capital, particularly P. Bourdieu's concept, allow the interpretation of English as a specific type of linguistic capital converted into economic and status advantages – better positions, higher income, and inclusion in internationally oriented fields of interaction (Bourdieu, 1986). Contemporary empirical studies develop this logic directly: Ramalingam and Islam (2024) demonstrate that English-language competence among graduates in Bangladesh is effectively "converted" into economic capital in the form of access to prestigious positions, higher salaries, and professional mobility, thereby indirectly enhancing enterprises' development potential.

A broad range of international studies reveals a link between English proficiency and employability among graduates of economics and related fields. Research conducted in Asian and Middle Eastern countries shows that employers expect graduates to demonstrate confident oral communication, the ability to conduct business correspondence, and the capacity to work with professional documentation in English; skill gaps are directly associated with difficulties entering the labor market (Hidayat, 2024; Karmaker &

Al Hasan, 2025). In the work of Tong and Gao (2022), which draws on human capital theory, the English-language component is included in an employability index for Business English graduates, and the empirical analysis shows a significant positive contribution of language, practical, and innovation-related skills to career prospects. Liu et al. (2025), in a study involving economics students, show that the use of authentic business materials and digital resources in English courses substantially strengthens communicative confidence and readiness for professional interaction.

A separate group of studies focuses on English as linguistic capital that directly shapes career trajectories. Ramalingam and Islam (2024) describe the mechanisms through which language competence is converted into career and material benefits, while Rana and Shaikh (2024) demonstrate that English communication skills are significantly associated with career advancement in business environments where English functions as the main language of professional interaction. Sweet et al. (2025) reveal that for migrant workers, English becomes essentially a resource of "economic survival," influencing both access to employment and the effectiveness of job performance. Studies by Karim et al. (2023) and Karmaker and Al Hasan (2025) emphasize that English-language training integrated into professional programs develops not only linguistic skills but also broader communicative and analytical abilities demanded by employers in STEM and business sectors.

European studies of Business English and ESP for economists confirm that professionally oriented English is an integral part of curricula oriented toward international labor markets. Courses built on real business scenarios contribute to the development of intercultural communication, presentation skills, and the ability to work with economic data in English (Erkir et al., 2025; Protasova & Svoboda, 2024). Comparative and experimental studies confirm the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language instruction – LMS tools, multimedia resources, and online platforms which improve performance across all language activities, especially writing and professional communication (meta-analyses on technology-enhanced language teaching, 2024; Liu et al., 2022).

At the same time, most of these studies remain focused on the level of individual educational outcomes: language proficiency, academic success, students' self-perceptions, and employability indicators. The link to enterprises' innovation-oriented development is usually outlined indirectly – through improved graduate employability or general statements about the role of English in global competitiveness but seldom supported by employers' own assessments of how language competence influences partnerships, market expansion, or overall company performance.

Ukrainian and regional studies on the professional training of economists emphasize that in the conditions of European integration and the rise of the knowledge economy, the importance of combining professional and transversal competencies is increasing – integrating subject knowledge with soft and business skills (Kharchenko et al., 2021; Semenikhina et al., 2021). Research on innovation policy and digital transformation stresses that enterprises' competitiveness increasingly depends on the ability to integrate digital tools, manage information flows, and build knowledge-oriented business structures (Omelyanenko et al., 2020; Kudrina et al., 2020). Within this field, English-language competence functions as a prerequisite for accessing international markets, information resources, and partnership networks, though its role is often only briefly mentioned in empirical studies.

A common conclusion among Ukrainian and foreign authors is that language training for economists must be closely integrated with professional disciplines, based on authentic business situations and digital resources, and aimed at developing innovation-capable human capital (Tong & Gao, 2022; Liu et al., 2025; Kharchenko et al., 2021). However, systematic studies in which employers directly assess how economists' English-language competence influences innovation-relevant enterprise characteristics (partnership expansion, participation in new and international projects, market entry, and overall business performance) remain extremely limited, especially in Ukraine under wartime conditions.

Thus, the existing theoretical and empirical foundations make it possible to view English simultaneously as a component of human and linguistic capital (Becker, 1993; Bourdieu, 1986; Ramalingam & Islam, 2024), as an element of enterprises' innovation capacity (Porter, 1990; Teece, 2007; Omelyanenko et al., 2020), and as an important factor shaping the employability of economics graduates (Hidayat, 2024; Karim et al., 2023; Karmaker & Al Hasan, 2025; Tong & Gao, 2022; Liu et al., 2025). However, there is a lack of studies that directly combine these dimensions through the analysis of employers' perceptions of how specific parameters of economists' English-language competence relate to innovation-oriented enterprise outcomes. Addressing this gap constitutes the theoretical foundation and motivation for the empirical study presented here.

Methodology. The study employs a quantitative, descriptive–analytical design and aims to examine employers' perceptions of the role of economists' English-language competence in supporting enterprises' innovation activity and competitiveness. The object of the study is employers' assessments regarding the English proficiency of economists and its influence on enterprise performance. The subject is the relationships identified within these assessments between indicators of employees' English-language competence and those

indicators that employers associate with innovation-oriented enterprise development (expansion of partnerships, entry into new markets, overall performance).

The empirical base consists of two interconnected datasets. The first, auxiliary dataset includes the results of an analysis of curricula and a short anonymous survey of 96 economics students regarding their self-assessed English proficiency and the specifics of its use in learning and everyday communication. These data serve primarily as an illustrative background for outlining the state of professionally oriented foreign-language training, and not as the central empirical material of the article. The second, core dataset is built on the employer survey and forms the basis for the quantitative analysis of perceptions regarding the role of English-language competence among economists.

A total of 50 employers were surveyed, representing enterprises from various economic sectors, including IT companies, service firms, financial institutions, and other organizations. Respondents included business owners, department heads, middle- and senior-level managers, and HR professionals – individuals capable of evaluating the professional and language-related characteristics of economists in their companies. Each respondent evaluated either a specific employee-economist or a group of employees whose job responsibilities involve at least occasional use of English when working with clients, partners, or internal stakeholders. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, using a standardized questionnaire.

The employer questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 "very low/minimal level" to 5 "very high level") and contained three thematic blocks. The first block captured basic characteristics of the enterprise and the evaluated employee (sector of activity, orientation toward domestic or foreign markets, work experience of the economist, primary functional duties). The second block focused on the employee's English-language competence: employers assessed the level of proficiency at the time of hiring, the frequency of using English in professional tasks, and the quality of performing tasks requiring English (reading and preparing documents, correspondence, oral communication). The third block explored the perceived influence of English on enterprise activity: respondents assessed the extent to which, in their view, the employee's English-language competence contributes to job effectiveness, participation in new or international projects, expansion of partnerships, entry into new markets, and improvement of overall company results.

Data processing was conducted using descriptive statistics. For each indicator of English-language competence and each indicator of enterprise development, mean values were calculated, along with distributions by sector and employee work

experience. Subsequent analysis involved analytically comparing the profiles of mean scores in two groups of indicators: those characterizing employees' English-language competence, and those reflecting enterprise development as perceived by employers. This approach made it possible to identify consistent tendencies: where English is used more frequently at work and assessed as an effective tool for task performance, employers typically report higher contributions of this competence to partnerships, project involvement, and overall company performance. Because the study relies on aggregated means and lacks full individual-level data, no formal correlation or regression analysis was conducted. Interpretation of relationships is descriptive and based on comparing the structures of average values rather than calculating correlation coefficients.

All data collection procedures adhered to ethical requirements: participation by employers and students was voluntary, informed, and anonymous; information obtained was used exclusively in aggregated form for scientific purposes. The combination of standardized employer surveys with analysis of educational programs and auxiliary data on students' self-assessed language competence enables, on one hand, an outline of real labor market expectations regarding economists' English proficiency and, on the other, the identification of potential directions for improving university training.

3. Main Research Material

The obtained results are summarized in two blocks: (1) a description of the system of professionally oriented foreign-language training for students of economics, and (2) an analysis of employers' assessments of the role of English in enterprise activity.

Description of the system of professionally oriented foreign-language training for economics students. An analysis of curricula and descriptive cases from several Ukrainian universities showed that professionally oriented foreign-language training for economists is gradually becoming institutionalized, though it remains fragmented. Most programs include courses such as *Foreign Language for Professional Purposes* or *Business English*, yet the volume, content, and level of integration with professional disciplines vary significantly across institutions and faculties. Participation of certain universities in initiatives such as *English for Universities* demonstrates the potential for systemic improvements, but based on available programs, these examples represent isolated "islands of best practice" rather than a national standard.

A supplementary survey of 96 students in economics programs conducted in 2023 revealed that most enter university with proficiency levels ranging from A1 to A2, actively use digital English-language resources independently, and yet feel uncertain about

professional writing and oral communication. This indirectly indicates a gap between the declared aims of programs and the actual learning outcomes. These observations are used as background for interpreting the employer data.

Analysis of employers' assessments of the role of English in enterprise activity. The core block of results concerns the survey of 50 employers and representatives of companies from different sectors. The sectoral composition of the sample (Figure 1) shows a predominance of IT and service companies, while the share of financial institutions and other sectors is comparatively small.

This suggests that the findings mostly reflect conditions in enterprises that already operate in internationally oriented environments where English is a natural component of daily communication.

The distribution of work experience among evaluated employees (Figure 2) shows a predominance of workers with limited experience: nearly three-quarters have up to three years of work experience, while the group with more than five years of experience is minimal.

Thus, the surveyed employees are primarily early-career specialists whose language competence was formed under relatively updated educational conditions.

Assessments of English proficiency and its use in the workplace are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Average English Proficiency Indicators

Indicator	Average Score (1–5)
Proficiency at hiring	3.6
Frequency of use	3.9
Task performance requiring English	3.7

The average proficiency at the time of hiring is 3.6 points on a five-point scale. The frequency of using English in professional tasks is rated at 3.9, and the quality of performing tasks requiring English stands at 3.7. Taken together, these values indicate that for a significant share of surveyed enterprises, English is no longer an occasional tool but is incorporated into everyday operational practice. At the same time, the indicators do not reach maximum values which indicates a significant reserve for further development of the language competence of employees even in relatively "advanced" industries.

The next block examines the perceived influence of English on individual job performance (Table 2).

The highest average score is for *communication with partners/clients* (4.6), indicating that English is perceived as a critical resource for external communication. The impact on work efficiency is rated at 4.4, and participation in new or international projects at 4.1. Notably, all three indicators fall between "above average" and "high," meaning employers consistently

Key Insights

- IT dominates the sample at 36%, substantially larger than the next sector (Services at 24%)
- Finance / Banking and Other are minor segments (6% and 4%), suggesting sector concentration in tech and services

Distribution by Field of Activity

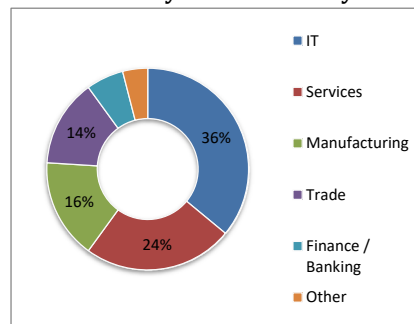


Figure 1. Distribution of surveyed enterprises by industry

Employee Length of Service Breakdown

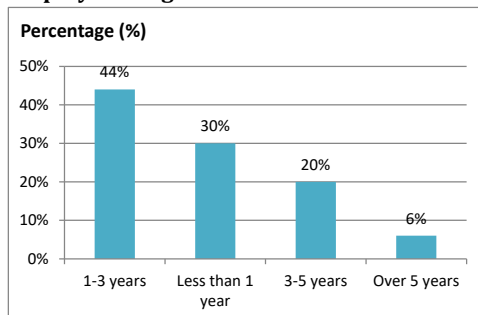


Figure 2. Distribution by length of service of evaluated employees

Key Insights

- Majority of employees are relatively new: 44% at 1-3 years and 30% less than 1 year (total 74%)
- Mid- to long-term staff are limited: only 20% at 3-5 years and 6% over 5 years, signaling low long-term retention

associate English proficiency with the ability to assign more complex and responsible tasks to employees and to increase their contribution to project-based work.

Table 2

Perceived Impact of English on Job Performance

Impact Dimension	Average Score (1–5)
Work efficiency	4.4
Participation in new projects	4.1
Communication with partners/clients	4.6

The strategic influence of language competence on enterprise development is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Impact of Linguistic Competence on Enterprise Development

Development Dimension	Average Score (1–5)
Expansion of partnerships	4.0
Entry into new markets	3.8
Overall company results	4.2

The highest scores are given to the overall contribution of English to company performance (4.2) and to partnership expansion (4.0), while the contribution to entering new markets is rated slightly lower (3.8). This suggests that employers primarily view English as an instrument for deepening and enhancing existing interactions with partners, improving communication with clients, support services, handling complaints, and related activities. The role of English in opening fundamentally new markets is assessed lower and likely depends on other factors (company strategy, financial resources, marketing policies), with language competence being only one among many variables.

A comparison of average score profiles shows a consistent pattern. Where employers rate English proficiency, frequency of use, and quality of task performance higher, they also tend to report expansion of partnerships, greater participation in new or international projects, and stronger overall company results. All indicators of English influence on enterprise development fall within the range of 3.8–4.6, indicating generally positive but differentiated effects. The most highly perceived roles of English include communication with clients and partners (4.6) and efficiency of work (4.4), while expected influence on new market entry (3.8) and partnership expansion (4.0) is somewhat lower.

This pattern suggests a positive association within employers' perceptions between economists' English-language competence and innovation-oriented aspects of enterprise development, although this relationship is descriptive rather than statistically proven.

A comparison of mean values across indicator blocks reveals a consistent trend: where English is used more frequently in work tasks and is associated with

higher-quality task performance, employers also more often report employee involvement in new projects, expansion of partnerships, and positive contributions to overall enterprise results. Because the study relies on aggregated averages, formal calculation of individual correlation coefficients was not conducted. The analysis is intentionally limited to descriptive statistics to avoid methodological overreach and to maintain transparency about the limitations of the sample.

The findings also have notable representativeness limitations. First, the sample is biased toward IT and service companies, where English traditionally plays a larger role; thus, estimates for less internationalized sectors may be overstated. Second, the predominance of employees with limited work experience means the results primarily reflect the profiles of younger specialists trained under more internationalized educational conditions. Third, the study uses perceptual assessments rather than objective economic indicators of enterprise activity, meaning that the results reflect summarized judgments rather than direct measurements of innovation activity.

Despite these limitations, the descriptive data allow several meaningful conclusions regarding the role of English as an element of human capital. First, employers consistently associate English with the ability to expand partner networks, improve the quality of external communication, and engage employees in innovative or international projects. Second, English is viewed not only as a hiring criterion but as a resource that continues to operate in daily enterprise activity and influences evaluations of employees' contributions to overall performance. Third, the obtained assessments align with observations about educational programs: where professionally oriented foreign-language training is consistent and intensive, employers are more likely to report competitive advantages among graduates and their ability to support innovation processes within enterprises.

4. Discussion of Results

The obtained data make it possible to view Ukrainian employers' perceptions of economists' English-language competence within a broad field of scholarly discussions on human and linguistic capital, innovation development, and graduate employability. The high importance attributed by respondents to English for external communication, project participation, and partnership support aligns with approaches in which language competence is seen as an investment in human capital (Becker, 1993) and as linguistic capital in Bourdieu's sense, capable of transforming into economic and status-related advantages (Bourdieu, 1986; Ramalingam & Islam, 2024). In this regard, employers' assessments confirm that for economists, English is not merely an "additional" skill but a component of the

professional profile that affects the ability to engage in more complex and innovation-intensive activities.

The results correspond to a large body of empirical work demonstrating the link between English proficiency and employability and career advancement. Surveys of graduates and business representatives in Bangladesh show that English competence significantly increases employment opportunities and effectiveness in professional settings, while shortcomings in business writing and presentation skills remain problematic (Karmaker & Al Hasan, 2025). Similar conclusions are drawn by Hidayat (2024), who shows that employers' expectations regarding English often exceed what university training provides. A series of studies confirm positive associations between English as a language of instruction or work and employment prospects, access to higher-paying positions, and an expanded range of professional tasks (Karim et al., 2023; Rana & Shaikh, 2024; Sweet et al., 2025).

Against this background, Ukrainian employers demonstrate similar patterns: the highest scores are given to indicators related to communication with clients and partners and to employee effectiveness, while the influence of English on entry into new markets is rated somewhat lower. This configuration refines the understanding of the relationship between language competence and enterprises' innovation activity. The findings do not imply that English serves as an independent driver of innovation development; rather, they indicate that employers view it as a prerequisite for employee participation in innovative and international processes – through access to information, involvement in inter-organizational teams, and support of network-based interactions. This aligns well with the approaches of Schumpeter (1950) and Porter (1990), where innovation is linked to the renewal of knowledge, search for new combinations, and strengthening competitive positions, as well as with national innovation system frameworks emphasizing information exchange and actor interactions as core conditions for innovation dynamics (Lundvall, 1992; Omelyanenko et al., 2020).

It is relevant to compare employers' assessments with studies focusing on the foreign-language training of economics students. Liu et al. (2025) show that implementing a technology-enhanced Business English course using authentic financial resources leads to statistically significant improvement across all language skills and strengthens students' confidence in professional communication. Tong and Gao (2022), drawing on human capital theory, construct an employability assessment system for Business English graduates that demonstrates the significant contribution of professional, practical, and innovation-related skills to their competitiveness. These results correspond with our finding that employers place

high value on aspects of English competence tied to practical activity – project participation, negotiations, and partnership development.

At the same time, both international and Ukrainian studies consistently reveal a gap between employers' requirements and the actual outcomes of university training. Karmaker and Al Hasan (2025) emphasize the mismatch between communicative requirements of workplaces and what educational programs deliver. Hidayat (2024) describes a similar discrepancy between labor market expectations and graduates' actual capabilities. Ukrainian research on the professional training of economists highlights the need to reconsider curriculum content and teaching formats to foster readiness for innovation-driven economic activity and to develop a set of transversal competencies – combining professional knowledge with soft and business skills (Kharchenko et al., 2021). In this regard, the supplementary data from our student survey (A1–A2 entry levels, low confidence in professional writing and speaking) can be interpreted as another indicator of the structural gap between program ambitions and employer expectations.

Studies that examine English as linguistic capital help deepen the interpretation of our findings. Ramalingam and Islam (2024) demonstrate that English-language competence among Bangladeshi graduates is converted into economic capital – access to better positions, higher income, and social prestige. Rana and Shaikh (2024) similarly show that English proficiency is positively associated with career advancement, especially in environments where English is the dominant language of professional communication. Translated to the Ukrainian setting, employers' assessments of English influence on overall company performance and partnership development may be viewed as an illustration of the same conversion mechanism: individual linguistic resources become part of the enterprise's collective innovation potential.

Another group of studies emphasizes that English-language competence is embedded in a broader system of skills that support enterprises' innovation development. Research on transversal competencies of innovation entrepreneurship professionals highlights the importance of communication, project participation, knowledge management, and digital literacy alongside subject-related expertise (Kudrina et al., 2020; Semenikhina et al., 2021). Studies on innovation policy and the development of a knowledge-based economy point out that enterprise competitiveness increasingly depends on the capacity to accumulate and use knowledge integrated into human capital (Omelyanenko et al., 2020). Within this field, our findings add another dimension: employers do not merely emphasize "communication skills" in general but directly associate English with participation in innovative and international initiatives – the sphere

where innovation, knowledge, and global connections intersect.

However, it is important not to overstate the strength of these observed relationships. Unlike large-scale studies employing multivariate models or objective indicators of performance (Tong & Gao, 2022; Liu et al., 2025), this study relies on a relatively small sample of employers and descriptive analysis of aggregated scores. Respondents' perceptions may reflect complex experiences shaped by global market exposure, hiring practices, and sectoral specifics. Therefore, the identified relationship between English competence and innovation activity should be interpreted as a relationship within employers' perceptions rather than as a causal dependency. This caution is particularly important given that innovation development, as shown in both classical and contemporary frameworks (Schumpeter, 1950; Porter, 1990; Lundvall, 1992), is a multidimensional process shaped by technological, organizational, institutional, and human factors.

Despite these limitations, the findings have practical relevance. They align with research on employability and language policy in education, which shows that employers view English not only as a tool for daily communication but also as a condition for accessing innovation-oriented and globally connected development trajectories (Tong & Gao, 2022; Karim et al., 2023; Sweet et al., 2025). For the training of economists, this underscores the need to move from merely including *Foreign Language for Professional Purposes* in curricula toward enriching course content with tasks that simulate real communication scenarios within enterprises, as well as aligning learning outcomes more closely with employer expectations.

Limitations of the study. The results should be interpreted with several important limitations in mind. First of all, the study is based on a relatively small sample of 50 employers, so the generalization of the findings to the entire set of Ukrainian enterprises is limited. The sample structure is biased towards IT companies and the service sector, where English traditionally has a higher status and is more often used in daily activities. Industries with a predominantly domestic sales market, where English-language competence may have a different status, are minimally represented, so the patterns identified primarily reflect the realities of more internationalized enterprises.

In addition, the majority of the assessed employees belong to the early-career group: almost three-quarters of the respondents described employees with up to three years of experience. This means that the results relate primarily to the generation of young economists, already trained according to updated educational programs, and do not necessarily reflect the situation with specialists of older age cohorts. The study is a one-time measurement and does not allow us to track the

dynamics of employers' perceptions or the changing role of English in connection with labor market transformations.

The next limitation is related to the nature of the data. The study is based solely on employers' assessments using Likert scales and descriptive statistics of aggregated mean values. Objective indicators of innovative activity of enterprises, such as the number of new products, the share of innovation revenues, the volume of export contracts, or formal performance indicators, were not included. It was also not possible to compare employers' assessments with the actual results of foreign language training of education seekers or internal data of universities on the achievements of graduates. This means that we are talking about a connection in the system of respondents' perceptions, and not about proven cause-and-effect relationships between the level of English and specific indicators of innovative development.

A separate limitation is the lack of access to complete individual data that would allow for a full-fledged correlation or regression analysis at the level of individual respondents. In this regard, the interpretation of the relationships between indicators of English language competence and indicators of enterprise development is carried out on the basis of comparing profiles of average grades, and not on the basis of formalized statistical models. In addition, the study focuses exclusively on English language competence and does not take into account other, equally important factors of innovative development of enterprises, such as organizational culture, level of digitalization, management practices or access to investment resources. Taken together, these limitations necessitate a cautious approach to the interpretation of the results and open the field for further, more comprehensive research.

Recommendations for stakeholders and educational institutions. The results of the employer survey show that English is perceived as an integral part of the professional profile of an economist, associated with the quality of interaction with clients and partners, the effectiveness of task performance, and participation in new projects. For higher education institutions, this means the advisability of reviewing the role of foreign language training in educational programs in economics. It is worth strengthening the professionally oriented component: integrate tasks into English courses that simulate real communication situations at the enterprise, in particular, working with contracts and reports, preparing presentations for partners, conducting business correspondence, participating in negotiations, and discussing project terms. It is advisable to provide for interdisciplinary modules within which English tasks are organically related to economic content, and do not exist "in parallel" to professional disciplines.

A useful step could be to systematically involve employers in designing and adjusting the language components of educational programs. Joint identification of typical situations of English use that employers expect from young professionals will allow for more precise adjustment of learning outcomes, ESP course content, and assessment criteria. Career centers and English departments can use the results of such studies to organize trainings, mini-courses, or summer schools aimed at developing language competence in precisely those components that employer respondents consider to be critically important: communication with clients, participation in international projects, and presentation of company performance.

It is advisable for higher education administrations to consider the possibility of gradually introducing integrated courses, where English is used as a working language when studying individual elements of economic disciplines, provided that teachers have adequate methodological support. In combination with regular diagnostics of the language level of education seekers at the entrance and exit of the program, this will allow not only to increase the effectiveness of foreign language training, but also to obtain empirical data for internal quality assurance. It is also worth stimulating education seekers to participate in international projects, academic mobilities and internships, where English is an obligatory tool of communication.

For employers as stakeholders, the results of the study can be the basis for more active participation in joint initiatives with universities. This includes the development of joint cases for English language courses, conducting guest lectures or workshops in English, providing feedback on the language skills of young specialists during internships and internships. It is advisable for human resources departments to more clearly articulate language requirements in job descriptions and use the results of internal employee assessments to plan corporate advanced training programs in the field of business communication in English. Such interaction will ensure that the English-language training of economists will not remain a purely academic component, but will turn into a real resource for the innovative development of enterprises and strengthening their position in the market.

5. Conclusion

The conducted study made it possible to describe employers' perceptions of the role of English language competence among economists in supporting enterprises' innovative activity. A survey of 50 employers, mainly from IT and service companies, showed that economists' English proficiency is considered moderately high (on average around

3.5–4 on a five-point scale), and the frequency of language use in professional tasks is stable, going beyond occasional application. This indicates that English is increasingly integrated into the daily operations of enterprises, although there remains noticeable potential for further development of employees' language skills.

Employers consistently link English proficiency to increased individual performance. The highest average ratings were given to indicators related to external communication and task execution: the impact of English on interactions with clients and partners was rated close to 4.5, while its effect on employee work efficiency exceeded 4 points. This suggests that, in employers' views, English competence is not a secondary skill but an essential component of an economist's professional profile, directly affecting task quality and the ability to take part in more complex assignments, including international or innovative projects.

From a strategic perspective, English is seen as a factor that contributes to enterprise development, although its role is perceived somewhat differently. Higher ratings were given to its impact on expanding partnerships and overall company performance (on average around 4 points), while the expected influence on entering new markets was rated slightly lower (about 3.8 points). This implies that employers primarily view English as a tool for deepening existing international and inter-company connections, improving communication and service, rather than as an independent resource for radically changing a company's market position. In other words, English competence is perceived more as a necessary condition for participating in innovative and international processes than as a standalone driver of innovation.

The results obtained are consistent with theoretical ideas about the English language as a component of human and linguistic capital. In the perception of employers, the English-speaking competence of economists acts as a resource that enhances the ability of employees to master new knowledge, interact with foreign partners, and join international initiatives. This indirectly supports the theoretical thesis that investments in language competence can contribute to the formation of the innovative potential of enterprises by strengthening the communication, information, and project capabilities of personnel.

The findings should be considered as empirically supported evidence that employers in internationally oriented sectors of the economy attach high importance to the English-speaking competence of economists as a factor of individual and organizational effectiveness. They record its positive contribution to the quality of communication, participation in

new projects, and support for partnerships, but assess its impact on the strategic expansion of markets as indirect and dependent on other conditions. This creates a basis for further research that could

combine employers' perceptions with data on specific practices of foreign language training of education seekers and with objective indicators of enterprises' innovative activity.

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