

# The cost of language and cultural barriers at work

## Communication lives right at the heart of any successful business.

Everything from global strategic initiatives to everyday business operations relies on clear, effective, and straightforward communication to move your organisation in the forward and upward direction.

Global businesses have the equally unique, exciting, and sometimes frustrating task of ensuring global communication is crisp and streamlined across multiple languages and cultures. While diversity is something we all love to celebrate, these differences create complex barriers that can increase discomfort and conflict in the workplace.

Even when two people speak the same language the opportunities for miscommunication and misunderstanding are great. **Research from Mitel reveals that sub-optimal communication practices cost businesses £8,000 per employee.**<sup>1</sup> For organisations with 500 employees or more the annual losses related to poor communication climbs to more than £4m every year.

Clearly, language barrier issues are not merely isolated to the realm of interpersonal conflict. They have real business consequences.

**A study by CPP indicates that 25% of employees facing language and cultural challenges at work will feign an illness.**<sup>2</sup> Even more drastic, one-third of the study's respondents said that these conflicts result in employee turnover—either from voluntary resignation or termination.

Offering language training at work can help alleviate the operational and interpersonal strain caused by language-related miscommunication.



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## 3 real benefits of language training

### ① Fosters a culture of inclusive communication

Offering language training at work promotes a culture of inclusive communication. Language is personal. It's how humans materialise their internal world (thoughts, feelings, ideas, desires) to the external world. As a result, learning a new language is an immediate perspective shift. Linguist Edward Sapir said it best: "The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same worlds with different labels attached." In other words, when your employees are learning a new language they are not simply swapping out words in their language for the same words in another language. They are learning a whole new way to communicate. The end result is one of inclusivity and mutual understanding.



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— Edward Sapir, Linguist



## ② Builds trust among your employees

The bulk of communication conflicts impacts trust. Your employees are only human. When miscommunication arises, they don't feel heard or understood. When your employees do not feel heard, trust in their co-workers diminishes. By equipping your employees with new language skills, they can better communicate across language and cultural barriers and build trust with their co-workers.

## ③ Reduces employee turnover

The big business casualty of language barriers in the workplace is employee turnover. When employees don't speak the same language, many may feel stalled in their careers and feel less engaged in their work. When this happens, even some of your brightest multilingual speakers may decide to pursue other opportunities. Language training helps you keep employees engaged in their careers and with each other—greatly improving employee retention in the process.

## Join 12,000+ industry leaders who use language solutions from Rosetta Stone.

Flexible, immersive language training can help enable success across your global team, putting your organisation on the path to improving communications on a global scale.

Rosetta Stone helps every employee within your organisation communicate, collaborate, and engage with their work. This ultimately results in significant strategic gains across your business—from reduced retention costs and improved productivity to minimised compliance risk and better customer experiences for all.

### With enterprise language solutions from Rosetta Stone you can:

- Drive down employee retention costs
- Improve productivity
- Boost collaboration across your organisation
- Foster a work culture of diversity and inclusion




### Contact us for more information:

United Kingdom:  
0800 145 6076

Outside of the United Kingdom:  
+44 (0) 207 749 2979

[RosettaStone.co.uk/Business](https://www.rosetta-stone.com/uk/Business)

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#### Resources

1 *UK Workers Costing Businesses £8,000 Each a Year Thanks to Inefficient Comms*. April 2017. <https://smallbusiness.co.uk/costing-inefficient-communications-2538195/>

2 *Workplace Conflict and How Businesses Can Harness it to Thrive*. July 2008. [https://shop.themyersbriggs.com/Pdfs/CPG\\_Global\\_Human\\_Capital\\_Report\\_Workplace\\_Conflict.pdf](https://shop.themyersbriggs.com/Pdfs/CPG_Global_Human_Capital_Report_Workplace_Conflict.pdf)