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## It's English but not as we know it

In this extract from *Executive Writing Skills for Managers*, Fiona Talbot focuses on writing English in international business

If you use English globally, your counterparts in other countries must understand you in the same way that you are understood at home. We know that even the British and the Americans can "be divided by a common language". So imagine how complicated things can get now that more non-native than native speakers use English in international business.

Managers need to search for ways to make the task easier for all. This in no way equates to "dumbing down" or "speaking down" to people. It is much, much more about realising that, in business, time is money — for speakers, readers and writers alike. That's why intercultural networking, socialising and training can help you pick up tips.

It's good to gain some awareness of how different cultures can use English. Depending on background, exactly the same situation can be relayed in writing as "We have a problem here and you need to fix it fast" or "It seems there may be a systems failure. It would appear to be something that needs corrective action".

Multinational companies find that where readers are aware of writers' different backgrounds they are likely to be:

- Less offended by direct exchanges;
- Less puzzled by deferential language where people do not appear willing to take the lead on decisions;
- Less frustrated by hierarchical language where a writer will deal only with a chief executive;
- Less bemused by overly polite language.

*Executive Writing Skills for Managers (Kogan Page)* is available post-free for £7.50 from [Books First](#) on 0845 271 2135.

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