



ENGLISH AS THE GLOBAL LANGUAGE

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Cite This Article: Dr. Vidya Patil, "English as the Global Language", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 3, Issue 1, Page Number 205-207, 2018.

Abstract:

As global communication proliferates throughout the world, so does the need for a global language. A global language is one that is acknowledged and understood by people everywhere. English is such a language and has been established in many parts of the world. In most countries around the globe the English language can be found in some form or another. English, for various reasons-primarily due to British rule in the many parts of the world-has emerged as the popular *lingua franca*. English has become an international language which bridges cultures and language barriers. Hopefully, someday English will eliminate all communication boundaries worldwide.

Lingua franca

Key Words: Global, Communication, Understood, *Lingua franca* & Language Barriers

Introduction:

As global communication proliferates throughout the world, so does the need for a global language. A global language is one that is acknowledged and understood by people everywhere. English is such a language and has been established in many parts of the world. In most countries around the globe the English language can be found in some form or another. "What centuries of British colonialism and decades of Esperanto couldn't do, a few years of free trade, MTV, and the Internet has done English dominates international business, politics, and culture more than any other language in human history." (Rohde) For this world to be truly global there must be some commonality or ease of communication. "If trade and tourism around the world are going to operate and a global economy function and a global culture flourish, a widely shared, reasonably accessible language is requisite." (Stevenson) There is no denying the fact that English is the World's Language.

English is a widely distributed language originating in England, now part of the United Kingdom, and is currently the primary language in several countries. It is extensively used as a second language and as an official language in many other countries, is the most widely taught and understood language in the world, and sometimes is described as a *lingua franca*.

An estimated 354 million people speak English as their first language. Estimates about second language speakers of English vary greatly between 150 million and 1.5 billion. English is the dominant international language in communications, science, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy and the Internet. It has been one of the official languages of the United Nations since its founding in 1945.

History of the English Language:

English is a West Germanic language which developed from Old English, the language of the Anglo-Saxons. English, having its major roots in Germanic languages, derives most of its grammar from Old English. As a result of the Norman Conquest and other events in English history, it has been heavily influenced in terms of vocabulary by French and Latin. From England it spread to the rest of the British Isles, then to the colonies and territories of the British Empire (outside and inside the current Commonwealth of Nations) such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and others, particularly those in the Anglophone Caribbean. As a result of these historical developments English is the official language (sometimes one of several) in many countries formerly under British or American rule, such as Pakistan, Ghana, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and the Philippines.

The primary means of communication among the peoples of the world is language. According to a well-known linguist, Frank Palmer, the difference between human beings and animals is poorly described by the label *homo sapiens* (man with wisdom). He questions what do we mean by wisdom? Anthropologists describe man as a tool maker, but even apes are known to be able to make primitive tools. In fact, what sets us apart from animals is our ability to speak. Man is a speaking animal-*homo loquens*-and this ability has greatly facilitated our advancement in all spheres.

Need for a Global Language:

There is an urgent need for the adoption of a common link language in a world in which all its people are quickly becoming interdependent despite the many differences of their profuse cultures, races, religions and ideologies. The concept of "Global Village" is almost complete due to the effects of recent dramatic advances in transport and communication. Communications has been greatly improved by the widespread adoption of mass media-especially radio and television-coupled with reduced costs and time that has been made possible by the use of satellites, computers and mobile telephones. The Internet is quickly emerging as the preferred information highway to meet our daily communication needs as well as for conducting important business transactions.

It is now almost impossible for us to fully participate in the global village that we live in, without 'knowing' a common world language. However, the common link language that would be the universally accepted means of communication should not be allowed to undermine the importance of any other existing language or culture. In fact, new linguistic insights have made us aware that no human language is superior to any other and that the development and growth of a language depend upon its use.

Evolution of English as the Global Language:

English, for various reasons—primarily due to British rule in the many parts of the world—has emerged as the popular *lingua franca*. In the process, it must be acknowledged, the role of English and its functions have vastly changed. English is no more seen as the language of the rulers, or as an instrument of promoting British culture and values. According to the famous linguist Tom McArthur, "*In the closing years of the twentieth century the English language has become a global resource. As such it does not owe its existence or the protection of its essence to any nation or group.*"

With the evolution of English to the status of a world language, we have become aware of some of the features that a world language must possess. Irrespective of its origin, a world language must become a utility language that embraces the needs of everyone. Though English originally was the language of the British, there are now many varieties of English, including American English, African English, Indian English and Australian English. Moreover, English now encompasses the dreams and aspirations of many peoples and experiences of diverse nations. It is used to transmit a mass of various information whether it be the latest advances in the fields of science and technology, the experiences of an ethnic group, negotiations in the field of commerce; documentation of cultural ethos; or individual experiences. Its vocabulary has been vastly enriched with the inclusion of many new words from other languages of the world. Some ten thousand words derived from Hindi and other Indian languages have become a part of Indian English.

"*A global economic and political structure needs a common tongue.*" (Stevenson) It is estimated that "*the number of native English speakers is 300 million to 450 million.*" (Stevenson) More than one billion people are believed to speak some form of English. Although the numbers vary, it is widely accepted that hundreds of millions of people around the world speak English, whether as a native, second or a foreign language. English, in some form, has become the native or unofficial language of a majority of the countries around the world today. "*In 20 to 30 countries around the world, English is merging with native languages to create hybrid Englishes.*" (Rohde)

Owing to the assimilation of words from many other languages throughout history, modern English contains a very large vocabulary, with complex and irregular spelling, particularly of vowels. Modern English has not only assimilated words from other European languages, but from all over the world. The Oxford English Dictionary lists over 250,000 distinct words, not including many technical, scientific, and slang terms.

The 21st century has witnessed a revolution in the use of Mobile phones, Emails and Internet. It has ushered in a new world where English communication has become a necessity to stand out in the world of competition. In today's society, life becomes very difficult for anyone who is not comfortable conversing in English. In today's world, where we are living in a cut throat competition, it is very embarrassing not to speak English when it is most needed.

The main language used throughout the world on the internet is English. So it is no wonder that the mother tongue of the Web is English. Of all the world's languages, English is arguably the richest in vocabulary. English is the official language of air transport and shipping; the leading language of science, technology, computers, and commerce; and a major medium of education, publishing, international negotiation & business management of the world. Because of this reason, English has often been referred to as a "World language", the *lingua franca* of the modern era. We must make the best use of English to develop ourselves culturally and materially so that we can compete with the best in the world. Simply put, English language is our window to the world.

Conclusion:

It is said that the human "*heart is like a box and language is the key.*" The only way that all the people of the world can co-exist peacefully together is through the adoption of a universal auxiliary language. English has become an international language which bridges cultures and language barriers. Hopefully, someday English will eliminate all communication boundaries worldwide. It is widely believed that "*English is truly the world language.*" (Stevenson) English seems to be emerging as a global language. English may not be the best choice, but it is the obvious choice, for an international language. Whether we like it or not, the English language is becoming the global language.

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