



English as a Global Language

PARIMAL P.GOHIL

Vidhyasahayak,

Shree Vajadi Virada Primary School,
Rajkot, Gujarat (India)

Abstract:

English is a global and well on its way to becoming the dominant global language. Is this a good thing? Yes, in fields such as science where a common language brings efficiency gains. But the global dominance of the English language is bad news for world literature, according to CEPR. Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a "world language", the lingua franca of the modern era, and while it is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aeronautical and maritime communications. English is an official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, including the International Olympic Committee. English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89% of schoolchildren, ahead of French at 32%, while the perception of the usefulness of foreign languages among Europeans is 68% in favour of English ahead of 25% for French. Among some non-English-speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the adult population claims to be able to converse in English – in particular: 85% in Sweden, 83% in Denmark, 79% in the Netherlands, 66% in Luxembourg and over 50% in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, and Germany.

Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world, and English is the most commonly used language in the sciences with Science Citation Index reporting as early as 1997 that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries. This increasing use of the English language globally has had a large impact on many other languages, leading to language shift and even language death, and to claims of linguistic imperialism. English itself has become more open to language shift as multiple regional varieties feed back into the language as a whole. In this article the author wants to introduce the importance of English language on Global platform.

Keywords: *Communication, English Language, Global Dominance, Status Symbol*

1. Introduction

English is a West Germanic language that was first spoken in early medieval England and is now the most widely used language in the world. It is spoken as a first language by the majority populations of several sovereign states, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and a number of Caribbean nations. It is the third-most-common native language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. It is widely learned as a second language and is an official language of the European Union, many Commonwealth countries and the United Nations, as well as in many world organisations.

English arose in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England and what is now southeast Scotland. Following the extensive influence of Great Britain and the United Kingdom from the 17th century to the mid-20th century, through the British Empire, and also of the United States since the mid-20th century, it has been widely propagated around the world, becoming the leading language of international discourse and the *lingua franca* in many regions.

Historically, English originated from the fusion of closely related dialects, now collectively termed Old English, which were brought to the eastern coast of Great Britain by Germanic settlers (Anglo-Saxons) by the 5th century – with the word *English* being derived from the name of the Angles, and ultimately from their ancestral region of Angeln (in what is now Schleswig-Holstein). A significant number of English words are constructed on the basis of roots from Latin, because Latin in some form was the *lingua franca* of the Christian Church and of European intellectual life. The language was further influenced by the Old Norse language because of Viking invasions in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Norman conquest of England in the 11th century gave rise to heavy borrowings from Norman-French, and vocabulary and spelling conventions began to give the appearance of a close relationship with Romance languages to what had then become Middle English. The Great Vowel Shift that began in the south of England in the 15th century is one of the historical events that mark the emergence of Modern English from Middle English.

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.

2. English as a global language

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a "world language", the *lingua franca* of the modern era and while it is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aeronautical and maritime communications. English is an official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, including the International Olympic Committee.

English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89% of school children, ahead of French at 32%, while the perception of the usefulness of foreign languages among Europeans is 68% in favour of English ahead of 25% for French. Among some non-English-speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the adult population claims to be able to converse in English – in particular: 85% in Sweden, 83% in Denmark, 79% in the Netherlands, 66% in Luxembourg and over 50% in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, and Germany.

Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world, and English is the most commonly used language in the sciences with Science Citation Index reporting as early as 1997 that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries.

This increasing use of the English language globally has had a large impact on many other languages, leading to language shift and even language death and to claims of linguistic imperialism. English itself has become more open to language shift as multiple regional varieties feed back into the language as a whole.

3. How English Became a Global Language

One important argument in favor of English as a global language is its effectiveness. Chinese has more native speakers, however, it also has simplistic grammar, and it lacks articles, prepositions, verb conjugation and tense, singularity and plurality of nouns making it less effective than English at expressing complex meanings. It is also tonal, which limits the speaker's use of tone for emotional and conceptual expression. Furthermore most Westerners find the Chinese writing system difficult to grasp, whereas the Chinese and other groups tend to learn the Roman alphabet easily. The Roman alphabet is already the most widely used alphabet in the world today, and is shared by many disparate and seemingly unrelated languages, such as English (which has Germanic and French roots) and Spanish (which derives from the Vulgar Latin.) Since the Roman alphabet is phonetic (representing sounds) rather than character based (representing concepts) it is a more effective method of describing the actual sounds of words and phrases. The primary difficulty with learning English is getting over irregularities. For example, the "gh" in through and laugh representing no sound and f respectively, whereas "g" alone can represent the hard "g" in get or the soft "g" in George, and "h" alone can represent the aspirated sound in hat or no sound at all as in honor. Unfortunately, the only solution to this problem is memorization and practice.

Today it is the most widely spoken artificial, constructed language, and even has native speakers. English appears to be more commonly used than Esperanto in global commerce, becoming a lingua franca (a common language spoken by people with different native languages). Esperanto, on the other hand, seems to have found its place as a cultural, educational and literary language.

Since English is so widely spoken, many non-native speakers have found that they've been required to learn it to stay in business. English has approximately 375 million native speakers, born in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries. However, it has been estimated that there are over a billion non-native speakers of English.

Some people mistakenly think that English is a Romance language. It is rather a Germanic language which was heavily influenced by the Normans upon their conquest of England in 1066. The Normans eventually went on to become the French. The early Britons adopted many of the Norman word roots, which has resulted in many similarities between French and English today.

Today, English is widespread largely due to the fact that it is used so heavily in television, film and music. Hollywood's global spread has contributed strongly to the international popularity of English. It is also the predominant language on the Internet. Web pages in other languages often tend to have an English translation. The British Empire and the dominant nature of American popular culture have contributed overall to the spread of English across the planet.

There are still significant language barriers between people of different countries. If more people learn English, and come to speak it fluently, these barriers could be broken down. A person in Holland would not need to learn Chinese in order to communicate with his friends in China. Instead, he could use English as a neutral language. Then, if he wished to learn Chinese for his own purposes, he could do so at his leisure, rather than being forced to learn it in a crash course

just to be able to communicate with his friend.

There is a strong push in this country to establish English as the official or only language. However, Spanish is the second most widely spoken and taught language next to English. There is a significant minority of Hispanic Americans who speak only Spanish, and the majority have only a limited proficiency in English. However, English is spreading rapidly through the Hispanic population, favored by the young and by Hispanics born in this country.

There has been some talk of attempting to establish Spanish as an official second language of the U.S. Since neither the Federal Government nor the states have established a national official second language, this is unlikely. Certain states, such as Alaska, have attempted to establish English-only laws which have been blocked in the courts. Also, it's unlikely that English-only will ever be established the official language of Texas, since there are so many Spanish speakers living here.

While English can be very difficult to learn, learning it can be very rewarding. Knowledge of English makes it possible for natives of non-English speaking countries to enjoy English-language film, television, music, magazines, novels and nonfiction, among other things, without the need for any translation. English makes communication with people of other countries and cultures possible. More importantly, English offers a wide range of possible expressions for similar concepts.

These all have effectively the same meaning, but each reflects a different nuance of expression. Esperanto, which has been proposed as an international language, offers comparatively limited expression.

The language offers terms for "unhappy" and a term for "sad". However, Esperanto does not have the wide range of synonyms that English offers. Worse, Esperanto is almost devoid of idiomatic expressions. This ultimately makes it a colorless language with a limited range of expression. Since terms in Esperanto tend to retain their original meaning, attempting English idioms in Esperanto would tend to cause the listener to interpret the speaker literally. That is to say, if I said "Mi estas blua," the listener might tend to think I was claiming to actually be blue in color.

While Esperanto is effective at communication it is simplistic and doesn't lend itself toward poetry. English in its modern form has been used for poetry, sonnets and songs for nearly five hundred years, and thus allows the speaker much more freedom to express himself.

Another thing in favor of English is relative simplicity of conjugation of verbs. Every language has its conjugation nightmare, especially for the irregular verbs. However, English dispenses with complex prefix and suffix arrangements for tenses such as the future tense and moods like the conditional in favor of a simpler auxiliary verb conjugation.

Perhaps the existence of English as a global language of commerce is a by product of imperialism. It's very likely that it is. However, English has become an international language which bridges cultures and language barriers. Hopefully, someday English will eliminate all communication boundaries worldwide.

4. Why language is a symbol of status in your society?

Language is arguably a symbol of status in the global society because of the perceived image attached to it. For example someone who talks with intricate English with a posh accent will give off the air of a rich well educated person, a person who talks largely in slang with many grammatical mistakes will give off the opposite air. As we attach the image of a rich person, dressed to the nines in white and brand names and so forth, to a social standing, and we attach a voice (or a manner of speaking) to that image, we use the manner in which someone speaks as an insight to their social status.

5. English language: The Window to the world

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 and it is equally disheartening when failure embraces us, in whatever form, because of that one simple reason.

On the professional front also, the personality of a job seeker is not merely measured by virtue of his IQ. Instead it is measured on the basis of his effective English communication. So here the importance of acquiring proper English learning & communication skills comes in picture. Simply putting, 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 & as a consequence of, which over a billion people speak English to at least a basic level. 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 of mind and matter. Simply put, English language is our window to the world.

Learning English is a skill which we can improve by ourselves! The young learners nowadays have to impart skills to merge into a dynamic society where knowledge, culture, technology and attitude are changing at an alarming speed. English can be difficult sometimes or confusing! Should you choose British English or American English? Perhaps you find English spelling rules, irregular verbs, and phrasal verbs confusing. Also, a working knowledge of English has become a requirement in a number of fields, occupations and professions such as medicine and computing; as a consequence of which over a billion people speak English to at least a basic level. Modern English is the dominant language or in some instances evens the required international language of communications, science, business, aviation, entertainment, radio etc. It is also one of six official languages of the United Nations.

But now we too can learn Correct English easily! There are several resources available on internet like English learning software, English learning e-books, English tutorials etc. for learning English & they provide the very best information which will help you to understand and learn the language in an effective way.

6. The 5 facts about the English language

- 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 most widespread language in the world and is more widely spoken and written than any other language.
- English is the medium for huge amount of the information stored in the world's computers
- Because a working knowledge of English is required in many fields and occupations, education ministries around the world mandate the teaching of English to at least a basic level.

7. Conclusion

English is the primary language in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, the British Indian Ocean Territory, the British Virgin Islands, Canada, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Grenada, Guam, Guernsey, Guyana, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Jamaica, Jersey, Montserrat, Nauru, New Zealand, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In some countries where English is not the most spoken language, it is an official language; these countries include Botswana, Cameroon, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines (Philippine English), Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Also there are countries where in a part of the territory English became a co-official language, e.g. Colombia's San Andres y Providencia and Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast. This was a result of the influence of British colonisation in the area.

It is also one of the 11 official languages that are given equal status in South Africa (South African English). English is also the official language in current dependent territories of Australia (Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and Cocos Island) and of the United States (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands) and the former British colony of Hong Kong. (See List of countries where English is an official language for more details.)

Although the United States federal government has no official languages, English has been given official status by 30 of the 50 state governments. Although falling short of official status, English is also an important language in several former colonies and protectorates of the United Kingdom, such as Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cyprus, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates.

References

1. Ammon, Ulrich (2006). *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society*. Walter de Gruyter. ISBN 3-11-018418-4.
2. Baugh, Albert C.; Thomas Cable (2002). *A History of the English Language* (5th Ed.). Routledge. ISBN 0-415-28099-0.
3. Bragg, Melvyn (2004). *The Adventure of English: The Biography of a Language*. Arcade Publishing. ISBN 1-55970-710-0.
4. Cercignani, Fausto, *Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981.

5. Crystal, David (1997). English as a Global Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-53032-6.
6. Crystal, David (2003). The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-53033-4.
7. Crystal, David (2004). The Stories of English. Allen Lane. ISBN 0-7139-9752-4.
8. Dunton-Downer, Leslie (2010). The English Is Coming!: How One Language Is Sweeping the World. New York: Touchstone Books. ISBN 978-1-4391-7665-8.
9. Gimson, ed. A. Cruttenden (2008). Pronunciation of English. Hodder.
10. Halliday, MAK (1994). An Introduction to Functional Grammar (2nd Ed.). London: Edward Arnold. ISBN 0-340-55782-6.
11. Hayford, Harrison; Howard P. Vincent (1954). Reader and Writer. Houghton Mifflin Company. "Internet Archive: Free Download: Reader And Writer". Archive.org. 10 March 2001. Retrieved 2 January 2010.
12. Howatt, Anthony (2004). A History of English Language Teaching. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-442185-6.
13. Kenyon, John Samuel and Knott, Thomas Albert, A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English, G & C Merriam Company, Springfield, Mass, USA, 1953.
14. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary – Oxford University Press ©2010.
15. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language
16. <http://www.cepr.org/press/DP2055PR.htm>