

Global English

English & Its Importance

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Abstract

This essay looks at the factors that made English an important language, the extent to which it is being used and the consequences it had on the rest of the world. We will look at views of various researchers who offer new perspectives on the issue of the linguistic domination of English, the factors that led to countries that were not former colonies adopting English, the issue of a standardised English enabling international communication among all countries and also the existence of various 'Englishes'.

One among four people in the world uses the English language. Its vocabulary is constantly expanding to accommodate the lexical needs of a varied population in diverse countries. English domination was consolidated when the United States emerged as a technological and military super-power, after the Second World War. At least 1.5 billion of the population throughout the world speak English (David Crystal, 2000, p6). From a struggling vernacular in the 14th century, when it had to be developed and taught to natives of England who spoke dialects for the most part, it has become a megalith among the languages.

The Spread of English

Colonisation, industrial developments, scientific, technological and medical developments that took place in England, and later, in the US, played a huge part in establishing English as a progressive language that had to be learnt if one was to progress.



THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

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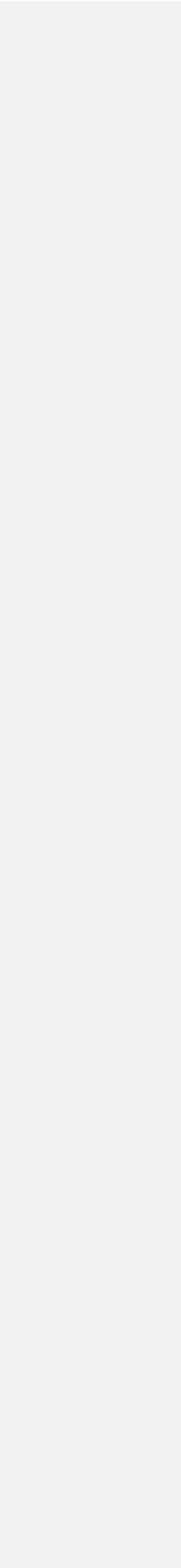
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Global Englishes



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Introduction

This essay looks at the factors that made English an important language, the extent to which it is being used and the consequences it had on the rest of the world. We will look at views of various researchers who offer new perspectives on the issue of the linguistic domination of English, the factors that led to countries that were not former colonies adopting English, the issue of a standardised English enabling international communication among all countries and also the existence of various 'Englishes'.

One among four people in the world uses the English language. Its vocabulary is constantly expanding to accommodate the lexical needs of a varied population in diverse countries. English domination was consolidated when the United States emerged as a technological and military super-power, after the Second World War. At least 1.5 billion of the population throughout the world speak English (David Crystal, 2000, p6)¹. From a struggling vernacular in the 14th century, when it had to be developed and taught to natives of England who spoke dialects for the most part, it has become a megalith among the languages.

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The Spread of English

Colonisation, industrial developments, scientific, technological and medical developments that took place in England, and later, in the US, played a huge part in establishing English as a progressive language that had to be learnt if one was to progress. It is acknowledged that the present century will be dominated by the Internet connectivity and according to most users of the language, English. (Paroo Nihalani, 'Globalisation and International Intelligibility', 2010, p23). The spread of English started with the growth of

¹ *English Teaching professional, Issue 14, January 2000*

English nationalism and imperial supremacy. An important factor that led to English domination was that the Industrial Revolution took place in England and Europe. All scientific discourse during that time as well as later, when the US emerged as a technological power, was in English. The languages of the rest of the world, barring a few, were not able to keep up with the pace and volume of progress.

Another important factor was that English continued to be used for all governmental and educational purposes, even after independence, in the colonial states. Institution of Man Booker, or Booker prizes and other awards for books written in English, by Britain continues to provide an incentive to keep English alive in these countries. However, in the decolonised states, the continuation of English usage has divided the population into two classes of people: the educated rich occupying key positions of power and the poorer section of the people, disadvantaged by their lack of English knowledge and holding lesser jobs. Significantly, in south Asia, among the ASEAN² countries, some of which had not been colonised by the British, English has been the official language of communication. (Kirkpatrick Andy, 2010).

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Neo-colonialism and Global English

In the Philippines, during the US occupation, the imposition of English was associated with the adoption of foreign theories and ideas that had nothing to do with the local culture. Further, the legacy of English has created a deep divide between those who had access to learning English and were among the affluent sections of society and the poor who had no means of English education. As Phillipson states, “One of the most durable legacies of

² ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) was founded in 1967 and initially consisted of five countries.

colonialism has been language. Yet, only about 3 to 4% of the population in the former colonies of Asia and Africa know English. In the context of globalisation, language provides careers and economic prosperity. Organisations like the IMF, trade policies and foreign aid also promote the use of English adding a new dimension to colonial domination - neo-colonialism.

Related to the hegemony of the English language, is the phenomenon of 'neo-colonialism', which is best exemplified by the Saudi Arabian linguistic history. English was first introduced to help the employees of oil and gas companies to communicate with the Americans whose expertise was necessary for the companies. Over the years, as a broad-based curriculum was introduced, when English was introduced in primary schools, many feared that it will lead to the loss of Islamic culture and values. This led to protests by some against the charge of 'westernisation' of the country, while others rooted for the youth of the nation to develop creative and critical abilities. The latter found justification for tolerance and acceptance of other languages and cultures in the Koran. Moreover, the neighbouring countries of UAE, Qatar etc. readily accepted the ELT methodologies of learning and teaching English.

Global promotion

In the context of retaining the linguistic hegemony that bestows enormous benefits to the Western powers of the US and the UK, we shall take a look at how the two countries have promoted the ELT and ELF. 'Benevolence' substituted for 'civilizing mission' in the era of neo-colonialism. US entities like the Carnegie Endowment, The Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, in addition to the US government, funded cultural exchanges and

health and educational programmes with a view to advance their foreign policies, culture and language.

Teaching and offering educational scholarships in US Universities, funding English training programmes for teachers and students all over the world, engaging volunteers to travel abroad for English teaching are some of the ways in which English knowledge was disseminated. Dependency on a foreign language as well as having a wide exposure to it entails absorbing its literature, values, and ways of thinking.

In the UK, promotion of British culture and language was done through the British Council that became important in the teaching of English in Third World countries. The British government saw a way to project its image abroad while furthering its economic and political goals. The competition of indigenous languages, communist literature and aggressive American policies of teaching English abroad made the British join forces with the US to introduce ELT training and research to fuel the growth of English speaking population throughout the world. Additionally, the British Broadcasting Corporation, British books and publishers were spread out far wide to promote English as the only common language in the world.

Such instances lend credence to Phillipson's views on 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson R, 1994)³ He implies that popularising English was a deliberate and concerted attempt by the US and the UK to consolidate economic and political domination over the rest of the world with the help of language policies. Referring to Saudi Arabia again, in this context, it is seen that with increasing dependence of Saudi Arabia on the US, the teaching of English along with Western cultural incursions has increased over the years.

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³ 'English Language Spread Policy', (*International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 107 pp.7-24

Disadvantages of spreading English

The general feeling among people who learn English as a second or foreign language is that, widespread dissemination of English has led to the neglect of local languages. The loss of knowledge of the indigenous languages is accompanied by a much greater loss of a culture and valuable traditional knowledge in all fields including art. In the former colonies, the propagation of English has led to serious psychological issues relating to the loss of identity of whole communities of people. It is also a fact that learning an alien language that has no connection to one's culture is a waste of valuable resources of time, energy and money. Most importantly, the full potential of a person is realised only when he/she is able to think and feel in his native language because it is closely connected to his cultural past.

A positive view in this context is that, the anxiety of losing one's language, culture or identity can initiate determined efforts to prevent the loss and lead to a revival of cultures that are presumed to be at risk. (Paul Bruthiaux, 2008, Chapter 1, p.25-26)

Related to this issue, it must be mentioned that language policies of states make a vital contribution to language education. Many issues complicate the framing of language policies. In spite of pressures to make English education compulsory, a few countries are trying to introduce multi- or bi- lingual education system that can help children to understand abstract concepts and make them interested in learning. It can help reduce the drop-out rates in primary schools as well. However, all over the world, the importance of English in all domains is an acknowledged fact.

For instance, English had an important role in building the nation in Singapore. The country has four official languages, so that no particular community is neglected. Yet,

English has proved to be the most popular choice for education^{*4}- and also as the home-language. The influence of inter-cultural marriages may be one reason for this phenomenon. In Karnataka, the state government is grappling with the issue of making Kannada, the local language compulsory for the primary classes. But the majority of people prefer their children to learn through the English medium. It is a matter of prestige as well, in most countries.

Moreover, the practitioners and patrons of English insist that, knowing English is essential to know what is happening around the world. The discourse available on the internet and media, the success of Hollywood films, American TV serials, pop-songs and rap, indicate that more and more people are taking to using English especially in the Asian and African continents.

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Standard English

David Crystal strongly advocated the idea of a standardised language to facilitate communication around the world. Claiming that around 1.5 billion people in the world spoke English, he declared that it was the language best suited for the purpose. Phillipson, however, criticizes this view (English in the New World Order, Chapter 6). He points out that David Crystal is blind to the fact of multi-linguicism among other issues such as that his statements are not based on 'facts' and that he is 'Euro-centric'.

Phillipson regards the use of Esperanto as an alternative to English even though he is not an Esperantist. This is because, he attended two conferences, where he found that in the

⁴(Cited in The Observer, 24.9.1995. 8 'R. Phillipson') (Internet source)

only-English conference, Asian participants had difficulty in expressing themselves while in the other conference where Esperanto was the medium, the Asians had no difficulty at all.

The term international communication is a vague concept as there are several international languages, and that, during interactions, the national or international identity of the people is not the focus. Phillipson claims that assigning our own values to such terms serves to emphasise linguistic hierarchies. The term 'international English' is also suggestive of a type of English like Singapore English or Japan English. The more appropriate term would be EIL (English as International Language) which is more concerned with 'intercultural communication' rather than 'international communication'. (Farzad, Sharifian 2009, p 2)

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World Englishes

This brings us to the question of whether it is possible to have standardised English? There are some differences in the way English is spoken by the users depending on their place of origin. There are several anecdotes which illustrate that native English users treat those who learn English as Second or Foreign language with prejudice, which gives rise to the idea that TESOL may be biased against non-native practitioners. Moreover, people think of a language with relation to its geographical origin, whereas, in the modern IT era, it is more suitable to view a language as being in virtual space and in a state of 'flux'. (Jaques Maurais, 2003, p 17)

An interesting point made by Brutt-Griffler, Janina concerning the history of the English language. She says that the Anglo-Saxons introduced the language in the country.

Later, after being under French occupation, the language was influenced to the extent that the vernacular language used in Beowulf or by Chaucer in the Middle Ages is incomprehensible today. The fact is that it is still developing and therefore the concept of a World English as a developed language cannot be assumed. Still less convincing is the fact that it belongs to England. Additionally, as English is a flexible language, it has absorbed many words from the local languages and also changed to reflect the local cultures. Consequently, there are many 'Englishes' that exist today in different parts of the world

In conclusion, English is esteemed as one of the most important languages in the world for furthering one's career. The IT revolution has transformed the way people interact and communicate with each other. It is a matter of debate if English has attained this position due to deliberate effort or due to its innate characteristics. It may be justifiably said that, if at all there is a consensus on the adoption of a single language, the most likely candidate is English.

Commented [A6]: Appropriately concluded

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Criterion	Levels of achievement		
	Exemplary	Good	Poor
Writing style and presentation are clear			
• Introduction	Introductory statement clearly indicates the main purpose of the contribution and suggests the plan of organization, so the reader can anticipate the text that will follow.	Introductory statement indicates the main purpose of the contribution in general terms, so the reader has some idea of what will follow.	The introduction does not give an overview of the contribution so the readers are not sure what to expect as they read the text.
• Main Body	Main body of contribution makes connected points that clearly build the argument so the text flows from introduction to conclusion in a logical manner, thereby helping the reader to follow the thinking behind the text.	The main body presents a number of points that allow the reader to understand the argument, but lapses in the writing may force the reader to make some connections between the parts.	The text is not well structured so the reader must stop reading at times to try to make sense of the text.
• Conclusion	The main point of the contribution is clearly indicated and reinforced so the reader can clearly remember it.	The main point of the contribution is indicated, but may be stated in an unconvincing manner.	The concluding section does not reinforce or revisit the main point so the reader is unsure about it and likely to misinterpret or forget it.
• Written expression	Sentences and paragraphs are well structured and clear so the reader can focus on what is written. Each paragraph has a topic sentence that indicates the subject matter.	Minor lapses in sentence structure, such as run-on sentences and unnecessarily complex sentence structures, force the reader to pause and reflect on the meaning of the text. Paragraphs present a complete argument, but may not flow so well.	Many sentences are poorly structured so the reader must stop often to reflect on the meaning of the text. Many paragraphs lack topic sentences or have poor flow so the main points and linkages among explanatory text are not clear.
• Grammar, punctuation and spelling	Grammar, spelling and punctuation are flawless, which allows the reader to focus on the message.	Some minor errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation detract from the quality of the text, but do not impair the communication.	Many errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation make reading the text difficult and communication is impaired.
Concepts and arguments are well developed			
• Accuracy	All information is accurately reported using appropriate terminology so the information is reliable.	The information is largely accurate but imprecise language could lead a reader to misinterpret aspects of the text.	Although the gist of the information is correct, there are problems with the interpretation of it. A reader can be misled by the text.

• Relevance	Connections between the contribution and the main topic of the discussion are clearly indicated.	Connections between the contribution and the main topic of the discussion are indicated or implied, but the reader needs to pause to clarify those connections.	Although the text is relevant, this is not clearly indicated, so the reader must guess how the text relates to the main topic.
• Significance	The reason why the contribution is important to the overall discussion is clearly described and discussed so the reader takes the contribution seriously.	The reason why the contribution is important is touched on but not elucidated, so the reader must make some interpretations about the author's view of the contribution's significance.	The contribution may include significant material but this is not indicated, so the reader must guess it.
• Clarity	The main points and new technical terms are clearly described and/or explained so the reader is left with no ambiguity about what was written.	Although the text is clear to informed audiences, unexplained points may leave room for alternative interpretations of the text.	Key points and new technical terms are not explained so the reader is confused.
• Independence	The contribution is completely self-contained so the reader does not have to read other contributions or published materials to understand what was written about.	The text is sufficiently clear that the reader can understand the main point without further reading, but some parts of the text are not clear without consulting earlier contributions or other sources of information.	The text is written in a manner that presumes considerable prior knowledge, so the reader must have a thorough knowledge of what has been written about the subject in order to understand the main point of the contribution.
Contribution is responsive to another contribution	The writer links ideas submitted by others to their own contribution in a manner that substantially strengthens the group's efforts to resolve the main problem. This linkage can include elaboration of what was previously written, a critique or questioning of it, demonstration of linkages among two or more earlier contributions, and/or utilization of an earlier contribution as a foundation to build your own.	The writer makes references to earlier works that are a starting point for new ideas but, apart from the reference to the earlier work, not much information is incorporated	The text mentions other contributions but neither explains the reference nor substantially adds to it, so there is no clear benefit to the resolution of the main problem from citing the earlier contribution.
Text is supported by references			
• Sources indicated	All information and ideas that are not commonly known are supported with references to sources, so the reader has confidence that the information is not based on hearsay or the writer's opinion or assumptions alone.	Most sources are indicated, but in only a few cases the sources are not given or are ambiguous, so the reader has to check some of the sources.	Sources are cited for some specific parts of the contribution, but no references are supplied for information and ideas that are clearly not the author's, so the reader has no idea of the validity and authority of the

			information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant references 	<p>Information, concepts and opinions are supported with references to published literature, especially primary (original) sources of information, rather than review articles or textbooks. This allows the reader to independently review the cited sources. More than one reference is cited to support key points, which adds strength and authority to the argument.</p>	<p>One or a few references are used to support the text. Thus the contribution is supported but this may be an idiosyncratic source. Some general references to textbooks are made that could have been replaced by primary references which are more thorough and authoritative.</p>	<p>Information comes from Web sites or other sources that have no recognized authority, so the validity or strength of the source is unknown.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citation style 	<p>References cited appropriately in the text, and the correct format is used in the text when citing information, so the reader clearly knows which information is attributable to which source.</p>	<p>Minor lapses in citation format do not prevent the reader from finding the sources in the reference list at the end of the contribution.</p>	<p>Citation format incorrect or poorly placed in the text, so citations distract from reading.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bibliographic information 	<p>The reference list contains complete bibliographic information (author's name(s), publication date, title, source, date web page accessed), so a reader can easily find the references for their own research. The authority of sources can be evaluated by checking them.</p>	<p>Bibliographic information largely complete, but some information missing so the reader may have difficulty finding some references. Most sources can still be easily checked.</p>	<p>Not all references are listed, information in the reference list is incorrect, or important information is missing from the reference list, so the reader is unable to find the same sources of information and the authority of sources is almost entirely unknown.</p>

Faculty Comments:

The work has been appropriately completed abiding all guidelines provided in the assignment details document. Lapses in elucidation of facts and missing references in some points if taken care of would help modulate the work into a higher marked assignment.