

# Globalization of English

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### ABSTRACT

*This article analyses the causes for the spread of English all over the world. Globalization of language is a recent phenomenon that has revolutionized the cultures, traditions, technologies and lifestyles of people across the globe. In this context, it is fascinating to dwell upon the causes of the rise of a language such as English into the most accepted or most adopted language worldwide. It is essential to understand the factors that shaped modern English. The article outlines the causes of the spread of the English language and its essence in order to appreciate the importance of this ever changing language in the teaching and learning process.*

**Key Words:** Global English; Globalization of English; Factors in globalizing English.

### What is a 'Global Language'

The expression 'Global Language' may give a wide range of meanings and interpretations. If the real sense of the term 'global language' is not defined properly, it may be used in a confusing manner. It is certainly not as most people think of the expression: a language spoken all over the world; a language recognized as an official language by all the nations of the world; and so on. All such notions are generally interpreted by linguists, but it is not what the expression 'global language' stands for in its true sense. The most appropriate

meaning of the term is that it is a language that enjoys a special status and plays a significant role in every country, rather in most countries of the world. To gain a special status in a country does not mean that the language must be a spoken as a first or a second or a foreign language, but it should be the language primarily used as a mode of communication in most parts of the country. This is one of the significant characteristics of a global language.

David Crystal elucidates the characteristics of a global language as follows: "If there is one predictable consequence of a language

becoming a global language, it is that nobody owns it any more. Or rather, everyone who has learned it now owns it – ‘has a share in it’ might be more accurate – and has a right to use it in the way they want.” (Crystal, 2003:2)

The fact about ‘English as a global language’ is its rapid movement spreading its wings like no other language has ever done.

The following are the four main reasons for the globalization of English.

### **1. Industrialization**

The transition in production of goods from manual processes to mechanical ones took place in England during the period between 1760 and 1840. Most of the inventions during the period affected various aspects of society including religion, literacy, economy, language and life style of people at large. For instance, William Caxton’s initiative as a (merchant, writer, diplomat, publisher, printer and) book publisher paved the way to the literary revolution in England. Subsequently, the English script was available in the form of books (first printed book: Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye) from the year 1473. Before the introduction of the printing press in England, there used to be religious scriptures accessible only for priests. However, the effects of industrialization (here. *press*) brought significant changes in English language and society at large. The other inventions including telegraph, phonograph, telephone, and television are responsible for new forms, styles and varieties of language that never existed before these inventions. For

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instance, with the invention of the printing press, news formats like report writing, sports column, editorial, features, etc. evolved. Similarly, telegraph has changed the way of drafting for a specific purpose; it incorporated precision in written communication. In addition, with the advent of the telephone, people started new conversational styles (opening the dialogue by saying ‘Hello’). Expressions like ‘you are not audible’, ‘there is lot of static on the line’, ‘May I place your call on hold?’, ‘how may I help you?’ and so on weren’t used before in the typical sense of telephone communication. Further, new varieties of communication such as sports commentary, news casting, interviews, live telecasts, and interview formats have evolved with the invention of television.

### **2. Multiculturalism**

The harmony among diverse cultures, races, religions, ethnic groups, values, traditions, ideas, systems and languages in society is termed as multiculturalism. In such a society, ideally, people would value and accept one another in all aspects. It became a prominent force in American society during the period between 1970s and 1980s. As a result of the multicultural society, new collocations of words have been added to the existing English words. The list includes words like cross-culturalism, ethnic groups, pluralism, cultural diversity, racism, acculturation, achievement gap, ageism, American Indian Movement (AIM), Amerasian, apartheid, baby boomers, bicultural, barrio, bigotry, bilingual, colorblind, cultural ally, ethnocentrism,

equal employment opportunity (EEO), fresh off the boat (FOB) and illegal alien, and inter-cultural communities. Each of these expressions has its own unique meaning and application; for instance, expressions like *acculturation* (the process of learning and incorporating the language, values, beliefs, and behaviours that make up a distinct culture). The concept is not to be confused with the expression ‘assimilation’ where an individual, family, or group may give up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to that of their new host country. The term ‘achievement gap’ has two significant connotations: the first one is a trend in the US educational system where white students’ academic performance is greater than that of blacks. It could apply between girls and boys as well. And expressions like *baby boomers* (a term used to describe the generation born during the two decades following World War II, from the 1940’s through the ‘60’s, when the United States experienced a significant rise in birth rates), *cultural ally* (an individual who actively supports others who experience racism and/or discrimination), and *glass ceiling* (a term used to describe the “unseen” barrier that prevents women and people of colour from being hired or promoted beyond a certain level of responsibility, prestige, or seniority in the workplace) are all the result of multiculturalism. In this way the new and diverse experiences of people in a multicultural world give rise to an inevitable volume of expressions all over the globe.

### 3. Modernization

A progressive transition of a traditional society

to modern society is termed as modernization. The process of modernization affects many domains including economy, education, life style and languages. World English speakers use the language predominantly in various domains such as business, politics, internet, media, education and culture. As a result of modernization English language is widely used all over the world.

### 4. The Internet

Education, entertainment, enlightenment, news, business, politics, culture, music, languages, sports and games, tourism, fashion, technology and many other spheres – if there is any platform that facilitates all these domains, the answer is certainly the Internet, an outstanding contribution of modern science. With the advent of the internet, the vast world is seen through a small window with a click of a mouse connecting people of different parts of the world. And the chief language used in internet communication is English. There are many apprehensions that the Internet is rapidly changing English language with new vocabulary, abbreviations and styles.

In the words of Crystal (2003:8), “. . . as the internet comes increasingly to be viewed from a social perspective, so the role of language becomes central. Indeed, notwithstanding the remarkable technological achievements and the visual panache of screen presentation, what is immediately obvious when engaging in any of the Internet’s functions is its linguistic character. If the internet is a revolution, it is likely to be a linguistic revolution.”

In the modern linguistic revolution, expressions like Netspeak, Cyberspeak, 'Msg' (for Message), BRB (for 'be right back'), F2T (for 'free to talk'), PCM (for 'please call me'), MMYT (for 'mail me your thoughts'), RUOK (for 'Are you ok?'), HHOJ (for 'Ha ha, only Joking'), TXT, weblish (for 'web English'), etc. Another novel usage in *weblish* is that the symbol '@' acts as a universal link between sender and receiver and the trend has entered in various business organizations replacing the letter 'a' with the symbol '@' such @pex instead of 'apex', @tractions instead of 'attractions', and so on. Other symbols such as :-) for happiness, :-( for sadness, ;-( for crying, :-[ for sarcasm, and other symbols convey different emotions. On the global scene, web language is certainly emerging as a new domain and one should be updated with the current trends and varieties of web language to avoid "%-(“ (confusion).

### **Conclusion**

It is essential to update oneself about the ever changing English language, for it is dynamic in nature. In the context of the teaching and learning process, comprehending the nuisances of the global language will keep us abreast of new trends of learning and teaching English as a language. When a language teacher is not aware of the various facets and the causes of these global changes in usage, it would set the teacher in a conventional mode. However, a teacher of a dynamic language ought to be dynamic in nature. Hence, there is a need to understand the effervescent

nature of 'Globalized English' in the teaching and learning process.

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