

Review article

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THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH INTO THE WORLD LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The English hegemony of the world in terms of language has become the sine qua non of the modern way of life. International communication depends on knowledge of the English language, and digital evolution has contributed to that to the greatest extent. Today, we can say that the whole world is digitally connected into one networked system of interplanetary communications. English has thus become the world's lingua franca language in the business world on a global scale. The question is whether we can predict the further spread of this language or its stagnation, perhaps even its replacement with some other world language?

In this article we want to point out as well as give a basic theoretical overview of the phenomenon of the English language. In the discussion, we rely on the opinions of English linguists to support our idea about the strength of the English people to expand, partially impose, their achievements of civilization by spreading the language worldwide. The world citizens have found the knowledge of English an essentially important element of life. English, therefore, has become a part of everyday life.

Key words: English of the world, digital communication, theoretical overview

INTRODUCTION

The rise of English on the soil of present-day Britain is related to the mid-5th century AD. It was a time when the Roman legions completely withdrew from the British Isle and left the Britons unprotected ready for the savage attack and occupation by Germanic tribes. Very soon the Celtic tribes were enslaved, killed, or exiled. The new Germanic age started to appear and Latin was replaced by the language brought to the Isle by the intruders. English was at the dawn of its birth.

Robert McCrum (2010) developed an interesting idea by saying that English did not originate in Britain but can be traced back to the language spoken in today's north-west Germany.

Another author - linguist writes that "the English language proper belongs to the people who dwell south of Hadrian's Wall, east of the Welsh hills and north of the English Channel" (Bailey, 1991:157).

The historical overview of English development led us into the story when the language grew up into a strong and powerful variety that started to show its mightiness out of the borders of Britain. The support for spreading over three

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continents – North America, Australia, and New Zealand was found in the rising political, economic and social supremacy on the Earth.

The development of the British Empire started in the 15th century without stopping to advance and spread influences across languages to the rest of the continents. As a result, English is considered the world, global, international, and the language of lingua franca.

WHAT CAUSED THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE START ITS DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONALLY?

“The English language is like London: proudly barbaric yet deeply civilized, too, common yet royal, vulgar yet processional, sacred yet profane. Each sentence we produce, whether we know it or not, is a mongrel mouthful of Chaucerian, Shakespearean, Miltonic, Johnsonian, Dickensian, and American. Military, naval, legal, corporate, criminal, jazz, rap and ghetto discourses are mingled at every turn. The French language, like Paris, has attempted, through its Academy, to retain its purity, to fight the advancing tides of Franglais and international prefabrication. English, by comparison, is a shameless whore.”

Stephen Fry, *The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within*

„Language, be it remembered, is not an abstract construction of the learned, or dictionary-makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground. Its final decisions are made by the masses, people nearest concrete, having most to do with actual land and sea. It impermeates all, the past as well as the present, and is the grandest triumph of the human intellect” (Crystal, 1995:86).

Languages are born and develop change through time. Depending on extra-linguistic influences they might die or become supplanted by other languages as, for example, happened with Celtic languages that were supplanted by English and French on the territory of Britain. Languages always have some parent language from which they have descended. Later, through the process of developing, languages grow or die which, in many respects, depends on several factors, of which we will single out the purpose of use and the number of people who speak the particular language. Such is the example of English that developed into the international language during the era of IT communication facilities and started to be applied as an inevitable aid for various purposes while spreading all around the Globe.

“The Sunday Times” in an article published in 1999 develops the current statement about the role of the English language in Britain and around the world. “We seem to be moving ... towards a social and linguistic situation in which nobody says or writes or probably knows anything more than an approximation to what he or she means” (The Sunday Times 1999).

The complexity of English language pronunciation and orthographic representation of words is mostly caused by the great impact English suffered from during its long-time history. Since its birth, it has been exposed to various linguistic influences coming from the country’s invaders who occupied and settled on the British territory. “English used to be a language which foreigners couldn’t pronounce but

could often understand. Today, it is rapidly becoming a language which the English can't pronounce and few foreigners can understand" (The Daily Telegraph 1968).

There is a long way to go for one language to become a worldwide-spoken language variety. Since its birth in the far-away past, English has experienced great temptation for survival when influences of other languages threatened to suppress it and change the course of its development. The English language not only exceeded its threats but strengthened its linguistic power over all other world languages to become the language of the world by the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Since English has almost reached the peak of its growth, it stays the matter of future external events to unwind its future story. With Brexit, the consequences of English spread could be dangerous and might reflect in its less predominance within the European Union members, even replaced by another language spoken within nations as members of the European Union (EU). It is the future to tell the destiny of English.

ENGLISH TO BECOME A GLOBAL MEANS FOR COMMUNICATION

The fact is that English has become a global means of communication among people on earth. But, do we ever stop for a moment and wonder what caused this language-speaking phenomenon. Why has English become a world favoured language? Do we have to look for causes in the historical tradition of political relations between nations, or in the desire for a developed commercial, technological or cultural contact? Whatever the reason, language has a role to play in connecting people, especially if we are talking about English in international terms.

International communication is incorporated and involved in inter-lingual, political, economic, healthcare, publishing, entertainment, and multiple more disciplines that require communication for mutual understanding, business discussions, or studying interactions with students and mentors. Academic scholars are broadly involved in taking digital lectures and in providing a communication channel with a wide audience from various parts of the world. It is about breaking through state borders and all kinds of restrictions that can, in one way or another, diminish the level of knowledge and opinion exchange. With the emergence of digital technologies, the spread of international communication globally becomes a part of real-life and a necessity we can hardly imagine living without it.

"International communication (also referred to as the study of global communication or transnational communication) is the communication practice that occurs across international borders. The need for international communication was due to the increasing effects and influences of globalization" (Wikipedia).⁵

World War Two was the time when the American government was greatly involved „in fighting Nazi propaganda" and WW2 „paved the way for the rise of the United States to world hegemony" (Ibid:6). Political power, with economic growth and strong technological development, have made America take the lead over other countries, and the English language has begun to expand into a major language in the world. The English language thus becomes a means of power by which, indirectly, the

⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_communication

development of the world and all nations on the Earth are brought into an interdependent position from English that unites them globally.

The Third World countries started to involve more English classes into the education system than it was the matter with other foreign languages as, for example, German, Russian or French. America has taken the lead in every aspect, and so has imposed a linguistic variant of American English, first through the media and film production, which are still among the most developed in the world today. As a result, English has become the language of lingua franca. Business companies worldwide cannot imagine any business activity without the mediation of English.

The political commitment leads a nation to choose a favourable foreign language to become a part of the education policy in the country. We would say that English managed to pave the way to its internationally recognized language for communication, because it is used and understood by the majority of the world population thanks to widespread former colonies of Britain and by transmitting English to the American continent, which is becoming so powerful that it spreads its power across the globe. Also, even when chosen, the "presence" of the language in education varies, depending on the extent to which a government is ready to give adequate financial support to a language-teaching policy. As for learning English in non-native English speaking parts of the world, the language is favoured as lingua franca in managing business activities, promotions of innovative products in the industry, and technological development worldwide.

When a language becomes a global language, it is usually because of some power coming from the country where it is spoken as a mother tongue. Becoming a global language has nothing to do with the number of people who speak it. It is much more to do with who those speakers are (Crystal, 1999). Chinese is spoken by the world majority of people, but still Chinese is not a global language on the Earth.

Language dominance is in the closest link with economic, cultural, and technological power. This relationship has become clear in the history of English varieties –World Englishes when they started to develop. To succeed as the language on the international stage is to succeed as a nation that speaks the language. This is a causal relationship. When particularly political and military power of the nation fails, the language in its international development fails, too.

English has been converted to serve hundreds of millions of people around the world to share one language, one speech, which would help them reach goals to expand their knowledge globally. More than 350 million people on the Earth speak English as a mother tongue, whereas more than 430 million people use English as their second language. All other nations learn English as their first foreign language or use it as an official one in diplomacy, for government issues announced worldwide, at scientific conferences, or for exchanging ideas and thoughts among business partners, etc.

Global understanding and communication are spreading at such a speed that threatens to end up and fulfill every single part of our planet. The positive side of the matter is that one major world language knows no boundaries and the people get closer in all aspects: they develop socially, scientifically, technologically, etc. IC technologies are the leader in promoting mutual people's connections in the

worldwide network. „Time is money“ is the current motto for the New Era. Everything must go fast. The flow of information from one end of the world to the other is measured in seconds. This speeds up the transfer of knowledge and information and enables peoples to prosper faster. Businesses started to grow and bring the world nations strength and power. The world market becomes recognized as a busy centre for goods and currency exchange. Advanced technologies started to be exchanged among people who benefit from this phenomenon. Selling and buying on the market with no limits becomes part of everyday life.

English has opened doors wide in the academic world. It penetrates all fields of science. With the help of English, knowledge spreads across nations, and opportunities to study with the top scholars are becoming attractive enough. A good command of English is seen as a must in the academic world but also in the world of journalism where English started to be an increasingly useful skill. The exchange of essential information is far more rapid and helps improve social life and its development. "Speaking English accurately will ensure you are able to communicate with clients and suppliers all over the world"⁶.

One gets the impression that without the knowledge of English, all significant activities in the world would be stopped in an instant. Jobs that depend on a good command of English are booming and all life seems to require proficiency in this world language.

At the individual level, many people take learning English as their primary strategy in managing the knowledge of English. They believe that English proficiency will bring them to benefit in one way or another. If we think sports, fashion, entertainment, and the like have little to do with the spread of English, we are mistaken. How would fashion news be known if there was no communication? Tennis matches are watched around the world and are attention-grabbing. However, if there was no common known language for communication and transmission of news and data, one would not know what is happening on these grounds in the world. Therefore, English is responsible for everything. Media, radio, television, press, and film production rely all on sources of information that people receive through the establishment of communication technology networks. IT communications technologies may be most responsible for the effects mentioned, but spoken or written words have tremendous power, even though they are transmitted from person to person in a traditional, classic way, or through meetings, messages, and through letter writing in rare cases today. What characterizes them all together is a common language that everyone in communication understands.

If we do not use English words as borrowings in everyday communication to explain something that we think "it sounds better" with the help of a foreign, English word instead of, for example, native Serbian, communication is not considered as "in" or "cool". So, what is the purpose of such communication? Maybe we want to show up as persons who know-how and in what context to use foreign words, or as someone who demonstrates "knowledge" of English, or as someone who goes beyond the "ordinary" citizens because he knows more than them, and his price is higher because

⁶https://www.thehistoryofenglish.com/issues_global.html

he values more? Whatever the reason, foreign, English borrowing or loanwords, are in massive use with the tendency to expand more. The spread of English borrowings is in expansion, and such behaviour is especially emphasized in the younger population who try to distance themselves from the elderly and differentiate, among other things, through the use of foreign words and collocations. To conclude, daily life and business depend on a language that is familiar to all of us to the extent that it allows smooth communication and business actions.

CAN WE PREDICT THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH?

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can choose to change the world.

Nelson Mandela

Many linguists were engaged in attempts to make predictions concerning the further development of English during the 21st century. We will mention some of them, for example, Sandra Jansen (2017), Quirk (1972), Graddol (1997), Kortmann (2001), Mair (2013), and many others. They all had in common a great desire to predict the English language changed in the future that will make its development in an ascending line towards the language that will expand to become a major world language. Mair (2013:314) said that „despite the known risks involved in the task, there is no dearth of prophets in the linguistic community“.

The historical overview of the development of English shows a great expansion in the number of speakers of English due to the spread of the language all over the world. The expansion of the English language worldwide is down to political, social, cultural, and scientific reasons. Wars and conquests are „the most powerful arbiters of the fates of human languages“ (Kiernan in Burke, Porter, eds.1991:191). They bring languages into contact by force and their degree of influence on each other depends on whether the country is being controlled from the outside or is occupied for settlement.

English, like any other world language, is in continual change and development because, like a living thing, it constantly spreads and evolves. English change and development depends on the language characteristics not only of the other languages it comes in close contact with, like for example English in India influenced by some Indian native languages like Hindi, or English spoken in Singapore, on the Caribbean Islands, in the Bahamas, in Taiwan, Hong Kong or Japan, but also of individual characteristics of language use among different social groups, different occupations, or „the whole speech-community with scientific detachment“ (Barber, 1993:278).

English is spoken widely in the world for different purposes in different social contexts. English spoken in South Africa or India developed into the first language of a small population, but a second language for millions of people living in India. English as a second language is used for communication between the people of different language groups belonging to the same community. It has become the official language used for administration and commerce, as in Nigeria. When English is used

for communicating with foreigners, as with Germans, Italians, it becomes a foreign language.

Martina Maria McCarthy (2014) remarks that "it is conceivable to envisage a future with at least two Englishes. One will be global English (or WSSE), and the others will be increasingly marked (either morphologically, syntactically, or otherwise) geographic or social dialects of native English speakers who may or may not be diglossic in WSSE". Whether English will keep its global existence in the future depends on the number of people who use the language as second language speakers, which can be predicted because "diglossia may become a means of survival by 2050" (McCarthy, 2014). The written form of English will survive in "the tolerance spectrum" (Crystal, 2006:115).

Rick Noack, the newspaper reporter, wrote in *The Washington Post* on September 24, 2015, that the future of the English language "will be more complex, more demanding and more challenging for the position of native-speaking countries than has been supposed". "Those who speak English alongside other languages will outnumber first-language speakers and, increasingly, will decide the global future of the language". (Graddol, 1997:11).

Predictions of the English language's further development in the position of the first world language can hardly be certain because many factors determine the language change for better or for worse. "Predictions vary, depending on your location and purpose" (Noack, 2015). "Scenarios are not predictions. The point of scenario-planning is to help us suspend our disbelief. Then we can prepare for what we don't think is going to happen", wrote Peter Schwartz in his book *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* published in 1997.

Truly, we expect a turning point to occur once England left the European Union as its member. It may have an impact on the spread of English over the languages in Europe. As the universe is not static but a changing thing, the development of English is still in progress in Britain and the rest of the world.

In the postscript, we can say that the future of English progress or decay depends on the position and role of English political power. This refers to England and America as allies and the power they have started to lose in recent years. Brexit is one thing that is shaking Britain a great deal. Adding to this the political-social disruption in America and the loss of power in the world can lead us to the conclusion that the power of English globally can be diminished and may even be replaced by some other world language as the language of lingua franca, as has happened in cycles with other languages in the history of the world. This "ever-whirling wheel of change" (Aitchison, 2001:3) occurs without stopping.

"Language, like everything else, joins this general flux" (Ibid). We believe that social and psychological factors will determine the future of English language development. Time is an important indicator of language change, which makes all the difference in either language progress or language decay in its final phase.

CONCLUSION

Globalization spreads to all segments of society and becomes a sociocultural phenomenon. This concept turned into the "global flow". It involves knowledge and teaching, which become transmitted over "open" borders. Knight and de Wit (1997:6) define globalization as "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders".

Arjun Appadurai, an Indian-American anthropologist, also known as one of the major theorists in globalization studies, refers to globalization as "a dense and fluid network of global flows". Such definition considers globalization as a process that generally embraces all spheres of social life. What is common to all areas of social life that are embraced by globalization is a language that enables them to understand and pursue common interests for social progress.

The network of global flows must include the cultural dimension because communication is based on an intercultural component. Inada and Rosaldo (2006) underline the significance of "interconnections" and "intercultural communication". Understanding cultural characteristics is important for letting the flow of uninterrupted communication. Therefore, language and culture cannot be separated.

Lee in his provocative book titled "*Internationalizing 'International Communication'*" (Lee, 2015:19) develops criticizing cultural imperialism, which, in our opinion, goes "hand-in-hand" with linguistic imperialism (Phillipson), and argues "that we should understand international communication as being shaped by the cultural consequences of imperialism". Imperialism here refers to capitalism as a "pronounced feature of the contemporary world system" (Ibid). Lee refers to Colin Spark's statement that international communication "tends to colonize countries globally through direct or indirect uses of media" (Ibid).

The logical conclusion is that with the spread of English on a global scale, the cultural component of this lingua franca world language is also expanding. It is an inevitability that must not be overlooked when considering the role of English as a lingua franca in the world and in the context of international communication. However, it is important to emphasize "mutually interactive characters of modern culture" (Lee, 2015:20).

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