

English as Lingua Franca of Globe

Dr T.V Surendranatha Reddy

Professor of English,
Malla Reddy Engineering College (Autonomous)
Email : tvsnreddy27@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper discusses about how English language became the lingua franca of globe. Lingua franca means a shared language of communication used by people whose main languages are different. English rapidly became a very prominent language all over the world. Many factors contributed for English to achieve this status like the presence of words of many other languages and easy to learn nature of English made the language occupy the prior position amongst all the languages and became globally popular. At present language for the people across the globe to communicate.

English Language:

English is a West Germanic language that originated in Anglo-Saxon England and has lingua franca status in many parts of the world due to the military, economic, scientific, political and cultural influence of the British Empire in the 18th a, 19th and early 20th centuries and that of the United States from the mid 20th century to the present. It is used extensively as a second language and as an official language in Commonwealth countries and is the preferred language of many international organizations.

Historically, English originated from several dialects (now called Old English) which were brought to Britain by Anglo-Saxon settlers beginning in the 5th century. The language was heavily influenced by the Old Norse language of Viking invaders. After the Norman conquest, old English developed into Middle English, borrowing heavily from the Norman (Anglo-French) vocabulary and spelling conventions. Modern English developed from there and continues to adopt foreign words, especially from Latin and Greek.

The History of English:

By the beginning of the 19th century, Britain had become the world's leading industrial and trading nation. In Crystal's book, pre-20th century commentator Isaac Pitman notes, "The British Empire covers nearly a third of the earth's surface, and British subjects are self-evident that the civilizing influence of Britain was desirable goal, anywhere in the world, and that the English language was an essential means of achieving this end."

Old English, which entered England from northern Europe in the 5th century, spread quickly throughout Britain, although Celtic dominated in the north and west. Norman French altered the language irrevocably in the centuries following A.D. 1066, producing the hybrid tongue known as English. Toward the end of the 16th century, westward expeditions from England began the movement of English beyond Britain to the Americas.

As English spread across the United States and Canada, accents began to vary as masses of immigrants arrived from different parts of England, Ireland and Scotland. As time passed,

new arrivals from France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Central Europe, Africa and The Netherlands added their own words, accents and style. Within a generation or two, most of these immigrant families had learned to speak English through the natural process of assimilation.

The English language continued to spread rapidly throughout the world as it piggybacked on British travels, conquests and colonization.

The West Indies developed a unique version of English influenced by the slave ships that traveled from Europe to West Africa and on to the Americas, according to Crystal. These voyages, for the purpose of exchanging slaves for commodities in the Caribbean, were behind the first black Creole language in the U.S. South.

Australia and New Zealand also derived their English language from their country's strong historical connections to Britain. Other parts of the world, including South Africa, the Indian subcontinent, several West and East African nations, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea were all influenced greatly by the expansion of British colonial power, which peaked toward the end of the 19th century.

Rapid technological and scientific advancements led primarily by Britain and the U.S. during the Industrial Revolution also affected the spread of English. English terminology became the primary mode of expression with the rest of the world. The introduction of the high-speed rotary press, the Linotype machine and the telegraph expanded the English vocabulary even further.

At the end of the 19th century, the torch was picked up by the United States as it emerged to become the leading world economic power in the 20th century. The influence of American English shows up in places like the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico and Hawaii. The U.S. has nearly 70 percent of all English mother tongue speakers in the world.

English was perceived as a "neutral" language. Many of the new nations which were once British colonies have realized the importance of English not only as a language of commerce, science and technology but also as an international language of communication."

Lingua Franca:

Lingua franca (lɪŋgwə 'frɑŋkə), from Italian, literally meaning Frankish language, is a language systematically used to communicate between persons not sharing a mother tongue, in particular when it is a third language, distinct from both persons' mother tongues.

Lingua franca is a functionally-defined term, independent of the linguistic history or structure of the language through pidgins and creoles often function as lingua francas, many lingua francas are neither pidgins nor creoles. Lingua franca may also refer to the de facto language within a more or less specialized field.

A synonym for lingua franca is "vehicular language." Whereas a vernacular language is used as a native language in a single speaker community, a vehicular language goes beyond the boundaries of its original community, and is used as a second language for communication between communities. For example, English is a vernacular in England, but is used as a vehicular language (that is, a lingua franca) in the Philippines.

Its original meaning also implies a hybrid or mixture of languages.

English as Lingua Franca:

English has unmistakably achieved global status as the world's lingua franca. How did it get that way?

The English language has unmistakably achieved status as the world or world's lingua franca through globalization. English is now the official or dominant language for two billion people in at least 75 countries. According to the British Council, speakers of English as a second language probably outnumber those who speak it as a first language, and around 750 million people are believed to speak English as a foreign language. English is the most common language to communicate scientific, technological, academic, and international trade information. English is clearly the world or world's lingua franca, but how did it get that way? Part of the reason is the feedback loop driving its history. A dynamic which may serve to illustrate how globalization often is the result of a natural course of events: before English infiltrated the world, many of the world or world's languages infiltrated English.

The term "lingua franca" originated in Mediterranean ports in the middle Ages among traders of different language backgrounds. In order to carry on the business of trade, they spoke a common "patchwork" language consisting of bits of Italian mixed with Greek, French, Spanish, and Arabic words. Some of those words are still part of ordinary conversation today in modern English. Nearly every language on Earth has contributed to the development of English. Languages of the Indian subcontinent provided words such as pundit, shampoo, pajamas, and juggernaut. From the Spanish are several words that came to define the spirit of the American "wild west" mustang, canyon, ranch, stampede, and vigilante are a few examples. English has adopted literally hundreds of words from Arabic and Persian. Though some filtered down through other languages, these words that evoke images from American culture have Arabic origins: tariff, sugar, hazard, jar, almanac, shrub, alfalfa, syrup, and spinach. Long is the list of words and expressions that came to English from foreign languages.

The speaking of English often functions as an elevated socio-economic currency on the international market and in international diplomacy, while local languages are pressured to be kept within the home or within communities, or for entertaining tourists. English is the official language of the European Central Bank even though the bank is in Frankfurt, Germany, and no predominantly English speaking country is a member of the European Monetary Union. English has become a commodity.

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. While English is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. Some linguists believe that it is no longer the exclusive cultural sign of "native English speakers", but is rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial 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), followed by French (32%), German (18%), and Spanish (8%). In the

EU, a large fraction of the population reports being, able to converse to some extent in English. Among non-English speaking countries, a large percentage of the population claimed to be able to converse in English in the Netherlands (87%), Sweden (85%), Denmark (83%), Luxembourg (66%), Finland (60%), Slovenia (56%), Austria (53%), Belgium (52%), and Germany (51%). Norway and Iceland also have a large majority of competent English-speakers.

Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world. English is also the most commonly used language in the sciences.

Globalization of the IT market place is accelerating the effect of English as a commodity. For decades English has dominated the IT industry, from research and development, to the design of hardware and software.

English, like so many other aspects of Western culture, has the potential to bring people together, or the power to divide people into classified groups. As the debate goes on, English will continue to grow and change with the same force that has always driven the patch working of language: the natural desire to exchange goods and ideas.

Why English is Rapidly Achieving Worldwide Status?

Most of us take language for granted. We use it every day in spoken, written, auditory and electronic forms while forgetting that it's what makes human communication possible. Indeed, our ability to communicate personally or professionally is primarily based on the existence of language.

In countries such as the, United Kingdom, Australia and the U.S., where English is the primary language, it's even easier to dismiss the advantage of speaking a language that the rest of the world is now being forced to learn out of necessity. Need to communicate globally increases, English is fast becoming the No. 1 choice for cross-border communication worldwide.

“A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country,” states David Crystal, British linguist. But mother tongue use by itself cannot give a language global status. A language must be taken up by different countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within their communities, even though they may have few [or no] mother tongue speakers.” English is the language most widely taught as a foreign language – in more than 100 countries worldwide. Nearly a quarter of the world's population – from 1.2 to 1.5 billion people – is already fluent or competent in English and the number of growing rapidly. No other language – Chinese included even comes close to this level of growth. But there are many reasons for favoring a particular language over another. Historical tradition, politics, and commercial, cultural or technological incentives are a few.

A lastair Pennycook, in his book “The Cultural Politics of English as a Second Language,” offers added insight, “A review of critical work on English in the world has shown how it is linked to social and economic power both within and between nations, to the global diffusion of particular forms of culture and knowledge, and to the inequitable structures of international relations.”

In addition, linguists point out that it may require a militarily powerful nation to establish a global language, but it also takes economic power to maintain and expand it.

New communication technologies, such as the telephone, telegraph and radio, also have had an enormous influence on the expansion of English in particular. Add to this the growth of international business, the tremendous influence of mass marketing and advertising, the globalization of broadcast media, the recording and film industry, and it's not difficult to see why the influence of English around the world has grown so rapidly.

Air transportation, communication technologies, the Internet, electronic mail and other technological advancements have all contributed greatly to mobilizing people and thus to the furthering of the English language over the last decade as well. "Any language at the center of such an explosion of international activity would suddenly have found itself with a global status," notes Crystal. "And English... 'a language on which the sun never sets'... was in the right place at the right time."

Why English?

Linguists often say that the English language "has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time." But, to add a bit more depth to the "Why English?" question, two reasons have been cited for the pre-eminence of the English language today. One is based on the history of world geography, the other on social/cultural factors.

History has provided us with a distinct trail of Britain's colonial developments as the British Empire expanded around the world. "The English language is now represented in every continent and in the islands of three major oceans," explains Crystal. "It is the spread of representation which makes the application of the label 'global language' a reality."

A multitude of societies and cultures also have come to depend on English for their well-being. When a language has become well integrated into a country's politics, business dealings, education and everyday lives, it becomes a necessary element for sustaining that society and its culture.

Further, English-centric global industries – such as communication, medicine, entertainment and media – by their very nature have created near-total dependence on English as the primary mode of communication in these fields. Computer technology and the computer software industry are prime examples. And, despite global efforts to the contrary, English also continues to be the primary language of the borderless Internet.

Other than the cultural, military, and political hegemony of the British Empire and of the United States, what might account for the staying power of English as a lingua franca? English is an irregular and fractured language comprised of influences from Latin and Celtic, and later Scandinavian and Norman French tongues.. The adoption of different words from different languages made people from various countries learn the language easily... its inherently hybridized nature makes it all the easier for English to assimilate characteristics of other cultures and languages, instead of reject them or demand they conform to some sort of rigid structure.

The Importance of English:

English language is a vital means of communication for millions of people around the world. During the twentieth century, numerous technological inventions and developments, such as the telephone, fax, electronic mail, internet, etc have facilitated communication between people from all walks of life and language that is used most is English, as the following quote proves, 'Most of the scientific, technological and academic information in the world is

expressed in English and over 80% of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English' (Crystal, 1997:106).

Conclusion:

English has derived many of its words from different languages which made people from different countries adopt this language easily.

IT revolution, which is the major cause to bind the people of different countries mainly, uses English language for their means of communication.

The dominant countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and the U.S., have English as its primary language. Hence people around the globe tend to learn the language.

Hence due to the above and many other reasons English language can be lingua franca of globe.

Bibliography / References:

^[1] Garfield, Eugene. *The English Language: The Lingua Franca of International Science, The*

Scientist Magazine, 1989, 3(10):12, 15 May 1989.

^[2] *The English Language: David Crystal*

^[3] *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language: David Crystal*