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## THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

**Dr Uttama Pandey, Associate Professor**

**Department in English**

**Dr.Y. S .Parmar Govt. P. G.College, Nahan, Himachal Pradesh**

### Abstract

English is very similar to other languages which have that become global, but it was never designed to be, it became a world language through historical, social and political processes. English was first spoken only in Britain but it spread out with the help of colonization, trade and foreign policies. To this extent, this paper seeks to analyze critical phases in the process through which English emerges as a world language involved in international communication, business, and diplomacy. The growth of Britain helped the use of English as an empire and later the America's world dominance. English added to this by the technological developments and especially the use of Internet which continued to push English to the front line in the global communication. Granting this, the phenomenon of using English as a global language is indisputable; however, it challenges the concept of diminishing other languages. This paper also gives an insight into such conceptions as Education English as a global language, and English as a lingua franca in multilingual settings. Therefore, through the analysis of how English developed, one can acknowledge the part it plays in the modern world and how it will continue to look like in the future.

**Keywords:** English language, world language, imperialism, Britain, sociolinguistic situation, media language, multicultural, interaction, modernization, technological progress, school.

### Introduction

This article tells the interesting story of how a language growing from a simple dialect of the British Isles becomes one of the most important languages in the world. Currently, estimated to be more than 1 billion people, use English as their primary language of communication. Today, English is spoken by 5 billion people around the globe as the first, second, or a foreign language. This widespread use puts English as an important tool in the contemporary world affairs in the areas of communication, commerce and diplomacy hence makes it relevant in the study of the nature and spread of language in the current society.

English has its background to colonialism when Great Britain was spreading its empire from the 16th century throughout the 20th century. This, as Britain's colonial reach spanned across continents, English was planted in various territories, namely North America and Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. In many of these territories English emerged as the official or parallel official language being used in the administration, education and trade acts. This colonial influence was the way through which English was introduced to many societies and made to become part of them.

After the dismantlement of the British Empire, America's rise as a superpower in the twentieth century enhanced English prestige all over the world. The Americans continued global dominance in



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cultural, economic, and technological transformation and solidification of English as the language of the modern global trade, knowledge, and entertainment after World War II. Hollywood, the music industry and the spread of American civilized products was a major factor in making English a popular language for everybody across the world, and a determinant of cultural trends and societal demeanour in the community.

Finally, the advances in information technology that has happened starting with the late 20 th century and through the 21st century, have supported the global establishment of English. With the internet, social media and other means of digital communication, information especially in English gets spread throughout the world at very high rates making English the language of social media. The use of digital technologies has open up cross cultural communication and information sharing which has also further put emphasis on the use of English all over the world as the medium of communication.

However, the increase of English to globalization has also thrown major questions on linguistic diversity and possibility of relegation of other languages to the periphery. English often dominates the international communication agenda and as a resultant, it causes language standardization and thus the extinction of cultural diversity. This explains the reason why promotion of a common language for the entire world comes with the disadvantage of distorting the cultural productivity of the world's languages.

Currently globalization has advanced the use of English in education systems much to the detriment of indigenous languages in the world. This situation is evident in the fact that education in English is practiced in more countries where English is not the native language, as the importance and demand for the language in the modern workplaces is acknowledged. But there are controversies as to the effect on local languages and identity – consequently there is demand for policies that will inculcate multilingual education and cultural nurturing.

Thus, to comprehend the status of English as a world language, it is necessary to study its historical developments, atypical present function, and effects on language variety. Through discussion of these aspects, it is possible to understand the richness of the processes associated with the dissemination of English in global contexts as well as the effects on cultural and language diversity. This exploration highlights the dual nature of English's global influence: In both positive and negative aspects as the force that brings people together through communication in a context of globalized world as well as a threat of the globalized world on different languages.

### **Historical Expansion and Colonial Influence**

Colonialism and imperialism were significant in establishing the status of English in various parts of the world's continents by the British Empire to this date. English was spread when Britain was imperialist from the 16th to early twentieth century; English was imported to many colonies worldwide as a medium in administration, education and business. This deliberate extension of



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English was also applied to fortify Britain's domination and management so that the language would most undeniably be a keystone of the societies.

The assumption of English in colonial administration was the tactical that helped the empire to govern as well as to communicate. In places like India the British made English the official language, echoed in the government and in legal cases. District administrations comprised the Indian Civil Service, where majority of officials were English speaking thus making English as the medium of administration. Being a policy, this was not simply about efficiency gains that would help deliver outcomes preferable for the British; it was also employed to semiotically pre-stake the ground with English as a language of authority and dominance. Groups that became educated in English ascended to higher levels in colonial bureaucracy and thus cemented the status of English language.

Another means of the dissemination of English was through the education systems which were availing across colonies. English was used as a medium of instruction so that British would have a loyal local class whom they could rely on in the running of the empire. In Africa especially, the roles that were played by missionary schools included imparting out the English language at the coat of African languages and cultures. In these schools, a particular emphasis was put on the teaching of English literature, history, and values, thus occupying the status of an exemplary language and culture. This approach led to a long-lasting correlation between achievement of English language and socio-economic mobility; something which is evident in many former colonies up to this date.

Exports and business endeavours also facilitated the use of English in crossing the communicational divide. Due to the Great Britain Empire's trade relations around the world, they needed a common language of business and commerce and this was met with English. Markets and trading places all over the globe were made into places where English remained the most vital business language. This commercial use of English added onto the position of English as an international language as merchants as well as traders started using English to engage in the lucrative globalization markets. As for places like the Caribbean where commodities like sugar and the like were exchanged, English prevails as the main language which sometimes affected the dialects and cultures of the indigenous people.

This colonial and linguistic imperialism is evident in the cases that where the English language was introduced as a medium of communication, it stays up to date as a language. Despite the de colonialization, some of the former colonial languages have become today's Languages of power and bureaucracy in those imperialistic countries which compelled these languages to be adopted in the governmental system, educational sectors and business organization. For example, in a country like Nigeria where more than a half-million native fluently speaking persons exist, they learned about four hundred various languages; however, the language of the country is English taking into account the Ethnic diversity of the country and the need for administration. In the same manner in South Africa English is among the recognized official languages more still it is the most used

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language in learning and teaching especially in our institution of higher learning and is a dominant language as far as business is concerned. In cultural aspect, the intervention of this English language has brought several impacts on identity and social relations in the former colonies. Consequently in India, the English language is endowed with powerful connotations as a medium that opens up opportunities both locally and internationally and education. Nevertheless, it is most important in terms of the study of colonial languages and impacts that has resulted in the sidelining of regional languages and cultures. Many people believe that English kills local cultures since it becomes the standard language in media, literature, and many other manifestations of popular culture.

However, there are so many former colonies that have taken up the English language and absorbed it with the identifiable cultures of their countries. For example, Indian English incorporates parts of the Indian languages and the predominant culture, thus giving rise to today's International Indian English. Likewise, the Nigerian English as well as the South African English contains incorporation of local proverbs and fables proving that the evolution of language is not stagnant.

British imperialism in the past as well as civilizing mission that they embarked on was vital in the spread of English as a global language. In administration, education and trade English became firmly implanted in the colonies thereby influencing linguistic and cultural formations. Colonialism in the present society brings about a long-lasting social feature especially to those countries where English was adopted as an official language affecting the identity, education and socio-economic system. English also has its advantages as the linguistic omnipresence, which means that it creates the opportunities for crossing the language barriers, and therefore – inspires international dialogue and cultural interchange. By coming to terms with this rich history one is able to discern the diverse uses of the English language in the contemporary global society.

### **The Role of the United States in Globalizing English**

Here is an exploration of "The Role of the United States in Globalizing English," focusing on its cultural, economic, and technological influence in spreading the English language worldwide. Here is an exploration of "The Role of the United States in Globalizing English," focusing on its cultural, economic, and technological influence in spreading the English language worldwide.

Today it is possible to emphasize that the United States has made a great contribution to the globalization of English and turning it into a leading world language. This influence started in the particular in the 20th century more so after the Second World War whereby the United State of America became a world super power. America has been a major player in terms of economy, culture and technology and this has played a role in spreading English all over the world.

This is a very significant avenue through which the United States has globalized English, although this aspect has already been touched earlier in this paper. The American culture through mass products – films, music, television and literature has a global influence like no other. Targeting global viewers, particularly English-speaking ones, Hollywood being the heart of the world film industry offers the majority of most viewed movies. Thus, these films are not only entertaining but



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also an instrument for propaganda of the American culture and the English language. In the same manner, exportation of America music ranging from jazz, rock, pop, hip hop and other had expressed English as a language of entertainment across the world. Film stars such as Elvis Presley, Beatles, Michael Jackson and recently Beyoncé and Taylor Swift have enticed the global learners to assimilate English through songs and media influence.

Many television and media networks like for instance Comm national and the British broadcasting corporation have continued to ignite this globalization of culture via the relaying of English language contents to rest of the world. These channels transmit news and entertainment in English influencing the perception of events worldwide and making English the official language of the media. The popularity of American TV shows ranging from the old generation TV shows like Friends to shows of this current generation like Game Of Thrones and Stranger Things has created the middle English language to be used in entertainment and Fun all over the world.

Another social reason that has been stated for diffusing English is economically and the United States has been more instrumental in this respect. As the largest economy in the world , theU. S provides many precedents in the world of foreign trade and to the business community. English is thus the medium adopted in cross border transactions such as business negotiation and the signing of related contracts. Large corporations such as Microsoft, Apple, Google and Amazon are intercontinental companies with their base in America; therefore, undertake their operations in numerous countries hence their staffs and business associates should have adequate English skills. The steady flow of new American brands in technology and use-products assures continuous usage of the language as the communication medium of the markets. The educational sector of the United States continues to lure a large number of foreign students every year thereby promoting the usage of English. The U. S. has many of the world's best universities, including Harvard, MIT, and Stanford, programs taught in English, and students from around the world. These institutions not only use English as a medium of instruction but also offer to research and publish in international academic and scientific journals hence leading to the propagation of the use of English as the primary language of academics and science. About half of the I. S students go back to their countries conversing English fluently which assists to expand the English language.

In technological front, America has pioneered innovations that have offered English the position of international language. Dyaruk (2011) went further to explaining that the meteoric sojourn of the internet: the lingua franca that has taken the world by a storm has been brought to life by American technology companies and therefore has English as its dominant language. Hypothetically, the numerous Web sites and pages and the services such as Facebook or Twitter and YouTube are predominantly in English, which fosters the submissive role of English as the International language of the new generation communication. Software and applications are usually provided in English, and this drives a person who is not a native English speaker into practice the language most of the time.

Besides, with the help of internet English has become the language that people all over the world can learn and bring into practice. Education is no longer a local phenomenon; professors from great universities provide lectures through Coursera and edX, thus anyone can take an English course.



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This has made English an important tool for growth whether individually or in the workplace; this in turn increases the motivation for learning the language and its usage.

Therefore, one can enable that globalization of English has been facilitated through exported culture, economic power, and technological advancement majorly from the United States. A number of American films, songs, and Television programs have introduced English to the people as the language of pop and thus, popularity, commerce makes it compulsory people to be fluent in English. Subsequently, technology has supported the sustenance of English as the major language of the internet and computer relations. On one hand, the expansion of English in the global environment can enhance communication and cultural interchange However, it increases concerns about the loss of multilingualism and minorities' and indigenous people languages. Taking a look at the United States that for a long time is actively participated in this process, one can conclude that language globalization is much more complex phenomenon that has significant impact on the world.

### **English in the Digital Era**

If one takes into account that the internet is a crucial part of the lives of people around the world and with the increasing popularity of online platforms, the prevalence of English as the primary language of the Internet, learning, and communication in social networks cannot be doubted. At the same time, this has contributed to working as the main agent in the unification of global interaction and communication while presenting problems to linguistic variation.

Since the internet was first created and realized in the Anglo-Saxon countries it was natural for it to base itself on the English language. Follow the expansion of the digital technology around the world, English as the medium, it is the language adopted by most of the digital interface, Web sites, and applications. Currently, English is used in 80% of what is written on the Internet, and it amounts to about 150 million pages. This domination is seen in Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and more that are mostly in English and control communication trends internationally.

Through the use of digital platforms social relations dissemination of information as well as e-Commerce activities have created an environment where English stands out as the most preferred language for communication. For instance, the hashtags used on social media channels are usually in English irrespective of the population mostly in a bid to reach different demography by going viral. This practice promotes the use of English by people who speak other languages to be able to relate in global forums and download a variety of materials.

The dominance of English in technology environments has several consequences. On the one side of the spectrum, it makes communication easier by bringing people of different languages to use English in order to get through to each other. English helps the person be able to read educational materials, to intervene in the discussion on the international level, and to consume content of different cultures. Coursera, edX, and Khan Academy to name but a few provide courses in English and therefore education to learners across the world is made possible through these institutions.

On the other hand though, it also makes the English language dominant over the rest and hinders the non-English speaking population from equal access to the content of social media and

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opportunities. There are games, which are dominant in English and those people, who can not speak English fluently, hardly have an opportunity to be a part of the society or rather be active and be involved in the economy, for example. Such language barrier can also in a way limit one's access to information and resources and therefore people who do not understand English cannot fully maximize on the available opportunities in the digital economy.

On the social level, this trend implies the domination of the English language over non-English speaking cultures. Works in English lay down values and viewpoints of English-speaking countries, thus, sentential content may not always meet expectations of other cultural backgrounds. Such an imbalance maintains cultural prejudices and results in the colonization of the global culture by the hegemonic one, which ignores other identities and histories.

The preservation of languages in the 21st century is a very problematic question indeed since the Internet in particular creates some threats to the death of languages but at the same time some opportunities as well. A major issue may be the loss of threatened languages where English predominates, and since few other languages have a comparable online audience, they will disappear. This is even more so the case with endangered languages that do not have many resources or even any online presence.

However, the digital era also presents chances to boost and maintain the use of as many languages as possible. Social media and new technologies can be used to write, restore and popularize the use of minorities languages. For example, the social networks allow speakers of indigenous languages to post content and form communities; they increase awareness of their language background. Through such sites as You-Tube and Tik-Tok, personalities are able to create content in several languages thus targeting people all over the world and encouraging multiculturalism.

Since globalization has exploded into the world stage, various innovations like the machine translation and application used in language learning offer ways to overcome language barriers and promote the use of multiple languages accepted in the modern society. Such websites and applications like Google Translate and Duolingo help users to find information in different languages and master new languages, thus guaranteeing the representation of multiculturalism.

The strategies, which are used to translate Web content and other software into different languages can improve the possibilities of the digital inclusive and avoid leaving people, who know only one language – English – out of the digital environment. Support for the production of more content in various languages is a way of promoting equality in the use of languages on the Internet.

The world of the digital age has further strengthened the position of English as the do go-between language, especially with reference to the internet and other related media. On the one hand, this engaging dominance makes global connection and information access easier but on other hand it presents threats to linguistic issue and balanced access to the relevant data. To overcome these difficulties, it is necessary to accept opportunities to increase multicultural and multilingualism in the information space. In this way, it becomes possible to expand the digital world to embrace the linguistic and cultural differences for a more comprehensible environment.

## **Conclusion**



Thus, the change and development of English into an international language is a complex process that cannot be understood without taking into consideration historical, cultural, economical and technological factors. English started as a dialect of the people in the British Isles, but due to the colonization events and later by the spread of culture and economic power of the United States, English has become the international language. As a result of this expansion English has become a must have commodity to enable communication, trade, and diplomacy around the world.

Thus, the English language dissemination has its roots in the British Empire colonial pervasion, which instilled the language into the colonies' governmental, educational, and commercial frameworks. Consequently, this colonialism has shaped language today by having English, as a coloniser language, remain relevant in the former colonies as an official or co-official language. The use of English escalated to a new level after the US surfaced as a world power through its cultural products like films, music and the media; and economically and by a technological boost which made English the language of the new business frontier, the cyberspace. In the modern context of the World Wide Web, English became the leading language of the Virtual space and extended its dominance. While this dominance has brought about globalization through giving access to information and transcultural communication, it has a problem with multiculturalism in as much as; it marginalizes minority languages and cultures.

To overcome the difficulties listed above, it is crucial to support the multicultural population and multilingualism within the digital environment. Measures for the localization of Web content and promotion of Minority languages' accessibility can be used to defend diversity and provide equal opportunities for minority languages' access to digital content. Thus, it can be concluded that by focusing on these possibilities, it is possible to build a tolerant and diverse society in terms of language and culture. All in all, the role of English as the global language share the following perspectives about history, culture, and technology. This way, one can comprehend the part played by English in the formation of today's world communication and at the same time respect the requirements of globalization for the language homogeneity on one hand, and respect the Global cultural and linguistic difference on the other.

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