

Future of English in India and Second language Teaching

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Abstract

Language is a way for people to think about the past, understand the present, and plan for the future. It goes without saying that language is important for a person's mental, emotional, and social growth. The world today thinks of English as a global language because no other language has ever been spoken by so many people in so many places. English is taught as one of the main languages almost everywhere in the world. It has a big reach and a lot of power all over the world. A huge number of people in India need to learn English as a second language. Every educational system has goals that are meant to change students in ways that are good. So that these changes can happen, the institutions set up learning experiences. The only way to measure how well you've learned is by how much you've changed as a result of what you've done and what you've thought about it. The present article focuses on the significance of English as a second language and on the future of this language in a multi lingual nation like India.

Keywords: English language, second language, educational system, future of English language, learning experiences etc.,

In a world where the borders are increasingly under erasure, English is a phenomenon which has permeated every sphere of activity and has enveloped the world in its firm embrace. Indeed, no language in the annals of world history, even Latin and Sanskrit in their heyday, has ever been put to use so substantially by countless people across the globe: on paper, in print, in sound and film, by telephone, through multimedia, E mails and blogs. Surely English has become a language of opportunity and an emblem of globalization.

English dominates the international popular culture and is the language of everyday public life of many countries where it is used either as foreign language or as second language

e.g., bilingual and multilingual road signs in many nations. English is the lingua Franca of civil aviation and shipping. "Across Cultures," by David Crystal, says that three times as many people who are not native English speakers speak English in some form as people who are native English speakers. English is the main language of science, medicine, communication, education, advertising, technology, literature, politics, the press, broadcasting, and publishing. The powerful and popular US version of English is used most often in computer software networking and in cyber space, which is a huge place full of creative ideas. David Graddol says that 80% of the information that is stored electronically in the world is in English. (Across Cultures. 2).

Most of what happens in English across the globe is a seemingly disorganized part of people's day to day activities, needs and the social and economic forces that operate on them. But the language is also tightly regulated in various ways, much more indeed than many might suppose, when we consider that there has never been an academy or major legislative intervention on behalf of good usage in any English-Speaking territory.

English is a native language to more than 380 million people throughout the world and a second language too many more. According to David Crystal, a quarter of the world's population is already fluent or competent in English. ("Future of Englishes"). Mark Warschauer, a professor of education and informatics at the University of California says that English has become the second language of everybody and its gotten to the point to where, in almost every part of the world, to be educated means to know English ; and in some places he adds, English has invaded the work place along with the global economy (Across Cultures. 2).

According to a survey, by the most common estimates, 400 million people speak English as a first language, another 300 million to 500 million as a fluent second language and nearly 750 million as a foreign language. The British Council estimates, that a billion people are engaged in learning English. Graddol says, "within a space of a few years, there could be 2 billion people learning English in many contexts in the world" (English Next 100). Many varieties of English are used across the continents. These varieties are referred to as world Englishes, Global Englishes, English as lingua Franca and English as international language. This is in addition to the number of native or near native speakers. English is also classified as ENL, EFL and ESL based on the segments in which it is used and also the socio-cultural contexts it implies.

English is unique among the languages of the world throughout history. Countries using English as either a first or second language are located in all five continents amounting to 49% of the world's population. Jan Svartvik and Geoffrey Leech, who came along a long time after Kachru, use history to back up what Kachru said about the three circles. They say that English has benefited from three times in world history that overlapped. The first time period was when European empires grew and more people spoke English and other languages like Spanish, French, and Portuguese. The second time period was the age of technological change, which started with the industrial revolution, which was led by the English-speaking countries of Britain and the United States, and continued with the electronic revolution, which was led by the United States. Globalization is the third time period.

British colonialism is arguably the major reason for the spread of English in the eighteenth century and nineteenth centuries. English spread to Scotland initially because of the military aggression and it remained there because it was regarded as the language of economic and political opportunity. It spread to Ireland in the twelfth century and it eventually won in the battle with the indigenous language, Irish, because of British colonialism in the first instance and culminated in Ireland joining the European community. The spread of English elsewhere did not begin until the sixteenth century when the language became a means of imperial spread out gaining a special place in the history of large number of countries.

The first phase of the Expansion of English was clearly set up by British colonialism. English medium instruction was a very important way for the British to keep their colonial power and for the language to spread. The second phase of English as a global language can be seen as the time when Britain was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution and English was the key to knowledge. If other countries needed this industrial knowledge, they could get it through English. Globalization as international economic policy coincides with the trends and by 1990s various developing countries dismantle their own brands of closed-door economic policy and open up to non-protectionist international trade. The movement of multinational from the affluent west into the developing countries such as India gains momentum. Related developments such as BPO, and call centre support drives a huge labour market towards English soft skills. Thus, we see a massive growth in the business of English language skills.

As noted earlier, English was introduced into the Indian subcontinent with the advent of the East India company. Later the East India company was dissolved and India became the

corner store of an English-speaking empire stretching throughout South Asia. The roles of India and of English in the international community grew decade by decade to a point where India gained Global recognition for a degree of English language proficiency next only to the native English speaking world coupled with inexpensive labour markets .India became the natural destination of transnational economic and commercial activity that is Globalization as international trade practice and a degree of English language skills emerged as a metaphoric India from the 1990s into the new millennium. This is precisely what Susan Sontag highlighted in her highly debated Oxford lecture 'The world as India ' .

Approximately around the same period David Graddol was discussing the future of English in the world in somewhat different terms. Graddol argues "No single language will occupy monopolistic position in the twentieth century as English has. As English has become a local language of every day communication in many nations and new environments besides developing indigenous forms it appears to be fragmenting, breaking up into regional and local varieties so that intelligence may be comprised" ("English in the Future" 29). This is echoed by McArthur who suggests that English is undergoing a process of radical change which will lead to fragmentation into a family of languages.

David Crystal adds "I think it likely that English has already grown to be independent of any form of social control" (English as a Global Language 139). He maintains that the momentum of growth has become so great that there is nothing likely to stop its continued spread as a global lingua franca. He examines the issue of New Englishes and World Englishes going as far as thinking new pedagogies for hybrid Englishes ("English in the Future" 59).

David Crystal says that India is on its way to becoming a linguistic superpower because its English-speaking population is likely to have passed that of Britain and the US. ("Subcontinent Raises its Voice"). Jan Svartik and Jeoffery Leech observe that "India is a striking example of the spread and importance of English in the outer circle" (4). These analytic statements indicate the extensive reach of English in India. As is well known English was introduced in India with the advent of East India Company.

However, Annamalai,2007 observes that since the acquisition of English was through colonial education its benefits went disproportionately to upper caste groups that had a long tradition of education and service in the courts of rulers which engendered economic inequality based on the knowledge of English coupled with the existing ritual of inequality based on classical language. People aren't sure how they feel about English, which may have something

to do with both the language policies of the post-Independence era and the way English fits in with Indian languages. Lachman M. Khubchandani says “The use of English language in the post-colonial India, in a way reflects the Nation’s capacity to accept and make a language as foreign as English so certainly her own” (114).

Through the various commissions and their formulations what emerges clearly is that ad hoc reactions rather than long-term policies ruled the Indian educational system in this period. Susan Sontag made certain comments in a lecture which was later published in the English literary periodical the TLS, titled “The world as India.” She comments that English has become “the common language that unifies linguistic disparities in an India that is driven by 16 official languages and many more dissenting voices.” She adds, ‘the only language that all Indians might have in common not only is, it has to be, English.’ A conclusion more gently and scientifically Dakin had already arrived at half-a-century before. Sontag’s logic is that such an English-driven India is the chief model for the rest of the world that is rapidly globalizing but facing the hurdle of multiple language ‘.

In an article for The Times of India, David Crystal says that English will split into different versions of the language spoken in each person's home country and a new kind of standard English that will be understandable all over the world. Crystal says this is necessary if the number of people who speak English around the world wants to keep growing. He also says that the new Standard English's Indian features would mean the end of American English's dominance. Since Indians like to say things like "I am thinking" and "I am feeling," this way of speaking could easily become cool and part of Global standard English, he says. David Graddol had also predicted a similar situation. He thinks that India now holds the key to the long-term future of English as a global language. (English Next).

Is this an acceptable prognosis? Pursuit of this question may lead in the direction not only of the future of English world-wide but it may also lead to pedagogic possibilities for English in India. Such possibilities may not necessarily conform to current practices or theoretical fashions but will be responsive to teaching of English as a Second or foreign language or a language of opportunity to Indian learners disadvantaged by both syntactic and semantic dimensions of English which vary largely from the socio-cultural givens of Indian language communities.

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