

## FUTURE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA AND SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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**I**n 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. According to David Crystal, “English is spoken in some form by three times as many non-native speakers as native speakers” (“Across Cultures” 2).

English is the leading language of science, medicine, communication, education, advertising, technology, literature, politics, press, broadcasting and publishing. The powerful and popular US variety of English dominates computer software networking and the vast creative crypt of cyber space. According to David Graddol, “80% of the world’s electronically stored information is in English” (“Across Cultures” 2).

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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.

Kachru's categorization of three circles finds an elaborate historical corroboration much later in Jan Svartvik and Geoffrey Leech who point out that English benefitted from three overlapping eras of world history .The first was the era of imperial expansion of European power which spread the use of English as well as of other languages like Spanish ,French and Portuguese. The second was the era of technological revolution beginning with the industrial revolution in which the English speaking nations of Britain and US took leading part and its extension, the electronic revolution chiefly by the US. The third is the era of Globalization.

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.

British colonialism clearly set the stage for the first phase of Expansion of English. .English medium instruction was a major tool both in reinforcing British colonial power on one hand and spreading the language on the other.

The second phase of English as a Global language can be understood in terms of its role as the passport to knowledge when Britain was at the forefront of Industrial Revolution. Other countries which needed this industrial knowledge could access it though the medium of 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 argues that with English-speaking population now likely to have surpassed that of Britain and the US, India, with its dynamic variety of English, is set to become a linguistic super power (“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.

The ambivalence towards English is perhaps the result not only of the language policies followed in the post Independence era, but also the inherent position of English vis-à-vis 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 published in *The Times of India*, David Crystal says that English will fragment into Global varieties of the language one spoken in their home country and a new kind of standard English which Crystal says will have Global intelligibility and would be necessary if growing ranks of English speakers around the world are to understand each other. He adds, the new Standard English's Indian characteristics would signify the end of the primacy of American English and since Indians tend to use the present continuous like, "I am thinking", "I am feeling" ..... this way, he says, could easily become sexy and part of Global standard English .David Graddol had also predicted a similar situation where he believes 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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