

English in the World Today

SAMIDA Deepak K.

今日の世界における英語

ディーパック K. サミダ

抄録：本研究の目的は今日の世界において英語の果たす役割を考察することである。英語は西ドイツの部族の一方言として始まり、5～6世紀にイギリスで定着し、現在では10億の人々が使う言語となった過程を例証する。世界では地域言語で人々が意思疎通の要求を満たすことが出来ない場合は英語が使用されている。又、コンピューターやインターネットの普及が更なる英語学習の必要性を生みだし、今や10億人以上が英語を学び、使用しているのである。

Of all the languages in the world, English is the most widely spoken language by more than 375 million native speakers and over 375 million second-language speakers, and 750 million foreign-language speakers. English has made the world flat, and the flat world has increased the use of English.

A brief History of the English language

It is difficult to imagine that a dialect spoken in England by West German tribes has developed into a language which is now the *lingua franca* of the world. The history of the English language is very interesting. It is also complicated which makes it fascinating to explore. It is hardly a coincidence that English is sometimes referred to as a melting pot of language. The history of the English Language can be divided into four periods: Old English, Middle English, Early-Modern English, and Late Modern English.

English began as a Germanic dialect when the West German tribes in the fifth and sixth century A.D. came to British Isles from Germany, Denmark and Holland. They were the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes who spoke a language now called Old English which is similar to modern Frisian. The name Angles is the source for words like England and English. Many words for ordinary things in the modern English have Germanic or Anglo-Saxon origin. These words are short like “work,” “water,” and “house.”

The Celts inhabited Britain before the arrival of the Angles, Saxons, and the Jutes. These tribes pushed the Celts into Cornwall, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The Angles settled in the north, the Saxons in the south, and the Jutes in a small area in the south-east. The Celtic language continues to exist in the Gaelic languages. Some scholars believe that there is a possibility that the grammar of English is influenced by the Celtic language (Bryson 1991).

Anglo-Saxons were invaded by William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy in 1066. This was the dawn of the Middle English period. The invasion brought a dialect of Old French known as Anglo-Norman spoken by the kings and the aristocrats, but the common people continued to speak English. The English looked after cows and pigs, and cooked their meat, but when the Normans saw the cooked meat at the table, they called them “beef” and “pork.” Also, words used in the court like “indict,” “jury,” and “verdict” came in application because the Anglo-Normans, new rulers of England were in-charge of the judiciary.

Two centuries later from 1500 - 1800, the Renaissance brought a revival of interest in Greek and Latin, and widespread innovation in the English language. It is called the period of Early Modern English. Some Latin words had already existed, but rediscovery of ancient culture flooded English with thousands of words that originated from Greek and Latin.

Invention of the printing press separated Old English from Modern English. Books became easily available which brought about higher literacy among people. The growing population of readers demanded more books which made printing a marketable occupation. Printing also helped to standardize the English language. The spoken and written English of London began to dominate Britain and was viewed as the standard language of the country.

There has been rapid development in the field of science and technology from the period of Renaissance to the present which resulted in new ideas and inventions. Each invention brought a new word into the English language. These new words were mostly made from Greek and Latin.

The colonial expansion of Britain also brought many words from Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and Hindi. *Alcohol* and *algebra* came from Arabic, *divan* and *khaki* came from Persian, *shampoo* and *punch* (the beverage) from Hindi, and *tea* and *tycoon* from Chinese. The words created in English-speaking colonies like the USA also entered English.

Just like the introduction of the printing press separated Early Modern English from Old English, the computer and the Internet have separated Modern English from Postmodern English.

English as an international language

The international travelers know that English is the official language of international aviation. Communication between the pilot and the control tower, and the in-flight announcements are in English in all international flights. Those countries whose national and official language is not English, broadcast radio programs for the purpose of public relation in English beamed at the listeners all over the world.

The use of English among the peoples of British colonies still continues in area of commerce and education. It

has also become the common medium of communication among the people of different mother tongues within a country. The intention of the British to promote English in the colonies was more than its use as a vehicle of communication, it was to influence the peoples in a more profound way. Lord Macaulay in the Minute on Indian Education delivered in 1835 stated, “form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”

Today in India, teaching and learning English is not thought as making Englishmen of different blood and color, but a necessity for the administrative purpose in the country where hundreds of dialects and languages exist. The government of India had understood the role of English since independence in 1947. It was decided in 1950 that Hindi would be the official language of India and the transition from English to Hindi was to be completed by 1965. When Hindi was declared the official language, the government was challenged by big demonstrations where students burnt themselves and many rioters were shot dead by police. The reason for strong opposition was that only in two states out of sixteen or 65 million people of the country spoke Hindi as their first language. The government was forced into accepting English as an associated official language. It is also an official language in countries like Ghana and Nigeria in Africa where it is used in daily life.

There are other reasons why English is commonly used all over the world. Technological development in the English speaking countries like Britain and the USA has made movies, songs, TV and radio programs, and books popular in many developing countries. Most of the scientific literature is written in English and international conferences are conducted in English.

English as a first and a second language

Once English was thought as the sole property of native speakers, but it is now believed that the speaker of English who may live anywhere in the world, owns the language. English can be found in many varieties around the world which is made up in interaction between people with different proficiencies. It is strongly influenced by the local language of the speaker, and is given labels like: *Chinglish*, *Japlish*, *Singlish*, etc. It is comprehensible to those who also know the local language, and therefore it does not serve as a tool for international communication.

For international communication, it is important to use a universally understood form of English. This argument is behind teaching and learning English as a second language. There are two incentives in learning English as a second language: instrumental and integrative. It can be said that tourists, salespersons, and science students are stimulated to learn it instrumentally because it is needed to communicate and read books. When someone learns English for integrative purpose, it is to identify oneself with the English speaking community, feel comfortable using it, and understand the attitudes and the world view of that community. Immigrants in English speaking countries have this kind of motivation to learn the language for smooth social integration.

In a country where English is the second language, the mass media: newspapers and TV programs are in English. It is also used in courts, government, commerce, and education. Those who achieve a high level of proficiency can expect social and economic advancement. They can also regard themselves successfully integrated with the English speaking community of their country. In case of the Chinese in Singapore, it could be said that the incentive to learn English would be to integrate and identify with the English speaking society. For this, the South-east Asian type of English would serve the purpose, rather than the British or American kind.

In some places the advancement of the local type of English is discouraged because it is neither British nor American, and therefore not considered authentic. It is impractical to set British or American English as an educational goal instead of the local type. For a second language learner, the local type is the easiest to learn because the pronunciation and usage are influenced by the native language. If a second language learner masters British or American variety perfectly, he or she may be rejected or ridiculed by others. In the opposite situation, a learner who can only use the local type may not be able to communicate internationally.

English as a foreign language

In some parts of the world like Brazil, China and Japan, English is a foreign language. It means that English is taught in schools, but has no function in the national or social life. A Japanese does not need English or any other foreign language in daily life. In some countries, English is considered as a world language, and is taught in schools along with other languages. In this kind of situation, motivation for learning a foreign language is only instrumental. The goal is to visit English-speaking country or to communicate with English-speaking people.

In the Japanese schools, both British and American varieties are taught. Both varieties are equally accepted, but could be influenced by the nationality of the teacher. Geography and politics may also influence the variety of English taught in schools. American English is taught as a foreign language in schools in Mexico and the Philippines. Students in Europe learn British English, but in Papua New Guinea Australian variety is taught.

It is difficult to distinguish between English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). Countries where the role of English as an official language is getting weaker, there is a movement to make it a foreign language. But in countries like Sweden and Holland, English is moving toward an official language status where the government is encouraging all educated people to be bilingual with a good command of English.

It is clear that geography, culture, and politics influence the role of English in a country. Whether English is taught as a second language or a foreign language, it should have an impact on the daily life and growth of the learner. It is getting complex to detect the position of English in a learner's life. In the past it was thought that

ESL and EFL students needed the language to express their ideas, not emotion. This is true in some situations like in Japan and Korea. For the Japanese and Korean learners, there will be more opportunity to express ideas than emotion in English. But Swedish and Dutch students will need to learn how to express emotion in English because they will come in contact with the native speakers more often.

The role of English becomes more difficult to define among bilingual speakers. In India where the educated Indians are bilingual, having a good command of both English and the mother tongue will frequently switch from one language to the other in the middle of the conversation. They often use their mother tongue for personal or intimate use like reciting prayer in religious ceremony, and discussing something very secret with a close friend. Situations like these mark the distinction between public and private use of the language. The mother tongue of an Indian is used for private purposes when intimate emotions are expressed, but English is used in public situations. The situation is similar among the immigrant children who learn a public form of English at school and use their mother tongue at home. They can handle both languages fluently. In Fiji, second or third generation children of Indian immigrants are fluent in Hindi, English and Fijian. At home or in private situation, Hindi is used, but in public situation either English or Fijian is used. Sometimes this condition could give a sense of not belonging to either social group. To help reduce this effect, there are schools in Fiji where lessons are taught in Hindi.

Global English

An international traveler will attest to the fact that one could get by with English in major cities of most of the countries in the world. The reason is that English has become a *lingua franca*, a global language in countries where it is not the native language. Today, over a billion people study and use English. It goes beyond religion and national boundaries. Pope John Paul II used English in the Middle East when he addressed Christians, Jews and Muslims. He did not speak in Italian, Hebrew, Arabic, or Polish which is his mother tongue. Here in Asia, English is used for all the proceedings of the trade group ASEAN. English is not the native language of any member state. It is now the language for international communication and negotiation, computer and the internet, and navigation. Over a billion people are learning it in all over the world. This has made English truly a global language.

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