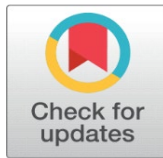
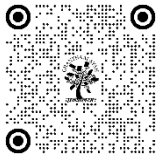


HIGHER EDUCATION AND ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LINK LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

English is the dominant language in the United Kingdom, the United States many Commonwealth nations including Australia and Canada, and other former British colonies. It is also a dominant or official language in many countries formerly under British rule.

English is now the fourth (or possibly third depending on the source) most widely spoken native language worldwide (after Chinese, Hindi and debatably Spanish), with some 380 million speakers. English is also the dominant member of the Germanic languages. It 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, 19th and early 20th centuries and that of the United States from the early 20th century to the present.

Through the global influence of native English speakers in cinema, airlines, broadcasting, science, and the Internet in recent decades, English is now the most widely learned second language in the world although other languages such as French and Spanish also retain much importance worldwide.

Many students worldwide are required to learn at least some English, and a working knowledge of English is required in many fields and occupations.

1. ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

English on the Internet

Because English is so widely spoken, it has been referred to as a "global language". While English is not an official language in many countries, it is the language most often taught as a second language around the world. It is also, by international treaty, the official language for aircraft/airport communication. Its widespread acceptance as a first or second language is the main indication of its worldwide status.

There are numerous arguments for and against English as a global language. On one hand, having a global language aid in communication and in pooling information (for example, in the scientific community). On the other hand, it leaves out those who, for one reason or another, are not fluent in the global language. It can also marginalize populations whose first language is not the global language, and lead to a cultural hegemony of the populations speaking the global language as a first language. Most of these arguments hold for any candidate for a global language, though the last two counter-arguments do not hold for languages not belonging to any ethnic group (like Esperanto)

A secondary concern with respect to the spread of global languages (including major non-English languages such as Spanish) is the resulting disappearance of minority languages, often along with the cultures and religions that are

primarily transmitted in those languages. English has been implicated in a number of historical and ongoing so-called 'language deaths' and 'linguicides' around the world, many of which have also led to the loss of cultural heritage. Language death caused by English has been particularly pronounced in areas such as Australia and North America where speakers of indigenous languages have been displaced or absorbed by speakers of English in the process of colonization.

Dialects and regional variants:

The expansiveness of the British and the Americans has spread English throughout the globe. Because of its global spread, it has bred a variety of English dialects and English-based creole languages.

The major varieties of English in most cases contain several subvarieties, such as Cockney slang within British English, Newfoundland English within Canadian English and African American Vernacular English ("Ebonics") within American English. English is considered a pluricentric language, with no variety being clearly considered the only standard.

Some consider Scots as an English dialect. Pronunciation, grammar and lexis differ, sometimes substantially. Because of English's wide use as a second language, English speakers can have many different accents, which may identify the speaker's native dialect or language. For more distinctive characteristics of regional accents.

Just as English itself has borrowed words from many different languages over its history, English loanwords now appear in a great many languages around the world, indicative of the technological and cultural influence wielded by English speakers. Several pidgins and creole languages have formed on an English base. There are a number of words in English coined to describe forms of particular non-English languages that contain a very high proportion of English words -Franglais, for example, is used to describe French with a very high English content.

Constructed variants of English:

- * Basic English is simplified for easy international use. It is used by some aircraft manufacturers and other international businesses to write manuals and communicate. Some English schools in the Far East teach it as an initial practical subset of English.

- * Special English is a simplified version of English used by the Voice of America. It uses a vocabulary of 1500 words.

- English reform is an attempt to improve collectively upon the English language.

Seaspeak and the related Airspeak and Policespeak, all based on restricted vocabularies, were designed by Edward Johnson in the 1980s to aid international co-operation and communication in specific areas. There is also a tunnelspeak for use in the Channel Tunnel.

- * European English is a new variant of the English language created to become the common language in Europe, spoken in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

- * Manually Coded English - A variety of systems have been developed to represent the English language with hand signals, designed primarily for use in deaf education.

Indian English refers to the dialects or varieties of English spoken primarily in India and the Indian subcontinent, and also by Indian diaspora elsewhere in the world. The dialect is also known as South Asian English.

Due to British colonialism that saw an English-speaking presence in India for over two hundred years, a distinctly South Asian brand of English was born. English is the co-official language of the Union of India.

Variations in the pronunciation of several phonemes are affected by the regional tongues (see Languages of India) across the subcontinent, the greatest distinction being that between South India and Sri Lanka on the one hand and the north of the subcontinent (including Pakistan, North India and Bangladesh) on the other. Several idiomatic forms crossing over from Indian literary and vernacular language also have made their way into the English of the masses. In spite of India's diversity, however, there is indeed a general homogeneity in syntax and vocabulary that can be found among speakers across South Asia. It will be found that excellent English bearing fewer regional grammatical peculiarities is spoken in upper-class families (commonly referred to, in India, as "Westernised"), though even among them hints of a uniquely Indian flavour (particularly in a so-called 'Indianised' British accent) are typically retained.

Influences British and American:

The form of English that Indians (and other subcontinentals) are taught in schools is essentially British English, especially Scottish English, which influenced Indian dialects with rhoticity. The Indian government though, accepts both forms of spellings as 'correct' English and makes no distinction. However, for most, it is desirable to emulate the brand

of English that is linguistically known as Received Pronunciation or, more commonly, BBC English. In particular, Indian spellings follow British conventions to the point at which American English variations are considered untenable. However, even during the time of British imperialism (before the creation of a separate Pakistan and Bangladesh), Indian English had established itself as an audibly distinct dialect with its own quirks and specific phrases.

Following the departure of the British from India in 1947, Indian English took on a divergent evolution and many phrases that the British may consider antiquated are still popular in India. Official letters continue to include phrases like "please do the needful" and "you will be intimated shortly". This difference in style, though, is not as marked a difference as between British and American English (and unlike Canadian or Australian English there is no variation in spelling whatsoever). Older British writers who made creative (and comical) use of now obsolete forms of colloquial English, like P.G. Wodehouse, and others who were in use fifty years ago, like Thomas Hardy, are immensely popular in India. British writer, journalist and wit Malcolm Muggeridge once joked that the last Englishman would be an Indian.

American English, due to the burgeoning influence of American pop culture on the rest of the world, has begun challenging traditional British English as the premier brand of English spoken in the Indian subcontinent, though this is largely limited to the youth in the last decade or two. The proliferation of "MTV culture," especially through pop and hip hop, and the increasing desire of Indians to attend US, as opposed to British, collegiate institutions for higher education, is leading to the spread of more emulation of American English among Indian youth. Also, the economic and political puissance of the U.S. often leads to heated debates as to whether or not British English or American English is the more practical accent for emigre Indians to adopt. It must be stressed, however, that British English retains its hold on the majority of Indians, particularly those of the older generation. American English spellings are also widely prevalent in scientific and technical publications while British English spellings are used in other media.

In a survey ([1]), it was found that "the (70%) majority of the informants felt that RP (Received Pronunciation) would serve as the best model for Indian English 10% thought General American English would be better, and 17% preferred the Indian variety of English."

Higher education in India:

INDIA is rushing headlong toward economic success and modernization, counting on high-tech industries such as information technology and biotechnology to propel the nation to prosperity. India's recent announcement that it would no longer produce unlicensed inexpensive generic pharmaceuticals bowed to the realities of the World Trade Organisation while at the same time challenging the domestic drug industry to compete with the multinational firms. Unfortunately, its weak higher education sector constitutes the Achilles' Heel of this strategy. Its systematic disinvestment in higher education in recent years has yielded neither world class research nor very many highly trained scholars, scientists, or managers to sustain high-tech development.

India's main competitors –

Especially China but also Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea - are investing in large and differentiated higher education systems. They are providing access to large numbers of students at the bottom of the academic system while at the same time building some research-based universities that are able to compete with the world's best institutions. The recent London Times Higher Education Supplement ranking of the world's top 200 universities included three in China, three in Hong Kong, three in South Korea, one in Taiwan, and one in India (an Indian Institute of Technology at number 41-the specific campus was not specified) These countries are positioning themselves for leadership in the knowledge-based economies of the coming era.

There was a time when countries could achieve economic success with cheap labour and low-tech manufacturing. Low wages still help, but contemporary large-scale development requires a sophisticated and at least partly knowledge-based economy. India has chosen that path.

India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector - the third largest in the world in student numbers, after China and the United States. It uses English as primary language of higher education and research. It has a long academic tradition. Academic freedom is respected. There are a small number of high-quality institutions, departments, and centres that can form the basis of quality sector in higher education. The fact that the States, rather than the Central Government, exercise major responsibility for higher education creates a rather cumbersome structure, but the system allows for a variety of policies and approaches. So we may hope for a bright future and that is a very big advantage this is one of the reason why India is leading in IT and outsourcing with little improvement of higher education in India.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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