

English Language: Facilitating Globalised Economy

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Abstract:

Communication is one of the most essential factors of every business. Without having communication with customers, suppliers, managers, technology developers, and innovators no business can thrive let alone flourish. Processes like knowledge acquisition and sharing of technological knowhow, hiring of workforce across countries, outsourcing work to countries with cheaper labor to increase profitability etc. are dependent upon common language among countries. That is why in globalised economy communication takes a greater magnitude since companies now have a need to communicate internationally. However the difference in languages has been the greatest barrier in international business since the inception of the global economy. It creates pressure of adoption of a common language of communication because without having a common language to interact the concept of globalised economy is not possible. The language which is most commonly linked with globalised economy is English. English: modern Lingua Franca i.e. the language of speakers of other tongue. It has become the dominant language of international business and economic development and its dominance continues to grow. The paper aims at understating the contribution of English language as the facilitator of the globalised economy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is Global Economy?

Global economy means all the economies of the world which we consider linked as one economic system in which the business, trade and industry all across the world are interlinked and affected by each other due to globalization. In other words, it is the way countries' economies have developed to operate collectively as one system. According to BusinessDictionary.com, the global economy is "Worldwide economic activity between various countries that are considered intertwined." (businessdictionary.com) It basically means the integration of fragmented national markets of goods and services of different countries into one single global market. In such a market, companies may use the whole world as one market place sourcing from one country, conducting research and development in another, taking orders in a third one and selling wherever the demand may exist regardless of customer's nationality. Kenichi Ohmae, a Japanese

consultant calls this a 'borderless world' (Ohmae, 1999) [2] So we can say global economics is the interdependent economies of the worlds' nations, regarded as a single economic system.

1. Challenges in Global Economy

Thomas Friedman, Pulitzer prize winning author in his bestseller work 'The World is Flat: A Brief History of Twenty-First Century', has described various factors that are making the world a 'level playing Field' providing equal opportunities to developing countries like India and China to compete against developed western countries. He mentions ten factors which have been instrumental in making world a 'level playing Field' and those factors are – democracy, web browsing, work flow software, open sourcing, out sourcing, off shoring, supply chaining, in sourcing, informing and WiFi/VoIP (Friedman, 2006) [3]. Excepting one factor that is democracy, all the other 9 factors are highly dependent upon communication. Communication expert Harold Janis also emphasizes

that, “the world of business is a world of action. Products are designed, made and sold. People are hired. Services are rendered. Policies are devised and implemented. Jobs are learned and performed. Yet there is no practical way in which any of these events can take place without communication” (Doctor, 2010) [4]. Communication plays a crucial role in the success of the business. “Every business organization, large or small in size, is held together by communication”. (Mulgaonkar, 2011)[5].

Business expansion in different countries brings with it a highly diverse work force in terms of difference of languages, business practices, behaviors and expectations. The biggest challenge that companies face in this is the difference of natural languages of communication of the countries. This diversity creates a huge barrier in working of any organization leading to a lot of communication and cultural conflicts. Communication is very important for the effective management of any business especially when it is spread all across the globe. However, the effectiveness of any communication relies purely upon a shared/common language between the sender and receiver, a prerequisite that may not necessarily exist in many international business situations. As mentioned by Thacker and Jajodia, “..... when a message is sent, it becomes communication only when it is received understood and reacted to by the receiving party”.(Jajodia, 2013) [6].

The problem that most of the international companies face is misunderstandings within international business deals due to absence of a common language of interaction. Around three decades ago, Percy Barnevik, the then CEO of ABB identified communicating across the language barriers as his company’s single most severe operational problem. (Taylor, 1991) [7].the need of a common language of interaction is most pressing for global economy. The problems of increasing communication intensity, linguistic diversity and scale of operations aggravate the problems created by the language barriers. Effective communication

with people of different countries and cultures is very challenging with international competition growing with each passing day. The need for businesses to communicate effectively with businesses in different countries can be very crucial for their success and profitability. Corporate Mergers and acquisitions are creating multi language/cultural environment making communication even more critical for successful business interactions and transactions. With the difference in languages of sender and receiver the possibility of misunderstanding increases many fold.

English Language: Bridging Communication Gap

As we all know, communication is an essential factor for any economy to thrive or to flourish. But it can take place only when both sender and receiver of the message understand a common language that’s why the need for a Lingua Franca(Prochet) [8] is most pressing in global economy where people of different countries, speaking different language, interact to perform business activities. However there are not many languages across the globe which can bridge communication gap and act as binding agent between counties with different languages. “A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country.” (Crystal, English as a Global Language, 1997) [9]

English Language has the unique distinction of being known as the most widely spoken language of the world across different counties due to the colonial rule of British Empire which spread English language all over the world.(lane, 2018) [10].In present era if any one language can hold the status of universal language then it is English language only. As stated by Schichao Li in her article, "Globalization of Languages," the English language can be considered a global language because "except English, no other language dominates international business, academia, media, the Internet, and international air/sea traffic."(Fijuljanin, 2013) [11]

Crystal believes that British political imperialism had sent English around the globe, during nineteenth century.(Crystal, English as a Global Language, 1997)[12] But while British imperialism is mainly responsible for the wide spread use of English, according to Neil Lands (Neilands, 1997) [13] that fact alone does not account for its high status among languages. A language becomes an international language for one basic reason i.e. because of the power of its people especially their political and military power. It is the economic clout of English speaking world that has helped it to expand and maintain its premier position. It is not only the language of England, the leading power of the industrial revolution of the 19th century, but also the language of the United States, the modern era's technological and economic superpower where most of the multinational corporations continue to be based in and from where they spread their business and influence throughout the world.

Almost everywhere in the world one can communicate a message in English because one will certainly find one or two persons understanding English language. This is the primary reason why knowing English language brings ease in doing business. With the help of English language international companies and entrepreneurs can avail tremendous amount of opportunities and expose themselves to a gamut of profit making ventures and successful business transactions. According to Crystal(Crystal, English as a Global Language, 1997) [14], Peters (Peters, 2004) [15], and Graddol(Graddol, 2006)[16] about 80 per cent of the world's trade and financial business transactions are done in English language only. That is the reason why enterprises all over the world have felt the need of having a workforce that is able to communicate in English if they want to avail the opportunities in the global market place.(Mckay, 2002) [17]

English: Facilitating Business through Internet

The most far reaching change in economy has come because of internet and its ubiquitous status. The world has turned into a global village in the present era due to technological advancement, especially the World Wide Web. It has actually boosted the global economy with its efficiency in communication and connectivity. The Economy of today is information based as latest business related information such as availability of raw material, and human resource , latest technological development, changes in rules and regulations of different governments and countries, the credit policies of different banks, customer's demand and preferences etc. play a very important role in business. In the absence of latest information the profit margin of company will plummet. Warschauer(Warschauer, 2000) [18] defines informationalism as the present economic order that had come up in 1970s due to advancement in telecommunication and computer technology. This shift toward informational economy has intensified as well as integrated countries and region into global market providing more markets to companies. This has spurred the international need of a common language of communication, in absence of which global economy cannot flourish because information provided through technology cannot be processed and understood without knowing the language. In the absence of a common language people will have to learn all the languages of the countries they intend to do business with.

The information technology could play an effective role in boosting global economy because of the international stature of English language which can be called the actual language of the internet through which any business gets accessibility, presence and market place throughout the world. In spite of growth of internet in various languages most of internet is written in English language only. The dominance of English on this foremost means of communication and information is evident by the fact that most foreign language websites provide translation services into English Language.

English language has boosted the world economy by acting as connecting tool for information exchange.

In this cut throat competition, companies realized that they could cut costs and increase profits by outsourcing jobs to other countries with cheaper labour and it could be done only if the work force and the employer shared a common language that they could communicate in. English has played a remarkable role in this regard especially in Information Technology related jobs where the language of the information to be processed or generated is crucial. Using a single language as the primary IT language, has also streamlined computer processing. The commands for many programs are in English, and so a program might not respond to other language commands, unless it was specifically reprogrammed to understand those languages. Most IT products are first created with English interface or user communication and then upgraded with other language support. Even if the user is able to use a program in another language, at the base level it is generally programmed in English only. India has been one of the greatest gainers because of this as it has a large population of highly skilled workforce with proficiency in English.

Internet has also facilitated e-commerce, a standard way of doing business in present time. It has opened up vast opportunities for corporates to penetrate new markets and territories as they are eager to use any resource available to gain market share wherever possible. It has also given freedom to people to operate, manage and survey their businesses from any part of the world and optimize their time and effort.

English: Facilitating Economy through Science and Academia

Economy can flourish only when new products ideas, technology and information are generated, learned and shared. For all these, people need knowledge for which they reach to educational institutions, internet, research papers, books, or

universities across the globe as it may not be necessary that all the information that they need be available from sources in a country or region only. Hence it becomes absolutely essential to know the language in which the information is available so that one may understand and make use of it. However, it is nearly impossible to learn all the languages of the world to gain knowledge from all these varied sources. That is why there is a need of a common language for academia. Today, all the major scientific journals are published in English which itself is an evidence that English is the lingua franca of science and technology also. This is one big factor through which English is contributing and facilitating the global economy. Aspiring professionals in most of fields are quick to recognize it as the language of intellectual and academic discourse. Essen(Essen, 1998) [19] emphasizes the same when he claims that 98% of all physicists in Germany try to be proficient in English as they use it as their working language. When articles are not accepted by professional journals because of "poor" English, a lack of competence in the language becomes an obstacle for those who work hard to grab attention for their new invention, idea or product in the world of scholarship, scientific research, or business. Today, more than 80% content posted on the internet is in English and leading scientific works are also published in English, in spite of the fact that only fifty per cent were actually written by authors in English speaking countries."(Johnson, 2009)[20]. It has also been observed by the researchers that publications written in other languages have a lower impact and command lower compensation than works published in English language.

This is the reason why university degrees from English speaking countries, generally have a higher status in the world of business. Students prefer to study in countries like UK, USA, Canada or Australia mainly because of the status of English as the international language of

academics, business and technology. It has been imposed that who has the knowledge of English doesn't need other languages to communicate with the rest of the world.

Proficiency in English has become a valuable commodity because of the increase in interactions across the globe over the past century; there has been increase in the demand for more streamlined and efficient communication across lingual borders. Thus, in the business world, companies seeking to expand multinationally have to find ways to communicate across such difference in cost-effective ways. Many firms have changed their corporate languages to the common tongue of English in efforts to streamline communication and avoid leaving team members. Responding to this situation, nearly a billion individuals worldwide are learning the language, most in hopes that their lingual skills will boost their paycheck or land them a better job. States, too, understand that an English-speaking workforce can help their economies integrate and become more competitive on the world market. (Johnson, 2009) [21]

II. CONCLUSION

Globalization is what created the vast interlinked global economy that we know today and Globalization itself could not have happened in such a degree without English pre-existing as a common language known to a large population living in different countries of the world. It can be said that global community cannot function effectively without global language. At the same time globalization strengthened the position of English as a global language and popularized it with more and more people learning the language so that they may reap the benefits of globalization and become a part of the global economy. Hence it can be said that English and globalization serve as pull factors for one another.

Crystal calls English as the language of globalization or "global language". (Crystal, English as a Global Language, 1997) [22] He (Crystal, English as a

Global Language, 2003)[23] identifies seventy five economies in which English has held or continues to hold a special status as either the primary language or second language. He argues that 'to achieve global status, a language has to be taken up by other countries around the world either as an official language or as apriority in a country's foreign language teaching'. Evidently, English is the medium of instruction at many schools and colleges all over the world even in countries where it is not their mother tongue. Research has shown a direct correlation between the English skills of a population and the economic performance of the country which can be seen by studying indicators like gross national income (GNI) and GDP. In World Economic Forum's 2017 edition of the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), it was found that in almost every one of the 60 countries and territories surveyed, a rise in English proficiency was connected with a rise in per capita income. (McCormick, 16) [24] Economic and professional incentives have made English an asset and a factor that can be directly linked with the growth of global economy.

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