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Future of English in the World of Communication Explosion

INTRODUCTION:

It is impossible to deny the fact that English is the most important language spoken and written all over the world. Millions of people use English to communicate at a global context. However, and taking into account the fact that different geographic regions adopt the language but also adapt it to their own idiosyncrasies, it is also possible to say that the future of English may also arise problems of intelligibility and as a consequence of this, people from different countries and using distinctive varieties will not be able to understand each other. Or perhaps some other language may emerge and replace English.

According to Bill Bryson in his book 'Mother Tongue', more than 300 million people around the world speak English. It has become the lingua franca of business, science, education, technology, politics and popular music... In India –for instance – There are more than 300 papers written in English; when companies all over the world decide to form joint ventures, the language they use is English. What is more, the students from China learning English outnumber the people in the United States.

All this leads us to ask which are the features of English that make it the "common" tongue. As stated before, Bill Bryson clearly distinguishes and explains eight characteristics which contribute to make English the language "chosen" by most of the people all over the world:

1. Its richness of vocabulary and the wealth of available synonyms. It is said that one of the main factors that "sets English apart" from other languages is its richness of vocabulary. The Webster's Third New International Dictionary lists 450,000 words, and the revised Oxford English Dictionary lists 615,000.
2. Another factor that contributes to make English the global language used at present is its flexibility. This can be seen in the freedom English speakers can enjoy when using either passive or active constructions. Bryson says, "not only can we say, 'I kicked the dog', but also 'The dog was kicked by me' –a construction that would be impossible in many other languages." Furthermore, many English nouns operate both as noun and as verbs. This versatility at work makes the rules of English grammar also "perplexing": many native speakers cannot differentiate a full infinitive from a bareone.
3. The third characteristic which makes English advantageous for users is its relative simplicity of its spelling and pronunciation. It has got few clusters and singsong tonal variations.
4. The fact that its pronouns are uninflected
5. English is free of gender
6. Its articles -free of gender and number. The sentence: 'It's time to go to bed' proves that the definite article 'the' in the time or in the bed are omitted whereas in other languages it is obligatory.
7. Its conciseness. English favours truncations: IBM, NATO, and laser.

SPREAD OF ENGLISH

Five hundred years after the scholar Richard Mulcaster said that the English tongue was not going to stretch further than their island (1582), this concept has changed considerably. The reasons for the success of this language over others may be divided into two historical processes: A) Colonization and B) Technological modernization.

Britain as a powerful country began to expand in the seventeenth century with settlements in North America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. English speakers, therefore, spread the language together with the process of colonization. Similarly, when colonizing Africa and Asia, the British forced the natives to learn it. Domination through language produced a terrible impact on natives whose identities were clearly threatened. Language IS power and by eradicating indigenous languages, their values were also eliminated. This loss of identity on the part of the oppressed led them to the destruction of their customs, habits, language, or –to be more specific- of their culture.

Education helps societies to develop; and to belong to the modern world new values into the population have to

be introduced through education, which plays a fundamental role in the "distribution of knowledge." Many programmes of education are produced in English speaking countries, especially the United Kingdom and the United States. American "models of technology and economy" are exported to the underdeveloped countries. These ones, import knowledge of both technology and economy models in the foreign language: English. Again, the American variety of English is introduced through technological modernization.

However, this is not the only form of spreading the American English variety. American films, advertisements, pop songs, and media in general, have also become part of our everyday life. They influence our lifestyles and our cultures, sometimes by deliberate -and at the same time- subtle imposition of thought control. This is the case of what Luke Prodromou (1997) suggests by the term: "coca-colarization." Drinking coke means much more than just calming down our thirst. Beyond the "Coca Cola" drink there is a process of acculturation, of belonging to the modern values, which has got a dramatic economic impact in favor of the United States.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGAUGE:

The origins of English are, for a language, surprisingly well documented. At the time of the Roman invasion c.55Bc, the indigenous languages of Britain were Celtic. The Romans made Latin an 'official' language of culture and government, probably resulting in many communities in Britain becoming bilingual Celtic Latin.

The English language developed after the Anglo Saxon invasion c.449 AD, when the Romans left Britain and new settlers brought Germanic dialects from mainland Europe. Latin was still an important written language because of the Church. In the north of England dialects of English were extensively influenced by Scandinavian languages.

The Norman Conquest (1066) and rule brought about many linguistic changes. French, now the official language in England, affected English vocabulary and spelling. Educated people probably needed to be trilingual in French, Latin and English. It was a flourishing period for English literature.

During Early Modern English, the Renaissance, the Elizabethan era and Shakespeare, Britain grew commercially and acquired overseas colonies. English was taken to the Americas (first colony at Jamestown, Virginia 1607) and India (first trading post at Surat 1614.) With the rise of printing (first printed book in English 1473) English acquired a stable typographic identity. Teaching English as a foreign language began in the 16th century, first in Holland and France.

During Modern English (c.1750-1950) period, English had become a 'national' language. Many attempts were made to standardize and fix the language with dictionaries and grammars. The industrial revolution triggered off a global restructuring of work and leisure which made English the international language of advertising and consumerism. The telegraph was patented in 1837, linking English speaking communities around the world and establishing English as the major language for wire services. As Britain consolidated imperial power, English medium education was introduced in many parts of the world. The international use of French declined. The first international series of English language teaching texts was published from Britain in 1938 and the world's first TV commercial was broadcast in the US in 1941. English emerged as the most popular working language for transnational institutions.

In the aftermath of World War II, the US became a global economic and cultural presence, making American English the dominant world variety. The first geostationary communications satellites were launched (Early Bird 1965) and the Internet was invented (US 1970s). A world market in audio visual products was created and soap operas such as Dallas circulated the globe. Worldwide English language TV channels began (CNN International launched 1989).

QUIRK AND WIDDOWSON puts main emphasis on the use of English in the world in the present scenario. The main attention is given to the use of English by various different users of it. This gives a number of varieties to English, desire to have a "standard English" ELT, in terms of both spoken and written.

In the most basic sense, ELT is distinguished into the teaching of English as a native language (ENL) and the teaching of English as an L2. The former is what Kachru (1985) identifies as the 'inner circle'. The latter can further be distinguished into the teaching of English:

- As a native language (ENL) – taught in countries where English is an L1 (UK, USA, Australia, etc. – Kachru's 'outer circle');
- As a foreign language (EFL) – taught in countries where English is not the L1 (i.e., in foreign language classrooms); in most cases around the world, this situation makes English the first foreign language that is taught/learned (Kachru's 'expanding circle' and Phillipson's 'periphery');
- As an additional language (EAL) – taught in situations similar to (b), but to learners whose mother tongue is not the country's L1 (e.g., immigrants); this situation applies, for example, in quite a lot of Greek state schools, where students from Albania learn Greek as a second language and English as an additional language;
- As a lingua/franca language (ELF) – at this level, English is equated with other lingua franca languages, i.e. languages spoken widely as a means of communication in certain parts of the world (the use of Spanish in

South America); finally,

- As an international language (EIL) – English is the only language world-wide with such a status.
- As a second language (ESL) taught to the people who don't have English as native language but used in internal purposes like administration, broadcasting, education, etc. e.g. India, Singapore, etc.

In India we have the CIEFL (Central Institute for English and Foreign Language). Initially, with a low number of people speaking English, standardization was possible. But with such big population, speaking English, standardization of English becomes impossible. He refers to few persons like Burchfield, Henry Sweet for their comments on the use of English in future in ENL countries. All use it in their own accordance and in requirement for their needs. He gives four examples in which English as a language in global context works very well –

THE BBC WORLD SERVICE OF LONDON
 ALL INDIA RADIO OF DELHI
 THE STRAITS TIMES OF SINGAPORE
 THE JAPAN TIMES OF TOKYO.

Prediction is the operative word in to determine the future of English communication due to the available multitude of unpredictable factors.

Further more, I will argue that looking for global trends or patterns in these matters is not appropriate. Not only are the tools being used to attempt such predictions inadequate, but also these factors will be determined increasingly by localized or regional influences and not global ones. It is overly simplistic to group together regions such as Europe and Asia when considering the futures of Englishes and other languages since the factors impacting on their future are so different. There seems no doubt that global demographic trends clearly demonstrate the fact that native speakers of English have either already or soon will be outnumbered by those who speak English as a foreign or second language. While this will clearly impact on varieties of English around the world, the main factors that determine how the language develops in terms of its variety and influence, will be localized factors, which will mean the experience will differ greatly around the world. Looking first at a definition of some of the terms discussed above, the concept of World Englishes is commonly understood as the different varieties or appropriations of English that have developed around the world over time. These have all been comprehensively documented in the literature, such as Singaporean English or 'Singlish', Malaysian English or 'Manglish', and so on. Such varieties are examples of how people in different parts of the world have expressed their own identity by developing their own version of predominately spoken English. However looking to the future we may need a broader definition of world Englishes or varieties of English.

As Warschauer (2000) discusses, as the commercialization of intellectual property in the EFL sector continues, native speaker countries such as England, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand will gradually lose market share in the delivery of English language training and publishing of ELT curricula to other regions such as Asia. This will have a likely impact on ELT pedagogy and quite possibly result in what Warschauer refers to as 'a bifurcated system' where the development of ELT courses is separated from their delivery (Warschauer 2000, p.10). One possible consequence of this is the development of larger regional varieties of English such as an 'Asian standard' where 'non-standard' rules governing grammar and vocabulary for example are established thus extending the concept of varieties of English.

The concept of an English speaking world also needs definition in order to speculate about its likely future. If we mean a world dominated purely by native speakers or those who speak English as a first language then clearly this seems most unlikely as Graddol (1997 & 2000) explains. Graddol's demographic modelling demonstrates quite emphatically that in terms of population, the number of native English speakers has either already been usurped or soon will be usurped by those who speak English as a second language. As birth rates fall in the industrialized English speaking world and the reverse occurs in the non-industrialised, non-English speaking world, it seems that the optimistically triumphant dreams of those mainly British speculators from the colonial era of a world dominated by native English speakers by the twenty-first century have been all but dashed. So, if we define an English speaking world as one of native speakers, then clearly this seems impossible at this stage. However if we define an English speaking world as one in which the majority of its residents speak the language as their preferred second language as a lingua franca, then this would seem an entirely likely scenario. The corollary of this would then seem to be a world in which greater variations in English develop in different regions overtime, although the arguments will later be developed to counter this as being a foregone conclusion.

The other definition to consider is what is meant by a global or major language. In order to be considered a global or major world language, it must be one which provides its speakers with a degree of power, whether this may be a political, commercial, social or all of these concepts. Clearly English by definition is such a language as are several other languages, carrying similar influence to a lesser extent, such as Spanish, Mandarin, French and so on. What seems likely as Graddol (1997), Crystal (1997) and others have discussed is that a greater number of languages will increase in importance as global languages along such terms, while an increasing number of 'minor' languages will do the reverse over time.

In order to speculate about the future of world Englishes and the position of English in the world, it is important to understand the situation as it is at present. Clearly, this is one in which English finds itself at the top of this apex of languages in terms of its worldly power, as is illustrated by facts such as those expressed by Crystal (1997) whereby at that time of publishing 85% of international organisations used English as their official language; 85% of the world's film market was in English; some 90% of all academic texts published in certain fields such as linguistics were in English. Figures of the total number of native speakers in the world today vary but Crystal (1997) puts this figure at around 337 million rising at a much slower pace to about 433 million by 2050 and Graddol (1997) puts the current figure (which he admits is an underestimate) at about 235 million now rising gradually to about 462 million by 2050.

However, commentators such as Graddol encourage those who view the possibility of a future world dominated by English first language speakers to do so with great caution. Graddol provides some interesting modelling of how the number of native English speakers will change using the 'Engco' module, a tool developed by his company, the English Company. While it could be argued this tool is still inadequate. It is reasonably comprehensive given the factors it takes into account beyond simple population modelling to make predictions of a future where this pattern of English domination will change quite significantly. Using Kachru's (1986) concept of the 3 circles of English with native speakers in the middle, second language English speakers outside this and those learning the language as a foreign language on the outer, Graddol predicts that there will be an ever-increasing pressure from the outside in. That is, as the number of native speakers decline, the group of those speaking the language as a second language will continue to increase dramatically as those from the outer circle move to the second over time.

This point to a world dominated by bi-lingual or multi-lingual people. As Graddol points out, there are real questions about how English will develop in the hands of people who are speaking it predominately as a second or third language rather than being on the whole dominated by mono-lingual people, as has been the case up until now. On the face of it, it would seem very likely that this will lead to greater varieties of the language developing over time as it becomes separated from the 'umbilical cord' of native speakers. Another way Graddol (2000) explains this is to compare two very different looking pyramids. On the one hand, we have a present one that resembles a triangle with English and French at its narrow apex, followed down the hierarchy by the other languages of the UN (Arabic, Chinese, German, Russian, Spanish) and then by around 80 national languages and then below this the other official languages within nation states and finally the base comprising all the remaining 6000 plus vernacular languages. On the other hand is a very different looking pyramid that Graddol sees developing by the middle of this century. That is one which has a widening apex where English is joined by the big global languages of the UN and a narrowing base of local languages with the remaining national languages in the middle. Graddol also points out that this situation cannot simply be attributed to the rise of English. That is, the loss of minor or endangered languages and dialects is due to several factors including a move towards industrialization and more urbanized populations away from rural and regional areas, improved communications within countries and so on.

While many prophecies about the future made by people such as Graddol are based on solid arguments, it must be said that definitive tools simply do not exist to predict the situation in 50-100 years vis a vis the position of English with any degree of certainty. Firstly, there are so many unpredictable factors at play. Secondly, it is still unclear how commercial trading habits and economic shifts will develop in regions of the world such as north and south-east Asia. Trying to look for global patterns in English is, in my view, unrealistic. It would seem more realistic to attempt to view these trends on a more regional basis. For example, Graddol 2000 sees the possibility of Europe developing as a single linguistic zone, where those who speak one of the 'big' languages such as English have better access to material success, as has been the case in India, for example. However, in my view it does not seem reasonable to assume the same situation will occur in north and south-east Asia and if it does it seems far from certain which language(s) would be dominant. One possible means of looking for a global trend could be, as Graddol, suggests, by examining the increasing changes in global youth culture. There is no doubt American popular youth culture has been the dominant influence over the last 30-40 years and with this has been the resulting prevalence of English has part of that culture. However, it seems that ageing populations in the west and rising populations in regions such as South America and Asia could have ramifications for the future of English: It would seem reasonable to assume that as global youth culture becomes increasingly influenced by young people from these parts of the non-English speaking world, the importance of other languages in this mix will increase. Technology is often one argument put forward to explain the growth of English throughout the world until now and into the future. Graddol (2000) points out that at the time of publishing some 90% of Internet service providers were English based. However as Graddol himself points out this trend is not likely continue along these lines. As HTML, the hyper text format in which web pages are compiled, continues to support multiple languages, Graddol (2000) suggests that the proportion of English.

Graddol (1997 & 2000) argues that the trend in global satellite delivery of programs such as MTV and the Murdoch-owned sports network Star TV is for globally produced content which is then locally distributed and customized. The result, which is already apparent in many parts of the world, can be seen as at least a continuation of the status quo in terms of current linguistic diversity where local languages are supported in

terms of both the programming content as well as advertising and so on. Not only does this cater for populations in a variety of non-English speaking countries but, as Graddol (2000) suggests, this will also cater for the Diaspora of people, whose first language is not English, currently living in the English speaking world. Once again such trends are evidence to suggest a sharp decrease in linguistic diversity over this century is not necessarily a certainty. One trend that does need to be emphasized is that discussed by Warschauer (2000);

and that is future employment patterns. As Warschauer points out there is an increasing move towards service or knowledge based work, which places a higher emphasis on inter-personal communication, which of course relies on language. Warschauer discusses Castells (1996) concept of 'Informationalism' where there is a move towards increasing global networks through tourism, business, the scientific world and the media. The result of this push, Warschauer claims, is the increasing value of a lingua franca. However, this does not automatically mean this lingua franca will be English or at least not English alone in every part of the world.

In so far as English is increasingly seen as one such lingua franca encouraged by this process of informationalism, Warschauer claims this will promote the development of world Englishes. He suggests that the TEFL/TESOL industry can respond to this by adopting the concept of 'multiliteracies' put forward by the New London Group (1996) and Cope & Kalantzis (2000), which suggests that most curricula in the field limits itself to standard forms of the language. However, it would seem that the degree to which the English language teaching profession can exert any real influence over the future of world Englishes is extremely small, given the enormity of factors at play.

THE MAIN FACTORS: DEMOGRAPHY:

How many people will be there in 2050? Where will they live? What age will they be? Population projections exist for all the world's countries and answers to such demographic questions can help us make broad predictions about a question at the heart of this study: who will speak what languages in the 21st century?

THE WORLD ECONOMY:

The economic shape of the world is rapidly changing. The world as a whole is getting richer, but the proportion of wealth created and spent by the west will decrease markedly in the next few decades. This will alter the relationship between the west and the rest of the world especially Asia and will change the economic attractiveness of other major languages.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY:

Advances in technology in the 19th century helped "kick start" the long wave of economic growth which is yet not reach some parts of the world. Technological change transforms the spaces in which we work and live, but it is difficult to predict how technology will shape our future global patterns of language use.

GLOBALISATION

World economies and cultures are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, politically, socially and technologically. 'Complexification', 'cross-border activity' and 'process re-engineering' have been the buzz words of the 1990s. Here we examine the impact of economic globalization on patterns of communication.

TRANSNATIONAL'S OWNERSHIP

Global trade is no longer a matter of bilateral arrangements between nation states, or between organizations economically rooted in nation states. Such is the complex structure of business ownership, through joint and ventures holding companies, establishing any simple national pattern of ownership of the major enterprises is difficult. And many of the world's largest corporations can hardly even be called multinational; rather they have become transnational. It has been calculated that transnational corporations (TNCs) account for as much as two-thirds of international trade in goods, while 50 of the 100 largest economies are said to be not nation states but TNCs. The largest of the world's TNCs are involved in the energy and chemicals industries (oil, pharmaceuticals) and the communications industry (airlines, telecommunications, media). The majority are headquartered in the Big Three trading blocs. And, at the present stage of global economic development, the international activities of TNCs are tending to promote English.

EXAMPLE OF A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY IN INDIA. LIKE GENERAL MOTORS,

GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR

The rise of TNCs has supported a new, global distribution of labour: large corporations can shift production to countries with a cheaper, less, regulated workforce. If production costs in one country become too great, production can be shifted to another part of the world, perhaps with tax incentives and subsidies to start up new enterprises. Although some commentators see this as a predatory, 'slash and burn' activity on a global scale, others regard it as an important and benign driver of economic development in third-world countries.

Such shifts of production require in-flows of capital, skills and technology, and are one means by which a developing economy is helped to 'come up to speed' in a shorter timescale than the industrialized countries themselves required. This process promotes the English language. EXAMPLE OF CALL CENTRE, BPOs, ETC.

GLOBAL USE OF ENGLISH VIA INTERNET:

The Internet epitomizes the information society, allows the transfer of services, expertise and intellectual capital across the world cheaply, rapidly and apparently without pollution or environmental damage. At present 90% of Internet hosts are based in English speaking countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of traffic and the majority of Web sites are based in English and that those user, based in other countries and who normally work in other languages, find they have to communicate with others in the cyberspace community through the medium of English.

Many studies, however, have shown how well the Internet supports minority and diasporic affinity groups. Although early studies of 'nationally oriented' Internet newsgroups (containing discussions of national or regional culture and language) seemed to indicate a preference for using English (for example, soc. culture. Punjabi) others which have become more recently active (such as soc. culture. Vietnamese) extensively use the national language. It is not yet clear why some groups use English less than others, but an overall trend away from the hegemony of English in such groups is visible and often surfaces as an explicit topic of discussion.

One reason may be that the Internet user base is developing rapidly in Asia and non English speaking countries. And software technology, such as browser and HTML standards (which govern the Hyper Text Markup Language in which Web pages are written), now also supports multilingual browsing (p. 3 1).

The quantity of Internet materials in languages other than English is set to expand dramatically in the next decade. English will remain pre eminent for some time, but it will eventually become one language amongst many. It is therefore misleading to suggest English is somehow the native language of the Internet. It will be used in cyberspace in the same way as it is deployed elsewhere: in international forums, for the dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge, in advertising, for the promotion of consumer goods and for after sales services.

In the meantime, local communication on the Internet is expected to grow significantly. This, and the increasing use of email for social and family communication, will encourage the use of a wider variety of languages English is said to have accounted for 80% of computer based communication in the 1990s. That proportion is expected to fall to around 40% in the next decade. BORROW FROM ABOVE.

NEED FOR AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ELT:

is a growing appreciation that the business environment of the next century will require global enterprises to meet three 'bottom lines': economic prosperity, environmental protection and social equity. Public trust in the institutions and organisations which provide goods and services may in the future represent a more important component of 'brand image than the quality of the product itself. Hence ethical, as well as environmental, values are likely to come under increasing public scrutiny and significantly influence customer loyalty.

However, one of the problems facing the proponents of an ethical approach to English teaching is that no one is sure where the moral high ground lies when it comes to the export of ELT goods and services. English has for long been seen as a 'clean' and safe export, one without some of the complex moral implications associated with the sale of 'products such as weapons or military vehicles. The ELT industry has been portrayed as one which benefits both producer and consumer and both exporting and importing countries. It has been a major component in overseas aid as well as a commercial enterprise.

How then, can the teaching of English be brought within a more ethical Cramework what social responsibilities are associated with the promotion and teaching of English? There is a growing concern about endangered languages but very little debate about the management of large languages, of which English is the largest.

A more sensitive approach will be needed in the future, which recognises that English is not a universal panacea for social, economic and political ills and that teaching methods and materials, and educational policies, need to be adapted for local contexts. The world is becoming aware of the fate of endangered languages and more anxious over the long term impact of English on world cultures, national institutions and local ways of life. Perhaps a combination of circumstances such as shifting public values, changed economic priorities and regional political expediency could bring about a serious reversal for British ELT providers at some point in the future. The development of a 'Brent Spar' scenario for English might help explore possible chains of events.

Whether such a discussion is held in terms of global 'brand management', the need to adapt to a changing business environment, or a moral requirement to work within an ethical framework, the ELT industry will have to respond to changing international social values, This would bring a major exporting activity into the same framework which is now expected to regulate trading relations with other countries and would help to ensure

that the reputation of Britain, of the British people and their language, is enhanced rather than diminished in the coming century. TESOL, ILETS, TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, SAT, ETC.

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