



GROWING DEMAND FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA

A.V.Rajya Lakshmi

(Head, Department of English, BCAS, Bapatla)

Email: rajyalakshmbcas@gmail.com

ABSTRACT



Today's world considers English as a global language because there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. It makes news daily in many countries and is adopted by many countries. It has a special role to play in the countries where it has been accepted as the official language and is being used as a medium of communication. The primary focus is on the study of the importance of English being the internally acknowledged language.

Keywords: *English, Global Language, Official Language.*

Citation:

APA Lakshmi, A.V.R. (2017) Growing Demand for English Language in India. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 4(2), 23-25.

MLA Lakshmi, Rajya.A.V. "Growing Demand for English Language in India." *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL* 4.2(2017): 23-25.

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English has reached the present day status primarily because of two main factors – the expansion of British Empire in the 19th Century and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the 20th Century. Not least, for largely accidental historical reasons, English has become the major international language and serves as a medium for communication not only with native English speakers but English, taught and learned as an international language, has become an important medium for communication between speakers of other languages. In fact, there are probably at least twice as many people who use English as a foreign or second language for daily communication as use it as a first language (Crystal 47)[1]. The simple fact is that English has become the main international language. The reasons for English to have become so dominant

are various: colonialism, military power, commerce, industry, trade, technology, media, the cinema and other arts, popular music, while, more recently, English has become the predominant language of the internet with some 80% of the net being conducted in English (Graddol 50) [2]. However, the reasons why English has assumed this significance don't matter so much as the fact that English is the most widely spoken language in the world. It is hard to estimate how many speakers of English there are in the world. Crystal, in 1987, estimated that there were 350 million native speakers but another 1400 million people who spoke it regularly as a second or foreign language (Crystal 438)[3]. More recent figures frequently quoted at the 2002 RELC Seminar in Singapore suggested there are 700 million English-L speakers, 700 million ESL speakers, and 700 million



EFL speakers. Such figures confirm that English has the strongest claim to being the principal international language, and therefore, for international communication, it is the most useful [4].

Across India, we find people speaking more than 400 languages and dialects, but only 22 of them are considered official languages. They include English, which is widely spoken in the big cities. And with rapid urbanisation, the demand for English has been sweeping almost all the fields of national life like politics, international relations, media, communication, travel and education. Most of the earlier scientific innovations were made in Britain and are now continued in America. The advancements in Science and Technology and their use of new terminology have been showing an immediate impact on the language, adding tens of thousands of words to the English lexicon. As these innovations come down from the English-speaking countries, those who wish to update their knowledge and learn about new inventions need to learn English well. This need has resulted in a dramatic increase of the expository material in the English language. Besides, all the dictionaries, encyclopedias and books of knowledge are written and printed in English. Hence, the access to new knowledge is only through the English language.

Even at the international political level, the English language operates in many ways. In fact, the League of Nations was the first to allocate a special place to English. Even in the media, the English language has an encompassing influence. The press, the radio, and especially the television – all share the expressions in English language. It is the English language which first added sound to the movie world. Even in the recording industry, the English language has been an early entrant. Recently, the Chief of the Australian army, Lieutenant General Peter Cosgrove, spoke about how he believed Australia could best secure the future.

“Language skills and cultural sensitivity will be the new currency of this world order. A long with computer literacy they will provide the keys to participation in the global economy. ... Our future prosperity and security will depend on our ability to understand these cultures [with whom we trade and

have other links] and to build bridges to the citizens of these nations and all our immediate neighbours. ... It is impossible to overstate the case for expanding our collective knowledge of the languages and customs of our neighbours”[5]. It is not only in Australia that this diversification has occurred and where it has been recognised that, to cope with the national and international diversity, it is necessary to upgrade and diversify the nation's language skills and try to ensure that the people learn to understand and accept other races and cultures. There are, in fact, many international treaties that recognize the value of learning other languages, especially in order to break down prejudice and increase intercultural understanding. The UNESCO Position Paper, October 2002, *Education in a Multicultural World (draft)*, for example, states:

“Learning another language opens up access to other value systems and ways of interpreting the world, encouraging intercultural understanding and helping to reduce xenophobia.”

The 1995 (UNESCO) *Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy* promote foreign language learning in order to foster understanding between communities and nations (Article 29). The 1998 *World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century* stresses the importance of multilingualism in order to encourage international understanding and asks for student exchange programmes to be an integral part of all higher education. The Council of Europe has always strongly supported language learning as a means to fostering understanding between the countries of Europe, to facilitate trade, and to enable Europeans to work anywhere in Europe.

The importance of the English language in educational field is clear from the fact that many countries have made English as an official language. Consequently, the English language teaching (ELT) has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the recent years.

English in India is a question of linguistic centralism while the other Indian languages lead to linguistic regionalism. A foreign language existing so firmly and distinctly has posed a problem to the



country. From Macaulay to Narendra Modi, we have seen many reports and commissions; but these have been only exhortations and attempts to improve the position of regional languages. Yet, the language problem became more complicated without any practical solution. It developed into a very serious problem as no solution has been offered. The growing modernization and internationalism in the world prevented us from doing away with the English language. Besides, Indian languages are often associated with tradition and are understood to be anti-modern. Therefore, a complete switchover to the Indian languages would lead to educational chaos and total isolation from the developments on the international arena. We could not risk this because of the cultural, social, political and economic reasons. Hence, this situation needed an urgent solution.

As the English language is getting consolidated as a global language, it is indispensable for all the countries to teach and learn English. Otherwise, it is difficult to keep pace with the development in the world. In particular, it is very essential for a multilingual and developing country like India to learn this global language. Hence, to make the learning of English effective and successful, a teacher should consider the following aims and objectives. They are to enable our students.

Thus, the English language provides the chief means of access to high-tech communication and information. This makes us conclude that English will retain its role as the dominant language in the modern world. Further, it continues to remain as the world's language for international communication as the whole world is heading towards the formation of a global village.

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