



ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN POSTMODERN ERA: WAY TO UNIMAGINABLE SUCCESS IN CONTEMPORARY BUSINESSES & CAREERS

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Abstract

In the present postmodern era, English language competence has become the central basis or fundamental requirement for creating opportunities of decent earning and unimaginable success for one's business or career all across the world. It is now language of business, academics, research, IT, media, advertisement, Science and technology. English is spoken and learnt all across the world and as such it has earned the status of a lingua franca, a language that is used for international exchanges. Today, it is economically active among thought leaders, the business decision-makers, policy makers, researchers and academia due to its resourcefulness and flexibility. The present advanced technological digital world has even compelled countries like Japan and china to initiate learning and using of English in different spheres especially at international levels.

In this backdrop, a lot of research studies have been carried out across the world and these reveal clearly that English has now become an essential language / tool of contemporary business and career excellence all over the world. It is this language which truly rules the present businesses & job markets.

Taking cognizance of the above mentioned facts, now the researcher, in this paper will make an attempt to showcase and discuss how strongly and necessarily English Language competence determines one's employability and success of businesses or career excellence in the current postmodern era or digital age.

Keywords: English Language, lingua franca, digitalization, opportunity, businesses, career, postmodern era

If you want to take full advantage ... there is only one way to do it; learn English...

- **David Crystal**

Speaking English makes people open to Britain's cultural achievements, social values and business aims.

- **Robert Phillipson**

English is seen as a language of Power and strength.

- **Ann Johnson**

Introduction

In the contemporary era, English language has emerged as a global language which facilitates

studies, research, travel, business, entrepreneurship, digitalization, and career opportunities. It has unequivocally been proclaimed as the *lingua franca* of the world. It is currently the link or bridging language across cultures, regions, nations, tribes, and continents. Due to its elegance of style, richness of vocabulary, clarity, dynamism, lucidity, rhetoric, adaptability, resourcefulness, and its vigour and vitality, it has entered in almost all walks of modern man's life. A good command of / over English is necessary / a necessity in today's global job market, career excellence and businesses.

In this regard, David Crystal, the most eminent voice on English language, in his world famous book, *English as a Global Language*, puts forward a lively and factual account of the rise of English as a global language and explicates the current status and future potential of English as an international language of communication.

Main Argument

At the outset, I would love to start with David Crystal's book *English as a Global Language*, he presents a cornucopia on the significance of English in the modern era. He states that presently English language has earned the status of a lingua franca, a language that is used for international exchanges. He goes on to mention that through history, different languages have served as linguae francae on a regional basis. In Europe, Latin served this role across the Roman Empire, and continued in this function for centuries after the fall of Rome because it was the language of the Catholic Church. In China, where dozens of mutually unintelligible dialects are spoken, Mandarin serves as the common language of government and intellectual exchange. And starting in the seventeenth century, French served as the international language of diplomacy until its fairly recent replacement by English.

The status of English as a lingua franca, however, is quickly transforming into that of a global language, one that nearly everyone in the world can speak. This is an unprecedented event, although there has been a trend over history toward linguistic consolidation as a result of political consolidation. The globalization of English was driven by a historical accident, namely that both world powers during the last two centuries spoke English. The language was first spread around the globe in the nineteenth century by the growing British Empire. As British political power waned at the turn of the last century, American influence and prestige was on the ascendancy, further spreading the use of English.

The globalization of English is further driven by the growing global economy. More and more people around the world are getting involved in the global marketplace of goods, jobs and ideas. But to participate in this marketplace, you need to speak English. And if it is not your native language, you

need to learn it, or you will be left behind. Although there are more native speakers of Mandarin Chinese than there are of English, there are more people who speak English as a second language than any other language in the world. In fact, there are more people who speak English as a second language than as a first language. Combining first and second language users, we find that English is the world's most widely spoken and used language.

David Crystal in his utopia, sees all people in the world speaking some sort of World Standard Spoken English when communicating internationally and their native language locally and at home. The globalization of English is a grass-roots movement. People want better lives for themselves and for their children, and they see the way to the good life is through participation in the global marketplace. Thus, they learn English and teach it to their children, often not caring whether the younger generation even learns the language of their ancestors. There is a sense in which a common world language would increase the chances of world peace, and that is through the global marketplace. As the world becomes more interconnected and interdependent, warfare becomes a less profitable means of resolving political problems. Crystal hopes for a future in which nation-states conduct their commerce in a common language while maintaining their national languages at home. But there is a bolder, brighter vision of the future – one in which the globe is unified economically, politically and linguistically. As members of a single community, there would be free movement of people, goods and ideas around the globe, facilitated by a single global language. That language would likely be a descendant of English, but with continued admixtures from many other languages. As the global economy develops, the number of English speakers will continue to increase. The development of some sort of World Standard Spoken English is virtually inevitable. It is also quite likely that the vast majority of the world's languages will die out because their speakers will no longer be interested in using them. Instead, they will be learning the global language so that they can claim their rightful place as citizens of the world. According to David Crystal:

English is a global languagea language is global when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country.... To achieve such a status, a language has to be taken up by other countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within their communities, even though they may have few (or no) mother-tongue speakers. (Crystal, 2003)

In this paper, the researcher tries to answer the following questions:

- i.) Has English Language emerged as the basic requirement for becoming employable or to emerge as a successful individual with a bright career or business in modern society?
- ii.) Is English Language truly the major requirement for excelling in contemporary business markets or life?
- iii.) How this foreign language, after crossing the British Isles, has succeeded in becoming the basic criterion for determining the job eligibility of our workforce?
- iv.) Does English Language help in becoming successful entrepreneurs?
- v.) What role does English language play in modern multi-lingual markets / corporates?
- vi.) What is the relationship between modern gadgets / technology and English language?
- vii.) How English language has finally emerged as the dominant and successful language of modern times?

For answering the first proposition, let us see first what Mr. Mark Robson, Director of English and Exams, British Council, says about English Language:

English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide – that's one in every four. By 2020, we forecast that two billion people will be using it – or learning to use it. And it is the economically active, the thought leaders, the business decision-makers, the young, the movers and shakers present and future who are learning and

speaking English. They are talking to each other more and more and English is the 'operating system' of that global conversation. (For details, see reference below)

He states further:

Research shows how a good command of English cannot only enhance an individual's economic prospects but also contribute to national growth and competitiveness. In a 2012 survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit, nearly 70 per cent of executives said their workforce will need to master English to realise corporate expansion plans, and a quarter said that more than 50 per cent of their total workforce will need English ability. English is becoming a core criterion in determining employability. Early adopter advantages are gradually fading and are being replaced by economic disadvantage for those who do not speak the language. Those who are not online or cannot speak English are increasingly left behind. (For details, see reference below)

Similarly, Tsedal Neelay, Professor in the Organisational Behavior Unit at Harvard Business School, in her article titled *Global Business Speaks English* in Harvard Business Review, remarks:

Ready or not, English is now the global language of business. More and more multinational companies are mandating English as the common corporate language—Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, Fast Retailing, Nokia, Renault, Samsung, SAP, Technicolor, and Microsoft in Beijing, to name a few—in an attempt to facilitate communication and performance across geographically diverse functions and business endeavours. (For details, see reference below)

She further states:

Similar concerns drove Hiroshi Mikitani, the CEO of Rakuten—Japan's largest online marketplace—to mandate in March 2010 that English would be the company's

official language of business. The company's goal was to become the number one internet services company in the world, and Mikitani believed that the new policy was vital to achieving that end, especially as expansion plans were concentrated outside Japan. He also felt responsible for contributing to an expanded worldview for his country, a conservative island nation. (For details, see reference below)

She further adds:

Adopting a global language policy is not easy, and companies invariably stumble along the way. It's radical, and it's almost certain to meet with staunch resistance from employees. Many may feel at a disadvantage if their English isn't as good as others', team dynamics and performance can suffer, and national pride can get in the way. But to survive and thrive in a global economy, companies must overcome language barriers—and English will almost always be the common ground, at least for now.

The fastest-spreading language in human history, English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide—that's one in every four of us. There are close to 385 million native speakers in countries like the U.S. and Australia, about a billion fluent speakers in formerly colonized nations such as India and Nigeria, and millions of people around the world who've studied it as a second language. An estimated 565 million people use it on the internet. (For details, see reference below)

According to David Crystal, Peters, and Graddol about 80 per cent of the world's trade and financial business is transacted today in the English language. Hence, enterprises worldwide have noted the necessity of having a workforce that is able to communicate in English if they are to take advantage of the opportunities in the global marketplace. This has made companies to consider seriously the candidates ability or inability to speak fluently in

English as one of the major selection criteria. It is also true that the situation has now fully changed in companies and corporates as employees need to be interactive and communicative with others in the team and outside.

Now let's talk about Entrepreneurs who bring together funds, raw materials, manufacturing facilities, labour, etc. and mostly focus on finding ways to satisfy the needs of the customer by offering improved quality, good service, durability and affordable prices. It has been realised that for achieving target gains use of English is a must in today's scenario even for entrepreneurs. Ideas, products or services arising from entrepreneurship generate interest and assume economic value only when they are brought to public notice through the proper use of an appropriate language that has an international or world-wide appeal. In fact, the ability to command the attention of diverse groups of people through the use of English has now become a critical factor in the success of any enterprise.

Good communication skills constitute therefore a valuable asset that enables the entrepreneur establish and disseminate the goals of his / her enterprise, develop plans and organize human and other resources in the most effective and purposeful way. By examining the purpose of communication, clarifying ideas before attempting to communicate, considering the content and overtones of messages, using unambiguous lucid words and terse sentences, expressing thoughts reasonably and lucidly, following up messages with actions, and approximating actions with goals / targets of the organization, the entrepreneur is better able to control the performance of his / her business. Nicholas Ostler in his book, *Lingua Franca: English until the Return of Babel*, states:

The current status of English language is unprecedented. Simultaneously, it has a preeminent global role in science, commerce, politics, finance, tourism, sport, and screen entertainment and popular music with no challenger comparable to it, it seems almost untouchable; even in China, the only country with a language

that has more native speakers, every school child now studies English and India set to overtake China in population by 2050, is already trading on an expertise in English inherited from the British Empire studiously preserved and fostered ever since. (Ostler 2010:267)

It is also a fact that there are 27 member states in the European Union and 54 in the Commonwealth of Nations. For European Union, English is one of the main official languages through which all business is conducted. In the same vein, English is the main language for all business transactions of the Commonwealth. In airlines and shipping industries, English is the official language. Hence, a sound and excellent command of English is greatly required for key jobs such as air traffic controller or ship captain. Henry Hitchings in his well-known work titled *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English* remarks:

No Language has spread as widely as English, and it continues to spread. Internationally the desire to learn it is insatiable. In the twenty first century the world is becoming more urban and more middle class, and the adoption is a symptom of this, for increasingly English serves as the lingua Franca of business and popular culture. It is dominant or at least very prominent in other areas such as shipping, diplomacy, computing, medicine, and education. A recent study has suggested that even in United Arab Emirates among students 'Arabic is associated with tradition, home, religion, culture, school, arts and social sciences whereas English is symbolic of modernity, work, higher education, commerce, economics and science and technology'. In Arabic speaking countries, science subjects are often taught in English because excellent textbooks and other educational resources are readily available in English. This is not something that has come about in an un-purposed fashion. (Hitchings 2011:300)

Research has proved that on the Internet, the majority of websites are written and created in English. Even those sites which are in other

languages often give you the option to translate the site. English has also now emerged as a major language for finance and the stock markets across the world. Those who wish to do business globally need to earn good command over spoken English. In fact, English has presently emerged as one of the major business languages on the internet. A business website composed in English attracts more customers and enables even small business owners to sell their products globally i.e., around the world.

A through study also shows that countless research papers and dissertations have been written under different titles across the world in various academic institutes on the indispensable nature of English language in the modern era. All have projected English language as the central or primary requirement for turning employable or earning or excelling in one's career in the contemporary postmodern world. Christian Mair's *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*, includes Michael Toolan's essay "the English as the Supranational Language of Human Rights?" wherein a US-based graduate student, on a discussion list concerning Critical Discourse Analysis, says:

I think the social role(s) of Arab women, whether in the West or in their respective Arab countries, is undergoing some major changes. I am confident that CDA will provide me with the tools necessary to account for those dramatic changes. In this connection, the English language is playing a major role as it's becoming the language of "freedom-seekers". (Mair 2005: 54)

This shows clearly that English Language contributes to sustainable global development in all respects. It eases life, trade and business between countries, companies, corporates and individuals that do not share a common language or who are distantly placed with different linguistic backgrounds. English language is now used for holding together these countries, individuals and business men with different languages and cultures. Thus, it won't be wrong if we say that English Language is the UK's greatest gift to the modern and postmodern era for it has truly now emerged as the world's commonest

language which is used for convenience, career excellence, businesses and better relations by one and all around the world.

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