

GLOBAL LANGUAGE ENGLISH: ITS IMPACT ON THE INDIAN SOCIETY

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**ABSTRACT:**

English language has got a major role to play in the linguistic side of globalization and has slowly emerged to be the lingua franca of international relations . Easily intelligible and widely accepted , English today is spoken by more than 350 million people and is synonymous with development and opportunities. The linguistic globalization is not an internal language phenomenon but the result of a deliberate linguistic attitude , strictly guided by economic interests. English is now widely regarded as a major business language . More and more multinational companies are mandating English as their common corporate language . Now,with this sudden IT revolution in India,with this sector increasing its contribution to India's GDP from 1.2% in 1998 to 7.7% in 2017,the significance of English language in our country has certainly increased, and due to valid reasons.

Our paper briefly describes the importance of English as a language in our modern Indian society , and how, through the British colonization English was first introduced to Indians. The contribution of English language in the progress of Indian society is truly unrequitable, and this paper sheds some light on how and why English came to be of such undeniable importance to the Modern Indian Education System.

**Keywords:** lingua franca, unrestricted multilingualism, linguistic globalization, communication, global language policy, global language, international relations, colonization

**INTRODUCTION:**

"Language is intimately tied to man's feeling and activity. It is bound up with nationality, religion and the feelings of self. It is used for work, worship and play by everyone, he be beggar or banker, savage or civilised". (Lado 1986 : 11)

India is a multilingual, multicultural society with twenty two official languages, and many more unofficial ones. India is one of the unique countries in the world that has this legacy of diversity of languages. Unrestricted multilingualism is the way of life in India as people in different parts of the country speak more than one language from their birth and learn additional languages during their life time. An individual can function best through the language which he/she acquires natively, i.e., his/her mother tongue. The social aspirations can best be fulfilled when they are allowed to function through the mother tongue. Therefore it is natural to think of mother tongue for the purpose of education. However, this lingual diversity increases the necessity of a standard language, a language spoken and understood by everyone that would help in exchange of thoughts between people with different lingos and coming from different parts of the country. This necessity to have a common language for interaction has led to the learning of English. Though a foreign language, English occupies an important position in the Indian Society. Moreover, for people residing in the developing and under-developed countries like India, English is often synonymous with opportunity, a brighter future and a better standard of living. This indicates the remarkable success of English as the *lingua franca* of business, travel and international relations.

So before we go into the importance of English learning in the contemporary Indian society and its increasing popularity among Indians, first we will take a look at the remarkable success of English as a **Global Language**, and the probable reasons behind it.

### Content:

In recent times , there has been a lot of speculation and argument among people of non-English origin regarding the importance of learning the English language and about incorporating it as a part of our day-to-day curriculum. Rapid development of English as a global business language has made it almost mandatory for a large number of people in today's world to adapt it and to implement it . The relative ease with which English can be picked up (especially compared with Mandarin , which has more than a thousand syllables) and the pervasive soft power of US culture and tradition indicates that English will continue to dominate the world stage for at least the foreseeable future without facing competitions from any other language . Now coming to the reasons behind this success of English, several reasons are possible. Let us shed light on some of these :

<1>*English promotes communication among people having different mother tongues*

<2>*English is the top language of the internet*

<3>*The British colonization*

<4>*English makes our life more entertaining*

<5>*Learning English can actually make us smarter*

<6>*English is now the global language of business*

Over the centuries , the British Empire has expanded and ruled over different countries . In most cases , they forced the people they ruled over to learn English . Some of these countries still speak English , even though that isn't their main language . For example- In our very own country India , English is majorly spoken and it is almost mandatory for educated people to know the language to bag a good job here . In fact , India has one of the largest English speaking population in the whole world . That is because , India was one of the colonies of the British Empire , and it was inevitable with colonialism that the British would impose their own language on the native people and so they did .

### **HISTORICAL ASPECT:THE BEGINNING**

The association of the British with India started in the early part of the 17th century with the first East India company voyage in 1601, which eventually resulted in the company controlling India from 1757 till 1858. The rule was then passed to the Crown and lasted till India's independence in 1947.

This rather long period resulted in India adopting English as one of its official languages post independence and several Indian languages leaving their impact on English. India is an extremely diverse subcontinent with a rich array of languages that run into the hundreds. India has 22 official languages, 150 major languages and about 1652 recorded languages and dialects (1962 census).

When two cultures are exposed to each other over an extended time, their languages begin to influence each other and words from one language are assimilated into the other. English came to be the language of the legal system, higher education, pan-regional administrative network, science and technology, trade and commerce because the indigenous languages were not equipped for these roles and English provided for a convenient vocabulary and because the use of English was considered prestigious and powerful. English became gradually a major tool for acquiring knowledge in the sciences and the humanities.

A letter of Raja Rammohan Roy addressed to Lord Amherst from the year 1823 is often presented as evidence of local demand for English. Roy embraced European learning, and in his opinion, English provided Indians with "the key to all knowledge - all the really useful knowledge which the world contains". In the letter, Roy expresses his opinion that the available funds should be used for employing European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world. According to the document, which had been prepared for the governor general William Bentinck, after listening to the argument of the two sides, felt that a class should be formed in India, a group of people who would act as interpreters between the British and Indians, "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect". Lord Bentinck declared that the funds "administered on Public Instruction should be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population". English gradually became the language of government, education,

advancement, "a symbol of imperial rule and of selfimprovement" In the following years, English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration by the British Raj (1765-1947). Indian education was ever greater anglicized as the English language became rooted in an alien linguistic, cultural, administrative and educational setting. The first universities were established in India in 1857 (in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras). English became accepted as the language of the élite, of the administration, and of the pan-Indian press. English newspapers had an influential reading public.. English was considered as a "road to the light", a tool of "civilization".

Indian languages also in their own way have left their influence on the English language which grew richer in vocabulary by inculcating some Indian words. Over the years there has been several Indian words which, apparently unnoticed, have become part and parcel of everyday English. Some examples are Loot, nirvana, pyjamas, shampoo and shawl; bungalow, jungle, pundit, jute, chutney, bandanna and thug.

### **THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH ON INDIAN CULTURE**

The culture of India is one of the oldest cultures in the world and yet it is so diverse as to be impossible to pin down and define. The South, North, and Northeast have their own distinct cultures and almost every state has carved out its own cultural niche. In spite of the diversity, it's bound by a common thread as one civilization perhaps because of its shared history of colonization and the following struggle for independence from the British. It seems the advent of English Language through education and mass media has significantly changed, altered and influenced the linguistic and cultural patterns of Indian life. Therefore, the study of impact of

English language on Indian languages, art, culture, literature, media and social behavioural patterns is more demanding today than it was in the past.

Often the same term may be used both in a positive and negative way. Increasing power of English has consciously and unconsciously affected native culture and traditions by introducing Westernization. English is often seen as a tool of economic exploitation and domination. Also as a window of the world, and a link language. English gradually became the language of the Government, of the education system and advancement and a symbol of Imperial rule and a tool for improvement". In the following years, English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration by the British Raj.

Presently through English communication many festivals & culture of the west are gradually being adopted in India. Christmas, Easter & Valentines day, mother's day are now becoming commonly celebrated days in the Indian calendar.

#### **STATUS OF ENGLISH IN POST INDEPENDENCE ERA :**

The constitution of India which was adopted in 1950 had envisaged Hindi as the only official language of the Union of India. However, English had been allowed to continue for 15 years from the date of adoption of the constitution and was then to be replaced by Hindi. It is impossible to think that we can educate millions in a totally foreign tongue. To quote Pandit Nehru, "English will inevitably remain an important language because of our past association and because of its present importance in the world". English, the language mostly of the colonizers during the British Raj became accepted to the higher strata, educationally,



economically and socially progressive class of the Indian society during the post-independence period.

### **PROMINENCE OF ENGLISH IN MODERN INDIA:**

English has played a crucial role in making India what it is today, one of the largest economies in the world and an upcoming superpower. English helps different natives of different regional dialects to communicate with each other. It continues to act as an indispensable 'Link' language. English symbolizes in Indian minds better education, better culture and better intellect. It is still freely used in administration, higher education and research, maritime communication judiciary, trade and commerce, news and information, all in all the language is imperative in Indian society. In India English is seen not only to be the key to economic prosperity, but for the social value as well. Parents, especially, those belonging to the upper and middle classes, expect their children to get the best type of education and they tend to think that this is possible only through English medium. On the other hand, people from the lower classes emulate the model-setting behavior of the upper and middle classes. This increasing demand for English has resulted in the rapid growth of English-medium schools all over India.

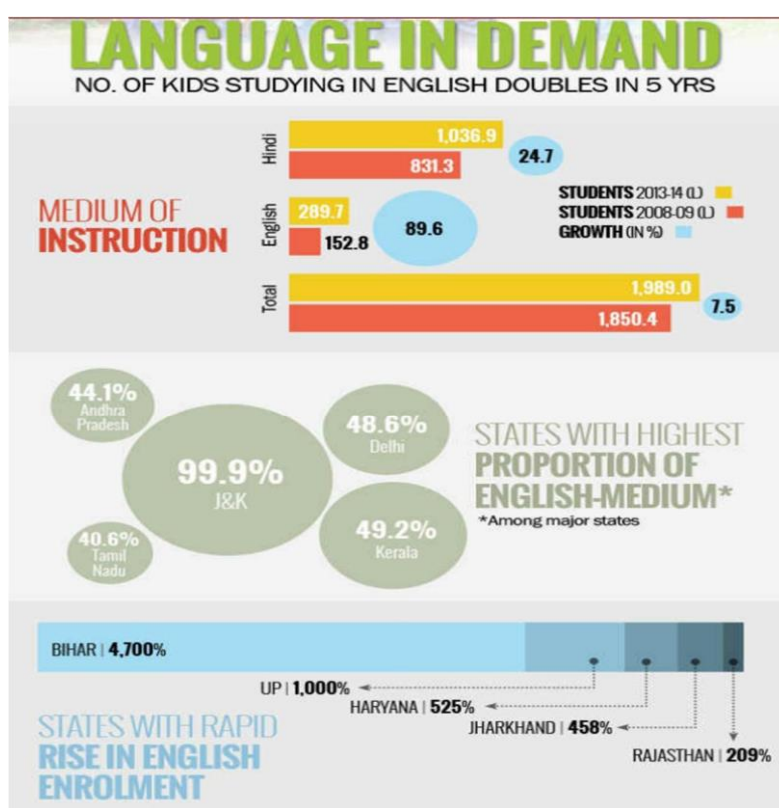
In any big metropolis of India, it is really difficult to come across any educated person who can speak any Indian language well without avoiding the use of English words. It is quite interesting to note that India, a multilingual nation, is the third largest English-speaking country after the US and UK (thanks to its huge population). In India, it is increasingly being perceived as a 'must-know' language and has now become a ladder for upward social

mobility and 'a window to the world'. Such is the demand for learning this language that a variety of English coaching centres and private-tuition shops, Englishmedium schools which

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are mushrooming in large numbers and are easy to spot almost everywhere in our country, even after independence clearly indicates the respectable position this language enjoys in the minds of the democratic Indians.



Still, there was a bitter controversy among Indian educationists with regard to the place of English in our system of education and there has been due to this a constant change of decisions as to what position English should hold in the present setup. But all in all, considering its global significance we can by no means underestimate the language.

After conducting surveys throughout India, and after speaking with more than 1500 adults across the length and breadth of the country, it has been revealed that there are majorly three types of people who want to learn English with three different motivations behind learning the language.

● **Graduate students and freshers:** According to employability reports from

Aspiring Minds being published every year, around 80% of 50 lakhs graduates India produces every year are not employable. Poor English skills is one of the top two reasons.

Even students from the prestigious IITs get expelled due to the same reasons. Poor communication skills oftentimes lead these students to have a very low confidence and self-esteem. So for them, learning English is not just a luxury but a necessity in order to bag a good job and to be able to perform their jobs efficiently.

● **Professionals:** In most cases, whether it's a bank or a software company, SME or a large corporate are not satisfied with the communication skills of their employees. It is a necessity for professionals these days to learn English so that they can communicate effectively, be efficient and even stand out from their peers so that they can get promoted to higher roles.

More and more multinational companies are mandating English as their common corporate language. With trade relations between companies from all over the world, the need for a common language to communicate in is undeniable. English is the language mostly used between any internationally acting company and agent and that is why it is imperative for all related to such multinational business organizations to have a good knowledge about the language. However, mandating English as medium of communication can create some problems as adapting a global language policy isn't always a cakewalk. The company might

have to face negative repercussions from its own employees. Here are some of the most common employee reactions in India:

**FOUR TYPES OF EMPLOYEE RESPONSE:**

**FRUSTRATED**

*“My company and I both would benefit if I learnt English , but I don’t think I can do this .”*

**INSPIRED**

*“I am capable of learning English, and it would be good for me and my company if I did .”*

**OPPRESSED**

*“I don’t think I am capable of learning English, and I don’t see the benefit to me or my company on learning it.”*

**INDIFFERENT**

*“I can learn English, but I don’t see the benefit for me or my company.”*

● **Housewives and retirees:** Even housewives and retired people sometimes want to improve their English to get along well in their social groups, understand the English being used ubiquitously on TV and the internet and live their life confidently. Housewives get this urge of learning English as they want to assist their children attending English medium schools,

and get along well in kitty parties. Retired people want to learn English as they want to communicate with their grandchildren.

Thus we see that although different groups of people have different motives, all have the same goal, that is to have a good knowledge about English so that they are able to speak the language fluently. Hence even though India is a land of 22 official languages and 1652 mother tongues, English has paramount importance in India.

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### CONCLUSION:

Being fluent in English is a must in modern times. In a world with ever-growing levels of globalization and interconnectivity, the importance of prompt and appropriate forms of communication increases rapidly. And just like English has influenced the rest of the world, it has also influenced the Indian culture. It has helped India become closer to other countries of the world. Through its rich heritage of English literature starting from the famous writer of children's books, Enid Blyton to the classics of Charles Dickens, 'Sherlock Holmes' to 'Harry Potter', and of course, the all time favourite Shakespeare –all have contributed to give Indians an insight into a society very different from our own & have shaped and moulded the thoughts & aspirations of many. And so, just like in the British era English was a very lucrative language to learn, it still continues to be so in modern India and the importance only seems to soar in the coming years of globalization.