



WEEK 6 - The globalization of English, the world's first-ever global language/GL

Questions about English as a GL

- [1] How did English come to be so widespread?
- [2] Are there any negative consequences to having a global language/GL?
- [3] What can we predict about the future of English as GL? Might English be overtaken by another language as GL?
 - Or replaced by new machine translation technology?
- [4] How might English change in the future, and which speakers will influence these changes most?
- [5] What attitudes do L2 speakers have to English?

What makes English a 'global language'?

1. **The total number of speakers.** 1/4 of the world's population has some proficiency in English.
2. **The global distribution** of knowledge of English – is distributed across all continents.
3. **Recognized as an OL** in 55 states + used in OL functions in 11 more states
 - → English is effectively an OL (or co-OL) in 1/3 of the world's 195 states.
4. **Widespread learning of English** – more than any other language. New young generations everywhere are able to speak some English.

Three circles of English

- Inner circle
 - Including USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand
 - English is the L1 of the majority ⇒ Few countries but a large combined population
- Outer circle
 - Including India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Ghana ⇒ Over 50 countries
 - English is mostly an L2.
 - Especially used in formal domains.
 - Often an OL.
 - Many former British colonies in Africa, and Asia.
 - New distinctive forms of English are emerging.
- Expanding circle
 - Including China, Sweden, Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia...
 - English is now strong in education, learned as the first foreign language.
 - But not an OL and is not used much domestically.
 - The total no. of L2 speakers is equal to inner+outer circles.

Three main causes of the development of English as a GL

1. **The Dominance of Britain** as a naval, trading, and industrial power from 17thC to 19thC.
2. **The 20thC growth of the USA** as the world's dominant economic power + major force of cultural influence.
3. Many late 20thC **advances in technology** spread knowledge and use of English further.

Dispersal of English

The first dispersal of English

- The first international spreading of English involved the settlement of English speakers in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, the Inner Circle Countries.

The second dispersal of English

- To Asia and Africa - smaller numbers of settlers
- In Asia:
 - India - now 125 million speakers of English. The second largest population of English speakers in the world.
- In Africa:
 - English was kept as an OL in many countries after independence due to ethno-linguistic complexity.
 - English felt to be ethnic neutral (although foreign).

A comparison of the spread of English and French colonial power and language

- The colonial territory occupied by France is much smaller than the colonial territories occupied by Britain.
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Strengthening the position of English as a GL: the rise of the USA

- In the 20thC, the British Empire went into decline. Too much debt from costly wars.
- The USA emerges as a world superpower.
- The economic, political, and cultural influence of the USA helps English become stronger in the first half of the 20thC.

New, international organizations

- All multi-national organizations add English as an OL (one of a restricted number of OLs)
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The third factor: new technology

- From the 1950s onward, new developments in technology establish English as the world's first global language.
- Help promote international access to English and provide motivation for people to learn English in even greater numbers.
- English now pulls far ahead of French and other languages in its global use and understanding.

[1] Growth of the film and TV industry

- American and British films and tv shows become very popular with international audiences.

[2] Short-wave radio use

- Affordable, effective radios are developed that allow people all over the world to listen to international radio programming, globally broadcast in English.
- International English broadcasts even made by non-English-L1 nations.

[3] Growth in the popular music industry

- The development of records, cassettes, cds, digital music, helps spread the availability and demand for popular music.
- American and British pop stars are very successful internationally, spreading English further.

[4] Improvements in printing and the dissemination of written materials

- International magazines and newspapers in English.
- Scientific research now heavily published in English.

[5] Computers and the Internet

- The development of computers and the Internet increases international communication. English is often used as a common language.

- Speakers of other languages (esp. smaller languages) access information on the Internet via English.

[6] Expansion of air travel

- Affordable, low-cost air travel boosts international tourism.
- Increases the need for an 'international language', a lingua franca for use between travelers and local people. English is increasingly used for this purpose.

Three additional areas of new growth

- The rapid expansion of English in the late 20thC has also stimulated more global demand for English.
1. **Marketing** – the use of English to promote the sale of products.
 2. Use of **English as a Lingua Franca** among L2 speakers.
 3. **Education** – the new use of English as a medium of education in schools and universities around the world.

[1] Marketing with English

- The global growth of English has led to English being perceived as a desired language with positive associations: success, modernity, and internationalism.
- English is now used extensively in advertising and fashion design, in countries where real knowledge of English may not be high across a population.
 - The 'ornamentation use of English'

[2] English as a Lingua Franca/ELF

- A common language, useful for international commerce and other situations of contact.
- English is frequently being selected as the OL of multi-national organizations and companies from non-L1 English countries
- The international language of air traffic control.

- International ship-to-ship communication at sea.

EU translation

- 1957, the EU had six member states.
- Languages: French, Dutch, Italian, German.
 - Interpreters needed: 6
- In 2021, the EU has 26 members.
- Total languages represented: 24.
 - Interpreters needed: 552
- To cut down on costs, a new **pivot system** is adopted.
 - Number of interpreters needed: 23
 - English as the EU pivot language

[3] English in education

- South Korean 'English fever. Koreans spend \$15 billion on English learning each year.
- English immersion schools, evening/weekend cramming schools, and English villages...

English-learning in China

- English is taught from the elementary school level.
- Bilingual education is becoming increasingly popular.

The growth of English learning in Europe

- 90% of secondary school students in Europe now have proficiency in English.
- Universities are offering courses with 'English as a Medium of Instruction' (EMI).

The value of EMI courses

- EMI courses help domestic students in Europe develop the English skills necessary for study abroad programs.

- Young Europeans who have studied abroad enjoy a much higher employment rate.
- Those with strong English are estimated to earn 30-50% higher salaries.
- EMI programs also provide foreign revenue, as international students come to study in English.

Are there any disadvantages to having a GL?

- Four possible negative consequences:
 1. Pressure on smaller languages - language endangerment
 2. L1 speakers of English stop learning other languages.
 3. Knowledge of English becomes a new social class marker, creating inequality.
 4. Challenges in the workplace relating to 'corporate English'.

[1] English as a 'killer language'?

- Is the growth of English as GL causing language death?
 - Global language endangerment is not just due to English, but all major regional languages.

Minority languages:	is endangered by:
Ainu	Japanese
Ugong	Thai
Atayal	Mandarin

[2] L1 English speakers stop learning other languages

- Negative consequences:
 - More restricted cultural knowledge of the world.
 - Monolingual L1 speakers are less competitive in international business.
 - Speakers of other languages are now increasingly multilingual.

- L1 speakers of English may get left behind.

[3] Knowledge of English increases divisions in society.

- Helps privileged elites hold onto power and employment?
- Bottom line: **a question of access** to English learning.
- If access is provided by public education, there are advantages for all.

[4] Challenges with the use of corporate English

- Adopting English as the OL of a multi-national company brings many advantages for business.
- But employees worry that promotions are tied to English proficiency not business skills.
- Due to worries about job security, employees may not talk in meetings, if their English is not good.

Possible scenarios which might cause English to lose its GL role

- Will English remain the world's GL?
- What changes could cause English NOT to be the GL in the next 50 years?
- Scenario 1: Some other language becomes the world's new GL.
- Scenario 2: New technology replaces English as GL.
- Scenario 3: English as a single global language disappears...

Scenario 1: Some other language becomes the world's new GL.

Spanish as future GL?

- 500 million speakers worldwide
- The L1 of the majority of the population in more countries than English

- The OL in over 20 countries
- But a restricted global distribution:
 - Heavily centered in America and Europe.

Mandarin Chinese as future GL?

- Could the Chinese become the world's new GL in the next few decades?
 - Two challenges: (a) demographic, and (b) linguistic.
 - Demographic Challenge:
 - The large population of speakers of Chinese is clustered in one area of the world (Asia), is not widespread in Africa, the Americas, South Pacific.
 - Linguistic Challenge:
 - Two major features of Chinese that are very complex.
- (a) Difficulty 1: [Chinese is a tone language](#).
- Every syllable can be pronounced with a different intonation pattern/contour.
 - Example: the syllable ma can be pronounced in 5 different ways - 5 different meanings
- (b) Difficulty 2: [the Chinese writing system](#).
- Chinese is written with 'characters' (汉字/ 汉字)
 - To read a newspaper, you need to know over 3,000 different characters.
 - The most complex form of writing in the world.
 - Learning Chinese requires a LOT of time and personal commitment.
 - Best speculation: due to these learning difficulties (and the demographic issue), Chinese may be unlikely to replace English as GL.
 - But who knows...

Scenario 2: Machine translation replaces English as a GL

- Substituting translation machines for English

Current forms of language software

- Programs like Google Translate work with **written input** and translate from one language to another.
- Other software programs process **spoken language** and provide written representations (closed captions, dictated text messages...)
- What is needed for a mobile translation device to replace English as a link language?
 - For example, the translation of spoken French in put into spoken Arabic output.
 - Spoken → Written → Spoken

Challenges for machine translation

[1] Accurate speech recognition

- Accuracy is only high when speech is relatively slow + clear pronunciation + in the majority dialect.
- Good quality, reliable results only in English and a few other major languages.
- Progress with most of the world's languages is poor.

[2] Accurate translation between languages

- Currently, the accuracy of translation between major languages is acceptable for simple sentences but gets worse with more complicated text.
- Translation accuracy between other languages is much less developed and will take a very long time to achieve.
 - Input to Google Translate: "The assignment is due after the midterm."
 - Translate from English into Chinese, Hindi, Zulu, Welsh, Georgian, and Korean, then back into English
 - Output result: "After the break, you need to continue doing your homework."
- The perils of relying on machine translation...
 - Mistranslate
 - Some more racy examples

[3] The time-lag problem

- Translation machines have to wait for speakers to complete their sentences before creating a translation into another language.
- Will people be willing to accept a much slower form of communication?
- An additional concern about MT: How do we know if a machine has translated our words correctly?

Scenario 3. English as a single global language disappears...

- Could English experience **regional divergence** to such an extent that it loses its ability to serve as a shared world language?
- Like Latin, fracturing into French, Italian, Spanish...
- English is a '**pluricentric language**' = multiple geographic centers and standard forms.
- And many different non-standardized forms of English, e.g. Nigerian English, Singaporean English, Indian English, ...

Inner Circle variation

- The model for learning English in Africa, Europe and (traditionally) in India/South Asia is **Standard British English/SBE**.
- The model for learning English in South America and East Asia is **Standard American English/SAE**.
- The main differences between SBE and SAE are in **vocabulary** and **pronunciation**.
 - Pronunciation: Some people nowadays could switch accents.
 - Gwyneth Paltrow; Renee Zellweger; Hugh Laurie
 - Vocabulary:

American English	British English
sidewalk	pavement

American English	British English
faucet	tap
truck	lorry
freeway	motorway
well-dressed	smart
pants	trousers
underpants	pants
school	university
eraser	rubber
swimsuit	swimming costume

The Outer Circle and New World Englishes

- New distinctive forms of English in Outer Circle countries, where English is spoken for a long time.
- The result: local differences in English **vocabulary**, **grammar**, and **pronunciation/accent**.

Divergence and the future of English as a GL

- Possible future scenario: English is no longer a single language with mutually intelligible local varieties, but many mutually unintelligible forms.
- A family of languages, like Latin fragmenting into the Romance languages (French, Italian,..).
- The optimistic hope – **stable bi-dialectalism** may develop – people around the world may speak two varieties of English:
- A distinctive local form + a common global form.

Heavy divergence: Singlish (Singapore)

- A mixture of English + Malay, Chinese, and Tamil

Singlish	English
Eh, better do properly, lah	You'd better do this right.

Singlish	English
Anyhow do, wait kena scolding	If you don't, you'll get told off.
Must lah.	You really have to.
Like that do cannot.	You can't just do it like that.

Deliberate Divergence: Cockney Rhyming Slang

- **Cockney rhyming slang**, east London, UK
- A rhyming pair of words or complex word:
 - $A + B = C$ B rhymes with C
 - $AB = C$ B rhymes with C

Cockney Rhyming Slang	Meaning
apples and pears	stairs
currant bun	sun

- But in A and B, or AB, the rhyming clue part is often not spoken

Cockney Rhyming Slang	Meaning
apples	stairs
currant	sun

- 'Use your loaf, mate!'
 - loaf = loaf of bread, bread rhymes with: 'head'
 - 'Use your head!' (Think!)
- 'I'll have a butcher's for it.'
 - butcher's = butcher's hook, hook rhymes with: 'look'
 - 'I'll have a look for it.'
- 'Where's your dog?'
 - dog = dog and bone, bone rhymes with 'phone'
 - 'Where's your phone?'

- 'We're in deep Barney.'
 - Barney = Barney Rubble, Rubble rhymes with 'trouble'
 - 'We're in deep trouble'
- 'I just don't Adam it'
 - Adam and Eve → believe
 - 'I just don't believe it.'
- 'Where's your trouble?'
 - trouble and strife → wife
 - 'Where's your wife?'

Global attitudes to English

Attitudes to English in the Outer Circle

- Many Outer Circle countries were previously colonies dominated by Britain.
- Are there negative attitudes toward English, due to history, although English is accepted as being useful?
- Research shows that English is now seen as a *global, international language* with multiple local forms, free of past connections.
 - A major survey in India showed that many people consider English is now an Indian language – it has been 'indigenized'.
 - Similar attitudes in West Africa - Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.

Attitudes to English in the Expanding Circle

- L2 speakers from Outer Circle countries often view English positively as an indigenized language now.
- What about speakers in Expanding Circle countries?
- No clearly distinctive forms of English yet.
- English is not used in special ways to project a local national identity.

- However, the use of English may be involved in the [projection of personal identity](#).
 - “My personality changes from Japanese mode to English mode.”

The creative use of English by L2 speakers

- Increasingly positive attitudes to English in L2 populations + greater confidence in its use →
- English is now being used by L2 speakers very successfully in new works of literature.
- Prestigious awards and prizes for literature won by L2 writers, esp. from India, West Africa, and the Caribbean.
- Chinua Achebe, Woye Solinka, Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Salman Rushdie...
- ‘Globalization with localization’
 - English should be celebrated for its ability to capture different ways of life and thinking around the world, modified as necessary to suit local needs