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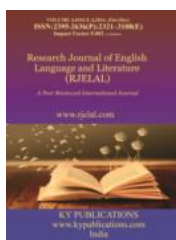
## HOW ENGLISH CONQUERED OUR TONGUE!

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the journey of English from a dialect confined to West Germanic tribes in a secluded corner of Europe and then taking massive proportion during the course of time and eventually covering the entire globe. This paper also investigates the reasons for its extensive growth . It also looks into possible threats for its numero uno status as an international language of business in the near future.

**Key words** ENL,ESL, ELF, Braj Kachru's 3 circles of English.

### Introduction

English from its humble beginnings as a dialect of West Germanic tribes in a remote corner of Europe today manifests the entire globe. The beauty of English lies in its ability to incorporate the essence of the times. It has been always willing to expand its thesaurus by accepting words of Celtic, Greek, Latin, French, Scandinavian, Asian, African words !!

Figuring out its momentous journey Braj Kachru gave the 3 circles of English. Inner Circle constitutes countries like UK, US, Australia etc which form the English as Native Language (ENL) bracket. The former colonies of England occupy the space in the Outer Circle establishing English as Second Language (ESL). Countries with no historical or geographical connection of English make the expanding circle like China, Russia, Japan, etc who unprecedently bonded with English for reasons of their own forming English as Lingua Franca ( ELF).

**The making of ENL:** The Germanic tribes ( Angles, Saxons and Jutes) marched into British Isles in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD and a medley of their dialects resulted in Anglo Saxon which prevailed. The

present day English owes its roots to it. The three types of gender in use (He, She,It) is purely Germanic. Prior to 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Celtic and Latin were spoken. Celtic influence is perceived in words like *Kent, Dover, Thames* etc. The ecclesiastical words of contemporary English like *Church, Monk, Bishop* are quintessentially Latin. The Viking influence brought the Scandinavian touch with words like *their, they, eggs, cakes*, etc. which roll over our tongue with infinite ease. The Norman conquest engraved French superiority in the English mindset. Words constituting the aristocratic vocabulary like *Court, Castle, Crown* are essentially French.

English continued to be the language of the common people. Names of domestic animals like *Ox, Cow, Pig* etc. are English and the meat enjoyed by the upper echelons of the society like *beef, veal*, etc. are exclusively French. French etiquettes, culinary delights, fashion has been ingrained as superlative in the British psyche from time immemorial . e.g. in Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice* " Mrs Bennet preens when Mr. Darcy approves of

the partridges dish of her party claiming that he may be having at least 2 – 3 French cooks.

The Bard of Avon William Shakespeare contributed over one thousand seven hundred words to the English vocabulary by changing nouns into verbs, changing verbs into adjectives, adding prefixes and suffixes e.g. *blood stained, compromise, frugal* etc. Industrial Revolution added words of innovation like *engine, train* etc. The mercenary cravings of English navigated them through unchartered territories like America and Australia where they settled spreading their language and in return assimilated words like *Kangaroo, Boomerang* etc and words of Native American Origin like *Caucus, Possum* etc. In this way English developed pushing the envelope, but in reality got validity when President Woodrow Wilson in 1914 requested to frame the Treaty of Versailles in English along with French.

**Rise of ESL:** The economic aspirations of England drove them to colonize Asia and Africa to find market for their sprawling factories courtesy Industrial Revolution. From being mere merchants they entrenched into the administration of these continents and introduced English to facilitate ruling. English got woven into the social fabric of countries like India where even patriotic fervour was nurtured through English. Moreover Indians personalized pronunciation and grammar of English to create an indigenous variety called Indian English. However the English vocabulary was enriched with words of Indian origin like *bungalow, dacoit, cheetah* etc. Consequently post independence, English occupied the position of ESL.

The economic liberalization in 1990s introduced the Business process outsourcing Industry where a strong English backup opened up employment opportunities for millions of youth and accelerated our national GDP. Today English opens up avenues for social mobility.

**The ELF Story:** First World War declared US as a mighty force to reckon with and the Second World War substantiated its supernatural presence across the globe. With US making quantum leaps in science and innovation, its military omnipotence, its glamorous Hollywood and fashion, its out and out consumer driven life style lured the youth breaching

barriers of geography and culture. US was a mega success story and everybody wanted to join the bandwagon and the medium to associate with it was English.

Business strived to go global from local and regional and the last resort was to secure it through English.

Thus this created ELF/English as a Lingua Franca. Thus countries like China and Japan with no colonial past clinched the English deal for monetary connotations. Thus ELF secured its position in trade, tourism and media.

Today the ELF status of English is undisputed and unparalleled. David Crystal in 2006 in English World Wide stated that there are approximately 400million ENL speakers, 400 ESL speakers and 600-700 ELF speakers!! The growing popularity of English as ESL can be substantiated by following examples:

- Chung Dong Young a former TV anchor of South Korea campaigned for Presidential position by promising huge increase in English teaching, so that young Koreans do not have to go abroad to learn English.
- Chile a country crazy about its soccer now shares its allegiance to English as well as the Government wants its people to be bilingual in Spanish (their native tongue) and English.
- The colossal repercussions of Brexit did not affect the position of English as it continues to be the official language of European Union. English dominated among its 3 working language (English – 38%, French – 12%, German 11%)

Removing English would have catastrophic results as EU already spends 1% of its annual budget on translation. Further, to bring this dramatic change several recruits would be needed which could take years to appoint.

Well the grass is always greener on the other side. Consequently it has tempted many in the past, but people have often been skeptical of taking the leap of faith. Today globalization fills the trust deficit.

Eg. Hiroshi Mikitani CEO of Rakuten, a company almost like amazon with 7100 employees, one fine day declared English as company's official language

of Business. The CEO of Honda, Takano Ito ridiculed this initiative but, unfazed Mr Mikitani continued and bought Price Minister.com in France, Buy.com and Free Cause in US, Play.com in UK, Tradoria in Germany, Kobo eBooks in Canada and established joint ventures with major companies in China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand and Brazil. The seismic shift paid off after initial stumbles. In April 2012 the apprehensive Mr Ito, CEO of Honda theatrically declared English as the official language of global meetings. He said, "all decisions about global operations will be in English and oh! by the way, if you don't understand it, get an interpreter." Similarly Japanese based Nissan made this shift in the 1990s. German electronics company Siemens, SAP, France based Food services Company SODEXO have all made English their official corporate language.

According to David Crystal a language becomes global not because more number of people are speaking it but what matters is who are speaking it. Like Latin remained a global language firstly due to the imperial powers of Roman army and later due to the ecclesiastical authority. Thus English rose in the world horizon due to the political clout of Britain which colonized almost the world to build an empire on which the sun would never set. Post world war America enjoyed that clout. But both US & UK are two countries divided by a common language.

So today with China's growing economic and political clout can we anticipate a threat to ELF status of English??

Recently Mark Zuckerberg's 30 minute address to students at Tsinghua University at Beijing in mandarin raised several eyebrows.

In spite of all this English can rest assured because QWERTY keyboards in use are designed for Roman alphabets and cannot accommodate 2000+ Chinese characters and the world can't imagine a minute, forget a day without computers. Mandarin with its pictorial script is a very tough nut to crack. For e.g. a word maO' in Mandarin can vary its meaning from being a horse, a mother, scold or hemph by simply pronouncing it in different pitches.

The top ten programming languages are in English and two out of them Python and Ruby were created by Dutch and Japanese speakers.

The internet was born in US as a Pentagon Research and development network which was later opened for public use. Internet and www got their roots in the US. Consequently, 80% of all electronic information in computer and transferred via Internet is in English (*Guardian, Rohde, Economist Walker*).

Thus English has put down roots in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for good.

In times when capitalism has written the obituary of socialism, the world is a giant market where only money of any denomination - be it dollar, yen, frank, rupee etc speaks and that too in the language of ENGLISH!!

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