

Global English and foreign language teaching – problems and probable solutions

Today we are living in a world where English has become the international language not only of communication but also of business, information technology, science, entertainment, diplomacy. It is spoken as a first language by several nations and it is the third most common native language after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish; English is the official language of many world organizations such as the European Union, the United Nations and the Commonwealth and it is also widely taught around the world as a second language.

International English is the concept of the English language as a global means of communication in numerous dialects, and also the movement towards an international standard for the language. It is also referred to as Global English, World English, Common English, Continental English, General English, Engas (English as associate language), or Globish. Sometimes, these terms refer simply to the array of varieties of English spoken throughout the world.

Global English is a relatively new term because it came into use in the late 1990s. Now it is used alongside with the terms World English, which dates back to just before the Second World War, and international English dating back to around 1980.

But English has not always been of such importance. It began spreading beyond the British Isles when the British Empire started growing. English started spreading all over the world by the many British colonies and it stayed an official language in many of them even after the colonies became separate countries again.

The history of the English language started with the arrival of three Germanic tribes – the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes – that invaded Britain during the 5th century AD. These tribes crossed the North Sea where today Denmark and northern Germany are. At that time the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most Celtic speakers were pushed west and north by the invaders - mainly into what is now Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Angles came from "Englaland" and their language was called "Englisc" - from which the words "England" and "English" are derived.

The invading Germanic tribes spoke similar languages, which developed into what we now call Old English. Old English did not sound or look like English today. Native English speakers now would have great difficulty understanding Old English. Nevertheless, about half of the most commonly used words in Modern English have Old English roots. The words *be*, *strong* and *water*, for example, derive from Old English. Old English was spoken until around 1100.

In 1066 William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy (part of modern France), invaded and conquered England. The new conquerors (called the Normans) brought with them a kind of French, which became the language of the Royal Court, and the ruling and business classes. For a period there was a kind of linguistic class division, where the lower classes spoke English and the upper classes spoke French. In the 14th century English became dominant in Britain again, but with many French words added. This language is called Middle English. It was the language of the great poet Chaucer (c1340-1400), but it would still be difficult for native English speakers to understand today.

Towards the end of Middle English, a sudden and distinct change in pronunciation (the Great Vowel Shift) started, with vowels being pronounced shorter and shorter. From the 16th century the British had contact with many peoples from around the world.

This, and the Renaissance of Classical learning, meant that many new words and phrases entered the language. The invention of printing also meant that there was now a common language in print. Books became cheaper and more people learned to read. Printing also brought standardization to English. Spelling and grammar became fixed, and the dialect of London, where most publishing houses were, became the standard. In 1604 the first English dictionary was published.

The main difference between Early Modern English and Late Modern English is vocabulary. Late Modern English has many more words, arising from two principal factors: firstly, the Industrial Revolution and technology created a need for new words; secondly, the British Empire at its height covered one quarter of the earth's surface, and the English language adopted foreign words from many countries.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain had become the world's leading industrial and trading country. By the end of the century, the population of the USA (then

approaching 100 million) was larger than that of any of the countries of western Europe, and its economy was the most productive and the fastest growing in the world. British political imperialism had sent English around the globe, during the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, this world presence was maintained and promoted through the economic supremacy of the new American superpower. Economics replaced politics as the chief driving force. And the language behind the US dollar was English. It became the language where most scientific research was published- although many papers continued to be published in the native language of the scientist as well. Now, to get cataloged internationally, a paper needs to be available in English, whatever the native language of the scientist is.

At the Treaty of Versailles, it became officially one of the two languages of diplomacy when the Treaty was written in both French and English. This act is a major milestone in the globalisation of English.

After 1600, English speakers started to spread around the world for a variety of reasons: exploration, trade, forced and voluntary migrations, and wars.

The Americas and Australia were the first to become affected by the spread of English. In 1497, John Cabot reached Newfoundland, now part of Canada, backed by the British monarch Henry VII. He was trying to find a northern passage to the East Indies. The first permanent, English-speaking settlers — the Jamestown settlers sent by a trading company — did not inhabit North America until 1607, however. Forced migrations, such as those due to religious persecutions, prison colonies, and later the slave trade, also contributed to the spread of English: British prisoners were sent to the West Indies (Barbados) in the 1620s, to Georgia in the US in the 1730s, and to Australia in the 1780s. When a famine broke out in Ireland in the 1820s, many people were forced to leave Ireland for other parts of the world. In addition, due to the Highland Clearances, where many thousands people were evicted to enable large-scale sheep farming, many inhabitants of Scotland had to move elsewhere. The migrants from Scotland and Ireland often only spoke Gaelic, and were therefore only indirectly related to the spread of English.

Parts of Africa and Asia were also colonized early on. The most important trading company in the English-speaking world was the British East India Company. It was established in 1600 and had a monopoly on all trade, initially mainly spices, in the East