

PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

SIMION MINODORA OTILIA

Lecturer PhD, „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu

e-mail: simionminodoraotilia@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The technological development, the growing economic globalization and the major demographic shifts have brought about the need for a global language. In international business, travel, science and technology, education, immigration, academia, diplomacy and entertainment, English is the dominant language, being spoken by over one billion people. English is used inside and outside the professional environment, both for communication in global business and for communication in social networks, but proficiency in English can definitely enhance people’s career opportunities both if they look for a job in the country or plan to go abroad to find employment. It may determine a division among those who have access to information and prosperity and those who don’t. In the future not just wealth but also the way it is created will have a great impact on people’s increasing communicative needs of international languages. It is obvious then that more and more people will need proficiency in English, both as a language for international communication and as the basis for constructing cultural identities .*

KEY WORDS: *proficiency in English, globalization, career opportunities, international communication, business, technology.*

JEL Classification: *M40, M41*

1. Introduction

In an ever-changing world of globalization, proficiency in English has become a prerequisite for communication in all fields of activity. The international importance of English has been closely related to the rise of US as a superpower in the 20th century but it is also the result of Britain’s colonial expansion in the previous centuries. The changing communication needs of people have caused a diversification in the use of English in accordance with the technological and scientific development, new thinking in economics and management, new literatures and forms of entertainment which gave rise to new ways of speaking and writing, new grammatical forms and new vocabularies. As there is an increasing interconnection and interdependence of world economies and cultures from a political, social and technological point of view, English as an international language is used in various settings, ranging from mere survival (asking for directions, help or assistance, buying, etc) to access to scientific research. In international business, travel, science and technology, education, immigration, academia, diplomacy and entertainment, English is the dominant language, being spoken by over one billion people. According to statistics more than 75% of the mails all over the world are written in English, 80% of data and electronically stored information are in English and more than two thirds of the scientists in the world read in English. English is used inside and outside the professional environment, both for communication in global business and for communication in social networks, through the Internet.

2. Usage of English today

English has become the language of international business, being spoken by native speakers as well as by foreigners who work for multinational companies in their own countries or abroad. For instance, even though a company may not have its headquarters in an English-speaking country it will establish a joint venture with a local concern and subsequently adopt English as their lingua franca, creating demand for training in English. Establishing joint ventures will attract international visitors and tourist and a need for proficiency in English, too.

Travel is another area where English is essential, with so many opportunities to travel to different parts of the world and the need to communicate even for basic survival. According to Nations Online, English is spoken in 105 countries, and it is the official language in 83 countries. However English is not the most widely spoken language in the world concerning the number of native speakers since there are more native Chinese than native English speakers but, Chinese is spoken only by the Chinese community while English is spoken all over the world with significant varieties: British English and American English, Canadian English, ,

Southern-American English within American English and the Bostonian dialect in the United States, etc.

In countries where English is not an official language, it is often taught as a second language and English-for-foreign-language-speaker courses (TOEFL exams) are subsidized by both British and American government in the whole world since it is regarded as a “global language”[1].If someone is interested in attending a university in the US, for example,he /she needs be able to pass a language proficiency test in order to be admitted to that institution.

For immigrants to English-speaking countries it is essential to speak the language and requirement for finding a job, a place to live or simply for doing everyday tasks like shopping, asking for directions, etc.

Tourism plays an important role in the world economy, some estimates suggesting that over 10% of the world’s labour force is employed in this field which tends to have a globalizing effect.International travel promotes the need for a common language among people of different nationalities. English is important in international travel because most of the information about countries outside their border is in English . English is spoken in hotels and tourist attractions, at airports and in shops and tours are always given in English In countries where English is not commonly spoken on the street, people proficient in English work as tourist guides, in order to avoid the use of interpreters.Being able to interact with people of different nationalities can enrich the whole experience of travelling by providing a lot of information about the culture of the people and the history of the places you have visited.

Science and technology are vital for our age and English is used extensively for the access to knowledge and information. Computers were mainly the invention of English speaking countries, both hardware and software reflecting the needs of the English language and the Internet having strong implications upon this language use.

But we should also note that about 90 % of the scientific journals around the world are written in English and scientists must be able to speak this language in order to read the latest publications , remain current in the world of science and share their ideas and results of research with their foreign colleagues by attending conferences around the world. English is commonly used in sciences. For instance in 1997, the citation index reported that 95% of its articles were written in English and only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries Academics can do successful research only if they publish their work in peer-reviewed journals and ability to read and write in English is a prerequisite for maintaining their position in university.

English language is also by international treaty the official language for aircraft/airport and maritime Communication as well as being one of the official language of the European Union (E.U), in the United Nations (U.N) and many International athletic bodies including the Olympic committee. Since ,according to the Longman Active Study Dictionary diplomacy is ” the activity of dealing with political relations between countries”, this activity is mediated through the use of English. By international treaty, English is the official language for aircraft/airport and maritime communication, of the United Nations(U.N.),of the European Union(E.U.), of the Olympic committee and other international organizations. As unity is required in diplomacy, it is a “unity language”.[2]

Finally, entertainment is mostly in English as American movies and TV programs have gained huge success and are distributed all over the world and almost all of them are produced in English.

3. Career Opportunities

These are the reasons why proficiency in English is so important and all these imply that it can definitely enhance people’s career opportunities both if they look for a job in the country or plan to go abroad to find employment. No matter what they option is, they have to undergo an interview process and knowledge of English is a requirement for many companies in our country and all companies from abroad where it is the basic instrument of communication. Many employers are looking for people with great communication skills, and ,for instance, if you go to America to seek employment, you will have to complete a job application or submit a resume in English and to attend an interview which is also conducted in English.

Skilled and confident use of English is a prerequisite for the selection of the successful candidates in the labour market, since some businesses deal with international clients and suppliers and need employees who can interpret, translate and communicate with their customers and clients. Thus, the ideal candidate for jobs in international business, travel or translation must speak two or more languages and sometimes be bilingual or even multilingual. Language professionals tend to believe that in the future people will be bilingual, speaking two or more languages in order to adjust to the new global economic, scientific,technological and cultural developments .Such people have international business opportunities or they can work with the general public in hospitals and law enforcement. It is beneficial ,as well, when you are hired because you will move to the top of the competition faster in corporations requiring bilingual employees. Knowledge of one language is not enough for successful companies in Europe: one must have a minimum level of proficiency in German and French, as well.

English is used as a neutral language for business between various countries and it is now common for an engineer in a country to get technical support in English from an expert in another country since you can communicate in English with technicians and experts from all over the world.. With English you can communicate with technicians and experts from the United States in order to help your company. You can also communicate with business people from other countries in the neutral language of English. The global distribution of labour, namely the shifting of production from one country to another when production costs become too high, has brought about promotion of the English language [3].

The free movement of people has had a significant impact on the use of English as well: for business or education, as tourists, workers or immigrants, people need English to communicate all over the world.

4. Conclusions

The technological development, the growing economic globalization and the major demographic shifts have brought about this need for a global language. International trade, for instance, is a complex, multilateral business which depends on English as the major business lingua franca in Europe. Thus, for jobs in international trade, English is essential, business and commerce being developed with it as its foundation .In such a position you have to be able to conduct business transactions and write and respond to various documents such as agreements, reports, contracts, memos, emails, etc. In industries , technical English is required and , in order to maintain their technical competence, employees working in this sector must be able to read and speak English and for those who have to speak at international conferences or events, a good command of English is crucial. As we have seen, knowledge of English is most common with professionals and proficiency in English may determine a division among those who have access to information and prosperity and those who don't. In developing countries, lack of access to information technologies may hinder professional development and wealth. In his book entitled *The Future of English?* David Graddol seems to summarize the importance of learning English ”Whereas in the past poverty has been larger a matter of geography, class, gender and ethnicity, now it may also depend on access to the lingua franca of a global elite”[4]In his view, Western Europe is tending to form a single multilingual area and those speaking English are supposed to enjoy better material success.

But in the future not just wealth but also the way it is created will have a great impact on people's increasing communicative needs of international languages. It is obvious then that more and more people will need proficiency in English ,both as a language for international communication and as the basis for constructing cultural identities .

4. References

- [1] Crystal, D., *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UP, 2003
- [2] *The Longman Active Study Dictionary*, 4th Edition, Longman, 2004
- [3] Burns, Anne, and Caroline Coffin, eds. *Analysing English in a Global Context*, Routledge, London and New York , 2001
- [4] Graddol, David, *The Future of English?* ,The British Council, 1997