ENGLISH BETWEEN "LANGUAGE MIRAGE" AND NOWADAYS "UNIVERSAL" TREND

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"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." Nelson Mandela

"Do you speak English?" This seems to be the question of our century and the basic criterion used not only in business, international trade and commerce, international affairs, politics but also in the academic life, research and development. In just one word, it seems to be the language in which communication takes place around the world and moves the world round.
But why and when has English language become "a must" for every successful activity? How hard is it to speak English and is there are there more types or this English language? Are there significant differences between the English language spoken by French people, Arabian, Chinese, Romanian, etc.? What is the connection and the differences between British English and American English? How long does it take to a person to speak English correctly? Is English a hard language to be learnt, or, in fact it's even easier to be learnt than our own native mother tongue? Is English just a "nowadays language fashion"? Is it going to last? Why is English so popular and in no time it has become "a universal language"? What are the chances to be successful (in any field of activity) if you don't speak English? Is there any "formula" for a quick English language grasp? What does English represent for Romanian people? How do people in our country perceive it: hard, easy, interesting, a challenge or just another "caprice" imposed by the rich world power countries?
These are only a part of the questions that first come into our mind when we pronounce the language in which the plays of the world greatest (and most prolific) playwright have first seen the light of the day. Can we exceed the limits of our world both as people and human beings by exceeding the limits of our language as once a great philosopher said: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world" Ludwig Wittgenstein?

Keywords: English, language, Romanian, universal, trend

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Dearest creature in creation
Studying English pronunciation,
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse and worse.

I will keep you, Susy, busy,
Make your head with heat grow dizzy;
Tear in eye, your dress you'll tear;
Queer, fair seer, hear my prayer.

Pray, console your loving poet,
Make my coat look new, dear, sew it!
Just compare heart, hear and heard,
Dies and diet, lord and word.

Sword and sward, retain and Britain
(Mind the latter how it's written).
Made has not the sound of bade,
Say-said, pay-paid, laid but plaid.

Now I surely will not plague you
With such words as vague and ague,
But be careful how you speak,
Say: gush, bush, steak, streak, break, bleak,

Previous, precious, fuchsia, via
Recipe, pipe, studding-sail, choir;
Woven, oven, how and low,
Script, receipt, shoe, poem, toe.

Say, expecting fraud and trickery:
Daughter, laughter and Terpsichore,
Branch, ranch, measles, topsails, aisles,
Missiles, similes, reviles.

Wholly, holly, signal, signing,
Same, examining, but mining,
Scholar, vicar, and cigar,
Solar, mica, war and far.

From "desire": desirable-admirable from "admire",
Lumber, plumber, bier, but brier,
Topsham, brougham, renown, but known,
Knowledge, done, lone, gone, none, tone,

One, anemone, Balmoral,
Kitchen, lichen, laundry, laurel.
Gertrude, German, wind and wind,
Beau, kind, kindred, queue, mankind,

Tortoise, turquoise, chamois-leather,
Reading, Reading, heathen, heather.
This phonetic labyrinth

Gives moss, gross, brook, brooch, ninth, plinth.

Have you ever yet endeavoured
To pronounce revered and severed,
Demon, lemon, ghoul, foul, soul,
Peter, petrol and patrol?

Billet does not end like ballet;
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet.
Blood and flood are not like food,
Nor is mould like should and would.

Banquet is not nearly parquet,
Which exactly rhymes with khaki.
Discount, viscount, load and broad,
Toward, to forward, to reward,

Ricocheted and crocheting, croquet?
Right! Your pronunciation's OK.
Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve,
Friend and fiend, alive and live.

Is your r correct in higher?
Keats asserts it rhymes Thalia.
Hugh, but hug, and hood, but hoot,
Buoyant, minute, but minute.

Say abscission with precision,
Now: position and transition;
Would it tally with my rhyme
If I mentioned paradigm?

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Twopence, threepence, tease are easy,
But cease, crease, grease and greasy?
Cornice, nice, valise, revise,
Rabies, but lullabies.

Of such puzzling words as nauseous,
Rhyming well with cautious, tortious,
You'll envelop lists, I hope,
In a linen envelope.

Would you like some more? You'll have it!
Affidavit, David, davit.
To abjure, to perjure. Sheik
Does not sound like Czech but ache.

Liberty, library, heave and heaven,
Rachel, loch, moustache, eleven.
We say hallowed, but allowed,
People, leopard, towed but vowed.

Mark the difference, moreover,
Between mover, plover, Dover.
Leeches, breeches, wise, precise,
Chalice, but police and lice,

Camel, constable, unstable,
Principle, disciple, label.
Petal, penal, and canal,
Wait, surmise, plait, promise, pal,

Suit, suite, ruin. Circuit, conduit
Rhyme with "shirk it" and "beyond it",
But it is not hard to tell
Why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall.

Muscle, muscular, gaol, iron,
Timber, climber, bullion, lion,
Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair,
Senator, spectator, mayor,

Ivy, privy, famous; clamour
Has the a of drachm and hammer.
Pussy, hussy and possess,
Desert, but desert, address.

Golf, wolf, countenance, lieutenants
Hoist in lieu of flags left pennants.
Courier, courtier, tomb, bomb, comb,
Cow, but Cowper, some and home.

"Solder, soldier! Blood is thicker",
Quoth he, "than liqueur or liquor",
Making, it is sad but true,
In bravado, much ado.

Stranger does not rhyme with anger,
Neither does devour with clangour.
Pilot, pivot, gaunt, but aunt,
Font, front, wont, want, grand and grant.

Arsenic, specific, scenic,
Relic, rhetoric, hygienic.
Gooseberry, goose, and close, but close,
Paradise, rise, rose, and dose.

Say inveigh, neigh, but inveigle,
Make the latter rhyme with eagle.
Mind! Meandering but mean,
Valentine and magazine.

And I bet you, dear, a penny,
You say mani-(fold) like many,
Which is wrong. Say rapier, pier,
Tier (one who ties), but tier.

Arch, archangel; pray, does erring
Rhyme with herring or with stirring?
Prison, bison, treasure trove,
Treason, hover, cover, cove,

Perseverance, severance. Ribald
Rhymes (but piebald doesn't) with nibbled.
Phaeton, paean, gnat, ghat, gnaw,
Lien, psychic, shone, bone, pshaw.

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Don't be down, my own, but rough it,
And distinguish buffet, buffet;
Brood, stood, roof, rook, school, wool, boon,
Worcester, Boleyn, to impugn.

Say in sounds correct and sterling
Hearse, hear, hearken, year and yearling.
Evil, devil, mezzotint,
Mind the z! (A gentle hint.)

Now you need not pay attention
To such sounds as I don't mention,
Sounds like pores, pause, pours and paws,
Rhyming with the pronoun yours;

Nor are proper names included,
Though I often heard, as you did,
Funny rhymes to unicorn,
Yes, you know them, Vaughan and Strachan.

No, my maiden, coy and comely,
I don't want to speak of Cholmondeley.
No. Yet Froude compared with proud
Is no better than McLeod.

But mind trivial and vial,
Tripod, menial, denial,
Troll and trolley, realm and ream,
Schedule, mischief, schism, and scheme.

Argil, gill, Argyll, gill. Surely
May be made to rhyme with Raleigh,
But you're not supposed to say
Piquet rhymes with sobriquet.

Had this invalid invalid
Worthless documents? How pallid,
How uncouth he, couchant, looked,
When for Portsmouth I had booked!

Zeus, Thebes, Thales, Aphrodite,
Paramour, enamoured, flighty,
Episodes, antipodes,
Acquiesce, and obsequies.

Please don't monkey with the geyser,
Don't peel 'taters with my razor,
Rather say in accents pure:
Nature, stature and mature.

Pious, impious, limb, climb, glumly,
Worsted, worsted, crumbly, dumbly,
Conquer, conquest, vase, phase, fan,
Wan, sedan and artisan.

*The **th** will surely trouble you*
*More than **r**, **ch** or **w**.*
Say then these phonetic gems:
Thomas, thyme, Theresa, Thames.

Thompson, Chatham, Waltham, Streatham,
There are more but I forget 'em-
Wait! I've got it: Anthony,
Lighten your anxiety.

The archaic word albeit
Does not rhyme with eight-you see it;
With and forthwith, one has voice,
One has not, you make your choice.

*Shoes, goes, does *. Now first say: finger;*
Then say: singer, ginger, linger.
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze and gauge,
Marriage, foliage, mirage, age,

Hero, heron, query, very,
Parry, tarry fury, bury,
Dost, lost, post, and doth, cloth, loth,
Job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath.

Faugh, oppugnant, keen oppugners,
Bowing, bowing, banjo-tuners
Holm you know, but noes, canoes,
Puisne, truism, use, to use?

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Though the difference seems little,
We say actual, but victual,

Seat, sweat, chaste, caste, Leigh, eight, heig ht,
Put, nut, granite, and unite.

Reefer does not rhyme with deafer,
Feoffer does, and zephyr, heifer.
Dull, bull, Geoffrey, George, ate, late,
Hint, pint, senate, but sedate.

Gaelic, Arabic, pacific,
Science, conscience, scientific;
Tour, but our, dour, succour, four,
Gas, alas, and Arkansas.

Say manoeuvre, yacht and vomit,
Next omit, which differs from it
Bona fide, alibi
Gyrate, dowry and awry.

Sea, idea, guinea, area,
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.
Youth, south, southern, cleanse and clean,
Doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian,
Dandelion with battalion,
Rally with ally; yea, ye,
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay!

Say aver, but ever, fever,
Neither, leisure, skein, receiver.
Never guess-it is not safe,
We say calves, valves, half, but Ralf.

Starry, granary, canary,
Crevice, but device, and eyrie,
Face, but preface, then grimace,
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.

Bass, large, target, gin, give, verging,
Ought, oust, joust, and scour, but scourging;
Ear, but earn; and ere and tear
Do not rhyme with here but heir.

Mind the o of off and often
Which may be pronounced as orphan,
With the sound of saw and sauce;
Also soft, lost, cloth and cross.

Pudding, puddle, putting. Putting?
Yes: at golf it rhymes with shutting.
Respite, spite, consent, resent.
Liable, but Parliament.

Seven is right, but so is even,
Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen,
Monkey, donkey, clerk and jerk,
Asp, grasp, wasp, demesne, cork, work.

***A** of valour, vapid vapour,*
***S** of news (compare newspaper),*
***G** of gibbet, gibbon, gist,*
***I** of antichrist and grist,*

Differ like diverse and divers,
Rivers, strivers, shivers, fivers.
Once, but nonce, toll, doll, but roll,
Polish, Polish, poll and poll.

Pronunciation-think of Psyche!-
Is a paling, stout and spiky.
Won't it make you lose your wits
Writing groats and saying "grits"?

It's a dark abyss or tunnel
Strewn with stones like rowlock, gunwale,
Islington, and Isle of Wight,
Housewife, verdict and indict.

Don't you think so, reader, rather,
Saying lather, bather, father?
Finally, which rhymes with enough,

Though, through, bough, cough, hough, sou gh, tough??

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Hiccough has the sound of sup...
My advice is: GIVE IT UP!
The Chaos in Drop Your Foreign Accent, by Gerard Nolst Trenité (1870-1946) (also known under the pseudonym Charivarius)[1]

Reading Gerard Nolst Trenité's masterpiece can be both an answer and a starting point to our desire and curiosity concerning English language. How much can we understand and grasp of the English language (or this author's poem) and how many of us can perform this task easily? And is it really necessarily? Why should we (or should we at all!) speak English? Is English language a bare nowadays necessity or is it only a caprice of our contemporary society? Are there several types of English and if there are which one is most likely to ensure success? Is English an easy or a hard language to be learnt? What does it easiness or hardness depend on? How long does it take to learn English and how much time does its practice require?
These are only some of the questions that rise when only uttering the word "English". As Gerard Nolst tried to emphasize in his poem (he himself being a non-native English speaker) English language may seem pretty easy at a first glance. May only seem. But after we look into its depths we reach its profound character. Starting from Nost' poem interpretation we can notice that a non-native speaker can find English language very hard to achieve. Its main difficulty is not the vocabulary itself but its pronunciation.
English is well-known for its lack of pronunciation rules and although it is considered a very inventive language (most words are compounds of or derivations from basic words: for example, "armchair" - "arm" and "chair", "businessman" - "business" and "man"; "useful" - "use" and the suffix "ful" - meaning having the characteristic of the word to which is added, "useless" - derived from the word "use" with the help of the suffix "less" meaning "without" the feature of the word to which is added to), a very logical one where the grammar rules seem to be general truths, its word pronunciation seems to equipoise everything and furthermore puzzle the poor non-native learner trying to get a complete picture of what English speaking really means.
"Words are pale shadows of forgotten names. As names have power, words have power. Words can light fires in the minds of men. Words can wring tears from the hardest hearts"[2]*, said once Patrick Rothfuss (in his book The Name of the Wind), therefore the power of a person is given by the language one speaks. Each and every of us speaks and knows his/her native language but things get complicated when we have to learn another language (either this "must" implies an inside or outside requirement). The more the language which is supposed to be learnt is different to us and our native language the more difficult the task seems and greater the effort is. The strength of our motivation can be the perfect engine to learn a new language but it is not enough. There are also other elements that can influence our decision to learn a new language: the environment, our aspirations, the way we choose to acquire this knowledge and the list can be a very long one. But the very first question and concern that appears when speaking about English learning is: why? Why English and not another language? Why has English become a sort of universal language and all of a sudden it seems to be almost the only accepted international communication language? Why all companies require their employees speak (or be able to*

[1] https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/english?page=2
[2] https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/language

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learn) English? Why all major cultural events "award" English "the great prize" and transform it into the "queen of the ball"? Why and most important when has English become "a universal" language?

The answers to these questions are as logical and easy as they can be. If we take a moment to analyze what happened in the last century then all our questions will get an answer (even though it is not the one we want).

First, in order to understand and explain what exists in the present we should have a look in the past. The British Empire being a force and colonizing a great number of countries spread both its customs, culture and language. More peoples conquered meant more speakers of the dominant language. Thus, it quickly spread around the world and soon all the continents were "infected with" English. Time passed and America became a superpower and as always "the winner takes it all" or at least indirectly "imposes" its superiority by means of language, traditions and culture.

English has become so popular due to the its spread means. It is only one click away. It is enough to switch on our laptop, our cell phone, or press a button of our remote control to get in touch with English. All technology, either we refer to software or hardware, electronics or simple house devices have their instructions or manuals of use in English. Under these circumstances it seems almost impossible not to get "fly-blown" with the English language. Means by which English has gained ground are even more important to explain its popularity. Movies and music (we all have at least once hummed the lyrics of a favorite song even if we didn't really understand its meaning) are the most favorable channels that helped English spread.

Moreover, the American "borrowed" traditions and culture seemed much more familiar and attractive for the people of other countries than their own (for example, in our country Halloween has become "a part of the Romanian autumn"; young Romanian people celebrate Valentine's day while the significance of the Romanian "rusty" equivalent Dragobete has been long forgotten and we should not forget to mention "a new-entry" of the list, the so long awaited, "Black Friday").

Since our society is daily concerned with "globalization", "Anglicization" and "Americanization" have also started to root as its "secondary effects"[3]. Surprisingly, the number of non-native English speakers is by far greater than that of the native ones. Therefore, while the number of native speakers is of 359 million that of non-native speakers is three times (or more) greater reaching 900 to 1500 million as we can easily see from the following chart. English has succeeded to become "number one" when talking about the number of people who choose to learn and speak English, to express their thoughts and feelings in a language that is not their own.

[3] See *The Social Psychology of English as a Global Language: Attitudes, Awareness and identity in the Japanese Context*, Robert, M.McKenzie, pg. 1, Springer Publishing House, 2010.

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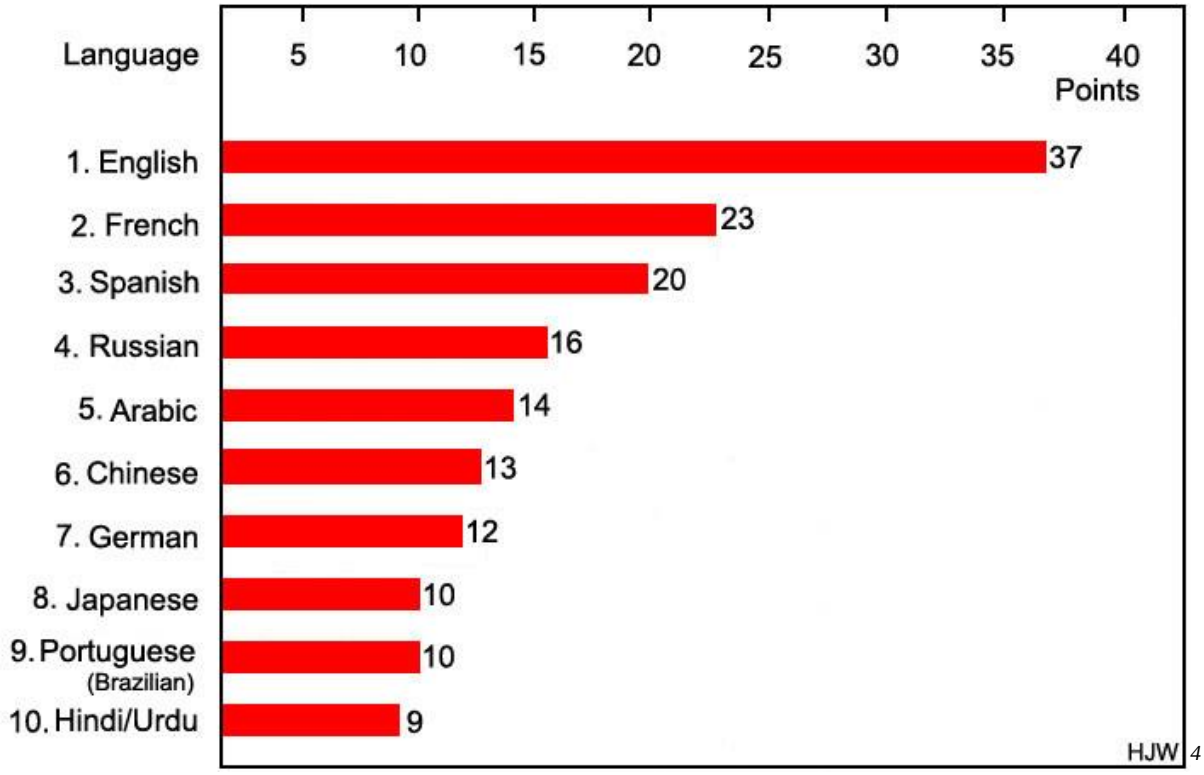

And since we started talking about English "in the figures language" it is important to mention that English is the official language of 54 countries. English seems to have become the "third native language superpower" after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish[5].

Also, it is the official language of the European Union and one of the most widely taught foreign language. We can assert that English has become nowadays an important element of personal and professional success. Used in businesses, trade, communication and technology, cultural events and academic life, English has become a part of our life, many of its words and phrases being borrowed in our language. Some completely justify their presence by the fact that they denominate realities or things for which our language does not provide words, and they have therefore, become international (words like: mouse; hotdog, hamburger, etc.) while other have been "adopted" and frequently used because they were considered to be more cosmopolitan, trendy and fashionable than our own words (in the category of such examples we may find words like: weekend, manager, discount; HR, PC, PR, discount, etc.).

*What it is even more interesting and original about the English language is that it itself is "a hybrid language", in the sense that along the years it has borrowed words from different languages (**Latin**: curriculum-curricula, cactus-cacti, magus-magi, datum-data, antenna-antennae, etc.; **Greek**: phenomenon-phenomena, crisis-crises, thesis-theses, antithesis-antitheses, synthesis-syntheses; **French** (most of the English words): bureau-bureaux, soup, fruit, chalet, chef, perfume, chief, handkerchief, pork, sausage; **German**: deaf, good, rough,*

[4] http://www.ilovechile.cl/2014/03/26/english-important-language-worldwide/106328
[5] According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language.

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tough, day, laugh, cough, night, soap, fish; ***Italian****: pizza, pasta, piano, radio, soprano, salami, etc.).*

Under these circumstances, we may say and consider English as "a language bazaar" reuniting not only an important number of language but also of cultures and conferring them particular shape and originality by its simple denomination as English language. So, if we are to characterize the English language we would say that it is "a mixture", one successful language cocktail that consists of more than 250, 000 words of different vocabulary field from technical to medical, from business, to fashion, or from usual daily phrases to specialized terms and collocations.

English has not only borrowed and assimilated terms, words and expressions from different languages but from all over the world and managed to bring them together and combine them in a harmonious synthesis. It has the great merit that it has succeed to create a proper lively language despite its complex, irregular (and most of the time puzzling) spellings, especially when referring to vowels.

English, this "language combination hybrid" has become a very important tool for every human being and a vital success instrument on a corporate ladder.

In nowadays society, a non-English speaker is perceived as a "language handicapped" and he / she does not stand any chance to acquire a higher position within the company he /she works for or get a better job unless he/she speaks English or improves his/her English knowledge.

In a modern, technologized world, where everything seems to be achieved virtually, where each and every thing can be performed by just pressing a button or is only one click distance, in such a world not speaking English (or not having any contact to it) may seem pure suicide.

This lingua franca has become a major barometer of our personal, professional and social life. All of a sudden we are "encircled" of English speaking people and the challenge seems to "trick or treat". We find ourselves in front of only two way choices: either remain stubbornly enclosed in our once known society and world, where things are exactly as we once wanted and remembered to be, unchanged and calm and treat any challenge with disregard and indifference or accept that society itself is in a continuous change and it evolves, changes, develops and grows in the same manner as we and our life do and "embrace" any new stings and make a special effort (which is always nevertheless required) to keep up with them, being in this way "updated" and daily informed of the evolution of things and never having the feeling that something is beyond our knowledge or takes us by surprise.

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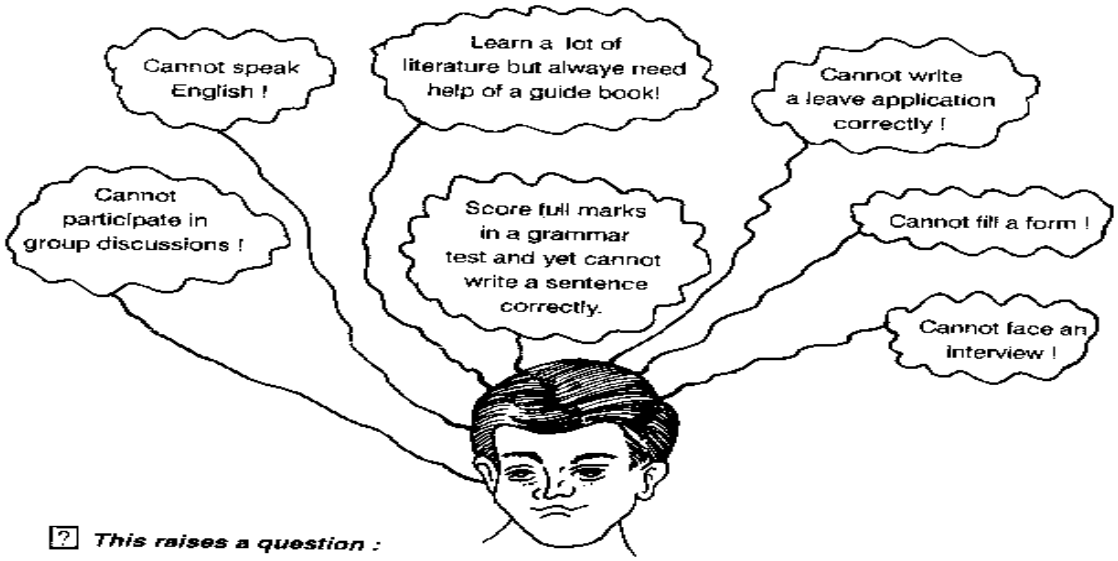

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Although it may seem that most people speak English, in fact, a great number of them actually speak Globish. But what is Globish? Globish is a trade mark developed by a Jean-Paul Nerriere and according to Wikipedia it has "a subset of standard English grammar and a list of 1500 words"[7]. But its creator has never claimed or seen it as a proper language but as a common ground, as a support language that business people employ and use in the context of international business. Furthermore, Nerriere claims having written his book Globish The World Over in this language, which he considers to be a natural one (and not something artificial) and he is truly convinced that his new invented language is the good one, "Good Globish is correct English"[8]. In order to support the efficiency and importance of his language Nerriere quotes Robert McCrum, literary editor of London Observer. In its turn, McCrum, explains in his book How the English language became the World's Language, Globish as an economic phenomenon, only as a business based language, while English is much more complex and cannot be reduced only to business communication. Complexity is exactly the argument that Nerriere brings into discussion when emphasizing the advantages of speaking and using Globish instead of English. While English has over 615 000 words (The Oxford English dictionary is used as reference) and native speakers know less than 80 000, Globish has a limited vocabulary consisting of only 1 500 words that can be combined for creating short and simple sentences, covering a basic syntax and lacking idiomatic expressions.

As a conclusion, we should say that we truly agree and share the opinion according to which a society that is monolingual, the people of a country that speak only their native language are at least handicapped, not to mention secluded, isolated and of minor importance doomed to endure social and communication failure, finding themselves "at a great disadvantage with foreign powers"[9]. [10]

[6] http://apostolosmakrides.blogspot.ro/2010/06/importance-of-english-language.html
[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globish_(Nerriere)
[8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globish_(Nerriere)
[9] See *The importance of learning a foreign language in a changing society*, Dr. Emanuel Alvarez Sandoval, iUniverse Publishing House, 2005, pg. 2; or:

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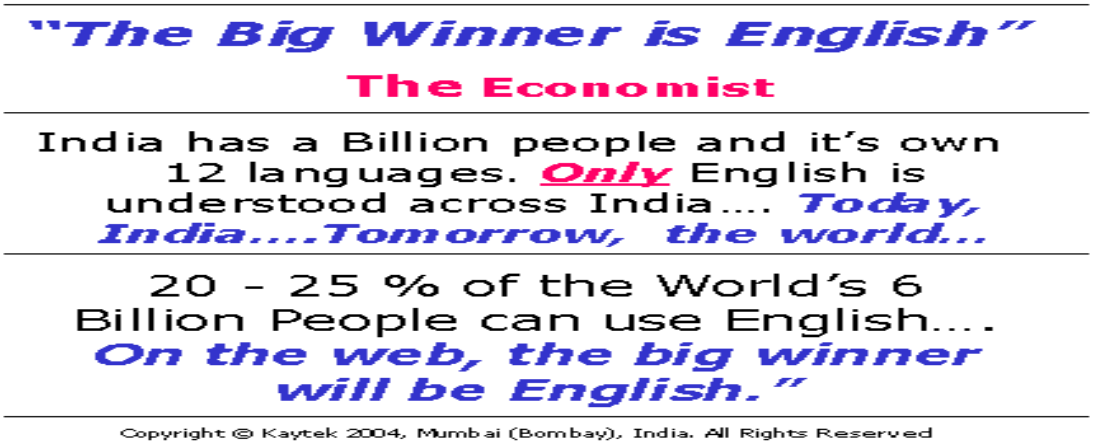
English language has become (especially in the field of business and large companies policy) an essential survive skill. Most companies have understood that their people are the most important assets of their company, that English has become the communication frame language and have combined these two elements in the form of English training courses for their staff.
Either we speak Globish or English the most important thing is to speak a foreign language either it is one widely spread or less "trendy".
What kind of language English is and what are its characteristic features in comparison to other international languages is the topic of another paper. We can either agree or disagree with Stephen Fry's definition of English in comparison to the French one:
"The English language is like London: proudly barbaric yet deeply civilized, too, common yet royal, vulgar yet processional, sacred yet profane. Each sentence we produce, whether we know it or not, is a mongrel mouthful of Chaucerian, Shakespearean, Miltonic, Johnsonian, Dickensian and American. Military, naval, legal, corporate, criminal, jazz, rap and ghetto discourses are mingled at every turn. The French language, like Paris, has attempted, through its Academy, to retain its purity, to fight the advancing tides of Franglais and international prefabrication. English, by comparison, is a shameless whore." Stephen Fry, The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within[11]



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"The importance of being a good English speaker" (if we were to paraphrase Oscar Wilde's famous play) seems to be the motto of our present world. "To be or not to be successful" (paraphrasing "the father of the English literature") is directly related to our degree and level of English performance. Speaking English (or any other language) may seem as one of the imposed social rules but in the end it's our choice if we want to go by this rule or we completely ignore it.

http://books.google.ro/books?id=c3uVVj1pMasC&pg=PP1&lpg=PP1&dq=the+importance+of+learning+a+foreign+language,+sandoval&source=bl&ots=cxUhPgHcUu&sig=jE68zbbEokN7Nco7E0RGqjH1amM&hl=ro&sa=X&ei=7Mg1VLL6BMfmyQPD8oLwBQ&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=the%20importance%20of%20learning%20a%20foreign%20language%2C%20sandoval&f=false

[10] See http://www.glogster.com/dhmp10b/importance-of-english/g-6mg6m9u8v6ilbjhvlu500a0

[11] http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/english

[12] See http://www.glogster.com/dhmp10b/importance-of-english/g-6mg6m9u8v6ilbjhvlu500a0.

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