WHY STILL ENGLISH FRANCA?

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Abstract:The English process to reach the status of a universal instrument of communication makes its way to the modern globalized world as the humankind second largest native language and the official language of over 70 countries. (Crystal, 2003: 1-27) English is the most widely learned second language and more and more people are clamoring to learn it. 80% of the information in the world is expressed in English (Crystal, 2003:106) making it a universal communication instrument and learning must for cross culture openness, flexibility, and adaptation. Our investigation covers the historical, political, and cultural resources of the linguistic phenomenon which assist communication, knowledge transfer, and development. The conclusion goes to the independent nature of the English language paradox: it is not the political or military domination, or even the native linguistic policy that made it spread and develop but the strength of the people speaking it natively, despite the political events in its country of origin[1]. The article pleads for the cognitive input-output language nature as part of the upward economic, cultural and social development and integration through knowledge and understanding.

Keywords: etymology, linguistic globalization, English Franca, language economics, development

Etymological clarification

Although it is called either a '*contact language'*, a '*global language'* (Crystal 2003; Gnutzmann 1999:358), or '*an international language'* (EIL) (Jenkins 2008) etc, English has acquired the status of *lingua franca* due to its capacity to meet the communication needs of the people from various geographical and cultural areas. '*Franca'* defines the functionality of English going beyond the cultural boundaries of its native speaking environment as opposed to its vernacular function.

The etymology of the term draws back to the history of a vehicular language used to match communication needs throughout eastern Mediterranean area from the 11th to 19th. The Italian '*franca'*, known also as *Sabir*, or the Arabic *Faranji*, or the Greek *phrankoi* was the name given to the Frankish tribes (Latin: *franci* or gens *Francorum*) in the time of the Eastern Roman Empire, and used before the crusades, according toKahane. (1951:287-91) The ancient European *LinguaFranca* was made up of Arabic, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish in the time of Renaissance. There was also some more historical emergence of languages used as *vehicular languages* which were used in particular geographical areas: Arabic, Chinese, the ancient Greek, Latin, and then French were, by turn, the *lingua franca* of Europe, in old times. Some of them represent the cultural liaison of a nation, such as the Arabic; Russian was the lingua *franca* for some eastern European countries where it was imposed politically, but English has become the universal operational communication instrument of the world. Holmes (1997: 195-224) estimates that *lingua franca* "refers to a language serving as a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups in a multilingual speech community'.

[1] We make reference to Brexit, the impending withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union decided by the British people by referendum in June, 2016

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Statistics show that in modern times, the non-native English users out-number the native speakers of the language, several times. It means that English is not only the language of the native speakers anymore, but it is the *English Franca* that provides the norms needed by communication of the non-native speaking community and make it functionally effective. (Kachru, 1992) But the socio-linguistic literature makes reference to the linguistic cultural communities as being related to the nation geography and culture. The social stability and cultural separation are reference criteria for the *English Franca* as long as it is the language defining "the community of practice" which is developed globally by nations which share it as common language. (Eckert; McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 2004) develop the term further into the following chracteristics that they found specific to the *English Franca* global speaking community:

- mutual engagement in shared practices
- jointly negotiated enterprise
- members' shared repertoire

English Franca turns into a *contact language* used by global speakers to negotiate and opt for the mutually understood meanings in particular situational contexts, or into *a partner language* when it combines with native language appropriately for the effectiveness of intercultural communicative situations. Communicative needs motivate innovative linguistic forms, influences and code-switches which are no longer regarded negatively. The *English Franca* global users will select the most effective linguistic repertoire for their particular purposes leading to the continuous development of their mutual understanding. It is the way that *English Franca* saves the multilingual and pluri-cultural diversity. (House & Rehbein, 2004: 2).

English Franca is 'no longer founded on the linguistic and socio-cultural norms of the native English and its respective countries and cultures.' (Gnutzman, 2000: 358).

The non-native English speakers, coming from different cultures, have the tendency to develop a democratic language status as they use it functionally, in terms of their native language norms, making English the communication instrument of equal rights.

The speakers of various mother tongues and cultural backgrounds choose English as their second language (House, 1999: 73–89; Seidlhofer, 2001: 133-158) as long as *English Franca*is already crucial for international professional intelligibility, culture awareness and intercultural communication effectiveness. It works for the information-based society and the mutual creation of knowledge by bridging languages and culture barriers.

The world that has been changed by English will never be the same. English is no longer learned as a foreign hegemonic language. People need it as an instrument of socializing or professional communication. English is present in virtually every key development trend whether it is communications technology such as the internet, news media, or education. English has evolved into the most extensive and prolific language in the world.

Are there any other reasons that made English the most extensively used language in the world? History experience proved that political and military domination would never be strong enough to make peoples willing to adopt a language happily as a means of their day-to-day communication. The masters can impose their language officially to the political and administration level, to the upper classes as a formal instrument of communication, but never to its informal stage, unless it contributes to the diversification and easiness of communication. The historic experience of the British Isles themselves witnessed this very dramatic situation. The speakers of the Old English could not be forced to use the language of the invading Normans. They preserved and developed their English as an expression of a specific and strong culture which was nevertheless open to influences.

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The modern-day global spread of English is pushed by economic, demographic and technological development drivers and accompanied by educational, cultural, political and ethical issues. The complex global tendencies and even fashions are closely interrelated with the role of English as a working world language. But the global English is no longer the language of Shakespeare that was standardized and developed originally on the British Isles and which was used to be taught as a second language in the 19th century. The extension of its status from the language of a nation, to the one of all nations, made it the language of all, the language that undertook the responsibility of the world-wide communication and education, able to redefine the national and individual cultural identity, and recreate new global social, professional and political human relationship patterns.

Communication and knowledge transfer: flexibility and adaptability

The key role of English in the process of globalization is closely connected to the next industrial revolution and to the shift of a new social, economic and political order. The availability of English as a global working language makes globalization process more rapid, while globalization push English use wider. The interrelated phenomena are severely transforming the world in the present and near future.

English is one of the simplest and easiest natural languages in the world. The only other simple and easy languages are the constructed[2] ones. Linguists and scholars felt like conceiving artificial languages that might help people to communicate easily. They experienced building up grammar, vocabulary, complex meanings, alphabets that might have done the constructed language handy. All of these experiences proved to be just linguistic training drills.

Why should they work out a *constructed language* if there were already a better easy natural one? This is English, for sure.

Nowadays, knowledge, information and education are transmitted through the natural ready-made instrument of communication: English Franca. People which are not language trained are cut off from education, knowledge, information and, consequently, from the right decision. In other words, they are shut off from the outside world. In contrast, educated people are open towards outside world.

The human resource quality of a nation is easily evaluated not only by the number of literate population, but also by its aspiration to achieve growth and development and by its capacity to sustain it. Productivity of human resource lies in the capacity to meet the new technical and business demands of the 21st century which is the result of training, education and accessibility to new information and knowledge through language training.

While British and American English represent specific cultural characteristics, *English Franca* has the effective communication potential in terms of cross culture environment. It also matches the information transfer and knowledge development needs. The present project recommends *English Franca* usage and teaching as a process rather than a product by raising cultural awareness through linguistic accommodation and meaningful negotiation. Language Franca instruction aims the achievement of mutual understanding, rather than convergence of the language standards and norms. The acquisition of the cross-cultural competence is closely dependent to the language culture-specificity of thought and behavior, social and religious values promoted by the culturally embedded language, which is able to balance the student flexibility to cognition and behavior. New ideas and beliefs can switch cultural codes and barrier patterns as a result of the culture-specific dependency paradigm and raise of awareness of parameters such as religion or social role of sexes according to the language culture promoted. It is *English Franca* innovative linguistic forms

[2] An artificial human language created and planned to facilitate peoples communication (Eco, 1995)

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that are able to promote cognitive flexibility through lingua-cultural awareness and open mindedness.

The access to professional information through language competence makes language instruction handy in achieving growth as professionals, as long as students can also pursue an online degree and work and earn at the same time. The acquisition of language skills can promote workforce achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering economic and social excellence through the equal access to information and effective professional and human communication. It is a sine-qua non condition to the continuous strives on key educational issues. In today's world, the role of language education has become even more vital, making it an absolute necessity for economic and social development of any nation.

English Franca Geography

The physical, political and economic geography of the English speaking areas in the world brings foreword knowledge contribution that English language skills have added to the economic development of various countries and nations. The status of English in various countries in the world is closely connected to the political options, cultural identity, and education policies. The linguistic map of Europe seems to be limited to five languages: English, French, German, Spanish and Russian.

According to the 2017 Eurostat Statistics[3] English seems to be the most widely-spoken-proficient foreign language throughout Europe and the self-rated English language skills of Europe are improving.

	Very good	**Good**	**Basic**
English	22	47	30
German	17	42	39
Spanish	17	35	47
French	15	39	46

The statistics show that almost every day English use is likely to apply to the professional needs of the non natives. English users as a foreign language are followed by 22% Spanish and German users.

	Occasionally	**Often**	**Almost everyday**
English	44	29	31
German	50	25	22
Spanish	87	26	22
French	61	22	13
None	25	52	53

At the country level, it appears that the frequency of use of a language is connected with the foreign language policy makers and the extent to which the language in question is known and learnt in school in each country.

The newly joined countries in the European Union appear to have a slightly different language competence situation. Bulgarians, with 33% and Romanians with 30% occasional use indicate that that foreign languages training is not focused on by language policy planners. Not surprisingly, youngpeopleuse languages mainly while studying.

The vast majority of Europeans perceive knowing foreign languages as very useful, mainly English which is considered the most useful to know for personal development and career.

The prospect of working in another country and studying abroad is more motivating for the young Lithuanians, (45%), Estonians (43%), Slovakians (42%) and Romanians (42%). The higher educatedstudents, as the most active language learners, indicate work-related

[3]http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign_language_learning_statistics

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reasons as an incentive to learn languages. Language training is frequently seen as a means of obtaining a better job, but a large part of Europeans seem unlikely to enjoy the advantages of multilingualism.

Language economics: conclusive ways ahead

The economic perspective on language policies is scientifically relevant for the contribution of language development and instruction to the economic evolution, professional and social integration. The issue of language policies impact on the economic development has contributed to the increased interest in sociological research, anthropology and political science since the 60ties.

The 'economics of language' or 'language economics' plays an increasingly practical role in the evolution of peoples. (Grin, 2003: 169-188; Grin, 2004: 189-202) The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have been marked by social, political events and technological evolutions which have made room to the follow-up socio-linguistic phenomena. (Firth, 1996: 237-59) The fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 opened way to the re-construction of Eastern European economic and cultural identities which were suppressed for decades.

The economic perspective on language learning appears to be on the rise in these geographical areas, as it gives relevance to the analysis of the specific problems having impact on the developing countries in the region. The close relationship between *English Franca*, as a global language, and the highly and rapid linguistically changing of the professional and cultural environments provide useful information for the research of the economics of international trade, world production, travel and communication technology. The dynamics of *English Franca* in these newly born economic environments is pendent on the choice of multinational corporations carrying out their activity across borders. The accessibility to the dominant *English Franca* facilitates economic, technological and scientific resources and secures economic development, which ultimately is followed at cultural level alterations. The option to support a minority language claims for deliberate expensive measures and contributes to the demise process of small languages. The language economics investigation takes its leads increasingly strategic, as the economic approach of the issue is materialized by language policy. Its capacity to analyze, evaluate and compare economically the language policy models assist in the economic decision-making process.

The language and cultural diversity can potentially be leveled up by a culture of a language Franca bringing economic development by direct access to information and technology through specific language policies. Economic arguments can be promoted to support its learning in EU developing countries.

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