

English as the Universal Business Language

By Bala Prasad

Success, in any industry, hinges on successful communication. From the local merchants in the town square to the CEO of multinational corporations, business goals can't be met if we do not communicate effectively with our clients. The global economy no doubt benefits from adopting a universal business language.

Why adopt English as the universal business language? Because English has already achieved global status around the world. It is the world's second largest native language, the official language in 70 countries, and English-speaking countries are responsible for about 40% of world's total GNP. It is the de facto working language of 98 percent of German research physicists and 83 percent of German research chemists. It is the official language of the European Central Bank, even though the bank is in Frankfurt and neither Britain nor any other predominantly English-speaking country is a member of the European Monetary Union. An official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, like the International Olympic Committee, English is also the language black parents in South Africa overwhelmingly wish their children to be educated.

English can already be at least understood almost everywhere among scholars and educated people – it's the world media language, of cinema, TV, pop music and the computer world. All over the planet people know many English words, their pronunciation and meaning.

A language becomes a world language for one reason – the power of the people who speak it. Power means political, economic, technological, and cultural power. For historical reasons, English has achieved the position it has. English is an easy language to learn compared to, for example, Asian languages. Even major Romance languages, such as French and Spanish, English have simpler grammar, particularly simpler verb conjugations. English has no gender or number inflection for adjectives, articles, and adverbs.

Adopting English as the universal business language will not lead to the erosion of other cultures, here's why. Consider that Chinese culture that is not translated into English is only accessible to Chinese speakers. For all others, it's as good as lost. If future Chinese speakers keep writing in Chinese, more culture will be lost. But if everyone learns English, those Chinese writers can expose their culture to a much larger audience if they write in English.

Ironically, only English speakers are adversely affected by the adoption of English as the universal business language. This is because, while the rest of the world is striving to become bilingual, native English speakers will have no incentive to learn a second language. In the long run, it is much better on an individual basis to understand more than one language. But for the business world, one language should be used: English.

Common Business Language is Unfeasible

By Musafir

A common global business language is as metaphoric as a blissful romantic dream. It's not only quixotic, it is as illogical as wanting to have one nation, one race or one common thought. The concept of having one global language is nothing new. In fact L. L. Zamenhof created Esperanto specifically for this purpose at the end of the 19th century. Today, a majority of the world population is unaware of his effort.

Unfortunately, language is more divisive than race, religion and culture. Bangladesh was carved out of Pakistan in 1972 over the differences in language. Europe has never been united as one nation despite having a similar western culture because of language differences. The point I am trying to make here is that people do not want to lose their linguistic identity at any cost. Despite that European businesses have dominated the world since the industrial revolution.

A true language, business or otherwise, evolves in the environment we live in. The words spoken on different soils have different meanings just like having different flavors and varieties of fruits. We should realize that meaning is given to words in a cultural context rather than a dictionary definition. This means people from different cultures may use the same word to mean different things in different contexts, even when speaking the same language. A French person speaking English may say, "I should have more time to bend on your business" actually meaning to say, "I want to pay more attention to your business." A Japanese person speaking English may feel more comfortable saying "inconsiderable number of departments" instead of saying, "It is difficult to manage so many departments." A rural Indian speaking English may say, "what does your father go?" instead of saying, "none of your business."

Kalidas could not have created *Shakuntalam*, Shakespeare could not have written *Macbeth* and Homer could not have penned *Iliad* with the same mastery, lucidity and emotion if they had to write in a common global language. Consequently, the world simply would have been void of their brilliance and we would have been left with limited expressions such as "you know, OK, cool or you figure!."

A language can only evolve; it cannot be imposed. It takes thousands of years, myriads of folklores, traditions and habits to create expressions and give meaning to the words. Let us be united by speaking different languages rather than be divided by speaking a common global business language.