

English: Language for communication in a globalised society

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GLOBALISATION refers to the increased pace of interconnectedness that has taken place starting from the 20th century until now (Agnihotri, 2005). It is a historical process, which includes the result of human innovation and technological progress. It is a product of increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows. The term 'globalisation' sometimes refers to the movement of people (labour) and knowledge (technology) across international borders (IMF Staff, 2000). It becomes an instrument in narrowing cultural and linguistic diversity, which eventually results in cultural and linguistic convergence. Moreover, the emergence of new information and communication technology has made an immense contribution towards cultural and linguistic convergence.

On the other hand, globalisation brings diversity particularly in the economic side because rich countries would have more chances of gaining more benefits in terms of economic growth than poor countries (Henry, 2002). To be on par with other countries, it is essential that every country capitalise on something that could help uplift its economy to be globally competitive. Looking at the situation at present, the best action that a country must take is to remove first the barriers towards globalisation like the linguistic and communication barriers.

Language and communication play a crucial role in globalisation specifically in unifying the world's culture and economy through the use of information technology and media. It is undeniable that language and communication are equally important to other factors that contribute to globalisation. They help people expand their territories and social network in a global world. Thus using a global language like English seems to be very important today and it should not be taken for granted.

Currently, it is evident that English is the language of international communication, but it is also evident that the dominance of English today causes not only linguistic and communicative inequality but also the feeling of anxiety and insecurity on the part of those who cannot speak the language in a rapidly globalising world where English dominates extensively (Tsuda, 2005). English now gains dominance over other languages and plays a crucial role in promoting globalisation. Therefore, the ability to communicate in English is now a necessity. English has become the language of the global village and serves as a neutral language to people who come from different linguistic background. Therefore, people who can communicate in English fluently and proficiently have an edge.

It has become the language of power and prestige in many countries, thus acting as a gatekeeper to social and economic progress. This is the reason that many countries are now giving importance to English because it is a pathway towards progress and learning.

A person may learn and progress faster if he or she can understand and communicate in English well because most information is available in the English language. In short, to be globally competitive every individual must be able to communicate in English effectively.

According to Ammon (1992) "English is the world's dominant language because it has the greatest number of speakers reaching as many as 1.5 billion people; English is designated as an official languages as many as 62 nations; English is the most dominant language in

scientific communication with 70-80 per cent of academic publications being published; English is the official and working language in most international organisations and English is the most taught foreign language across the world.

English is indeed a language that serves as a common medium for international and intercultural communication in a global society". In addition, the use of English in a globalised society minimises cultural diversity and expands cultural convergence.

Viewing globalisation as crystallisation of the entire world as a single place (Arnason, 1990), it is expected that there is a possibility of having one culture that unifies people all over the world.

The dominance of English is evident in the Americanisation of the world culture and McDonaldisation of the society. It is evident in the lifestyle of people around the world; the language they speak, the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the movie they watch and the music they listen. These are all proofs that the world is moving to one common culture and cultural diversity is narrowing while cultural divergence is expanding. However, it must not be forgotten that the unification of culture is actually a product of technological advancement.

People could communicate with one another through telephones, fax machines, emails, internet and television. The development of information technology and media makes the world a smaller place to live in. Information technology and media have also their role in globalisation. The massive development of computers around the world advances all aspects of life.

The emergence of these technologies requires everyone to be communicatively competent in English language.

For example the use of internet today brings a lot of benefits and it brings countries closer to each other. However, in using the internet and in exploring the new technology requires ability to understand, read, write and speak English.

It is to be noted that the introduction of the 'Information Superhighway' and the spread of the Internet in the 1990s makes English a dominant language in technological advancement.

Generally, it can be said that in this century, English has contributed a lot to globalisation for it narrows cultural and linguistic diversity, expands cultural and linguistic divergence and advances the information technology and media.

So, English has a bigger role in today's society and the ability to speak the language is already a necessity because it is the language of the global village; the language used in business, technology, media and education; the language that bridges cultural and linguistic gaps and the language that narrows cultural diversity and expands cultural divergence.