

## TEACHING AND LEARNING BUSINESS ENGLISH IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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### Abstract

*Globalization is the process of integration across world-space among the people, companies and governments of different nations, the term itself being increasingly used since the 1980s and especially 1990s. This process has been triggered by international trade and investment and aided by information technology and it has had a great impact on environment, culture, economic development and political systems all over the world. Globalization and the status of English as a world language have a great impact upon the teaching and learning of English worldwide. There is a growing interest in many countries in improving the quality of teaching English and many national education policies are adopted in order to increase the students' communication competence rather just having some knowledge about the language which was common in the past.*

**Key-words:** globalization, Business English, English for Specific Purposes, world language, proficiency

**Clasificare JEL :** M40, M41

### 1. Introduction

Multilingualism is nowadays a passport to success in modern Europe, knowing of foreign languages allowing people to improve their career prospects everywhere on the labour market. According to Gita Galova: "globalization of the world economy requires professionals and specialists in various areas to communicate effectively in foreign languages. The success is conditional on their ability to manage language and cultural barriers, i.e. on the language skills and competences with respect to their professional areas". (Galova, 2007, p VIII)

Multinational companies employ speakers of foreign languages not only for communication but also for the improvement of their sales, negotiations and contracts. This is proved by the CBI Education and Skills Survey (2009:8) where it is stated that "in an increasingly competitive job market, it is clear that foreign language proficiency adds significant value to a candidate's portfolio of skills and can give them a real competitive edge when applying for jobs. 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, for example, 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.

The increased status of English in a globalized world is also proved by the fact that it is promoted as an important factor in international development programmes, Bruthiaux (2002, p 289) stating that development efforts have now become "inextricably linked in governmental and academic circles as well as in the media with English language education." In the book entitled *Language Planning and Economics. Current Issues in Language Planning*, 2003, 4(1) p36, -p1-66 Grin mentions another aspect, what he calls the "non-market value" of English, this, the social and cultural effects that are associated with the language.

We should also mention the fact that globalization has continuously changed the English language. In J. Green's book *Globalization and the Teaching and Learning of English Worldwide – An Annotated Bibliography*, he states that the English language has been used around the world for over a century, witnessing the days of the British Empire and those of the United States as a political and cultural superpower. "With the recent increased pace of globalization and the profound changes in the kinds of connections that exist between nations and peoples in different parts of the world", he notes, "English has become ever more of a world language" (Green, 2011)

Thus, improvement in knowledge of English is closely related to improvement in the country's overall education system. In another book, entitled *English as Economic Value: Facts and Fallacies. World Englishes* 20(1), p65-78, 2001, he adds: "Policies supporting the teaching of English as a means of educational enhancement are not solely based on societal beliefs about the power of English to transform people's lives, however and there is some tangible evidence that knowledge of English can correlate with a better overall education in certain contexts."

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”. 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.

Consequently, it is a truism to say that English has become the lingua franca of the twenty-first century since research has established that 85% of international associations use English officially, 85% of the world film market is in English, 85% of the scientific articles in the world are written in English, 80% of the world electronically stored information is in English nowadays and 70% of the linguistics journals in the world are published in English.

Business negotiations all over the world are commonly held in English and as a consequence the use of this language is more and more focused on within this context of internationalization. In various settings: trade, tourism, journalism, diplomacy, science and technology, politics etc, communication in English is highly important. Mastering English is essential for people working in the tourism sector. since it is used to communicate with international tourists visiting foreign countries, It is not only the means for communicating with tourists, it is also the means for understanding cultural differences, and for increasing employees' job opportunities within this international context. English for tourism is considered to be an area of Business English ,and it integrates Business English and English for academic purposes dealing with teaching the language needed for communication and interaction between people of different cultures in tourism and travel firms ,airports, , markets and hospitality

Globalisation, including the growth of tourism and travel industries has brought about, besides the emergence of business discourse as a field of study, an increasing interest in international business. Discourse and business communication has become a popular field of investigation, with a tremendous complexity and methodological heterogeneity.

## 2.Features of ESP

Business English belongs to ESP(English for Specific Purposes) which is considered distinct from ESL(English as a Second Language). However, teachers of Business English have many things in common with teachers of General English : they have to be familiar with linguistic development and teaching theories, they have to be aware of contemporary ideas related to their position and role and of the new technologies which can contribute to the improvement of their methodology.

According to Milevica Bojovic in her article *Teaching Foreign Language for Specific Purposes:Teacher Development* presented at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Atee Conference, ESP has grown out of three main trends:

1. The expansion of demand for English to suit specific needs of a profession
2. Developments in the field of linguistics
3. Educational psychology considering the fact that the learner's needs and interests have

an influence on their motivation and effectiveness of their learning. If we consider Hutchinson and Water's definition of ESP we have to focus on the purpose of learning as they define it as an approach which does not involve a particular kind of language,teaching material or methodology. Following this definition, Anthony(1997) emphasized the idea that it is not clear where ESP courses end and General English courses begin.

Characteristics of ESP courses

Carver (1983) distinguishes between three characteristics of ESP courses:

- 1) Authentic materials which is possible since the learners' level for ESP classes should be intermediate and advanced, the students being encouraged to conduct research by using all sorts of resources, including the Internet
- 2) Purpose-related orientation based on simulation of communicative tasks(for example: conference preparation, preparation of papers, reading, note-taking, listening and writing)
- 3) Self-direction(meaning that the ESP attempts at turning learners into users and encouraging students to have some autonomy and leaving them a certain degree of freedom to decide what, when and how they will study.

Generally speaking, among various authors of English for Specific Purposes there has been a long debate about the learner's needs and if whether texts based on specific subjects should or should not be used in classes with students of a certain professional area. In the early 1980s Hutchinson &Waters stated that: “there is no justification for subject specific ESP materials ”because they understood to focus on the underlying competences of language and how they may best be acquired, rather than focusing so closely on the specific language itself.”(1980,p 45)

A few years later Pickett introduced the concepts of ergolect and poetics which gave another direction to teaching Business English and they lead ,to the idea that there is a special language that needs teaching, and obviously, materials should reflect this:“The student already knows the routines and transactions to which business English will

refer, since these are almost behavioral universals. His task will therefore be the more narrowly linguistic one of acquiring the expressions”(Pickett 1989:6)

As Mounford put it later on, “the relevance and appropriateness of teaching materials must drive from the language of the target situation, whether or not there is any evidence that the student’s interest in his or her area of study or work as a motivating purpose will automatically carry over into the ESP classroom” (Mountford 1988:83)

### 3.ESP as Compared to ESL

If we compare ESP to ESL we note that the most important difference lies on the needs and purposes of the learners who are adults and need to know the language in order to communicate in a certain professional domain. This is the reason why ESP is more oriented towards language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. The aim of instruction is another point in which ESP diverges from ESL. In ESL, teaching is based on all the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, writing. In ESP the focus is on the most needed skills for the students in a particular field of activity. For instance, an ESP program may emphasize the development of reading skills for students of business administration but it may emphasize speaking skills for tourism students. English language teaching is always combined with subject matter, the students being able to apply their knowledge of English to their main field of study: accounting, management, economics, finance, tourism, etc.

In ESP, the teacher’s role is extremely complex because he/she needs to understand the requirements of the profession of his future graduates and help them to acquire the skills they need in their career, According to Mario Pace in his article *The Teaching of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes: The Way Forward*, presented at the International Conference “ICT for Language Learning”<sup>4th</sup> Edition, the role of the teacher is “to equip the learners with tools and strategies that will empower them in a world where the teacher is only one of the many providers, or sources, of language exposure and communicative practice. His/her role is to provide them with the necessary linguistic tools to be able to apply the concepts, interpret them, and above all communicate in the target language, not just with the particular jargon characteristic of that specific occupational context but also with the language of everyday informal talk, that allows them to communicate effectively regardless of their occupational context

The use of English has spread across the world and it has been extensively used in scientific, economic and political fields or in media (radio, television, newspaper, the Internet)

In his book *English as a Global Language*, Crystal notes that the impact of English as a global language means “linguistic power, linguistic complacency, and linguistic death”

Linguistic power refers to the fact that people who have English as their first language will have great opportunities in English language companies, greater than those who speak English as their second language.

Linguistic complacency means that English speakers are less willing to learn another languages since English as a global language is spoken all over the world.

Linguistic death refers to the death of other languages as compared to the massive use of English nowadays. English is nowadays used for various purposes and so it is continuously developing to match the technological and scientific development that our society is experiencing. New vocabularies, grammatical forms and ways of speaking and writing are created, resulting in a great expansion of the use of English.

David Graddol in his book entitled *The Future of English?* identifies some global trends which have a great impact upon the usage of English nowadays: demography, the world economy, the role of technology, globalization, cultural flows, global inequalities. According to him “globalization was probably the most significant socio-economic process affecting the world in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its effects are felt not only in the economy, but also in politics and culture. It would be wrong, however, “to think of globalization as primarily a “neo-colonial” process-whereby the capital and social values of rich countries are imposed upon poorer ones. Discussions of globalization usually emphasize the importance of local contexts, for globalization creates patterns of interdependence and interconnections, where cultures and economies influence each other rapidly, but in complex and often unpredictable ways”(Graddol, 2000,p.33.)He further argues:”Rather than a process which leads to uniformity and homogeneity, globalization seems to create new, hybrid forms of culture, language and political organization: the results of global influences meeting local traditions, values and social contexts” Thus globalization is a factor which adds value to the whole society and the language is a valuable tool to do so.

### 4.Conclusions:

In a globalized world, English tends to become an essential skill for the entire workforce rather than a distinctive feature of the elite-as it used to be in the past, its hegemony being proved by its use for global business success.

Businesses have experienced globalization lately and so has the English language. The role of English as the lingua franca for the economic and scientific domains has tremendously increased over the last few decades. According

to Crystal(1997), 85% of international organizations use English officially, at least 85% in the international film market is in English and about 90% of academic articles are written in English.

Language teaching will be based on this role of English as an international language for global communication among generations who will have to be able to carry out complex negotiation and collaboration , write persuasively , interpret critically and analyse information , all of them in English.The English language connects people from all over the world and it will become an additional language to impact and change the world.

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