

---

---

OLEXANDR KHOMENKO

## *Impact of Economy on the Formation of the Lingua Franca In Globalized World: European Outlook*

---

### Summary

*The paper focuses on the economic factors affecting the formation of the language of international communication (lingua franca) in the era of globalization in Europe.*

*Key words: lingua franca, globalization, economic power, the English language, multilingualism.*

With the advent of modern technology the conceptual space of the world has reduced incredibly. Communication has gone a great distance to bring people together. People from all over the world can communicate with one another with great ease and comfort. The integration of countries, different societies, economies, cultures and people is the basic definition of Globalization. Another invention that brought the world even closer together is the Worldwide Web or the Internet. The use of the internet has made communication faster and more affordable. It has made it possible to reach people no matter which corner of the world they reside in. The information technology field also has a great hand in the process of integration. It has opened the way for greater and easier communication among people. Consequently, global world with its common information network and global economic relations inevitably requires common lingua franca. Though the latter cannot replace existing national languages it should complement them, fulfilling just the function of being the language of international communication.

The purpose of the current paper is to examine the impact of the modern world economy globalization on the formation and development of its lingua franca. The goal is to be achieved by identifying the factors influencing the emergence of a particular language as the lingua franca in today's globalized world.

With the beginning of the globalization process some new opportunities for the emergence of a lingua franca appeared. Analysis of the researches on globalisation (Robertson R, 1992, Mussa M. 2000, W. Beck, 2001, Voitovich R., 2003, Shnipko O., 2005, O. Nosov, 2006, Bose P; Lyons L, 2010 etc.), shows some basic features of globalisation: national economies have become more integrated into the global economy; labour and finance have become more mobile; multinational corporations with branches all over the world began playing a significant role. Some other trends are the globalization of financial markets, the creation of international organizations

---

---

in economic and financial spheres: International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, etc. The development of the global economy provides inter-connection of economies of individual countries, the unification of their efforts in order to solve the socio-economic and political issues [4], [5]. Another hallmark of globalization is placing parts of the business firms in countries with cheaper labour force, which became known as outsourcing [6].

Thus, the global economic community is being steadily turned into a coherent economic system, into a single global economic body. Consequently, there is a natural need for a common language of communication.

The study of literature on the language of international communication brings us to the conclusion that there are two vivid major trends in the modern world: the first one is directed to preserve the national languages, since they are considered to be the major sign of both the nationhood and the national identity, the second trend is the spread of English as the language of international communication.

The researchers of the English language status in the contemporary world indicate that the impact of globalization and economic development has made English the 'language of opportunity' and a vital means of improving prospects for well-paid employment. English is at the center of many globalization mechanisms. In this context it should be considered as the language for international development. (D.Graddol, 2006), D.Crystal (2007), Philip Seargeant and Elizabeth J. Erling (2011). English is spoken by almost 1.5 billion people. And the number of non-native native English speakers three times exceeds the Anglophone population (Graddol, 2006). The largest English-speaking country is the United States – almost 20% of English-speaking population. English is already the second language for citizens of the European Union with a population of almost 500 million.

The establishment of English as the language of international communication is being influenced by many factors. Limited by the frameworks of the paper we will not be dwelling on their detailed analysis. However, we only will note that in the 18th-19th centuries due to the industrial revolution the United Kingdom turned into the most developed state, and became the founder of the modernization of the global economy. It stands to reason that scientific knowledge underline the modernization, therefore English became the means of the access to and dissemination of knowledge. According to D.Crystal (2007) at that time more than half of all important scientific researches were written in the English language [1].

The spread of English in the later period was contributed by the economic strength of the United States of America. After Germany's defeat in the World War I the USA got the prospect of economic domination. Nowadays the USA and the UK pursue the policy of persistent implementation of the English language throughout the world, in particular, by economic means via globalization, which is playing a significant role in the process of spread of English.

---

---

A language becomes a means of international communication when its special position is recognized by majority of countries. All stated above suggests that understanding the special role of English as the world's lingua franca was resulted from changes after the first, and then the second World Wars followed by the globalization of the modern world. The official status of English as a lingua franca was granted by the League of Nations. Its role has increased even more since the creation of the United Nations in 1945.

Lingua franca (or working language, bridge language, vehicular language) is a language systematically used to make communication possible between people not sharing a mother tongue, in particular when it is a third language, distinct from both mother tongues. In a globalized world this is the English language that performs that function. English has become the language of intercultural communication, because no matter who you are – Ukrainian, Hungarian, Italian, Russian or German, when you find yourself within an international surrounding you have to communicate at least in English.

Thus, the emergence of English as the lingua franca was determined by the economic, linguistic and cultural substance of the 21st century. The economic power of the English-speaking countries has always been the main motivating factor in the approval of lingua franca. However, modern economic transformation in the world causes supporters of English as a lingua franca to fear its status stability.

The world economy forecast analysis shows that the ranking of national economies for the period up to 2050 is quite unique. According to HSBC Global Research, 2012, economic relations between developed countries and the “Third World” are changing. There will be significant changes in the world economy. By 2050, 19 of the 30 most powerful economies in the world will be the economies that are now being developed. Global growth will depend on these economies. [7]

*Top 10 national economies in 2050*

---

1. China
2. United States
3. India
4. Japan
5. Germany
6. United Kingdom
7. Brazil
8. Mexico
9. France
10. Canada

---

Source: <https://www.research.hsbc.com/midas/Res/RDV?p=pdf&tkey=hCmm8WiQC0&tn=317638.PDF>

---

---

---

According to the forecasts of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2012, China will overtake the U.S. and the EU countries and will become the most powerful global exporter, along with an increase in the service sector [8]. That service sector requires a high proportion of international communication. India and China on a planetary scale will shape the global biosphere' and they will need 'a whole planet to meet their needs [2]

Let us consider whether these changes in the world economy will effect the position of English and what role the national languages of the indicated countries will play in a global economy.

Chinese enterprises are gradually gaining control under key global resources. Some researchers foresees that in a global context it may result in changes in the English language, and lead to politically determined global spread of the Chinese language (Mandarin) as a foreign language [2:33]. 'Though Mandarin may have the most speakers in absolute terms, but in the globalized economy of the 21st century it is unlikely to replace English as the lingua franca' [10]. And the reason, as stated by most of researchers, has rather linguistic than economic or political nature: Mandarin is quite difficult for most people to learn because it is a tone language i.e. different tones indicate drastically different meanings and speakers of non-tone languages (i.e all European languages) have trouble dealing with this when they learn Mandarin. Another aspect of the language that will impede its widespread adoption is the script [11]. Chinese calligraphy takes years to learn, and learning how to read can take even longer. Furthermore, one of the advertisement of HSBC Bank, USA, which launched a new advertising campaign 'Unlocking the World's Potential' placing the ads with surprising global insights and facts, says: '*Five times more people are learning English in China, than there are people in England*' [12]. This is a further evidence of why Mandarin does not replace English – the Chinese themselves have recognized the role of English as a lingua franca.

According to the survey 'Europeans and their languages' requested by the European Commission and carried out by TNS Opinion & Social network in the 27 Member States of the European Union in February- March 2012, **English dominates as the foreign language that Europeans are most likely to be able to speak.**

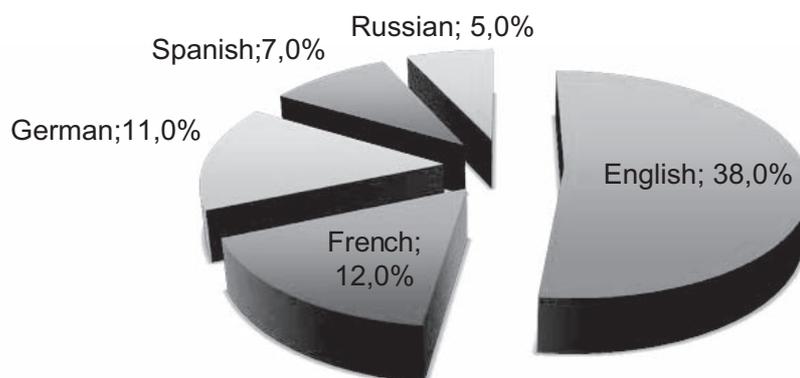
In terms of the most common foreign languages spoken, the linguistic map of Europe looks as follows:

---

---

*Top 5 most widely spoken foreign languages in Europe*

---



---

The majority of Europeans (54%) are able to hold a conversation in at least one additional language, a quarter (25%) are able to speak at least two additional languages and one in ten (10%) are conversant in at least three.

Those countries where respondents are least likely to be able to speak any foreign language are Hungary (65%), Italy (62%), the UK and Portugal (61% in each) and Ireland (60%). There are also further five Member States where at least half of all respondents say they are unable to speak any foreign language: Spain (54%), Romania and Bulgaria (52% in each), the Czech Republic (51%) and Poland (50%).

English was cited by respondents as the first foreign language spoken (32%), than the second (11%) or third (3%).

In contrast **German**, **French** and **Spanish** are more likely to be mentioned as the second most fluent (10%, 10% and 5% of respondents respectively) or third most fluent (6%, 8% and 6% respectively) than the most fluent foreign language that a respondent can speak (5%, 5% and 3% respectively).

At a national level, **English** and **Spanish** are the only two of five languages that show notable increases since 2005 in the proportion of respondents saying that they know them well enough to be able to hold a conversation [9].

Thus, apart from English there are four more languages that are spoken by Europeans. We can assume that the choice of these languages was particularly determined by economic concurrent. At least Europeans recognise the benefits of being able to speak other languages in terms of being able to work. They identify working in another country as a key advantage of learning a new language, though some respondents think that learning a new language would help them to get a better job in their own country [9:142].

Another research of the European Commission was dedicated to the “Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise (ELAN)”. The research was commissioned by the Directorate General for Education and Culture

---

---

of the European Commission and undertaken by CILT, the UK National Centre for Languages in collaboration with an international team of researchers. Its objective was to provide the Commission and decision-takers in Member States with practical information and analysis of the use of language skills small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the impact on business performance.

The research comprised the following major components:

- A summary of previous work examining the linkage between language skills, cultural competence and exporting performance;
- A survey of nearly 2000 exporting SMEs across 29 European states to collect data on approaches to the use of language skills, intercultural competence, awareness of language strategies, loss of business owing to lack of language skills, future exporting intentions and hence projected requirements for further language skills;
- A survey of thirty multinational companies to establish differences in perspective between them and SMEs in relation to language and intercultural skills in their business strategy.

The results of the research show that ‘many respondents indicated that they viewed English as a key language for gaining access to export markets and frequent reference was made to its use as a lingua franca. However, the survey results suggest that the picture is more complex than the much-quoted view that English is the world language’.

The companies indicated that they use intermediary languages for cooperation with their major export markets. For instance English is used to trade in over 20 different markets, including the four Anglophone countries, UK, USA, Canada and Ireland. German is used for exporting to 15 markets (including Germany and Austria), Russian is used to trade in the Baltic States, Poland and Bulgaria and French is used in 8 markets, including France, Belgium and Luxembourg).

‘The percentage of separate instances of languages used for specifically identified export markets by companies in the sample is: English 51%, German 13%, French 9%, Russian 8%, Spanish 4%, others 15%.’ [3:19]

The survey of SMEs found that a significant amount of business is being lost as a result of lack of language skills. Across the sample of nearly 2000 businesses, 11% of respondents (195 SMEs) had lost a contract as a result of lack of language skills. 37 businesses had lost actual contracts which together were valued at between € 8 million and € 13.5 million. 54 businesses had lost potential contracts worth in total between €16.5 million and €25.3 million. At least 10 businesses had lost contracts worth over €1 million. That’s why in 57% of the firms the level of record-keeping of staff language skills is high. Furthermore, a high proportion of businesses (48% across the sample) claimed to offer language training to their staff, with fifteen countries exceeding a 50% return. [3].

---

---

Evidently, the results stated above serve as an extra proof of the necessity of foreign language proficiency in the realm of business, however the mentioned research also revealed that English is about to share its status of lingua franca with German, French, Russian which inevitably will bring us to multilingualism.

**Conclusions.** The ‘choice’ of a *lingua franca* is initially an economic phenomenon. English has deserved the right to be the “chosen” by objective historical and economic factors as well as by ‘vox populi’. With the growing dependence of the economies on the world’s scientific and technological progress the value of the English language has increased. The number of people speaking English is increasing. In addition, well-paid and more prestigious jobs also require proficiency in English. Since it is well suited for that purpose, we might as well keep it. Thus, it can be concluded that mastering the English nowadays as a lingua franca in the globalized world, in particular, Europe will contribute to:

- improving the competitiveness of a country and restructuring of its economy (the biggest barriers in the implementation of international joint projects or joint ventures is the linguistic and cultural ones);
- integration of a country to the world economic and cultural community;
- an access to information and innovative information technologies;
- the successful career prospective.

On the other hand, English is sharing its paramount status with German, French, Spanish and Russian in Europe. So there is a quite clear tendency to a shift towards multilingualism.

---

#### REFERENCES:

1. Crystal D. *English Worldwide* // R. Hogg and D. Denison (eds). *A History of the English Language*. – Cambridge: CUP, 2006 – pp. 420 – 439.
2. Graddol D. *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of “English as a Foreign Language”*. – URL [[www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-english-next.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-english-next.pdf)]
3. *Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise (ELAN): December 2006.* – pp. 1-79. – URL [[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/elan\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/elan_en.pdf)]
4. Mussa M. *Factors Driving Global Economic Integration*. – URL [<http://www.imf.org/external/speeches/2000/082500.htm>]
5. Robertson R. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. – London: Thousand Oaks (Ca.): Sage Publications, 1992. – 224 p.
6. *Outsourcing – What is Outsourcing?* – URL [[http://www.sourcingsmag.com/content/what\\_is\\_outsourcing.asp](http://www.sourcingsmag.com/content/what_is_outsourcing.asp)]
7. Ward K. *The world in 2050. From the top 30 to the top 100*. – 2012. – URL [<https://www.research.hsbc.com/midas/Res/RDV?p=pdf&key=hCmm8WiQC0&n=31763.PDF>]
8. *OECD ENVIRONMENTAL OUTLOOK TO 2050: The Consequences of Inaction Key Facts and Figures*. – 2012. – URL [<http://www.oecd.org/env/environmentalindicatorsmodellandoutlooks/49910023.pdf>]
9. *Europeans and their languages. Report* – 2012. – URL [[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_386\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf)]
10. *English as Lingua Franca*. – May, 2011. – URL [<http://latintrade.com/2011/05/english-as-lingua-franca/>]
11. *Chinese characters*. – URL [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_characters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_characters)]
12. *New Yorkers Discover the World’s Potential in Unexpected Places*. – September, 2010. – URL [[http://www.hsbcusa.com/ourcompany/pressroom/2010/news\\_09302010\\_newyork\\_discover.html](http://www.hsbcusa.com/ourcompany/pressroom/2010/news_09302010_newyork_discover.html)]