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**To what extent globalization has an impact on
English being the most important lingua
franca in the world?**

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INTRODUCTION:

The great extent of presence the English Language has around the world has always intrigued me as a non-native speaker. As I could observe that a lot of English communication was done between non-native speakers, I decided to research more about this topic. That is the reason why I decided to write the extended essay about the use of English as a Lingua Franca by using the following research question: To what extent globalization has an impact on English being the most important lingua franca in the world? This investigation will be done through the analysis of studies made about the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) around the world, as well as statistics about the use of languages in certain areas. Also it would be discussed the different definitions about the main terms used in this extended essay to better understand the topic: Lingua Franca and Globalization. By using this analysis, we could understand the impact globalization has had on the extended use of English as a Lingua Franca, specifically how globalization has had an influence on it through economics and trade, technology and in the academic domain.

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CHAPTER 1:

English as a language is one of the main languages used around the world. The millions of people that use it are the prove of it. However, before explaining the impact Globalization has on the Status of the English Language as a Lingua Franca, we must understand these concepts first. This chapter will serve to clarify the concepts of Lingua Franca and Globalization, as well as to observe how these concepts independently can be linked with the English language.

Lingua Franca:

Although some people might think otherwise, Lingua Franca as a concept does not refer to the language of the Franks. According to Samarin (cited by Seidlhofer, 2004) A Lingua Franca can be considered as “any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language” Using his definition, we can assure that any lingua franca has the main purpose of help people with different native tongues to understand each other via other language. This makes Lingua Franca a denomination that is applied to certain languages in a specific context. For example, Quechua was used as a Lingua Franca during the Tahuantinsuyo in Peru, as it served the purpose of being the official language of a newly formed empire that had several languages in it.

In order for a language to be considered as a Lingua Franca, it has to have some characteristics in particular. According to Smokotin (2014) “The term “lingua franca” is usually used to refer to a language functioning as a means of interethnic

communication” As this quote says, one of the main characteristics of any lingua Franca is that permits the interaction between different groups of people. In order to achieve that, the participants of the conversation or the communication must understand and talk the language used as a Lingua Franca to the extent that they can understand each other or the message.

Considering both of the definitions of Lingua Franca mentioned above, we still can consider a lot of languages as a Lingua Franca, yet we can divide the types of Lingua Franca based on the area they are used. By using this criterion, we can divide the different Lingua Franca in regional Lingua Franca or Global Lingua Franca. We can consider the first one as being a Lingua Franca specific to one geographical place, while the second term implies that the language can act as a Lingua Franca in a bigger scale, surpassing geographical barriers. In the case of the English language, it can be considered as a Global Lingua Franca (or EGLF).

In the specific case of English as a Lingua Franca, we can observe that a significant quantity of research has been done during the last 25 years. Starting with the definition of what English as a Lingua Franca (or ELF) means, we can observe the following:

Firth (1996) mentions that:

“[ELF is] a “contact language” between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication.”

Jenkins (2015) mentions that:

“In other words, English as a Multilingua Franca refers to multilingual communicative settings in which English is known to everyone present, and is therefore always potentially ‘in the mix’ , regardless of whether or not, and how much, it is actually used.”

By comparing both definitions we can see the evolution the concept of English as a Lingua Franca has had. In the case of the definition given by Firth, it is considering that the interactions where English as a Lingua Franca is used are restricted only for the communication between non-native speakers of English. However, Jenkins redefines the concept of English as a Lingua Franca by expanding the range of interactions where we can consider English being used as a Lingua Franca. It is worth mentioning that Jenkins uses interchangeably in her article the terminology of English as a Lingua Franca and English as a Multilingua Franca, for clarity.

We can also notice that English as a Lingua Franca, has certain characteristics that make it noticeable. This characteristics, summarized from Mauranen (2006) are:

- Bilingualism in different degrees.
- “Dialectal contact” (different English accents or dialects because of the influence the first language could have in the speaker’s pronunciation and grammar).
- The shift of use of the language depending on the situation (Example of this is English being used only in the academic domain, rather than personal or social).

The characteristics mentioned before can help us understand the problems a Lingua Franca can face when being used as a form of communication. Specifically, the

dialectal contact can represent a problem if the difference between the pronunciation and correct use of grammar is so great that interferes with the message.

Also, it must be clarified that these characteristics refer specifically to verbal communication, as it is one of the most common ways to identify the use of English as a Lingua Franca. However, this does not mean that verbal communication is the only form of communication where the use of English as a Lingua Franca can be recognized. The use of a language almost always involves a written form of it, and in this category is where English as a Lingua Franca is also used, through the published works or articles made by researchers around the world. In this case in particular, we can see less characteristics that distinguish the use of it, as articles are supposed to be written in a formal way and the level of proficiency the writer and the reader have on the language usually is high.

Globalization:

In contrast of Lingua Franca, Globalization is a more know term. According to Dewey (2007) Considers the definition of Globalization as the following: "Globalization may be thought of initially as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life" This definition can be interpreted as the increasing link societies around the world are making between each other in all areas, for example trade, culture, businesses and others.

As a term, we can observe that globalization as time passes becomes more important for the understanding of the contemporary society. To understand better

this term, we need to see globalization as a gradual process, that can be accelerated depending on how easy connections between different societies can be established.

As any other process, we have to define a start on the globalizing process the world is having. Looking through history, we can observe that not always our world was as connected as it is nowadays. During the ancient and Medieval eras, people knew about the existence of other cultures and societies, and even traded between them (one example of this can be the silk road network established between Europe and East Asia during the medieval era), yet the cultural, political or economic influence they had was shallow. This means that there has to be a period where the world started to become more global. If we need to establish two important periods of time that were influential to the acceleration of globalization, we can consider the start of Colonization from European countries starting in the XVI century, and the invention of new technology during the XIX and XX centuries. In both of these events, the world started to become more tied as different regions of the world started to rely on the events that happened on different parts of the world. For example, availability of resources in Europe started to depend more on the colonies in the Americas as they were the places where mines were. With the start of industrialization, new machines and packaging techniques, as well as the advancement on the transportation and communication technologies tightened this dependence, that made countries in this time more dependent on each other than even before. This is how globalization has developed during history.

It is apparent that globalization has a great effect on the whole world, but How we can observe globalization through English?

According to Seidlhofer (2004) comments on the importance of the English language internationally:

“English is like no other language in its current role internationally, indeed like no other at any moment in history. Although there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves.”

What Seidlhofer explains in this extract is that the English language has an important role internationally speaking. It is evident that English language is used in an extensive part of the world as a native tongue (examples of it can be observed in Australia and the UK, two countries on the opposite sides of the world, yet both of them consider English as their official language), also that a lot of the speakers of English come from different cultural backgrounds and that it is present on various fields, like communications, where most of the press written for international readers use English as their default language or the publication of books and research papers is made in English. To better reflect this role that English is having globally, the Term Global Language was created.

There are some characteristics that let us understand why English can be considered as a Global Language. This characteristics, summarized from Brutt-Griffler (2002) are:

- Use of the language for economic and cultural reasons.

- The learning of the language in all the socioeconomic levels of the society, not only by the elite.
- The establishment of it as a main language alongside other native languages.
- The increase of the language speakers due to the fact of more people learning the language instead of other causes.

As we can observe, the characteristics mentioned by Brutt-Griffer can be seen in the different uses the English language has. English, as mentioned before, has been used as a language to make trade and expansion of different cultures easier. We can find English learners on various parts of the socioeconomic spectrum. In various countries, especially in Africa, English has an official status alongside other Languages (For example, in South Africa English is one of the 11 official languages of the country) And considerable amounts of people from English non speaking countries are learning the language. (We can see that in the numbers of non-native English speakers. This makes English a global language.

CHAPTER 2: To what extent globalization has an impact on English being the most important lingua franca in the world?

Now that the concept of Lingua Franca and Globalization is clear, and how both of these concepts are related with the English language separately, we can analyze the impact globalization has had on the status of English being a Lingua Franca. As we could observe in the first chapter, English is both a Lingua Franca and a Global Language. Both of these concepts can be united as a Global Lingua Franca (EGLF). But, Is English really that present around the world? To notice the huge presence the English language has, we can observe a Table that compares the 12 most important languages on the world by total number of speakers, being the estimates calculated by Ethnologue and Melitz and Troubal (MT).

Table 1: Languages by native and total number of speakers

TABLE 1 Worldwide speakers (millions)

Language	<i>Ethnologue</i> Native speakers (1)	<i>Ethnologue</i> Total speakers (2)	MT Native speakers (3)	MT Total speakers (4)
Chinese ^a	1,197	>1,197	1,161	1,165
English ^b	335	>765	357	1,123
Spanish	406	466	401	479
Hindi/Urdu ^b	324	>387	—	—
Arabic ^a	206	246	244	272
Russian	162	272	184	267
French	68	118	69	260
Bengali	193	250	—	—
Portuguese	202	217	209	222
German	84	112	89	168
Malay ^b	23	>163	22	158
Japanese	122	123	126	126
Turkish/Azerbaijani/Turkmen ^b	83	>83	91	102
Italian ^b	61	>61	64	77
Dutch/Afrikaans ^b	28	>28	22	37

As we can observe from the table shown above, English is considered both by Ethnologue and Melitz and Troubal as the second largest language by total speakers, the estimations being more than 775 million and 1123 million respectively, still, when counting native speakers only, the number decreases significantly, being 335 and 35 million respectively. In contrast to other large total speaker languages, such as Spanish or Chinese, where the difference between total and native speakers is not that high. (For example we can observe that the difference between native and total speaker's estimations done by MT is of 3 million). This means that while most of the speakers of the largest languages learn the language as their first language, in the particular case of English, the majority of the speakers are non-native speakers. In fact, the greater expansion of the English language is due more because of the learning interest foreigners have on the language rather than the growth of the native speaker population. By seeing the interests why non-native speakers are motivated to learn the language, we could understand how Globalization has an impact on English being a global Lingua Franca.

English speaking countries as world powers:

As seen in the chapter 1, one of the periods influential to the acceleration of globalization was the start of colonization starting in the XVI century, and one of the most important empires that surged from that time was the British language. The territories that once were British colonies now are independent countries, and have obtained great influence over time that made them relevant for international affairs. One of the best examples of this is the United States, but still we can observe another examples in countries like India or South Africa.

Melitz (2018) mentions that:

“There are areas of international encounter where the welfare benefits of a lingua franca are evident. For example, a lingua franca is of mutual benefit to everyone in travel and inside the world industry of news diffusion. The spread of multinational organisations promotes a lingua franca too. The political clout of the United States may be important in explaining the convergence on English as the preferred choice of lingua franca in these cases.”

This means that the United States has had a clear influence on the status of the language as a Lingua Franca. Both of these cases proposed by Melitz imply that without the economic and political power the USA has had, maybe the Lingua Franca used in these cases could be other. Because USA is home to many multinational organizations headquarters, as it is one of the most important markets for goods, and it is the center of the news diffusion industry, being founded in the country newspapers like The New York Times or broadcasting news channels like CNN, the best alternative to communicate internationally in these cases was to use English as a Lingua Franca. Globalization intervenes because if the United States industries did not become as important as they are around the world, there would not be a need to use English as a Global Lingua Franca. So, not only British colonization has had an impact on the use of English as a Global Lingua Franca, but the proper influence of the former colonies of England, now independent countries have through trade and economic influence on other countries around the globe.

Still, if trade and economic influence has resulted in a positive outcome for the extended use of English as a Global Lingua Franca, that does not mean that the

opposite could happen if other non-speaking English countries become a main influence on world trade and economics. Melitz (2018) mentions that: "Growth in Chinese/English trade should promote the learning of Chinese in Native-English countries just as it should promote the learning of English in Native-Chinese countries." What can be extracted from this cite is that the dominance of English as a Global Lingua Franca can be affected by the economic dominance of other countries, like China, at least on business. However, the presence of English as a Global Lingua Franca does not restrict to this area as we can see in the following paragraphs.

Technology as a mean of diffusion for the English language

Technology has advance greatly during the last half of the XX and the first decades of the XXI century. The invention of the internet has led to an explosion on the possibility of exchange of information between people from different parts of the world. This information has to be transmitted in a certain language, and English has been used greatly for this purpose. We can observe the presence of the English language in the internet specifically, by seeing the number of internet users that use it in certain languages. That is what the graph below shows:

Graph 1: Number of internet users according to language in 2000 and 2013

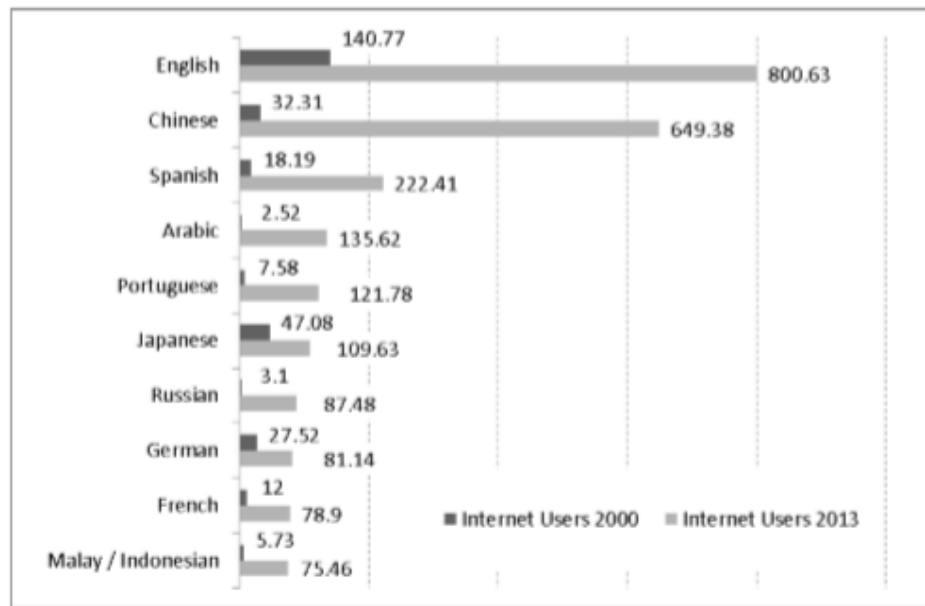


Figure 7

Internet users according to language (in millions) 2000-2013 according to *Internet World Stats*.

What this graph shows are the change in the number of internet users in certain languages, between the years 2000 and 2013. Although Chinese was the first language in total number of speakers according to the first table, we can observe in this graph that it is second on number of internet users in 2013 (approximately 649.38) in contrast, Estimated English speaking Internet users surpass greatly the estimated Chinese speaking Internet users (by 200 million). Comparing these results with the table shown before, it is evident that some of the English Internet users must be non-native speakers (as both estimates put native English speakers between 330 to 350 million approximately). This opens a lot of possibilities for the use of English as a Global Lingua Franca, as a lot of non-native English speakers have the possibility to exchange information between each other in English, being the internet the platform where this exchange can be done.

According to Dewey (2007) mentions that:

“Rather than view the intensity of interconnectedness as a root cause of cultural dominance, new infrastructures and innovative channels of communication in fact make censorship and oppression of local identities more difficult to maintain. International movements have greatly benefited from the possibility of virtual communities, cultural networks that link the ideas and practices of different groups across vast distances.”

What Dewey refers in this cite is that the new connections and communication by using the Internet and English as a Lingua Franca, by increasing the information people can access, can actually impact social change and cultural exchange. As the information is in one specific language that a sizable number of people can access, the spread of this information is faster, and can promote social change. In this case, is Lingua Franca what is helping globalization, promoting a more connected world by giving the facilities people need to connect between each other.

Expansion of knowledge through English:

As explained before, the use of English as a Global Lingua Franca promotes the access of information. However, we can consider that specifically, the expansion of knowledge has benefited from the use of English as a Global Lingua Franca. As English had established itself as a Global Lingua Franca, it was a matter of time that its use expanded to the academic domain. The use of English in the academic context has been increasing during the last half of the XX century. Example of this increase is the study done by Tsunoda (1983) and Ammon (1998), described in

Melitz (2018), where they examined publications between 1980 and 1996 based on Russian, French, American and German bibliographies. The results showed that only 36% of the publications studied in 1980 were written in English. Regardless, in 1996 that number had increased drastically to 91%. As we can observe, English in scientific research is having more presence as time passes by.

We can associate this increase on the use of English for research papers with the surge of mainstream internet connections. As mentioned before, the invention of internet was very influential for globalization, and in this case we can observe how it has changed the academic world to adopt English as a Lingua franca for academic writing.

According to Bada (2015) mentions that:

“It is widely accepted that English has become the language of choice for many international scholarly journals. The trend is on a rise, and academia is left with almost no choice but to publish in English in order to obtain international recognition. In this respect, academic English, for the majority, means both an opportunity and a threat. The international community may get the chance to get to know the author and his or her work well. If not, the researcher and his or her work are, in a sense, deprived of this opportunity”

What Bada is explaining in this paragraph is that even if the use of English as a Global Lingua Franca has made possible to international authors to get recognition around the world, it also has made more difficult for the articles written in other languages to be recognized as well. This makes its use a very influential tool for

accelerating globalization. The consideration Bada has about the use of English reducing the possibilities of recognition in comparison of other languages, although it is true, it does not represent a harm to the status of English as a Global language. Instead it is a prove that in this particular case, the use of English as a Lingua Franca is because of necessity, rather than choice, as it is almost a requirement.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while investigating the research question proposed for this extended essay (To what extent globalization has an impact on English being the most important lingua franca in the world?) I found that globalization has impacted in various ways to the use of English as a Lingua Franca. Through the investigation, I discovered that the concepts of Globalization and Lingua Franca are both interconnected, as globalization describes the process of the increase of connections and links between societies from different parts of the world, the use of a Lingua Franca facilitates these interactions that accelerate the process of Globalization. In the case of the English language specifically, I could realize that globalization had an impact on its use as a Lingua Franca to a great extent, because this process promoted to use a language a great number of communities could understand, and English became this language as it was the language that was used by the countries which had more political and economic influence and still have it (specially the US). However, its use as a Lingua Franca expanded more as technology advanced and accelerated the process of globalization, being the best example of this the use of English as a Lingua Franca through the internet. Finally, as the use of English became more extended and the availability of information from around the world increased, it became practical the adoption of the English language as the language for publication of academic work. Even though the use of English as a Lingua Franca helps with the acceleration of the process of globalization, that does not mean that globalization has the need to use English indefinitely as the global Lingua Franca. Changes in world economics and culture could also affect the

language used as a global Lingua Franca, but for the time being, English still has a long time to be replaced.

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