

THE POWER OF ENGLISH: RECOGNIZING AND UTILIZING THE TREMENDOUS IMPACT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON THE COMMUNITY

Kaharuddin

andi.kaharuddin@uin-alauddin.ac.id
Univeritas Islam Negeri Alauddin, Makassar

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24252/elties.v1i1.7625>

ABSTACT

This paper discusses two things i.e. the power of English as the most dominant language in the world and the concepts of *using English* and *using the power of English*. English today emerges as a power which can't be defeated by any languages in the world. The domination of English is obviously seen from its status as: the most rapidly growing language, the most widely spoken language, the most popular content language on the internet, the most preferred language for the scientific communities, the number-one language for business, and the most preferred Language for publishing. Knowing this, learners of English should be proud since they evidently learn something extraordinary. The pride should be reflected in two things i.e. learning English earnestly to achieve benefits of having English skills and turning the achivement of benefits to providing benefits for the communities. However, the reality shows that many learners simply learn English to achieve benefits, for example, to get a job or to win a scholarship abroad. Meanwhile, few learners are aware of using English to bring benefits. As the learners learn English and finally achieve a benefit. This is called *Using English*. Yet, they learn English and achieve a benefit, and could bring benefits to the communities. This is called *Using the Power of English*. To use the power of English, we should have and integrate English skills, knowledge, experiences, education, as well as professionalism. Therefore, the orientation of learning English should not just end immediately after *Using English*, but it should continue to *Using the power of the English*.

Keywords: *English language; use English; use the power of English; Lingua Franca*

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that English today has been the most dominant language in the world. The domination of English can obviously be seen in the presence of English in almost all aspects of our lives i.e. business, education, politic, science and technology, journalism,

entertainment, etc. English is now viewed as a globalizing communication system phenomenon. It is then considered as a global language. This is due to its main function as a *lingua franca*, which has been used for communication among people from different backgrounds, ethnic groups as well as nationalities. It stands to reason that English currently belongs to everyone in globe who speaks it and native English speakers no longer totally claim their right to possess an exclusive ownership of English. According to Raine (2012) native speakers of English are outnumbered more than 2-to-1 by non-native speakers of the language.

The fact that English as a global language has influenced and given many people the idea of learning the language earnestly everywhere. They are learning English for different purposes in communication, economic, education, technology, law, entertainment, etc. English consequently becomes the most commonly used language in the world with approximately 1.5 billion speakers (native and non native speakers) all over the world (www.Britannica. com). English really has the power to influence many countries in the world. Mastin (2011) is the opinion that the influence of a language for the world can be viewed from three important things i.e. *the first*: the number of countries using it as their first language or mother-tongue, *the second*: the number of countries adopting it as their official language, and the number of countries teaching it as their foreign language of choice in schools. If we use this idea as a measurement to determine whether or not English is influential and powerful, then we will say, it is a powerful language. The most acceptable reasons to explain this are the following statistical evidences:

- a. ***English has been the most rapidly growing language today*** due to its status as the most preferred official language in the world. It is estimated that 83 countries have used English as their official language and also spoken as a second and learning language in 105 other countries. In addition, the British Council reports that by 2020, two billion people will be studying English (<http://www.nationsonline.org>).
- b. ***English is in the second place as the most widely spoken language in the world*** after mandarin (1.200 million). The total number of speakers is 850 million speakers categorized in 340 million speakers of first language and 510 speakers of second

language (www. Ethnologue.com 18th edition, 2015). This total number excludes the number of speakers of English as a foreign language. If EFL speakers are included, English will take the first place with total number of speakers 1.500 million (Yassi, A. H. & Kaharuddin, 2018).

- c. *English is in the top place as the most popular content language on the internet.* Ongoing monitoring by W3Techs showed that in October 2015, over 54.4% of the most visited websites had English-language homepages (W3Techs.com)
- d. *English is still considered to be the most preferred language for the scientific community.* It is estimated that approximately 80% of all the scientific journals indexed in Scopus are published in English (www.researchtrends.com).
- e. *English remains the number-one language for business.* English is the dominant business language and it has become almost a necessity for people to speak English if they are to enter a global workforce, research from all over the world shows that cross-border business communication is most often conducted in English (www.esoe.co.uk).
- f. *English is the most preferred Language for publishing.* UNESCO measures the number of books published by each country per year. Correlating the data for various countries, the British Council gives reports that English is still the most preferred language used for publishing with the highest percentage that is 28% among the other languages (www.esl-languages.com).

Regarding to the six main evidences, English has come up to be the strongest lingua franca which has defeated not only a number of languages used as lingua franca in the past (e.g. Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, German, and Russian), but also the other over 5000 languages spoken throughout the world in the entire aspects of life. Just like a virus, English has undergone constant mutation that ensures its survival and spread continuously (Caterson S, 2010). The fact really illustrates the emergence of **the power of English**. In this paper, the writer is specifically going to discuss the concept of the power of English. For the reason, it is necessary to take a look at the definitions of power. In online dictionaries, power can be understood in two ways i.e. influential power and instrumental power. Influential power is defined as an ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others (www.oxforddictionaries.com) and the instrumental power is defined as a matter of the

instrumentalisation of authority as a means in doing something effectively (www.thefreedictionary.com).

The power of English here is defined as a matter of the instrumentalisation of English used as a means in doing things effectively. Businessdictionary.com defines effectiveness as the extent to which targeted problems are solved. If we refer to the two concepts of power, we can obviously see that English has been running the influential power with its ability to direct and to influence the behaviour of so many people around the world to learn and use it for communication purposes in almost all important aspects of their lives. People then learn English for many different reasons owing to the influence of English such as they want to get a good job, succeed at schools, expand their business, study abroad, travel abroad, expand social relationships etc. However, this discussion will only focus on discussing the matter of using English as the instrumental power. This discussion is presented to examine the most essential things to do after mastering English that is using the power of English as powerful instrument to bring tremendous impacts on the community development. The impacts are then expected able to solve a variety of problems in our lives including employment and educational issues.

METHOD

This work was written by using Library research that followed three important steps in collecting information and completing this work. The first step is to identify relevant facts regarding English language such as the number of English speakers (as a mother tongue, a second language and a foreign language), the domination of English in all aspects of humans' social life. The second step is to analyze the facts and the domination of English to define and to explain the terms "The Power of English". The the step is to produce and to promote the ideas about Using English and Using the Power of English. To execute the three steps, two sources were used namely primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to original works such as studies carried out by researchers, linguists, language teachers, and language practitioners that report original concepts, thoughts, ideas based on their findings. Besides, secondary sources refer to information written by language experts such as books, online articles, dictionaries, handbooks, as well as reviews (Kaharuddin, A. 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Using English vs Using the Power of English

When people decide to learn English, their decisions are certainly affected by goals to be achieved after they really could speak the language. Some people are desperately learning English due to education, profession, association purposes. However, people's goal orientation in learning English is closely related to jobs. With English skills, many people are expecting to get jobs easily such as teachers of English, officers in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tour guides, employees at the hotels, documents translators, interpreters, employees at foreign companies and many more. The dominance of English usage in many aspects of human lives has really paved the way people's success in achieving the goal of learning English including getting the most wanted jobs. It is no wonder that some say, English is the passport to explore fields of endeavor and to win the jobs.

Therefore, people are vying for preparing themselves with English earlier by choosing the English Department as their major at universities. This is done to equip them with English skills, which are expected able to facilitate them in gaining brighter careers in the future. While some are vying for taking English courses after graduating from universities for two main purposes i.e. overseas scholarships and job preparations.

Seems like, the people are really motivated to learn English and *to achieve benefits from English* for something very ordinary. Now, you think of these situations. As someone was all out learning English and he finally succeeds in becoming an English teacher, or is able to work in a foreign company with high incomes, or able to win scholarship to study abroad. Is it surprising to you? I dare to bet, it is not surprising at all. It is a natural thing, you learned then you **achieve a benefit** from what you've learned. This is what I call **Using English**. It is really not comparable to the status of English as the most powerful language in the world. It is the greatest thing. As William Shakespeare once said 'the greatest treasure of our heritage is the English language, and it is our greatest gift to the world'. The problem is how come we use something greatest (extraordinary) for an ordinary purpose?

However, someone was trying hard to master English. Then, he became an English teacher. Finally, he has a huge company, employs many people and is now ranked as the

richest person in the world on the Forbes list. Is it surprising to you? I bet you, it must be very surprising. Why is that? Because it is a wonderful thing, you learned English first, and then you achieve a benefit from English, and finally you **bring more benefits** to the community from your English. This is what I call **Using the Power of English**. The situation exemplified here is a true story which really happens to the life of a Chinese called Jack Ma.

Jack Ma is a former English teacher. He is the owner of Alibaba Group, the largest e-commerce company in China. Jack Ma was not proficient at computer. Even before 1995, he had never touched things named computer. But now he is a successful internet businessman who is able to compete with the world's largest e-commerce 'ebay'. At the age of 12, Jack Ma has been interested in English. Eight years of his childhood were spent by cycling for 40 minutes to a hotel near the Lake of Hangzhou, about 160 km from Shanghai. China, at that time, was just opening up to the outside world and many tourists come for a visit. With his courage, Jack Ma became a tour guide for free in order to learn and to practice his English. Experience, that makes Ma more open minded and more globalized than his peers.

With a determination, Ma learned English and took university entrance test. He was finally accepted in the University of Hangzhou, a kind of Teachers' Training College in the past. After graduating from the University, Ma was the only one out of 500 students assigned to teach English at the University. His salary was about 120 renminbi or equivalent to 142,500 rupiahs per month. But, Ma still had a dream. After devoting himself teaching for five years, he would start a hotel or another business. In 1992, he applied quite a lot for many different positions, but he didn't make it. Eventually he was accepted at KFC outlet for a secretary manager position. Besides, Ma also worked as a translator for a trading company. One day one of his friends showed him an internet. Then he was looking for something but did not find any data about China. Then, Ma and his friend made a site about china.

In March 1999, Ma and his team of 18 people launched a site called Alibaba.com in Ma's apartment in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. With this site, Ma was dreaming of creating a facility that could facilitate business activities of small and medium entrepreneurs. After experiencing various ups and downs, Ma's business finally showed results. Just like the challenges faced by the other Internet business to business (B2B) companies in the world,

consumer confidence is the key. Quickly learned the shortages and mended them up, Alibaba.com could gradually rise up and grow bigger.

Under the leadership of Ma, Alibaba then developed rapidly and reached its peak in October 2005. At that time, Alibaba cooperated with Yahoo ! With a fund of USD 1 billion, Yahoo! bought 40% ownership of Alibaba, while Ma took over Yahoo China operations. From there, the Alibaba Group was formed. The company consists of a virtual e-commerce sites globally, Alibaba.com and Taobao, search engine (Yahoo! China), online payments (Alipay), and business software (Alisoft). Starting from the 19 personnel at Ma's apartment, Alibaba Group now has more than 5,000 employees serving millions of users worldwide. Ma is very proud of its identity as a Chinese citizen and a great flourish person in China.

Ma grew 100% in China. Taught himself English at the beginning in China, and has never studied outside China. By using the power of English and now he is not only achieving great benefits from his English skills, but also bringing more benefits to his community in particular and to the world in general from the most powerful thing he has: ENGLISH. With the power of English, Ma is chasing a bigger dream to become the greatest e-commerce in the world for a period of 5 years.

What about you? How is your experience of learning English? Have you mastered English? If you have mastered English, what change do you want to make? Or if you have not mastered it yet, how big is your dream to master English? Do you have any other ideal ideas or high expectations to change something in your life? It is now the time to choose: **will you use English?** or **will you use the power of English?** Your choice determines what sort of person you are.

2. Choosing to Use the Power of English

There is certainly a benefit from something we learn, including English. If explanations are needed, many benefits can be found mainly in the world of business, labor, and education. However, the most important thing of having English skills is not only about achieving benefits, but also about bringing benefits from the skills. We do not always have to be like Jack Ma's efforts because our abilities are varied. Jack Ma is simply a real pattern of how to use the power of English to bring positive impact on the society. The point is to do things

according to our abilities and to use English skills for bringing more benefits. That is more than enough.

For example, someone is probably learning English because she aspires to be a teacher of English. When he finally becomes a teacher and teaches English, he should continue developing his knowledge, because his English skills will allow him to understand diverse science books mostly written in English. By reading the books a lot, his knowledge will increase. Through the increased knowledge he has, he can carry out a useful research in the area of his interest. Once the research is completed, he can bring more benefits to the community by:

- a. Sending the research manuscript for publication in the national/international journals that many people can read and utilize the research results for the development of science.
- b. Writing a paper, based on the results of the study, to be presented at a national/ an international conference or seminar that many people could benefit from the information presented in the seminar or the conference.
- c. Publishing the results of the research in the form of scientific books that can be a source of reading science for others.

If the person has really done the three things above, he has successfully used the power of English. The reason is the language skills possessed have given him a chance to become a teacher, and by becoming an English teacher he can develop his knowledge and his knowledge opens the opportunity for him to give more benefits to others. Such a person is called the best of men. In accordance with the words of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH: للناس أنفعهم لناس وخير

"And the best of men are those who are the most beneficial to others"

CONCLUSIONS

We need to do all means that we can succeed in learning English in order to have good skills at communicating in English (communicative competence) and to have sufficient knowledge to pass when taking written and spoken tests (Bahar, A. K. 2013). However, our true success is not only measured by the achievements, but it is also measured by our givings after having the skills of English. We use English to achieve an initial goal and then we make

the achievement of the initial goal as a means to gain a final goal. We can go abroad with English skills, but going abroad is not an end. It is the beginning for us to open the gate of the benefits we will give after returning from abroad. Hence, one important thing to keep in mind related to this: use the power of English since it will make you more valuable due to the benefit and the solutions that you bring with your English to the community. Here are some tips to use the power of English that can make you a person of full benefits in life. The tips are organized ranging from a small and seems simple, up to a big thing:

- a. Grow your interest in learning English earnestly and join in an English class and an English club which focus not only on developing language skills, but also on solving the major problems of English skills such as bad pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and bad grammar, which causes inability to communicate in English effectively (Andi.K and Arafah.B. 2017)
- b. Find the experience of using English directly. For example: teaching. If necessary, no need to be paid.
- c. Having had the skills and experiences, immediately increase the quality yourself with knowledge. This can be done by going to school again at a higher level of education.
- d. Work professionally because you already have 3 important things in your career, namely; language skills, experience and knowledge of language.
- e. Synergize the skills, experience, and knowledge of English to benefit as much as possible for the community. From this, it would seem that you really use the power of English.

REFERENCES

- Andi, K., & Arafah, B. (2017). Using needs analysis to develop English teaching materials in initial speaking skills for Indonesian college students of English. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication (TOJDAC), Special Edition*, 419-436.
- Bahar, A. K. (2013). *The Communicative Competence-Based English Language Teaching*. Yogyakarta: TrustMedia

- Clark, D. (2012). English - The Language of Global Business?, available online at <http://www.forbes.com>
- Hammond, A. (2012). How did English Become the Most Widely Spoken Language, available online at www.blog.esl-languages.com
- Kaharuddin, A. (2018). The Communicative Grammar Translation Method: A Practical Method to Teach Communication Skills of English. *ETERNAL (English, Teaching, Learning, and Research Journal)*, 4(2), 232-254.
- Mastin, L. (2011). Language Issues - English as a Global Language, available online at <http://www.thehistoryofenglish.com>
- McCrum (2010). Globish: How the English Language Became the World's Language, available online at www.smh.com.au
- Michalowicz, M. (2012). The 5 Essential Languages for Business, available online at <https://www.americanexpress.com>
- Raine, P. (2012). Why is English the dominant world language?, available online at <https://blogs.jobs.ac.uk>
- Weib, J and Schwietring, T. (2013). The Power of Language: A Philosophical-Sociological Reflection, available online at <http://www.goethe.de>
- Weijen, D.V. (2012). The Language of (Future) Scientific Communication, available online at <http://www.researchtrends.com>
- W3Techs.com, Usage of Content Languages for Websites. Retrieved on November 13, 2015
- Yassi, A. H. & Kaharuddin (2018). *Syllabus Design Of English Language Teaching*. Jakarta: Prenada Media.
- www.ethnologue.com/statistics/size
- www.oxforddictionaries.com
- www.thefreedictionary.com