



Beyond Babel Programme 1

Narrator

Shanghai - trading capital of communist China. Even 10 years ago, the idea of the administrators of this great city encouraging its citizens to learn English would have been unlikely to say the least.

But at the start of the 21st Century the global spread of English seems unstoppable. In countries, like China, where there are more people learning English than speak it in the United States;

India where millions shun Hindi to embrace the language, which makes them, feel more international;

And in South Africa where even school children realise that a knowledge of English is a passport to a better future.

In this series we will explore the phenomenon of English. Is it the answer to our quest for an international language and if it is what will become of the other languages that are teetering on the brink of extinction?

Professor David Crystal Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language

English has now achieved this position of becoming a global language in the last fifty years or so. Something like a quarter of the world's populations speak English now. That's one and a half billion, something like 400 million speak it as a first language, another 400 million or so speak it as a second language and another, well, who knows, perhaps a billion speak it as a foreign language. And as a result of this English has achieved a status that no previous language has ever done.

Narrator

China has always been a destination for native English speakers, and huge investment into cities like Shanghai has led to a new wave of ex-patriots.

The development of the city's hotel industry, for example, has provided new opportunities for English speakers. British chef, Richard Taffs, is one of the first to take advantage of these.

Richard Taffs Hotel Inter-Continental

Well, I came to Shanghai first of all in 1993 but I was in Manila in between, Taipei and Chengdu. And I just recently came back to Shanghai. I speak a little bit of French and I speak a little bit of German as well but definitely English is obviously the international language and the local staff are trained to learn English. So they are all attending class and all of my key people have a basic level of English.

They are taught it in school, right. They are taught it from a young age and definitely if you want to work in a five star hotel, international hotel then you must have a basic English.

Narrator

Hong Kong, a former British colony, is another traditional destination for those with English as a first language.

Orla Savage

English in Hong Kong is important and it is used widely. And the thing is that you don't actually really need to know the Cantonese or Mandarin to survive in Hong Kong. So English is probably the most widely used language in business anyway.

If I make a call to anybody, or make an enquiry on the phone, they might answer initially in Cantonese but if I say "hello" they switch straight to English. You might be dealing with somebody who doesn't have much English, there isn't any problem, they don't expect you to speak Cantonese, they are quite happy for you to discuss things in English. And they'll try their best to, you know, understand you. It makes it incredibly easy because if you go from an English speaking country in Europe and go to somewhere like France or Spain, then you really need to know their language in order to survive there. But here you don't need to. Here you just, you turn up, you have your job and you don't... I mean you could live here for as long as you wanted to and never learn a word of Cantonese.

Narrator

The traditional native English-speaking traveller has been around for a long time but now those with English as a second language are also benefiting from its global spread.

Cletus Z. Nadukoro **TWI India**

My name is Cletus Nadukoro. They call me NZ Cletus for short and I'm an assistant producer with TWI, India. Basically I'm a football correspondent.

Narrator

Cletus is originally from Nigeria but his knowledge of English has enabled him to advance his career in a way, which might not have been possible in Africa.

Cletus Nadukoro

Nigeria and India they were both colonized by the British so English has always been a first language except that Nigeria is different because it is a multi tribal society so English is, you know, generally used. But in India, Hindi and English are the acceptable languages.

For me as a foreigner, I don't have any choice; I have to definitely adapt myself to the environment I'm in. Get to, you know, chase whoever I have to chase, that's part of the profession. I've been here for quite some time now so I, I don't know, I should say I've been pretty smart to pick up the Hindi language now. But you see, a couple of these players are from different parts of the country and there are foreigners here. So for those who speak English I can just go straight ahead and ask them in English.

Actuality Footballer Interview

'How's it going so far?'

'So far, so good, you know. Because you see our guys, we attack from the flanks but since this is the first match maybe that's happening for us, you know.'

'So for Zee Churchill as it is going now, it is going pretty well for you.'

'Yes, sure'

'Good luck, sir'

'Yeah, thank you very much.'

Cletus Nadukoro

My accent is pretty different from err, from you know the Indian concept but at the same time in India you just have to accept everything sometime.

Narrator

The value of speaking English as a means of joining the global economy is most keenly perceived in the world's poorer countries. In South Africa with its eleven official languages, children are encouraged to learn the language, which has become the nation's lingua franca and link to the outside world.

Actuality Radio DJ

Wow, that's a lovely song indeed. 'If Dreams Do Come True' is the name of the song and remember dreams do come true only if you work hard. Yes, you're still with me, Mmamotse Maloka. Now the time is twenty five minutes before eleven o'clock. This is your favourite radio station, CDC Radio. I know I've been spoiling you with a lot, a lot of music but now is the time, you know, my favourite educational programme. I know children are dying to hear this programme which is brought to you by the OLSET, the Open Learning Systems Education Trust. It's time for you to relax and enjoy the programme.

Actuality Classroom

'English in Action, English is Fun, English in Action, I want to learn...'

Radio Announcer

'You're listening to English in Action, produced by the Open Learning Systems Education trust.'

Gordon Naidoo

Executive Director, OLSET

OLSET was founded as the first radio-learning programme in anticipation of the change in the educational system in South Africa.

Actuality Classroom

'I want to learn, I want to learn....'

Gordon Naidoo

Our programmes are half hour programmes, the content is perhaps 12 minutes of English language teaching itself. A lot of the programme is about, you know, comprises dramas, music, songs, games, stand up, sit down activities.

Actuality Classroom

"Hello, good day, how do you do, I'm fine, pleased to meet to you, pleased to meet you to. I'm fine, pleased to meet you, pleased to meet you too,"

Gordon Naidoo

Music, I think, not just for South African children, but for children all over the world, is a great motivator. I think that it doesn't matter about your culture or your religion or your race, I think music stimulates all people and all children in particular. We found that music is a great way to engage children in what we call total physical engagement.

Actuality Classroom

'Mr Mlambo has a farm, eei eei oo...'

Busisiwe Nto Luthuli Winnie Ngwekasi Primary School

They learn a lot through singing, a lot. Rhymes, counting, a lot of things through singing, they learn a lot.

Actuality Classroom

'... with a moo moo here and a moo moo there...'

Gordon Naidoo

A major part of the consideration in the programme is also supporting teachers in English language teaching, which as you may know is not the easiest of subjects to teach in a country that is as multi lingual as South Africa. So we've got to ensure that the programmes also support teachers and also goad them into a new classroom practice that's in keeping with our new national curriculum.

Actuality Classroom

'Lovely'
'Tell me children, what is in the hand?'
'What is in the hand?'
'A feather'
'It's a what?'
'A feather'
'Ahh good'
'Where is a feather?'

Busisiwe Nto Luthuli

These children are so fluent in English, the little ones, they are so fluent. You don't tell them what to say they just talk language.

Pupil Interviews

'My name is Kanisele. My surname is Zhola.'

'When I grow up I'd like to be a nurse.'

'When I grow up I want to be a lawyer.'

Busisiwe Nto Luthuli

If you want job, firstly, if you can't talk English it is difficult, going to interviews, must know English. It is a most important language here in South Africa.

Pupil Interview

Today is a lovely day because we are wearing our national day... national clothes.

Narrator

These children and others like them hold the key to South Africa's future prosperity. If they succeed in their quest to learn the world's language it follows that South Africa has a better chance of prospering in the global economy.

So how has English come to be so important to the lives of millions of people around the world? The answer lies in places like this, the Rhodes Memorial near Cape Town in South Africa. This relic of Britain's colonial past was built in celebration of the vast economic power and ambition of the British Empire.

At London's Maritime Museum, collections record the historic trading traditions on which the British Empire was founded, and which intimately wove the English language into the fabric of international trade.

David Crystal

A language becomes a global language for one reason only and that is the power of the people who speak it. But power means different things at different times. To begin with something like 400 years ago it was political power, military power, the power that became the British Empire. But that isn't the only kind of power, soon after it became technological power, the power that associated with the industrial revolution. The fact of the matter is that during the industrial revolution something like a half to two thirds of the people who made that revolution possible worked through the medium of English so anybody who wanted access to that technology had to learn English in order to do it. At the beginning of the 19th Century, Britain was the world's most productive nation, at the end of the 19th century it was America, both English speaking nations, meant that the economic powerhouse of the world became associated with the English language. Money talks and the language in which it was talking was, well, chiefly the dollar and to some extent the pound.

Narrator

The economic supremacy of English in international trade has led to its domination of the world's financial markets, and created an insatiable demand for financial news, in English.

Actuality 'Asia Business Report' Clip

'Run VT'

'Stand by, cue Mishal.'

'Good morning, and welcome to Asia Business Report'

'The BBC's 24 hour international news and information channel BBC World.....'

Mishal Husain Presenter, BBC World

English really has a pole position in terms of the way that the whole world of finance and economics operates in. Almost all economists have been trained in English wherever they studied in the world. It's the language of the markets and of course that makes our jobs as business journalists much easier because there's a certain level of knowledge that you can assume and the words you use translate relatively well across international boundaries.

Actuality Bloomberg Television Clip

'So let's return now to the money desk and see what Guy's got for us this time. He's having a look at some of those financial stocks which are moving on the market.'

'Well, banks very much in the spotlight today because we've had a report out from the UK anti-trust watchdog and ...'

Guy Collins Bloomberg Television

There's clearly a vocabulary that goes with accounting, there's a vocabulary of the balance sheet, there's a vocabulary of the stock markets. Initial public offerings, mergers and acquisitions, investment banking all have their own vocabularies, their own shortcuts, their own jargon.

Mishal Husain

I think there are two types of jargon. There's the type that's really become much more mainstream and that's evolved out of the language of business into the mainstream. Terms like bull and bear market one hears all the time, far beyond the trading floor. So those are ones that as business journalists one can use and again assume a certain amount of knowledge. But then there are other terms, like for instance blue chips and that's a term that's used all the time but we still have viewers all over the world who'll write to us once in a while and ask us to explain that term. So one gets an idea of what is in the mainstream and what is still specialist language.

Actuality Bloomberg Television Clip

'Thank you very much. Well, it's that time of the year again when the quarterly FTSE changes begin to take hold again. Tonight closing numbers will be used by the statistics department of FTSE

Guy Collins

Ten years ago, 90% of Daimler Chrysler shareholders were in Germany, they spoke German, the brokers spoke German to the buyers and to the sellers. Nowadays, probably 10 or 20% of the shareholder base is in Germany and probably 50% is in the United States. And so the whole profile of the company, the profile of the shareholder base has changed and with it the language that the stock brokers, that the management have to use to communicate with each other.

Mishal Husain

I think with everyone moving towards a 24 hour global trading day everyone wakes up in the morning and wants to know what's happened in Asia or in the US depending where in the world you're waking up and I think the fact that so much business communication is done in English speeds up that entire process of people needing to assimilate the information as quickly as possible and use it to make their decisions on the trading floors.

Narrator

The money markets provide finance for international companies, many of which are built upon American principles of global branding.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School

When I use to take my son around the world, when he was a young teenager, I wanted him to spend a day with the children of local managers that I was dealing with so he could experience what they experienced and in four or five different parts of the world he spent the day exactly the same way. They went to a local shopping mall, where they ate McDonald's hamburgers, played video games, they were all wearing Levi's blue jeans and that was the power of American brands.

Narrator

Perhaps the most famous of these global brands is Coca Cola.

Jay Gould

The Coca Cola Company

Well, we operate in 200 countries around the world. We have 26 operating divisions, which help us run our business. In terms of leveraging our global capabilities English serves as an important unification in our ability to work together as management.

We try to bring in people who either already know the language or have the facility to learn new languages. So that's a desire and most people who do join the company are trying to join an international operation so they have aspirations to communicate in English.

Narrator

This is especially true for recruitment in countries like China. Coca Cola first came to Shanghai during the 1920's and after an absence of forty years it was one of the first companies to return when China re-opened to the West in 1990. Being part of Coke's global network means that it is essential for local management to have a good knowledge of English.

B C Lo Coca Cola China

China is now the sixth largest market in the worldwide Coca Cola system and it's the second largest market in Asia for our company. At the moment 15,000 people are working in our system, in the 28 factories and the 6 offices and our production centres.

Simon Liu Shanghai Shen-Mei Coca Cola

Here in Shen-mei it is very, very widely used. It is one the two working languages on a daily basis. If it is production line workers, really the language, the expectation of English language proficiency would not be very high. Say if it is secretarial position we actually have very high expectations that their language pass the test. Also for management positions we would like them to have communicational proficiency.

Narrator

While global brands may depend upon English literacy for their international management, their access to consumers is typically more localized.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Part of our success hasn't simply been because we create brands with great mass appeal but also because companies have been smart enough to localize their products and to integrate with local cultures. Coca Cola of course have been global for a very long time and Coca Cola does translate the words into local languages and often looks like a local product.

Jay Gould

During the era of globalisation we did a lot of things centrally and ran a lot of the business out of Atlanta. But over the last, you know, year or so, we've begun to fully decentralise the business and running much more of it locally. We currently advertise the brand in 80 different languages around the world. So what we try to do as the brand stewards is try to help to talk to people about that heritage, that identity and it's their job then to translate that locally.

The notion of refreshment and entertainment and connectivity tend to be universal values so it's not difficult to get people to understand that.

Narrator

Companies like Coca Cola are part of a business community, which no longer identifies itself by national boundaries. In this globalized economy English speaking executives are at a premium and institutions like the Harvard Business School specialize in producing students schooled in the international language of trade.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

It is a funny concept to think of English as the international language of business as a lingua franca. One of my most interesting cases in point are two Swiss pharmaceutical companies, both headquartered in Basel Switzerland. It was Sandos and Ciba Geigy, when they merged to form Novartis they are still headquartered in Basel Switzerland and they were both Swiss companies but they immediately made English their corporate language and that was part of their globalization thrust.

Andrew Toma Harvard Business School

We are brokering a deal between the Germans and Croatians. It was a financial institution insurance joint venture and while our client, the Croatian client, actually knew German and the Germans obviously German, we still did everything in English because we as investment bankers were all speaking English. So that everything including the negotiations were conducted in English despite the fact that the two senior parties from the client perspective knew German better than they did English.

Alice Gugelev Harvard Business School

Even if you're not with an American firm and you're completely outside of the situation, the ways that people relate to each other, there's the Thais need to speak to the Indonesians, the Singaporeans need to speak to the Australians and the Chinese need to speak to the Japanese. And before there was a lot more of let's say Chinese learning Japanese, now it's much more that all of the countries independently of the US speak English.

Funso Doherty Harvard Business School

Business itself, you know, has a language, almost has a language of its own. And one of the things which we find even here at HBS when we are having sort of like case discussions and things like that very often you get beyond sort of the grammar and all of that to the real sort of underlying business concepts and there's a lot of sort of universality of those concepts across, you know, languages.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

I was giving a speech in Germany a few years ago to an audience that was entirely German speaking although they had English as a second language. I do not speak any German so every other speaker preceding me was speaking in German. And I listened to them but I listened to their German without understanding it. And I would hear them go da da da da da... re-engineering... ... da da da da dada...

market focus and so I could get up and say, "As the last speaker just said..." as though I understood it because the buzz words were being invented in English because they were coming out of our huge engine, like the Harvard Business School, of creating management knowledge and scientific knowledge and coining words for, new words for it in English and those words travelled immediately without translation into the local language.

Narrator

In the post war period, the need for this type of common terminology increased with the growth of international air travel which allowed people to conduct business face to face having travelled vast distances. Of necessity the business of air traffic control became dependent on the use of a lingua franca.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

The global information age is all about connectivity so you can't have a machine that doesn't talk to somebody else's machine because its code is written differently. It all pushes for universal standards, like air traffic control. If you're going to fly from one country to another you can't suddenly switch languages when you have routes taking you into 130 countries every time you change countries. They all push for something that's universal.

Steve Garner

College of Air Traffic Control

Well, it really came about in 1945 after the end of the war and the very rapid expansion of aviation and the need in fact for countries all over the world for pilots to be able to communicate both with air traffic controllers and with each other in parts of the world in which previously they had never flown and really air traffic control borrowed from maritime history and developed in English.

Actuality Air Traffic Control College

'.... 432 about 24 miles, runaway 27 left, begin to reduce speed now to 210 knots...'

'432 contact radar now, frequency 12 decimal 52'

Steve Garner

It's a very technical and standardized English. The phraseology is laid down in the text books. It's learnt by air traffic controllers and learnt by pilots.

Actuality Air Traffic Control College

'Descend altitude 4000 feet, Q & H one, zero, zero.'

Steve Garner

And often you'll find people who can speak perfectly good aviation English could not order a beer in a pub.

Actuality Air Traffic Control College

'Give me 190 knots. Maintain 109, no 190 knots. Just for a very short while'

Steve Garner

A lot of work has gone on over the years to pare it down, to cut out ambiguity, to try and avoid words that whilst still English could sound different when it's spoken by people with different accents and a lot of the casual verbs and a lot of the courtesies have been dropped over the years.

Narrator

The boom in international air travel has led to new airports and larger airlines. Today these airlines are standard bearers for a new era of globalisation. Shanghai is once again a destination for foreign business travellers, transported by companies like Britain's Virgin Atlantic.

Louise Keay Virgin Atlantic, China

Shanghai is really important to Virgin as a route. It's a developing market; it's full of vibrancy, full of excitement. Every month something new is happening in Shanghai.

The role of speaking English in the airline business is really vital. It's a customer service business of course so when we're looking to recruit staff it's really important that they can speak and understand English. It's not just textbook English, it's understanding the different variations of English, not just in speaking but in writing and also communicating through the email and also in the body language of English as well.

Actuality Check-In desk

'Mr & Mrs Neary. From Shanghai to London Heathrow. 17 is today's boarding gate. You just... up the road is the boarding gate.'

Louise Keay

Globally we have a policy to recruit locally. It's really, I think, one of the most important things that we do. To recruit people who are actually local employees as well as people from our head office. In fact we were the first European airline to recruit local crew here in China and having Shanghainese people on board the flight has really made a difference to our service level.

Actuality telephone conversation

'Good afternoon, Virgin Atlantic. How may I help you?
Our flights from Shanghai to London is on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays.'

Louise Keay

When we recruit for people and we look for their English skills quite often now what we do is actually do a telephone interview first because sometimes when people meet face to face they can give one feeling of their English level. But it's

important to get a judge a level of how they can speak English over the phone as well.

Actuality telephone conversation

'Yes we have flight on that day and there are seats available.'

Louise Keay

Can they show empathy for example. Can they demonstrate how to describe how to do something and how can they express themselves in English well.

Actuality telephone conversation

OK may I know your telephone number in Shanghai please? Just pick up your tickets four days before departure. OK. Thank you for calling.

Narration

It seems remarkable in a city which only 20 years ago was closed to Westerners that there is such an acceptance of the usefulness of English in the work place.

Janet Ho

Airport Duty Manager

We have the passengers from all different kinds of countries. However, most commonly people may speak English because English is the most common spoken language. So I must speak to our passengers when I'm face to face with them and also when I use the company email and write something to them then I should use English.

David Crystal

There must be the best part of a billion people learning English in some shape or form around the world. And because the population growth of those countries where English is being learnt as a second or foreign language is three times the rate on average as the population growth of places where English is a mother-tongue, Britain, America, Australia, and so on. Increasingly over the next couple of generations we're going to see that differential grow and mother tongue speakers become much less significant in the order of global English speech. Foreigners, in other words, are going to be the centre of gravity of the language and that's a big contrast with what's happened in the past.

Narration

The global economic need for English speakers has created a boom in the business of English teaching. Organisations such as the British Council are catering to an apparently insatiable demand for English classes, even in cities like Hong Kong which have a long English speaking tradition.

Actuality Classroom

'And what are their plans for the future?'

'Go back to Spain together.'

'Why does he like her?'

'Because he is very handsome.'
'Oh sorry, why does she like him? He's very handsome ...'

Kevan Cummins
British Council

A large percentage actually want to improve their job position. If you ask them why they are learning English. They are very easy to teach. They're not as responsive as say Europeans so often you have to work a lot harder to get the students doing sort of interactive things in the classroom. Often they just want to sit there by themselves and do a little exercise, do some writing. So to actually encourage them to get up and speak to other students is more difficult.

Pupil Interviews

' I like to go to another country and live there and I can use English language to speak with other people.'

'English is national language, international language so I start English.'

'I want to earn much money.'

Kevan Cummins

The government here is actually pushing English at the moment. They are actually giving money back to students who are taking English courses so they are actually pushing English more. Because they want to promote Hong Kong as an international city and the level of English here is actually not up to standard. It's not comparable say with Singapore so there's actually a push for English rather than a push towards Chinese.

Actuality Classroom

'Green team, what's yours?'

'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.'

'Very good. OK and the yellow team.'

'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday....'

Narrator

Mainland China is at an even earlier stage in its drive towards English, but the Chinese Government recognises that in order to secure China's place in the new world economy it must do everything possible to improve this situation.

Jane Henry
Deputy Director, British Council, Shanghai

I think more and more people in China see English as a very important means for personal development. And companies are insisting on very high levels of English from their employees as well. Even non British, or non English speaking companies do all their communication in English so you have Dutch and German companies using English in their work environment. They see their future very much in terms of you know where they can get to in foreign companies, joint venture companies so English is a sort of passport to that.

They encourage it to be taught in schools from primary right up. It's encouraged by the government because I think they also see it as a means of development in China.

Zhu Xiao Ming

Deputy Secretary General, Shanghai Municipal People's Government

Chinese children are now learning English from the age of seven and in larger cities even from kindergarten. We can expect that the ratio of English speaking people in the population will be greatly increased in the future.

Narrator

In places like the Changzheng Middle School the government's plan is well advanced. These students will be amongst the first Chinese to have undergone a formal English language training while still at school.

Actuality Classroom

She sells seashells on the seashore. OK, very good. OK what I want to do today is follow up what we've been doing in previous classes about travelling in Britain. And different trains, different trains to different places. So they might tell you that the train to Beijing leaves from platform one.

Tim Sharp

British Council Language Assistant

I think they might use vocabulary not just for visiting Britain or for visiting America, but I suspect that in other countries, if they visit them, English is a good common language. It is also trying to get them to be a bit more fluent. I think that's one of the things. They are very keen to be precise and right but sometimes the listener will lose the thread so trying to get them to speak a bit more, a bit more fluently.

Actuality Classroom

'...standard class return tickets on the next train please.'
'Here you go. Which platform does it leave from?'

Pupil Interview

'If I learn English well I can keep in touch with the modern things and keep informed of some international information and the news about other countries. I can do everything good for my homeland.'

Actuality Classroom

'Next group, when you're ready. Tracy, Nancy, Frances, Lydia, Ruby, Hatty... up to the front.'
'...Other lady and she is very thin.'
'And she has wavy hair, its colour is ginger.'

Yasmin Ahmed
British Council Language Assistant

There's lots of role plays with them so they get to interact with each other in English and be able to perform as well. They love presenting things in front of each other and of course the other students, take the... you know, they take the... they love laughing at them, and of course they don't mind. They like it. They like being able to enjoy themselves rather than just sitting, you know, in a classroom and not really speaking much.

Narration

The government sponsored drive towards English in China is an explicit recognition of its economic importance in a global marketplace.

In India, where English has held joint official status alongside Hindi since independence in 1947, some estimates have suggested that as few as 5% of the population actually speak the language fluently. However for the upwardly mobile, English remains an aspirational language and a route to economic betterment that has given rise to countless private language schools. The British School of Language in Dehli's backstreets is a typical example of this trend for self-improvement.

S K Singh Bedi
Founder & Director, British School of Language

I started in 1975 - '76 and I have been running very successfully since that. I get people from all walks of life, our students are housewives, the job seekers, the graduates, the businessman, professionals and then people who want to go abroad.

Actuality Classroom

'So today we would be starting with present tense. The first action is continuous action. Now what do you understand by continuous action?'

'A thing that is going on. Can you give me an example?'

'I am going to the market...'

'I am going to the market. So with I which helping verb comes? AM... Now go is the main verb, so with GO we will put ING. I am going to the market. Now with IS which form of the verb is used? Which first form of the verb? ING.'

Pupil Interviews

'My first language was Hindi since I am brought up in Delhi only. And my mode of communication at my residence, at my home is Hindi so because I have to start my career, I have to make my bread and butter so I have to choose a language through which I can communicate with other people.'

'All the computer language, and all the computer books are written in English only. That's why I want to learn English.'

Actuality Classroom

'Now if you want to make it in negative, you have to put a NOT. He is ... after the helping verb you are putting NOT. Any action that is happening in front of your eyes.'

'Yeah... the teacher is ... teaching us.'
'We are ... studying. OK ...'

S K Singh Bedi

The future belongs to English basically. Not the local languages, the local dialect. Globalisation of India, let's say, the opening up of the economy has made the people feel that without English you cannot adjust in India.

Narration

But for those further up the economic scale, like the 100,000 software engineers produced by India every year, just speaking English is not enough, especially if they want to work abroad.

At BT Mahindra, classes are held in the cultural nuances of the language.

Actuality Classroom

'... how does it impact me, why is it important for me to know about it. You're going to travel, you'll be working in a different country. Why do you need to know about it?'

Andy Ranaweera Mahindra - British Telecom

Anyone who joins MBT we tell them that they are joining a multi-national company and you are expected to be available to travel to any part of the world within a reasonable time scale. In addition to learning software engineering they need to be equipped to handle different cultures, even the differences in the same language.

Actuality Classroom

'...with me? yes, no, what?'

Sheila Singla Training Consultant

The job I think would be to understand how English gets spoken in different countries, what are the cultural specifications of every country and how do you understand the language in that country. For example, if somebody in the US was to turn around and say "get out of here", it doesn't mean he's asking you to leave the room. He's saying "Hey, don't kid with me." Now for an Indian to be able to understand that, it's important.

Actuality Classroom

You've heard of this term, sexual harassment. Yeah? Let's do a little activity. You tell me, what do you think it is, how does it manifest itself, what does it actually mean. I mean, you'd get offended perhaps if I said "Kalha boss, sabtita..." He might, he might shoo, hands off, down girl, down. He might actually end up doing that. Different people get affected by different things and when you are travelling to a country other than your own and you are going to be working there. It's not just a visit. You are going to be dealing with people there. Then you have to be

extremely careful that you don't do anything which can rub someone the wrong way. And things like this are taken very seriously in all parts of the world. US more so, because of the simple reason you could have a law suit, I could sue you, I could sue your company and that could be a lot of damages.

Sheila Singla

For a lot of cultures, your tonality actually displays your mood or what you are trying to say and you could say the same thing with a very flat accent and the other person doesn't understand whether there is any other meaning to it apart from the words you are saying.

Actuality Classroom

'We come with very strong paradigms. We have very strong preconceived notions that every American woman would be blonde, beautiful and Baywatch. I'm sure all of them are blonde, beautiful in their own way but don't go with such preconceived notions where you go 'available'. Wrong, wrong, wrong and you'll land up into deep, deep, deep, trouble.'

'I think we here use a lot more 4 letter words and damns and bloodys than an office in let's say UK or USA would. They are very formal at work.'

Narrator

The economic motivation to learn English can take many forms. In South Africa, soccer is a national obsession but it is also a global industry and at clubs like F C Fortune, boys dream of playing for the big British teams. Fluency in English is yet another step towards achieving that dream.

Mark Harrison is head of development at F C Fortune. He knows how important the language is in the sports world.

Mark Harrison

Youth Development Officer, F C Fortune

We're a new club, if you like, in Cape Town. The club is barely 18 months old. We're trying to give the opportunity to all the kids in Cape Town especially the township kids who are very under privileged if you like and we try to give them that opportunity to have that dream to play soccer at a high level, at senior level, whether it be in South Africa or whether it be elsewhere in the world.

Actuality Football training

'In the back of the net...'

Mark Harrison

Without any doubt in my mind there is definitely talent here, which can go and play at senior level somewhere.

Actuality Football training

'How are you going to communicate... think about it... walk through me... look for the player, look for the player.'

Mark Harrison

I mean Man United, Liverpool; I mean they're worshipped over here. The kids dream of playing in the Premiership in the UK.

Young Footballer Interview

'I want to play for Manchester United one day. Play professional soccer and yeah, just enjoy myself.'

'If one of the players can't communicate with me, I'll just shout at him and talk nicely in English.'

'Because I am the captain I have to communicate with my players in English. They can't understand Xhosa, if I talk Xhosa, they are not all Xhosa so I have to talk English to them.'

Actuality Football training

Come on, score goals, think about it, concentrate, Cup Final you've got to score goals on Saturday. Come on.

Mark Harrison

Here in South Africa, I mean, they speak a multitude of languages but English is predominant.

Actuality Football training

'Good. OK you are going follow what... do what I do guys OK. Are we ready to go? We're going to jog that way. Let's jog.'

Brian Overmeyer Kleinberg Primary School

We have other kids, also from this area, who plays for various clubs in South Africa and abroad, in Europe for instance. And although they come from Ocean View where they spoke their mother tongue Afrikaans we had to prepare them. They had to know English, although they keep their own culture, they keep their own language, but if they want to play soccer they've going to need English for instance.

Actuality Football training

'OK so if the ball's off line, if the ball gone to you there, I've actually got to get my feet... because if I want to play the ball to this chap here.. what's your name.. Asimeer. Ok give me the ball please Asimeer...'

Narrator

Skills acquired on the pitch are reinforced by classroom theory, which can in itself present a challenge for the non-native speakers and their English coach...

Actuality Classroom

'Three five two, goalkeeper. Now this is... now this is interesting, I'm glad we've done this one Greg. My terminology or the way I say things is very different from what you guys say here. So we have a left wing back and a right wing back. Have you got that now?'

Mark Harrison

Their English language and mine English language... I have to listen, you know, hard. And they look at me and have to listen at me, you know.

Actuality Classroom

'What question would you like to ask me?'

'If you go on trial, do they look at your skill?'

'They would check your skills, your techniques, your fitness level. They would also check your character. OK, when I say character do you know what I mean?'

Mark Harrison

After a month or two, then they get to understand me, they pick up my accent, I pick up their accent and we're OK. Yeah, there is a difference, obviously, the way they say certain words, the twang to their accent and the twang to my accent, you know, so it is different but the language is still there isn't it, you know?

Narrator

For these would-be soccer stars of tomorrow English is just an unquestioned means by which their dreams and aspirations can be realised on an international stage. Their adoption of English reflects its new status, as a tool available to everyone who wants to look beyond their own shores and communicate with the world.