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A Perspective on English as a Language of International Communication: A Study of University Learners

Rajakumar Guduru, Ph.D. ELT Scholar

Abstract

English as a global language made its mark in every field and has immensely contributed to growth and development of human progression. Today, the use of English in international communication is not limited to business and politics alone, but extends to all other sectors of contemporary life such as science and technology, sports, entertainment, and so on. Thus, in the contemporary world, the status of English as an international language can hardly be questioned (Crystal, 1997). However, it is quite interesting to learn how certain European countries, especially Germany, could maintain the world standard economic progression with minimal use of English as a language of communication in business transactions as well as socio-cultural interactions. To understand the saying ‘today’s learners are tomorrow’s nation builders’ better, the university learners’ (Technical University of Dresden, Germany) perspective on ‘English

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as language of international communication' was studied. The study throws light on three aspects: one, the role of English as a foreign language in today's global world; two, German language and the influence of English on German language; and three, German university learners' beliefs on English as a language of international communication. And finally it offers the findings, and implication for learners.

1. Background

I got selected on the student exchange programme for a summer semester with Technical University of Dresden, Germany. When I was about to leave for Germany, I started to imagine myself among the new people, new language and culture. There were too many apprehensions about my stay in Europe for the next six months. Even though my friends had repeatedly asked me if I knew any German, I did not realize the importance of German as a language. A gentleman even lent me two basic travel guide books in German language, suggesting me to pick up some German before I left. Although it sounded as a warning, I was reluctant to even pick up few phrases. It was because I thought I could very well manage to survive in Germany with the knowledge of English I had. But very soon, even before I left for Germany, I had to put up with the tough experience of German when I was asked to attach copies of covering letter, financial statement, and others in German translation while applying for visa, by the Consulate of Germany. At times, I felt quite frustrated with this tedious procedure but I could hardly help myself.

Well, finally I arrived in Germany, the great 'Duetsch Land.' I do not think I could have managed to communicate while getting my formalities done, I had not been accompanied by my German translator with me. A translator was necessary to speak to the staff at Immigration Office, College, Health Insurance Office, Bank, Hostel and Mensas (student dining messes). When I was introduced to German friends, the first question they asked me was, 'do you know German?' With my answer 'sorry, I don't', some learners hardly made any attempts to communicate with me.

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One day, I, along with my friend, happened to go to a tourist information center, in Dresden. My friend could manage a little German and so he had asked the lady agent if she could speak English. She gave a very quick response saying 'no'. But, she did speak little English. And my friend managed to communicate to her, his wish to know information on holiday packages in Europe. Immediately she brought three bulky tourist information books and opened them up and said to us something in German, which meant 'you need to look for a relevant package.' Since all the three books were in German language, my friend asked her if there were any books available in English. The lady immediately said 'no' again. Then, I asked her with a strange and impatient tone, 'but why?' With much pride, the lady replied to us saying, 'we live in Germany and therefore only German language books are available here.' As she found me a bit shocked on hearing her, she again justified her stance by saying, 'if you go to USA, we do not get books in German language, but only in English', 'if you go to Italy, you find them only in Italian.' We looked at each other and quietly walked out.

Experiences such as these tickled my curiosity to take up this study to find out to what extent German university learners believe in the role of English as a Language of International Communication. The next section presents information on the importance of English as a language of international communications.

2. English Language as a *Lingua Franca*

English is a West Germanic language that originated in Anglo-Saxon England. As a result of the military, economic, scientific, political, and cultural influence of the British Empire during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries and of the United States since the mid 20th century, it is a well known fact that English language has become the *lingua franca* in many parts of the world. It is used extensively as a second language and also as an official language in Commonwealth countries and many international organizations. Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries

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around the world. English is also the most commonly used language in the sciences. In 1997, the Science Citation Index reported that 95% of its articles were written in English, but it is said that only half of them were being contributed from authors in English-speaking countries. It speaks that how wide English is spread its wings especially in the filed of science and technology.

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a “world language”, the *lingua franca* of the modern era. Although English is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. Some linguists, such as David Graddol (1997), believe that English is no longer the exclusive cultural property of “native English speakers”, but is rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial and maritime communications. English is an official language of the United Nations and many other international organizations, including the International Olympic Committee.

A number of studies have consistently demonstrated that those who have an advanced knowledge of the English language are much more likely to advance their professional careers. In addition to this, these studies have also demonstrated that a strong command of the English language will lead to higher paying jobs, more social mobility, and a great deal of social success. However, it is said that English language is believed to have two facets: one, as a second or a foreign language it represents for bringing many people together and mediating between cultures in conflict; two, as a global mode of communication, English is not always seen as a blessing but as a threat, as it is seen as the epitome of Anglo-American imperialism. English is also seen as undemocratic since it creates a structure of linguistic hierarchy, which enhances the cultural dominance of English-speaking countries, particularly the USA and Britain.

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The increased global spread of English as a lingua franca should be seen as a culture-free and neutral mode of communication. It is true that language influences one's thinking and perception of the world, but most likely not in a unidirectional manner. Thus, it can be a warning and threat to all minority languages of the world in the race achieving linguistic power in order to assume the economic stability of any nation. The next section deals with importance of German language.

3. The Influence of English on German Language

Germany is located in the Western Central part of Europe. Germany enjoys the status of being the world's third largest economy. The people in Germany speak a variety of languages. Each state and each province has different dialects and also often, they are completely different from each other. The official language of Germany is German and over 95% of the people living in Germany use it as their first language. Other popularly spoken languages in Germany are Sorbian, North Frisian, Danish, Romani, Kurdish and Turkish. At present, German is the dominant language of mainland Europe (spoken in Germany and Austria, the majority language in Switzerland, important minorities in Poland and the Czech Republic). It also has an international commercial importance, and of course dominates recent central European history.

The German Language is one of the very most important languages for communication in Europe. It is said that around 100 million people use German as their native language. German is spoken not only in Germany but also in Austria, in large parts of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg as well as areas of Northern Italy, Eastern Belgium and Eastern France. It is believed that there are native speakers of German throughout Eastern Europe all the way into the Ukraine. Alongside Russian, German is the most frequently spoken native language in Europe and is one of the ten most frequently spoken languages in the World. German is one of the primary literary languages of the world and about 18% of books published world-wide are in German. It is the fact that over 60,000 new books are published in Germany each year. The German language boasts the third largest Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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number of published books in the world. It is interesting to note that in the field of scientific publications, German language stands second only to English. The statistics show that about 40% of scientists in the USA recommend that their learners learn German. In Poland and Hungary the number of learners who learn German is said to be over 70%. German is the second most widely used language on the Internet. German is also known as the language of some of the most influential people in history such as Goethe, Nietzsche, Kafka, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Freud and Einstein.

Globalization and the Future of German (Mouton de Gruyter) (2004), published by Andreas Gardt and Bernd Hüppauf, presents a critical assessment of the present position and future prospects of the German language as a 'paradigmatic example' of the future of European languages in general in the face of global forces apparently favouring the growing domination of 'global Englishes' and militating against linguistic diversity.

It is said that English is usually the first foreign language learned at German schools. It is different in regions bordering EU partner countries: there kindergarteners already learn the national language from across the way. This can make life together more understanding and appreciative.

In the European context it can be seen that the use of English in academic communication can display a variety of functions depending on, for example, the subject of study, spoken vs. written manifestation or language competencies of the learners. The different functions of English are seen to reflect the varying degrees of neutrality in which English as a lingua franca is used in academic discourse.

English is fast becoming a feature in promotional business in Germany (Endmark, 2003). According to Berns (1995a) (cited in Gerritsen, Marinel, et al, 2007), although English is in the process of developing as a second language in Germany, the use of English is increasing in Germany as it does in other European countries. According to Claus Gnutzmann (Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany), the scientific study of

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English language and culture(s), as well as the teaching and learning of English in schools and other contexts, have been salient features of the history of the humanities and of education in Germany.

There is no doubt that English is becoming visible in socio-cultural behaviour, as well as academic and public discourse of Germans. It is assumed that sometimes people use English words in German in spite of the existence of suitable synonyms in German. This increasing contact with English has resulted in the debatable question of endangering the German language. According to Onysko (2009) this exaggerated use of English in German can lead to three critical issues such as; one, the use of English discriminates against people who have little or no knowledge of the language; two, the use of unnecessary loan words leads to corruption of German means of expression and will result in an impoverishment of German and, ultimately, loss of the language; three, the insertion of (pseudo-) English elements embodies a factually empty mode of expression and merely indicates a speaker's (misguided) wish to appear knowledgeable and modern. These are quite difficult to accept for the people who hold puristic and traditional beliefs such as language is invariable, stable property and an epitome of the culture of a nation.

4. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to understand the university learners' views on how important is English as a language of international communication in their advanced academic as well as in their professional career. The objectives of the study are to: understand learners' individual opinions/perspectives on English as an international language; understand what learners' expectations are in accepting English as an international language; understand if learners welcome English as an important language.

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5. Methodology

Research Questions

1. What are University learners' personal opinions about English as an international language?
2. Why English language, though it is a global language, has a very limited space/role in the academic as well as professional lives of German learners?

Research Tools

In order to collect the data, research tools such as learner questionnaire, informal, as well as formal interviews, classroom observation have been used in the study. A questionnaire was administered to a group of 12 university learners. It consists of four categories such as personal details, information on schooling, university education and beliefs about English language and in all 34 questions. All the learners were natives of Germany and are studying literature, languages, business administration, mathematics, medicine, and technology at the Technical University, Dresden.

A number of informal interviews were part of the data collection procedure. The researcher has made it a point to discuss the topic in informal situations like: traveling, evening walks, informal gatherings, chats, and parties, to name a few. This has served a very good deal of information on learners' views about English as language of international communication. Informal situations such as learners' casual talks and chats while eating, playing, partying and gatherings were also observed. Some formal communication between two people at banks, courier offices, international office, health insurance office, immigration office, and hostel office was also observed. This has given

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the researcher a general picture as to what extent English, as an international language, is being used by the German population.

Classroom observation in terms of peer-interaction, learners class presentations, teacher-learner interactions and a number of books, articles and online materials have been used in the process of writing the project.

Subjects of the Study

12 native German learners, 8 girls and 4 boys between the age groups of 23 to 27 were the subjects of the study. All the learners belong to Technical University, Dresden. Except three, all the other learners were studying in German as the medium of instruction at the university level. They belong to different courses such as; two learners study teaching degree, three learners study medicine, one studies German linguistics, three learners study M.A in English, one student studies Business Administration, one student studies economics and one studies mathematics. Two learners did not like to reveal their names. Most of the learners did not like to fill in their address in the questionnaire. The table 1 below presents learners' profile.

Table: 1 Learners' Profile

S. No	Name	Age	Gender	University	Medium	Course
1	Christian	23	M	TUD	German	Teacher Degree
2	Daniela	24	F	TUD	German	Medicine
3	Jana Simon	24	F	TUD	German	Medicine
4	Diana	26	F	TUD	German	German Linguistics
5	Sebastian	27	M	TUD	German	Medicine
6	Jana	23	F	TUD	English	MA English
7	Tina	23	F	TUD	English	English Studies
8	Felix	27	M	TUD	German	Economics
9	Brigitte	25	F	TUD	German	British

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						English
10	Unknown A	25	M	TUD	German	Business
11	Unknown B	25	F	TUD	German	Mathematics
12	Ulrike	24	F	TUD	English	Teacher Degree

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Learners were asked number of questions about their schooling and special interests in English language and other details. The learners' answers to the questionnaire have been presented in a sequence. To the question *what was the medium of your schooling?* out of 12 learners, 11 of them answered that their schooling was in German medium. One student said that she studied in an English medium school. To the question, *which language did you like most?*, 6 learners said they liked German and 5 learners said English and 1 said Spanish.

Learners seem to have lot of variety of opportunities to learn English in their schooling. It is evident from the question, *what opportunities have you had to learn English in your school?* Learners could recall as many opportunities as they could in learning English at school level such as; language classes, exchange learners from other countries to interact with, class lessons, a basic course or a so called "Leistungskurs" (kind of an advanced course), English was a compulsory subject, pupil's exchange programmes to London, English was a compulsory from the age of 11 till the age of 16, lessons for 9 years, normal English lessons and exchange programmes. Among all of the above opportunities, student exchange programme, even at the school level, is the most interesting programme. It exposes learners to foreign culture and language at a very early age. Most of the learners also said that English was a compulsory subject in their schooling.

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To the question, *what aspects of English language did you like most or least?* most of the learners said that they liked grammar and vocabulary most, and communication and pronunciation least. The reason why most of the present university learners are poor in English communication and pronunciation becomes clear from their answers. In other words, it is obvious that these learners seem to have paid least attention to English communication and pronunciation in their schooling.

The following table describes that the learners' likes and dislikes about their English teacher in school.

Table: 2 Learners' likes and dislikes about their English teacher in school.

Liking	Disliking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus on speech and communication - listen to cassettes and also answer questions. - tried always to do interesting and versatile classes, always varying the methods and materials. - Their classes were very creative and demanding. - never boring but always a challenge. - inspired us to learn language and grammar. - great command of English, great motivation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for using the book and closed tasks in earlier stages. - about the issues we are not interested and the books were outdated. - poor quality of cassettes that one could hardly understand anything. - talked the whole hour about one silly topic with maybe two to three learners. - he didn't prepare for the classes. - communication for the ones who only dared to speak English. - our teacher did not have a good English accent. - not at all interesting themes. - too dull in her teaching, using only old-fashioned methods and going strictly with the text book, not encouraging student interaction or communication. - classes were just very boring and no one was motivated enough to work in her classes. - we did what she wanted, but grudgingly and without much pleasure. - her English wasn't much better than mine which disappointed me a lot. - pronunciation was a bigger issue.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - old and uninteresting topics, teacher-centered-teaching. - lessons too stiff, same procedures.
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A section of the questionnaire was devoted in order to draw some information regarding learners' interests in English language learning at the university level. The following are the learners' responses to the questions. The given are learners' responses to the question, *if given a chance would you prefer to communicate in German or in English with strangers? And why?* One student said, 'if the stranger knows German and he wants to talk in German, then definitely German, otherwise English. If I speak to a native speaker of English I want to improve my English through conversing with the person. Even if both know English and German, the topic of the talk, the mood, the level of difficulty would come in.' Student two said, 'German because it is easier to me and everything I can express what I want to say.' Student three said, 'for myself I would always prefer English or the language the person speaks. But in practice I prefer German, because I think it is important that the foreigner learns German and gets the opportunity to listen to German and practice it.' Student four said, 'I prefer English, to improve my English.' Student five said, 'wherever possible I would prefer German, because I am not always sure to which extent I really say what I wanted to say in English.' Student six said, 'that depends on where I am. At the moment I am in Germany and I would talk German to anyone unknown because it comes naturally but I'd as soon switch to English if necessary. When I am anywhere else in the world I prefer to speak English because I will be understood. When a stranger approaches me in Germany I would not automatically assume that he doesn't know German so I'd talk to him in German of course. But in which language I proceed to talk doesn't really matter to me.' Student seven said, 'English, because there are many prejudices against the Germans, especially in Europe.' Student eight said, 'German for I speak it fluently.' Student nine said, 'English, communication usually runs well and is great fun.' Student ten said, 'German, for it is my

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native language.’ Student eleven said, ‘German because it's my first language. English is ok, but I prefer German.’ And student twelve said, ‘this depends on the other persons (which language they feel comfortable with).’

Table: 3 Learners’ mother tongue, other languages they know, percentage of English they know, and English spoken by their family members.

S. No	Name	Mother Tongue	Other Languages Known	Percentage of English known	English spoken by Family members
1	Christian	German	1) English 2) French 3) Spanish 4) a little bit of Hindi	80%	Father Mother Sister Grand father
2	Daniela	German	1) Latin 2) English	40%	Sister
3	Jana Simon	German	1) German 2) English 3) Spanish 4) a bit French 5) a bit Turkish	80%	Sister
4	Diana	German	1) English 2) French	70%	Mother Brother
5	Sebastian	German	1) English 2) French 3) Spanish	80%	Brother
6	Jana	German	1) English 2) French (just a little) 3) (Latin) 4) Sorbian (very basic knowledge)	100%	Sister
7	Tina	German	1) English 2) French 3) a little Spanish	80%	Mother Brother
8	Felix	German	1) English 2) Spanish	40%	Nil
9	Brigitte	German	1) English	80%	Father Sister
10	Unknown A	German	1) English 2) Chinese	80%	Father Mother Brother

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					Sister
11	Unknown B	German	1) English 2) French 3) Czech	100%	Sister
12	Ulrike	German	1) English 2) French 3) Spanish	80%	Mother Sister

To the question, *could you name some of the immediate resources you always have in order to learn English?*, learners have come up with resources such as; BBC World news, British radio, books, novels, watching movies, watch English programs on TV, read English newspaper, communicate to English people (via Internet), learn vocabulary, my digital dictionary for words and the internet for finding correct sentences/grammar, books, I always read books in their original language if I know that one, that way you'll learn while entertaining yourself. Also listening to English radio, watch DVDs in English or talking to English friends, research documents, TV- serials, English surroundings, the internet, radio, podcasts, online newspapers, etc.

To the question, *have you ever made any self attempts to learn English? At what level?* learners have answered saying; using the Cambridge University Press books, going abroad for a year or reading books, learning vocabulary, learning through English media, I read English books and tried to watch my favourite movies in English, post-intermediate level, vocabulary studies, Film studies, learning by doing, exchange programs, for study purposes and exam preparation, at least intermediate and one said he never made any self attempts to learn English.

To the question, *given a chance would you prefer to take exams in German or in English? And why?* while studying English, of course, I would rather choose English. Because by doing so, one exercises the use of the language and at the same time one is using the language as a means of communication. Language teaching should always be directed towards communication (be it written or oral). As well or especially in situations

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of stress: like an exam. As it is my native language I prefer German, but if needed I might as well take an exam in English. I prefer German, because in English, the insecurity of a wrong translation or expression is too heavy. It also depends on the subject. For example, I also study history apart from English but I would prefer exams about German medieval times to be in German because there are so many German historic terms in that context for which there is no appropriate English equivalent (take 'Standesherrschaft' oder 'Grundherr' or 'Lehnswesen' as example). So for these reasons I'd rather have the exam in German. But my linguistics exam in English for example, was also held partly in German so that the professor could see that I am proficient in both languages. I have to be able to explain any linguist context in either German or English. But for longer written exams I think I still prefer German because I am much more fluent in my native language and rare words or phrases come much easier to my mind in German. One student said she prefers German because in an exam you have to be quick and words come easier to me in German. Exams in my English Studies I prefer to write them in English and Exams in my German Studies in German; Because I am acquainted with the topics in the respective language.

It can be said from the question, *would you like to learn English language? If yes, why?* that learners seem to be positive about learning English language. The reasons they mentioned were: in order to communicate to the people of other nationalities, to learn more colloquial language, to speak English fluently, to understand the web information, to communicate in business and with English speakers. Some even said that they want to learn English because it is a beautiful language.

It is quite interesting to know from learners' responses to the question, *what activities would you like to become involved in order to learn English?* They said that they would like to be involved in activities such as interacting with friends and others in English, participating in international and intercultural evenings with new friends, maintaining personal contact with native speakers, media (movies, novels, newspaper etc.),

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participating and practicing in theatre club, taking up an internship in a foreign or English speaking country, signing up for Tandem Learning, watching films, living abroad in an English speaking country, meeting international learners and other people who live in Dresden.

From the question, *how often do you browse the internet for emails, chatting, watching movies and searching for information and others?*, it is gathered that all the learners browse the internet daily for various purposes. And in order to access the internet, to know the learners' preferred language, it was asked, *what language would you prefer while chatting, mailing, searching for information?* Five of them said they use German, two said English, five said English and German languages. To the question, *how often do you watch English movies on computer or TV?* four learners said very often, four said often, three said very rare and one said daily. It is quite appalling to know that very few learners read English newspapers. It is gathered from the question, *how often do you read English newspaper?*, four learners said that they not at all read English newspapers, three said very rarely, and only four said often. To know their opportunities to communicate in English, it was asked, *how often do you communicate in English?* Four learners said daily, six learners said rarely and two said often. Another question on the same lines, *how often do you have a chance to communicate in English with learners from culturally and linguistically diverse background?*, was asked. Three learners said daily, six learners said rarely, two said often and one said very often.

Have you ever faced any situation where you could not speak in English? If yes, where?, to this question, most of the learners have said that they have faced such a situation with strangers and friends at the university. To the question, *have you ever regretted for not being able to speak in English?* six of the learners said 'no' and two said 'yes' and the rest did not answer. To the question, *has it ever occurred to you that you should learn English? And why?* out of 12, only 3 learners have answered saying that it occurred to

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them that they should learn English during their internship abroad and to improve communication skills.

The table 4 below shows learners' beliefs about English Language.

- *1. I believe that English is the most important foreign language.
- *2. I believe that English is a must for all learners at university level.
- *3. I believe that English is a must for getting a decent job.
- *4. I believe that English must be taught as a compulsory subject at school.
- *5. I believe that English must be learned besides mother tongue.
- *6. I believe that being able to speak English can be an advantage in my career.
- *7. I will definitely send my children to an English medium school.
- *8. Given a chance I would like to take up a proficiency course in English.

Table: 4 Learners' beliefs about English Language

S. No	Name	*1	*2	*3	*4	*5	*6	*7	*8
1	Christian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Daniela	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
3	Jana Simon	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
4	Diana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Sebastian	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
6	Jana	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
7	Tina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	----	---
8	Felix	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Brigitte	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
10	Unknown A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Unknown B	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
12	Ulrike	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	---	Yes
Total	YES	10	9	5	11	10	12	4	9
	No	2	3	7	1	2	0	6	2

The table above describes the learners' beliefs about English language. To the statement 1, i.e. *I believe that English is the most important foreign language* two learners say 'No' and ten learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 2, i.e. *I believe that English is a must for all learners at university level* three learners say 'No' and nine learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 3, i.e. *I believe that English is a must for getting a decent job* seven learners say, 'No' and five learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 4, i.e. *I believe that English must be taught as a compulsory subject at school* only one student says 'No' but all other eleven learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 5, i.e. *I believe that English must be learned besides mother tongue* only two learners say 'No' but all other ten learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 6, i.e. *I believe that being able to speak English can be an advantage in my career* all twelve learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 7, i.e. *I will definitely send my children to an English medium school* six learners say 'No', two learners did not say anything, and four learners say 'Yes.' To the statement 8, i.e. *Given a chance I would like to take up a proficiency course in English* two learners say 'No', one student did not say anything and the other nine learners say 'Yes.'

The above learners' beliefs suggest us that most of the learners do believe that English is the most important foreign language and therefore, they opine that English as a language is a must for all learners at the university learners. However, most of the learners seem to differ with the statement 'English is a must for getting a decent job.' I think it is because most of the learners have the confidence that they can get a job in Germany and therefore think that English does not influence much their professional career. But the following answers, on the contrary, show that almost all the learners are positive about English being taught as a compulsory subject at school and also believe in English, as a foreign language, must be learned/taught besides one's mother tongue or native language. All the twelve learners strongly believe that being able to speak English can be an added advantage in their academic as well as in their professional career. However, in spite of their beliefs that English can certainly bring about a huge difference in both academic as well as professional career, most of the present generation university learners are not

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positive about sending their children to an English medium schools. And to know the present learners' interest to learn English, a statement, *given a chance I would like to take up a proficiency course in English* was posed to them. It is found that most of the learners are willing to take up a course in proficiency in English language. It shows that learners are open to learning English language.

6. Findings of the Study

The findings stated below have emerged from the data analysis.

- Most of the learners take pride in their mother tongue (here German) and give much preference to it in communication.
- It was observed that most of the learners were non-serious about studying courses/subjects in English. This results in taking English language in a more light-hearted manner. However, extensive use of technology such as computers, internet, e-library, etc forces learners to use English.
- Learners believe that English is the most important foreign language in the world and also think that English can be an added advantage in their academic as well as in their professional career. In spite of knowing the fact, they are not positive on the stand that if they want to send their children to English medium schools. They do not seem to see English as a prerequisite for learners of future generation.
- Most of the learners have been on exchange programmes to native English speaking countries either USA, UK or Canada.
- Learners also think that English must be learned besides one's mother tongue. Most of these learners speak more than two foreign languages besides their mother tongue.

- Most of the learners, if given a chance, would prefer to write exams in German language. They seem to be much more comfortable in expressing in their mother tongue than a foreign language.
- It seems that nationalistic beliefs and policies tend to strengthen language purism and weaken the tendency to adapt and use of English as a dominant language.
- German language policies and planning seem to play a major role for English being rejected by most of the Germans through its legal and cultural means. Probably, it is because German policy makers perceive unconditional acceptance of English might result in overpowering their national language German. This might be a disadvantage for Germans as the opportunities might be grabbed by those who are proficient in language than those who are less proficient. This can be seen as a threat to the entire national economic development.
- For German learners code-switching is a common phenomena either from English to German or visa versa.

7. Suggestions

Based on the above findings, the following suggestions for teachers are put forward.

- The foreign language curricula may emphasize on more meaningful and language-rich, culture-sensitive and learners-centred, more individually-tailored and flexible instructional practices designed to achieve a variety of educational as well as foreign language learning goals.
- EFL teachers may adopt and equip themselves with modern methods to not to fall back to the tendency of teaching a foreign language through the bottleneck of assessment schedules.
- Sustained high-quality support for teachers in terms of systematic in-service teacher development programmes may be conducted periodically, to make sure

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the improvement of foreign language in everyday classroom practice with more innovative methodologies.

- The top-down implementation of foreign language policies, besides being inadequate, amount to a massive burden on teachers and contribute to less achievement of realistic classroom improvement. Hence, to yield desired results in teaching as well as learning a foreign language, a bottom-up perspective to language implementation at the grass root level must be an independent choice and decision of a classroom teacher.

8. Conclusion

The few critical issues that are actually tackled are a long way away from representing the complexity of demands and challenges young people are confronted with nowadays, and of which they are in fact well aware. Thus, foreign language instruction in secondary schools is learners-centred to a very limited extent only, especially in terms of thematic content.

All in all, foreign language learning and teaching in actual everyday practice adds too little to the holistic development of knowledge, skills and understanding, and of attitudes and values that enable children and adolescents to think critically and to exchange views and ideas on essential issues of life. These issues, which are global in nature but manifest themselves regionally and locally, need to be seen as important thematic content around which foreign language learning and teaching should be designed in the future.

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Questionnaire

I. Personal Details

Name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: M / F (highlight)
University: _____ Medium: English / German (highlight)
Course: _____ Specialization: _____
Permanent Address: _____
Mail: _____

II. Schooling

(tick your answers)

1. What was the medium of your schooling?

German English Other? -----

2. Which language did you like most?

English German Other? -----

3. What opportunities have you had to learn English in your school?

Ans:

4. What aspects of English language did you most or least?

Grammar: Most Least (tick your answers)

Vocabulary: Most Least

Communication: Most Least

Pronunciation: Most Least

5. Have you ever had a chance to communicate with students from culturally and linguistically diverse background during your school days?

Yes No

If yes, who were the students? What language did you communicate in?

Ans:

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6. Was English a compulsory subject in your school?

Yes No

7. What did you like/dislike about your English language teacher in your school?

Ans:

8. Who can speak English in your family?

Father	Yes	No	(tick your answers)
Mother	Yes	No	
Sister	Yes	No	
Brother	Yes	No	
Grand Father	Yes	No	
Grand Mother	Yes	No	

III. University Education

9. How many languages can you speak?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

10. Can you speak English fluently?

Yes No

11. What percentage of fluency do you think you have in English?

20% 40% 60% 80% 100% (tick your answer)

12. If given a chance would you prefer to communicate in German or in English with strangers? And why?

Ans:

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13. Could you name some of the immediate resources you always have in order to learn English?

Ans:

14. Have you ever made any self attempts to learn English? At what level?

Ans:

15. Given a chance would you prefer to take exams in German or in English? And why?

Ans:

16. Would you like to learn English language? If yes, why?

Ans:

17. What activities would you like to become involved in order to learn English?

Ans:

18. How often do you browse the internet for emails, chatting, watching movies and searching for information and others? (tick your answers)

Not at all Very rare Rarely Often Very often Daily

19. What language would you prefer while chatting, mailing, searching for information?

English German Any other? -----

20. How often do you watch English movies on computer or TV?

Not at all Very rare Rarely Often Very often Daily

21. How often do you read English newspaper?

Not at all Very rare Rarely Often Very often Daily

22. How often do you communicate in English?

Not at all Very rare Rarely Often Very often Daily

23. How often do you have a chance to communicate in English with students from culturally and linguistically diverse background?

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Not at all Very rare Rarely Often Very often Daily

24. Have you ever faced any situation where you could not speak in English? If yes, where?

At school At university With a stranger With a friend

25. Have you ever regretted for not being able to speak in English?

Yes No

26. Has it ever occurred to you that you should learn English? And why?

Ans:

IV. Beliefs about English Language

(please tick your answers)

27. I believe that English is the most important foreign language: Yes No

28. I believe that English is a must for all learners at university level: Yes No

29. I believe that English is a must for getting a decent job: Yes No

30. I believe that English must be taught as a compulsory subject at school: Yes No

31. I believe that English must be learned besides mother tongue: Yes No

32. I believe that being able to speak English can be an advantage in my career: Yes No

33. I will definitely send my children to an English medium school: Yes No

34. Given a chance I would like to take up a proficiency course in English: Yes No

Thank you

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Rajakumar Guduru, M.A., M. Phil., Ph. D. ELT. Scholar
EFL University
Tarnaka
Hyderabad 500 605
Andhra Pradesh, India
raja.ciefl@gmail.com

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