

English matters in esl countries essay sample

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



In today's world, the total number of ESL (English as a Second Language) speakers well exceeds the number of ENL (English as a Native Language) speakers (Jenkins 4). By English being a second language, that means the language has an official status within a country and is used 'in fields such as government, law and education' (3). English language relates to ESL countries in two main domains: one is social status, that is, a higher class for higher education standard; the other is economic power for English being the lingua franca between countries. People generally conceive the ability to use English competently as more educated, and with more education, it is usually easier for people to climb up the social ladder. The mindset is deeply implanted in people from ESL countries. This perception of linking English with education originates from the fact that most tertiary education use English as the medium of instruction. The reasons for such dominance are as stated in Jenkins' *World English*. As English being the lingua franca between institutions from different countries and most works are in English (both for the works originally written in English and translated works), English dominates in academic world. "...most academic information in the world is expressed in English, and over 80 percent of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English... (Jenkins 41)"

Jenkins later on explained the importance for English translation works by giving the example of readers generally unable to process Goethe's or Dante's works if they are not translated into English. Therefore, English matters in studies, particularly in higher education. One of the reasons for people willing to get into universities is the belief of the opportunities education provides after graduation. It is a general belief that the more

education one's got, the more ease in career and life in general he could find. But in ESL countries where English has an official status, English not only identifies one's educational background, but also his cultural background. English is closely related to class. If one speaks English competently, he is easily being seen as being in a higher class compared with those who speak less fluent English. Therefore, English symbolizes one's class in ESL countries. Economic power, on the other hand, is also often related to ESL countries which are usually expanding their urban areas.

“ The world is rapidly becoming more urban and more middle class - both of which are encouraging the adoption of English, (Graddol 50)” as the U. S. is the strongest economy in the world; it is the most powerful one as well. It influences the way countries trade. Because of its economic dominance, countries which like to develop international market have to work with English. Hence, with English being the lingua franca in business domain, people from different countries, even when an ESL speaker cooperates with another ESL or EFL (English as a foreign language) speaker, they communicate and trade in English. English matters in countries which rely on international businesses or tourism. ESL countries like Hong Kong, Singapore and India which often trade with other countries, position English not only for internal usage such as government, education or law, but also external. External usages of a language include international business and tourism. Tourism is an industry depends on English as English is the lingua franca of the world. Locals, even for ESL or EFL speakers with little competence, can still communicate with tourist from different countries.

In modern world, tourism is one of the major industries for developed countries, including ESL countries. India, for instance, has a fast growing tourism. From 2001, the number of foreign tourists gradually increased a double, from 2282738 to 4977193 in 2007 (Indian Tour Operators Promotion Council itopc. org). It is noted that the number is much higher by now. For ESL countries, English also helps to create a global image, an image which attracts and appeals foreign investment. Take Singapore, one of the ESL countries, as an example. According to Department of Statistics Singapore, in 2010: The stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Singapore rose 7.9 % from \$573.3 billion as at end-2009 to \$618.6 billion as at end-2010. The United States (\$65 billion), Netherlands (\$61 billion), Japan (\$54 billion) and United Kingdom (\$50 billion) were major sources of FDI in Singapore. (Department of Statistics Singapore singstat. gov. sg) To trade with the foreign countries mentioned above, Singaporean need to be a fluent English speaker first as the only common language between their clients and themselves would normally be English.

Thus, being an ESL country means Singaporean process a certain degree of English competence, giving an edge to the city in terms of competitiveness. It is interesting to note that Singapore was ranked second in a global competitiveness report while Hong Kong, another ESL country, ranked 11th (World Economic Forum weforum. org). To conclude, English matters in ESL countries in terms of social status and economic power. Socially, English provides opportunity for its speakers in ESL countries, thus increases a country's social mobility. Economically, the fact that English is seen as the

lingua franca helps ESL countries developing their global image, and as a result, helps trading, tourism and foreign investment.

Works cited

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