The Effects of English Language Dominance of the Internet and the Digital Divide

Robert M. Wolk
Bridgewater State College
85% of all WebPages are in English. (Norris, 2003).

Despite similar population totals and standard of living, the English have twice the number of Internet users than the French.
What is the Digital Divide?

- The separation of society into the have and have-nots based on access and availability of technology has been termed the digital divide.
- Productivity is the most affected factor from the increase in technology.
The importance of global Ecommerce

- A United Nations study has linked the growth of E-commerce in developing countries to improvements in competitiveness, lowering the costs of transactions, increased economy of scale and greater allocation of resources. (UNCTAD, 2001).
Internet generated revenue 1996 - 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMOUNT IN BILLIONS (US DOLLARS)</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>1234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
US ECOMMERCE 1998 - 2003

- Business - to - Business
- Business - to - Consumer

(Amount in US Billions)

Year | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
8 | 43 | 18 | 33 | 52 | 76 | 108

1331

Forrester Research
Reasons for the Digital Divide

- Economic Development
- Cultural Differences
- Infrastructure
- Government Policies
- Language
Cultural Influences

- Lynch and Beck (2001) found an Asian bias against e-commerce rooted in cultural beliefs.
- Hargittai (1999) found some cultures required face to face encounters as important.
- Research on barriers to E-commerce in Malaysia found security and fear of legal contracts on E-commerce to be the greatest concern of Malaysian business managers. (Mukti, 2000).
Research Approaches

- One Country
- Compare two countries
- Region
- Similar grouping
- All countries
Hypothesis

- The level of English language adoption in a country is related to the degree of Internet usage
Methodology

- The data sample was collected from multiple sources on 197 countries.
- United Nations data was used for countries and populations. Internet users and the number of ISP’s were obtained from the CIA Factbook.
Procedure

- Countries were divided into two groups. The developed group was those with a per capita GNP of 19,000 US dollars equivalent.
- Divided again into two groups titled “High English” and “Low English”
High English Group

- English was the primary language of the country
- English literacy was prevalent within the population
- English was an official language of the country
Percent of Population that are Internet Users by Country Development

- High English
  - Developed 43.41% (N=15)
  - Developing 4.97% (N=57)

- Low English
  - Developed 37.3% (N=22)
  - Developing 4.08% (N=91)
## Population per Internet Service Provider by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High English</th>
<th>Low English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>188,088 (N=16)</td>
<td>713,228 (N=23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>1,829,034 (N=61)</td>
<td>10,233,505 (N=89)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- the number of ISP’s paired with English revealed no significant relationship
- the number of Internet users and English indicated a relationship
While English sites seldom have other language options, many foreign sites have an English language option.

- Microsoft developing MUI (Multilingual User Interface).

- Companies like Systran have developed Web Translators.
Lagging Data

Difficult to obtain reliable data on many developing countries