The Use of English in Room to Read

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**Introduction**

The expansion of English on a global scale has brought on a lot of questions about the future. Governments, businesses, and charities wonder what role English should play in their respective fields as they look towards the future of the language and what effects may occur because of its massive use. According to Graddol, the beginning of the 21st century brings a “global transition” that will determine the state of the English language (2).

In this report I describe the characteristics of a global language according to Crystal, the present use of English, the predicted future use of English, and recommendations about the language and our charity, Room to Read. With the help of David Crystal, David Graddol and Seth Mydans, I hope to clarify the role of English and how our charity should use it. I took great pleasure out of researching this topic and I hope it proves useful to you.

**What is a Global Language?**

Before I explain the state of English as a global language, the characteristics of a global language need defining. Crystal defines a global language as having a “special role” in every country through the use of it as the official language of a country, or having importance as a second language through foreign language education (4). To become a global language English must have an important place in many communities.

**English as a Global Language in the Present**

*Strengths of English as a Global Language*

Today one quarter of the world’s population speaks English (Crystal 69). English has grown as a native language and a second language giving it the ability to become a global language. The amount of influential fields using English expresses the powerful state of the language.

English has become the accepted official language in various fields. In 1980 the International Maritime Organization launched the idea seaspeak, commands spoken in English, to make sea communication more efficient and clear. Similarly, the International Civil Aviation Organization determined English to be the chosen language when pilots and controllers do not speak the same language (Crystal 108). In the international relations arena 85% of organizations, like the UN, OPEC and NATO, that list their official language, call English one of the official languages (Crystal ch4). The official status of English in these international fields shows the universal role of the language.

English also holds the majority in other fields that do not hold an official language. Crystal says by the 1990s the United States held 85% of the world film market (100) and 80% of electrically stored information is in English (115). Because of the correlation between English and advancement in the arts and sciences it holds its universal role. "English is dominant in a way that no language has ever been before” (Mydans).

*Weaknesses of English as a Global Language*

The spread of English has taken a hold over the world, but because of apprehensive countries it is not yet considered a global language. Ghandi said “To give millions the knowledge of English is to enslave them” (Crystal 124). The power of a global language threatens the preservation of cultures. For many countries, the risks outweigh the benefits in using a global language because of their need to protect their cultural identity. English gained its power through colonization leaving many people apprehensive about giving it control. This apprehension in the present limits the use of English on a global scale.

**English as a Global Language in the Future**

*The New Englishes*

New fragments of English, called New Englishes by Crystal, form through the differing of climate, government, religions, foods and personality traits throughout the world. These newly created sects pose a threat to the use of English in a global forum for the future. The largest English speaking country, America, has only 20% of the world’s English speaking population (Crystal 141). This means ownership of the language is held by many non-native speakers causing New Englishes.

The fluidity of language allows communities to take Standard English and make it their own. While this gives them identity, it hinders the ability of global understanding. The fragmentation of English could end the idea of English becoming a global language, but studies show that “there was no evidence of a breakdown in the functioning of English as an international lingua franca” (Graddol 56).

*Predicting the Unpredictable*

Predicting the future complicates when trying to forecast something as fluid and vastly influenced as language. Graddol explains the unpredictability of the future of English as a global language is due to the inability to collect accurate and comparative data. The continuous change in language use blocks researchers’ ability to find an accurate number of English as a second language speakers, and also complicates the ability to track proficiency in the language. Without a correct estimate of these numbers today, what tomorrow holds proves unknown.

Even if we could find accurate estimates, using those numbers may not give us an accurate account for the future. “The world has changed so drastically that history is no longer a guide” (Mydans). Never in history has a language been so globally used, leaving us unable to have a basis for a prediction.

**Recommendations**

*Inner Organization Communication*

Working at an international charity, communication through language needs to be addressed. Evaluating the unpredictability of English, I recommend the use of English for communication inside the organization. Even though the future proves unpredictable, today English holds value and efficiency. Making English the official language of the charity means holding all meetings in English and writing all documents in English. While efficiency has importance, we must also ensure non-English speaking workers are equipped to continue working in an English speaking environment. If to mandate the use of English I recommend:

* Providing translators for international employees without proficiency in English at all meetings
* Awarding compensation for non-English speaking employees to take English classes
* Assuring the presence of at least one English speaker at each location

*Outside the Organization Communication*

Communication between charity workers and the locals needs a different plan. Our mission to help children seek their true potential,l and to enable them to become important members of the community and the world requires us to localize our charity. To do this I recommend use of their native language to improve our ability to help children and their families. Using English to communicate would not only distance ourselves from the relationships of the community but will also block communication. Many of the small communities we help have little access to English speakers, so we must ensure a constant flow of communication by:

* Providing translators to mediate English and native language conversations when proficiency is low on either end of the conversation
* Requiring language classes in the native language of the country for all employees stationed there
* Hiring a native to explain customs and the structure of the community

By looking at the future of English as unpredictable and efficient, we can structure our charity so that internal communication works effectively and our community presence remains open and passionate. Thank you for this assignment and feel free to ask me any questions you might still have.

Work Cited

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