

# Dangers of a global language

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Studij: Preddiplomski studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti i pedagogije

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## **Dangers of a Global Language**

Završni rad

Mentor: prof. dr. sc. Mario Brdar

Osijek, 2018.

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Literature and Pedagogy

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Bachelor's Thesis

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**TABLE OF CONTENT**

**SUMMARY**..... 1

**INTRODUCTION**..... 2

**MAIN PART**..... 3

**SPREAD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGHOUT HISTORY** ..... 3

    LANGUAGE DEATH ..... 6

    LEVELS OF DANGER ..... 9

    ADVANTAGES OF SPREAD OF ENGLISH ..... 10

    DISADVANTAGES OF SPREAD OF ENGLISH..... 12

    THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH ..... 14

**CONCLUSION**..... 16

**LIST OF REFERENCES** ..... 17

## **SUMMARY**

Throughout history English became the most widely spoken international language in the world today thanks to the military might of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, and to the military and economic power of the United States of America in the twentieth century.

Globalization and connecting the world through media has helped it to spread even more and gain the power that it has today. However if the U.S.-led mass culture loses its credibility as a result of twenty straight years of record-high trade deficits, or if nations simply refuse to do business with the United States, the power of English may decline. With the increasing spread of the English language, there came the death of many minor languages alongside. One of the signs of the language death is increasing use of foreign words among younger generations. This causes the loss of the cultural knowledge since some of the minor languages possess various names for variations of the same thing, whereas English often has only one word for them. The problem is that hundreds of languages disappear forever and very few of them are born. There are good sides to English being the global language, such as easier and faster communication between people from different countries or cheaper ways of communicating without the need for translators. However, there are many more disadvantages to it. The biggest problem is the destruction of linguistic and cultural diversity, but also unequal opportunities for those who do not speak it as their first language.

**KEY WORDS:** Lingua Franca, global language, language death, globalization, ‘global village’

## **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of this paper is to explore how English as a global language impacts the way our society functions. Globalization process has never been faster and more widespread due to the fast flow of information and news through internet and other media. That has greatly influenced spreading of English and the dominance that it possesses today. The impact is visible in various aspects, e.g. in smaller languages dying out or English being taught as a second language in many more schools than before. This issue is going to be further looked into in the following chapters. The first chapter (The Spread of English Language Throughout History) briefly describes how historical, economic and political circumstances have influenced the power that English has today. In the second chapter (Language Death), I describe the issue of many minor languages dying out because less and less people are speaking them and how it impacts cultural heritage of the people from those countries. In the third chapter, entitled Levels of Danger, we are looking into a few different classifications of endangerment and dying out of languages. In the chapter Advantages of Spread of English we examine the good sides that global language brings, such as easier, cheaper and faster communication between people from different parts of the world. In the chapter Disadvantages of the Spread of English, negative sides which are much greater than positive ones, are being explored. Some of them are losing a big part of the culture that language is, unequal opportunities for people that are not from countries where English is the first language and many more. In the chapter The Future of English we look into some possible threats to the global status of English that it possesses today and how and why it might change in the future.



## **MAIN PART**

### **THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGHOUT HISTORY**

In today's world of fast-pacing and broadly available information we can easily find out about the latest news in the most remote areas of the world. Modern technology has allowed us to virtually remove all barriers between the countries and thus create a so-called „global village“. It is a relatively new term, but very often used today to describe the world where there are no boundaries and all problems become so widely known and intimate as if they were one's own. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as “the world viewed as a community in which distance and isolation have been dramatically reduced by electronic media (such as television and internet)”. However, the concept of globalization is not new. For thousands of years people have been buying and selling to each other in lands at great distances, such as through the famed Silk Road across Central Asia that connected China and Europe during the Middle Ages. In fact, many of the features of the current wave of globalization are similar to those prevailing before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Technology has always been a major factor or even a principal driver of globalization. Advances in information technology, in particular, have dramatically transformed the way our lives function. Along with globalization, there has been an enormous increase of the usage of English in the world. That in particular is visible in the predominance of the Western media where a vast majority of the movies, TV shows, songs and the entire pop culture is based on English. According to some scholars (e.g. Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992), English is a tool of globalization, an agent of imposing Western (usually American) culture and values throughout the world. Kovacs (2008) explains that becoming “well-informed“ -and well-educated nowadays is virtually impossible without having at least a working knowledge of the English language.

Kovacs (2008) points out that Otto Jespersen (1968) estimated that there were roughly four million English speakers in 1500 - all confined to a relatively small island in northwestern Europe. There were six million English speakers in 1600, around 8.5 million in 1700, somewhere between 20 and 40 million in 1800, and approximately 120 million in 1900. Another century later, the number of English-speakers appears to have increased six- to tenfold. The “best” estimates put the total number of English speakers in the world between 700 million and 1.4 billion. That figure can be divided into three groups, following Kachru's (1986) distinction: native speakers of English, speakers of English as a second language; and speakers of English as a foreign language. There are an estimated 380 million people worldwide who speak English as their native tongue. Another 200 to 300 million use it occasionally as a foreign language. Although the exact numbers cannot

be precisely estimated, the prominent position of English among the other world's languages is apparent.

Kovacs (2008) mentions that English is second only to Mandarin Chinese in terms of the number of people who speak it, but in terms of international prestige and significance, it far outweighs its Chinese counterpart. Even though over a billion people on the planet speak Mandarin Chinese either as their native tongue or have a good proficiency in it as second-language speakers, Mandarin is not a global language. Similarly, the number of native speakers of Hindi is only marginally lower than those speaking English as their mother tongue, yet Hindi has nowhere near the international prestige that English enjoys. Moreover, Spanish is an official language of many more countries than English is, yet Spanish is not de facto international language of communication in the world today.

We can say that English has become an unofficial lingua franca. Kovacs (2008, as cited in Crystal, 2003) points out that English has now become the most widely taught foreign language throughout the world. In over a hundred countries it is the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another foreign language in the process. It is now the first choice as a second language by Ministries of Education in almost every non-English-speaking country. Much greater emphasis on the English language in the elementary and secondary schools, as well as in universities, means a lessening importance of other foreign languages. In 1996, for instance, English replaced French as the main foreign language taught in the schools of Algeria, a former French colony. In addition, most multilateral political discussions and international negotiations about issues of trade and commerce are now conducted in English. It is also the language prevalent in the world's entertainment industry, and the overwhelming majority of the findings of scientific and technological research are now published exclusively in English. A great deal of world's books, newspapers, magazines and academic papers are now produced in English as well.



*Picture 1: Countries where English is an official language  
(from Wikipedia)*

From the visual representation of the countries where English is an official language, we can see that officially speaking, it is not so dominating as one would imagine.

So, how come English language has become so widely used despite other languages that are official in many more countries than English is, or the great many speakers of other languages that are not so popular even though they have almost equal amount of people who speak them as English has?

Kovacs (2008, as cited in Crystal, 2003) points out that a language has traditionally grown to such importance for one chief reason: the military, economic, or religious power of its people. English is the most widely spoken international language in the world today thanks to the military might of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, and to the military and economic power of the United States of America in the twentieth century. In addition, Robson (2013) explains that although the UK's political and military power was crucial in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 was to prove to be of major significance. This established English as dominant over French in the United States; and then – as the UK's empire shrank in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – rapidly growing American global influence gave the language a momentum perhaps unique in modern history.

We can say that historical circumstances were the most important factor, rather than anything intrinsic in the language itself, in the dominance of English language that is present today. Just like it was the case with Latin language. Barber (1993) mentions that Latin became the dominant cultural language of Western Europe, not because it was intrinsically superior to Greek or Arabic or the local languages, but because of the political, military, and administrative achievements of Imperial Rome. Similarly, the wealth and power of the United States make her a creditor nation in linguistic matters.

Robson (2013) notes that in the past the spread of language was first governed by the physical encounters, and later by the circulation of printed materials. However, today, technology has enabled it to jump the fence and to thrive without the physical contact which had previously been necessary. So the growth of English, and the emergence of the internet as a global communication channel, are mutually reinforcing trends.

## LANGUAGE DEATH

With the increasing spread of English language, there came the death of many minor languages alongside. Crystal (2000) explains that a language dies when nobody speaks it anymore, for languages have no existence without people. Furthermore, if the language has never been written down, or recorded on tape, people who speak it are the only “carriers” of that language. The moment the last speaker of an unwritten or unrecorded language dies, the archive disappears forever. When that happens to a language which has never been recorded in some way, it is as if it has never existed.

Crystal (2000) mentions that although its exact scope is not yet known, it is certain that the extinction of languages is progressing rapidly in many parts of the world. Languages have died throughout history, but we have never faced the massive extinction that is threatening the world right now. How many languages are at the point of death and how many are endangered exactly?

Kovacs (2008) emphasizes that language death is one of the most troubling and irreversible effect of the phenomenal spread of the English language. Half of the world’s 6000 or so languages are now in serious danger of disappearing forever within the twenty-first century.

	N	%	Cumulative downwards%	Cumulative upwards%
more than 100 million	8	0.13		99.9
10–99.9 million	72	1.2	1.3	99.8
1–9.9 million	239	3.9	5.2	98.6
100,000–999,999	795	13.1	18.3	94.7
10,000–99,999	1,605	26.5	44.8	81.6
1,000–9,999	1,782	29.4	74.2	55.1
100–999	1,075	17.7	91.9	25.7
10–99	302	5.0	96.9	8.0
1–9	181	3.0	99.9	

*Table 1: Increasing number of people speaking few world languages*

*(From: Crystal, Language Death, 2000)*

We can see from the table above that the 8 languages that have over 100 million speakers (Mandarin, Spanish, English, Bengali, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese) have nearly 2.4 billion speakers between them; and if we extend this count to include just the top 20 languages, we find a total of 3.2 billion speakers between them- over half the world's population. If we further analyze the table, we can find that just 4% of the world's languages are spoken by 96% of the population. Turning this statistics on its head: 96% of the world's languages are spoken by just 4% of the population.

Kovacs (2008) mentions that extinction is a natural process for biological species and, according to some estimates, some 95% of all species that ever existed on planet Earth are now extinct. On the other hand, in the course of the past 3.5 billion years, the general trend has been an increase in the variety of species. This, however, does not hold for human languages: as hundreds of languages disappear forever, very few new ones are ever born. Linguistic and cultural diversity, which have been around for tens of thousands of years, are now being eroded at an alarming rate.

Kovacs (2008) describes the direct effect that language death has on the names of plants in the Amazonian rainforest. He mentions that there have been highly effective medical plants that were only known to people in traditional cultures, whose languages possessed specific names for those plants. *Curare* and *quinine* are just two examples from South America. Their medical properties were well known to the forest tribes long before they came into contact with European explorers. When the language and cultures of some of these small speech communities disappears, the knowledge about those plants and their healing powers are forever lost. Crystal (2000) also tackles this issue saying that languages which are off the beaten track' are especially important, as their isolation means that they may have developed features not found in other languages. And language death is the chief threat to the achievement of this goal as, with the death of each language, another source of potentially invaluable information disappears.

To further describe this problem of language death and thus disappearance of knowledge about certain things, Kovacs (2008) refers to the example of some Inuit languages which have over a dozen words to describe and qualify a dozen completely different types of snow. However, in the English language there is only one word (and a few adjectives) for snow.

We can say that hardly any language is truly safe from the threat of extinction. Kovacs (2008) mentions that French, the language with the ninth-largest number of native speakers, has been trying to protect itself against the unwanted influence of English. In official contexts in France, it

is illegal to use an English word where a French word already exists. Even if the English loan word enjoys widespread popularity among certain segment of the French people.

Furthermore, one of the signs of the language death is increasing use of foreign words among younger generations. This concept is vastly influenced by mass media and internet language which young people absorb on daily basis. It is truly concerning when a person cannot think of a phrase or a word in their own language, but can easily express themselves in English.

However, even English might face some troubled times in the future despite its growing presence and power that it possesses today. Crystal (2003) warns that a significant change in the balance of power either political, economic, technological, or cultural could result in another language rising to prominence and English gradually losing worldwide prestige.

A similar thing had happened to Ancient Greek and Latin—the two best-known examples of languages that fell from grace.

If the U.S.-led mass culture may lose most of its luster or the U.S. dollar loses its credibility as a result of twenty straight years of record-high trade deficits, or if dozens of nations simply refuse to do business with the United States as a protest against its unfair trade practices or its unilateral actions against some nations it considers as posing a security risk, the whole economic house of cards the U.S.A. is built upon could be brought down with relative ease. Alternatively, English could fragment into mutually unintelligible dialects—the way Latin did fifteen centuries ago—giving birth to a family of English languages. This, however, seems less likely, given the nature and extent of mass media and the worldwide availability and instant access of cultural products. But if this unlikely scenario does unfold, teachers of English will have a whole new set of moral dilemmas and obligations to worry about; for instance, trying to keep the language alive or popular enough worldwide, against tremendous pressure. But until English is thus threatened, teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language should concern themselves with teaching their language while also acknowledging, respecting, and nurturing other languages and the cultures those languages represent. (Kovacs, 2006, p. 33)

From the quotation mentioned above, it is visible that any language, however widespread or popular may be, can die out within a couple of years. However, this has happened in the past, when culture was not so influenced by and involved in the mass media. In that period, the only thing that really held language except for the people that spoke it, were books and documents that were written in it. In today's world that kind of thing would be much less likely to happen, since the entire popular culture is based upon English language. It sure is not impossible, but a

lot less likely than in the case of before mentioned Latin or Greek language that were as popular as English is today.

Wurm (2001) emphasizes that the loss of each language means a contraction, reduction and impoverishment of the sum total of human thought and knowledge as expressible throughout language.

## LEVELS OF DANGER

Crystal (2000) mentions that level of endangerment depends on factors as the rate of acquisition by the children, the attitude of the whole community to it, and the level of impact of other languages which may be threatening it. A common-sense classification recognizes three levels: languages are safe, endangered, or extinct. To this Michael Krauss adds a notion which has been widely taken up: languages which are no longer being learned as a mother tongue by children are said to be moribund (a term originating in the field of medicine). This captures the notion of a language well beyond the stage of 'mere' endangerment, because it lacks intergenerational transmission; the analogy is with a species unable to reproduce itself.

Crystal (2000) explains that some classifications go a stage further, distinguishing 'safe' and 'not so safe', as in this five-level system: viable languages: have population bases that are sufficiently large and thriving to mean that no threat to long-term survival is likely. Viable but small languages: have more than c. 1000 speakers, and are spoken in communities that are isolated or with a strong internal organization, and aware of the way their language is a marker of identity. Endangered languages: are spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility, but only in favourable circumstances and with a growth in community support. Nearly extinct languages: are thought to be beyond the possibility of survival, usually because they are spoken by just a few elderly people. Extinct languages are those where the last fluent speaker has died, and there is no sign of any revival.

Crystal (2000) further mentions another five-level classification used by Stephen Wurm which focuses on the weaker languages (and giving *moribund* a somewhat different emphasis). First category are potentially endangered languages: socially and economically disadvantaged, under heavy pressure from a larger language, and beginning to lose child speakers. Endangered languages: have few or no children learning the language, and the youngest good speakers are young adults. Seriously endangered languages: have the youngest good speakers age 50 or older. Moribund languages: have only a handful of good speakers left, mostly very old. Extinct languages: have no speakers left.

Endangered languages, Crystal (2000) mentions, come to be used progressively less and less throughout the community, with some of the functions they originally performed either dying out or gradually being supplanted by other languages. There are many cases in Africa, for example, where an indigenous language has come to be less used in educational, political, and other public situations, because its roles have been taken over by English, Swahili, or some other lingua franca. In one formulation, such languages have been called ‘deprived’. Some languages suffer discourse attrition so much that they end up surviving in just one domain. For example, Ge’ez (Ethiopia) as a language of liturgy.

#### ADVANTAGES OF SPREAD OF ENGLISH

Although the rapid spread of English language may seem too dominant and repressing towards other languages, there may be some positive sides to it as well. Barber (1993) mentions that in countries where English is used as a second language, it would develop independently of British or American English. Moreover, if this trend continues, local varieties may ultimately diverge widely from Standard World English, and become separate languages, just as the various Romance languages evolved from Latin. Even though, it is just a possibility and is too early to say how likely it is to happen, this might be the case one day.

Kushner (2003) suggests that it could be said that in some ways the globalization of English offers an opportunity for many people in many places to communicate when previously it was not the case, raising a question whether this might be a modest step towards a better world.

Fennel (2001) mentions the words of Baugh and Cable (1993) about the future of English:

How much pleasanter foreign travel would be if we did not have to contend with the inconveniences of a foreign travel. How much more readily we could conduct our business abroad if there were but a single language of trade. How greatly would the problem of the scientist and the scholar be simplified if there were one universal language of learning. And how many of the prejudices that divide nations would be avoided, how much the peace of the world would be promoted if there were free interchange of national thought and feeling – if only we could make effective the French proverb *Tout comprende, c’est tout pardonner*. (Baugh and Cable 1993, as cited in Fennell, 2001, p. 269)

Crystal (2003) mentions the similar thing saying that having a single “common language” for the entire world would offer the scintillating possibility of mutual understanding, and provide us with the opportunity to find new avenues for international cooperation. A common language also fosters a historical identity which mankind may have been on the verge of losing, and, according to Crystal, a common language even “promotes a climate of mutual respect.”



Crystal (2000) explains the ancient tradition, expressed in several mythologies but most famously in the Biblical story of Babel, that the proliferation of languages in the world was a penalty imposed on humanity, the reversal of which would restore some of its original perfectibility. In an ideal world, according to this view, there would be just one language, which would guarantee mutual understanding, enlightenment, and peace. However there are two intractable difficulties with this view. The first is the naivety of the conception that sharing a single language is a guarantor of mutual understanding and peace, a world of new alliances and global solidarity. The examples to the contrary are so numerous that it would be impracticable to list them. Suffice it to say that all the major monolingual countries of the world have had their civil wars. It is striking just how many of them are in countries which are predominantly monolingual – Vietnam, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Burundi (the latter two standing out in Africa in their lack of multilingualism). It is, in short, a total myth that the sharing of a single language brings peace, whichever language it might be.

Kushner (2003) tackles the issue of how expansive it is for the country to preserve equal linguistic opportunities in schools for everyone. Many millions of US citizens have non-English language backgrounds, and vast programs exist to meet their needs. The cost of curriculum development, preparation of materials, and teacher training for so many different languages is enormous. However, this problem would be non-existent if there was single world language.

Crystal (2000) also writes about this economic argument for having a single world language. He explains that having so many languages in the world is a waste of money, because individuals and firms have to spend so much time and energy on translating and interpreting. If there were just one language, so this argument goes, everyone could get on with the job of buying and selling without having to worry about these barriers. There is an element of truth in this: it does indeed cost a lot of money to cope with the diversity of the world's languages.

Fennell (2001) comments that it is easy to think this is one part of the 'we' that speak English natively, but this is not likely to happen in the near future. Although it might seem as a perfect solution, humans need diversity.

Crystal (2000) also writes about the need for diversity. He explains that the whole concept of the ecosystem is based on the insight that living entities exist through a network of interrelationships. To take just one definition: an ecosystem is 'the system formed by the interaction of all living organisms, plants, animals, bacteria, etc. with the physical and chemical factors of their environment'. In a holistic conception, the cultural as well as the biological domains are brought

into a mutually reinforcing relationship: the distinctive feature of human ecology is accordingly the attempt ‘to link the structure and organization of a human community to interactions with its localized environment’. And a major emphasis in this literature is that damage to any one of the elements in an ecosystem can result in unforeseen consequences for the system as a whole. In the language of ecology: the strongest ecosystems are those which are most diverse. As one author has put it, ‘The diversity of living things is apparently directly correlated with stability variety may be a necessity in the evolution of natural systems.’ And, in its application to human development, the point has often been made that our success in colonizing the planet has been due to our ability to develop diverse cultures which suit all kinds of environments. If diversity is a prerequisite for successful humanity, then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, for language lies at the heart of what it means to be human.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF SPREAD OF ENGLISH

Fennell (2001) explains that people mostly regard English as a language of economic opportunity, though this is not a universal feeling, since some consider English a tool for the destruction of linguistic and cultural diversity. A number of commentators have seen the spread of English not as an unqualified benefit, but rather as an opportunity reserved only for the selected few and a means to construct patterns of inequality both within countries and between the “west” and the “rest”.

Crystal (2003) also contemplates the possible negative repercussions of a single language becoming the global language. Perhaps a global language will cultivate an elite monolingual linguistic class, which will be more complacent and dismissive in their attitudes towards other languages. Such linguistic elites, whose mother tongue is the global language, would most likely be able to think and work more quickly in that language, and to manipulate it to their advantage at the expense of those who do not speak it that well, thus creating and maintaining the traditional inequalities between rich and poor, based on language.

Pattanayak (1981) has suggested that in India the use of English affords improved educational opportunities for only a very small minority. On the whole it accentuates the rift between the urban and the rural, the developed and the developing and the masses and the elite. He argues that since the English is almost exclusive language of science and technology, this actually prevents ordinary people from having access to and interacting with it. Because it prevents many languages sharing communication, it promotes ‘alienation, anomie, and blind spots in cultural perception’. Ultimately, Pattanayak argues, English causes other cultures to wither and die, and its use by the

elite to secure their position of privilege is just as much of an imposition on the people as colonialism ever was.

Kovacs (2008) adds that as a consequence of not seeing their own cultures validated and, at the same time, constantly hearing, seeing, and reading texts that celebrate “English” culture in their ESL/EFL classes, some young adolescents and teenagers in industrializing nations may decide to spend their pocket moneys on the products of the multibillion-dollar American entertainment industry, instead of supporting their local artists. In turn, local artists are deprived of much-needed cash to further of their country’s culture and traditions. Insufficient funds may mean the local artists are unable to explore and popularize their native cultures, and so future generations will be even less interested in seeing, hearing, or reading their own countries’ artists and the stories of their forefathers.

Kushner (2003) argues that maybe it does not matter much to the rest of the world if one language and its culture are lost, or two languages, or even a dozen. However, if we lose half the languages on the planet- even if most of them are very small, marginal languages, spoken by people in faraway places- we will compromise the health of human society generally.

In addition, Pattanayak (1981) mentions that the spread of global English has led to complacency about the use of English, and has encouraged people to be lazy about learning languages.

It is often thought that English language is easier to learn in comparison to many other world languages. However, Kovacs (2008) argues that in terms of learnability, any human language is by definition, learnable by children with normal mental faculties. A child exposed to a particular language in a “natural” linguistic and cultural environment, surrounded by speakers of that language as well as its cultural artifacts, will, in due time, automatically pick up that language’s phonetic system, will master its syntax and grammar, and will slowly but surely learn thousands upon thousands of that language’s words, phrases, and idioms. In other words, no single language is more inherently “learnable” than any other. Furthermore, since people in various parts of the world speak different languages as their mother tongue, there isn’t a single universally “easy” language to learn for everyone.

Ammon (2007) mentions the issue of English being the lingua franca in science (and also in other fields, such as economics) but differs from a lingua franca in the narrower sense in that it is, at the same time, the native language (or mother tongue) of a substantial subset of participants in the communicative process (the Anglophones). Roughly speaking, the three languages English, French and German were of similar importance for scientific communication at the beginning of

the 20th century, with their countries forming the three main centers of science. As a consequence of WW I, Nazism, WW II, and finally the fall of the Soviet Union, the US rose to the position of a leading world power with dominance in science and today forms the single dominant center and biggest market for science world-wide. As a consequence, native speakers have to invest less in language learning, i.e. to contribute less to the creation of the public good of a common lingua franca than non-native speakers. As they have a better mastery of the language, this enables them to produce linguistically more refined texts with superior impact on the recipients.

There are several domains in which languages play an important role, and thus contribute to their economic success such as tourism (with its emphasis on diversity), the arts, and local manufacturing industries. Local languages are seen to be valuable because they promote community cohesion and vitality, foster pride in a culture, and give a community (and thus a workforce) self-confidence.

Crystal (2000) states that learning only one language would be very depriving because languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge. Several proverbial expressions have captured the essential insight. From Slovakia: 'With each newly learned language you acquire a new soul.' From France: 'A man who knows two languages is worth two men.' The message is clearly that there is much to be learned and enjoyed in experiencing other languages. And the corollary is that we miss out on this experience if we do not avail ourselves of the opportunity to encounter at least one other language.

## THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH

The future of English is impossible to predict. However, Crystal (1997) has suggested a number of factors that might negatively influence the role of English as a global language in the future. Firstly, he mentions that some nations have already rejected English. In the 1950s Malaysia rejected English as a language of education in favor of Bahasa Malaysia, and there are many more countries where English does not find favour. Should this reaction to English develop into a world-wide trend, the future of English as a global language would be jeopardized. But this is an unlikely eventuality in the foreseeable future, if only because so many countries are dependent on the United States financially. Furthermore, if United States were to lose its position as an economic, political and cultural superpower, the use of English would become much less desirable in non-English-speaking countries. Fennell (2001) says that another possible threat to the global status of English is the global nature of English itself. As previously mentioned in the chapter *Disadvantages of the spread of English*, English comes into contact with other languages and

begins to develop its own distinctive character. These 'other Englishes', as they have come to be called, have prompted some linguists to predict that these varieties will soon diverge so markedly from each other that they will lose mutual intelligibility, thus causing the fragmentation of English across the globe. But those commentators have failed to take into consideration the centripetal force of standard written language across the globe and the fact that education in English is also conducted through the medium of standard, not local varieties.

## CONCLUSION

English language has gone through some remarkable transitions since it arrived in the British Isles in the fifth century. No one could foresee in the Middle Ages that English, not Latin, would be the language of learning and knowledge across the globe. No one could foresee in the eighteenth century, and even in the 1950s, that English, not French, would be the first language international communication. (Fennell 2001) The current situation is without precedent: the world has never had so many people in it, globalization processes have never been so marked; communication and transport technologies have never been so omnipresent; there has never been so much language contact; and no language has ever exercised so much international influence as English. (Crystal 2000) So we can say that English is the nearest thing to the global language and the concept of *Lingua Franca*. Its worldwide reach is much greater than that of Latin or Greek which might also be due to the wide presence of media and internet, all being mostly in English. However, its widespread presence is mostly because of the historical reasons and the political and economic power of English-speaking countries. If United States were to lose its position as an economic, political and cultural superpower, the power of English could become jeopardized. There are some advantages of English being the world language, such as easier and faster communication between people from different countries or cheaper ways of communicating (because there is no need for translators). However, there are many more disadvantages. Some of them are losing cultural heritage that comes with language, unequal opportunities for people whose mother tongue is not English and generally a view that English is a tool for the destruction of linguistic and cultural diversity. We can conclude that although the idea of having English as *Lingua Franca* does seem as a convenient solution, there are many issues that would be raised if that happened. After all, people and the world need diversity to survive.

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