

## **BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN: THE EFFECTS OF THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE**

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### **Resumen**

La expansión del inglés como lengua mundial presenta beneficios y riesgos. En los contextos donde un grupo de personas no comparten una primera lengua, una lengua internacional, como el inglés, podría hacer posible una comunicación efectiva. Por otra parte, debido a que la lengua inglesa es considerada frecuentemente como lengua mundial, otras lenguas distintas al inglés podrían ser percibidas como innecesarias, lo que a su vez aporta a la pérdida de lenguas, especialmente las minoritarias. El ensayo expone cómo la difusión del inglés ha presentado ventajas y desventajas para nuestra sociedad mundial, promoviendo la interconexión, un gran número de hablantes del inglés y la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua. Al mismo tiempo, sostiene que la expansión del inglés como lengua mundial podría contribuir a la muerte de otras lenguas ya que conduce a un menor interés en estas otras.

Palabras claves: lengua mundial, lengua global, idioma internacional, efecto inglés, lenguas minoritarias

### **Abstract**

The spread of English as a global language presents benefits and risks. In contexts where a group of people do not share the same first language, a global language, such as English, could make communication possible. On the other hand, because English is frequently considered the world language, other languages that are different than English could be perceived as unnecessary which, in turn, contributes to the loss of languages, especially minority languages. This essay presents how the

spread of English has had both benefits and detriments to our global society by promoting interconnectedness, a high number of English speakers, and teaching of English as a second language. At the same time, it argues that the spread of English as a global language could contribute to the death of other languages since it leads to a lower interest in them.

Keywords: world language, global language, international language, English effect, minority languages

A Puerto Rican whose first language is Spanish is going into the room 301 of a Convention Center. A person from China whose native language is Chinese is arriving from the opposite side of the same building. They will meet. Both the Puerto Rican and the Chinese men are important business persons. What language will they use to communicate between them? They will probably utilize English, an international or global language. According to Ammon (2010) an international language acts as the official language in several territories. English is referred to frequently as the global or world language by researchers and newspapers. One explanation is that the use of English is common in more countries than Spanish. For example, Ammon (2010) notes that although other languages such as Spanish can be treated as a world language, its use is more confined to America, Europe and some areas of Africa. Globalization of language has been defined as the procedure by which some languages extend out and become international languages at the time that languages die due to the absence of speakers (Steger, 2003). This paper will examine some of the effects of the spread of English as a global language in these ways: how it facilitates the sharing of cultural information and connections between countries; the high number of English speakers worldwide; the teaching of English as a second language; and, finally, how its use contributes to the loss of minority languages.

The influence of English as a global language allows us to transmit world knowledge and increase interconnectedness. For instance, English has been used to present international news. One example is Al Jazeera Media Network, which changed its Arabic language to the English language in the global news in 2005 to reach a wider audience (Carpenter, 2017). It shows that English is employed to inform people about relevant events that are happening in more countries. In addition, Crystal (2003) writes about a meeting where a Japanese organization will have dialogue with German and Saudi Arabian people. If all of them would speak in their Japanese, German and Arabic languages respectively, effective communication

would be impossible. Hence, English as a global language acts as a link between people who possess common interests, but do not share a common language. The spread of English as a world language creates a higher population of English speakers and promotes the teaching of English.

The English language is supported by many non-native speakers and countries. A higher number of English speakers and people teaching English as a second language represent other effects of the spread of English as a global language. Surprisingly, more people whose native language is other than English are the largest users of English language (Seargeant, 2012). This means that English is spoken more frequently by English non-natives. In addition, according to Seargeant (2012), about two billion people, including the native and non-native speakers, have basic or proficient knowledge of the English language. Even more, English as a foreign language has been implemented in nations like China, Africa, Australia, America and Asia (Ammon, 2010; Shin, 2015). This support in teaching English as a second language is a consequence of its influence and usage as an international language.

On the other hand, a negative effect of the spread of English as a global language could be the death of other languages. In a linguistic context, language death equates to the lack of speakers of a language (Crystal, 2003). Crystal (2003), of the Institute of Linguistics and the author of *Dictionary of Languages* (1998), remarks that a language dies every two weeks. In other words, valuable traditions, knowledge, and life perspectives are lost biweekly. This may result in a hazardous situation where minority languages can be perceived as "unnecessary" languages in the presence of an international language (Crystal, 2003). This also means that an international language may cause a lower interest in other languages because they might not seem as useful in a number of scenarios. In addition, it is known that since the presence of English as a world language has become increasingly dominant in more scientific contexts, then academic studies written in different languages could be disregarded (Crystal, 2003). This implies that knowledge which is written in languages other than English could be devalued. Loss of languages means misplacing of culture and diversity.

The spread of English as a global language has positive and negative effects. It is beneficial in the way that it allows people who do not share a native language to communicate. Therefore, information that is transmitted in contexts where effective communication would normally be impossible, due to an absence of a world language, is possible thanks to the use of English. Ultimately, this results in increased interconnectedness. Because of the spread of English as an international language, more countries have decided to teach English as a second language. Currently, English is spoken in some capacity by more non-native than native

speakers. However, a hazardous consequence of this is that minority languages can seem irrelevant in the presence of English as a global language. In this way, English as an international language could cause languages to die. Dead languages unfortunately result in a loss of knowledge and diversity. To take against some of the negative side effects such as the death of culture through language loss, it is necessary to know both sides of the use of English as a global language.

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