

ENGLISH: THE BIRTH OF A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

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ENGLISH: THE BIRTH OF A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my parents for allowing me to adventure. I wouldn't be half the man I am today without them.

And I suppose my friends are alright too.

Semper Fidelis

Abstract

As we develop increasingly efficient modes of communication the number of languages of the world declines. As the overall number of languages decreases, a few tongues have become dominant in their respective regions with one spanning the entire globe: English. This process has sped up in the last few centuries and will grow ever faster as the internet and international business spread into previously secluded regions. As the global market and internet are largely dominated by English, it also claims the largest share of contemporary second-language learning throughout the world. As of now there are more people who speak English as a second language than those who learned it as their first. This presents a puzzling question: If other languages spread earlier and further than English, how did it become the current global lingua franca?

This study will analyze some of those competing colonial languages, how they spread, and their respective levels of success in regard to propagation. Of particular importance will be the geographic aspect of language spread instead of the size of a particular language's population. With that, this thesis will show that a language—English in particular—will spread peacefully and rapidly if proficiency offers access to the global system.

“If we are not cautious about the way English is progressing it may kill most other languages.”

–French linguist Claude Hagège, 1998

Introduction

In the early 1990s, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization stated that of the earth’s 6,000 plus actively spoken languages more than half will cease to be used by the end of this century.¹ In the 20 years since that prediction was made the process of language replacement has increased exponentially largely due to ease of access to information and the spread of international business. Replacement, in this context, does not necessarily involve a new language wholly replacing a person’s original language. Replacement can simply mean the acquisition of a new language for use in certain situations, like speaking one language in a professional setting, while using one’s mother tongue in the household and social settings as with immigrants. The process and necessity of language acquisition is changing, however. Due to the internet and international business this form of bilingualism is growing while no longer requiring one to leave their own country. But, before analysis of the current global language situation can be offered, we must first analyze how and why languages spread.

Linguist Nicholas Ostler states that traditionally, language spread occurred two ways “...’organically’ and those that have been put together through the processes of ‘merger and acquisition’.” Organic growth generally involves population growth within

¹ “Endangered Languages,” *UNESCO*, accessed 15 September, 2012, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages>.

its area of origin such as Mandarin Chinese, whereas “merger and acquisition” occurs over “discontinuous areas of the world, principally through seaborne invasion and settlement.”² Of today’s top ten most widely-spoken languages, at least six (English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish) were spread through various forms of conquest. However, the contemporary global community demonstrates a much more Darwinian nature in regard to language acquisition and propagation. As organic growth, by Ostler’s definition, rarely involves language replacement this paper will not examine it in great detail. However, this paper will refer to “organic” growth in the Darwinian sense in that a useful language will spread and grow whereas those that offer no advantage will struggle to survive.

The process of one language replacing another tended to begin with a military conquest, the search for gold and glory and the ensuing colonialization, and natural disasters like the bubonic plague. Languages themselves also shift and change with time. When populations who speak the same language are separated geographically their versions of that language slowly change. From simple accentual differences come new words and structures. Eventually they are wholly unique languages. Latin, long considered a “dead” language, is a perfect example of this concept with over 660 million speakers of its derivatives today. However, the number of languages is drastically decreasing as the world’s population booms. The top twelve languages, as measured by the number of speakers, account for 50% of the world’s population.³ With that, people who speak multiple languages, even if they are highly-specific forms of a language like

² Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* (Great Britain: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005) 527-528.

³ Ostler, “Empires,” 526-527.

“Business English or “Aviation English” (both will be discussed later), are difficult to track as there are no official processes that can measure language acquisition or proficiency.⁴

We can offer some analysis of the effects of international business and modern technology and the increasing rate of language learning—and in some cases, loss. In today’s post-colonial world, instant global communication allows for relatively simple language acquisition and fluency in another language often offers a material advantage.

The successful retention and propagation of the new language depends on a number of factors that are generally uncontrollable. While forcefully imposing a new language onto a people can be effective, the true marker for a language’s success is the people’s willingness to learn that language, particularly when they are not forced. Specifically, a language will spread and truly replace others if learning the new language offers an advantage over one’s mother tongue. An American who knows Mandarin or Arabic can easily find a job in the business or political world while knowing French opens fewer opportunities.⁵ Knowing English certainly helps a person from a non-English-speaking country in a job hunt. In many cases, knowledge of English is a requirement to legally perform a job. Indeed, in the contemporary international world, learning English is viewed “less as [a] symbol of colonial domination and more as a crucial key for access to the global system.”⁶

⁴ Crystal, David, “English Worldwide,” *Cambridge Books Online*, accessed 20 October 2012, <http://ebooks.cambridge.org/chapter.jsf?bid=CBO9780511791154&cid=CBO9780511791154A019>. 423-425.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Applications Q&A,” *Office of Language Services*, accessed 19 October 2012, http://languageservices.state.gov/content.asp?Content_id=174&menu_id=108#Q11.

⁶ Ostler, “Empires,” 532.

The following will examine a few major languages, how they grew, and why they may or may not have successfully replaced indigenous languages. It will discuss why some failed to stay firmly rooted in their new lands and eventually lost ground and how some continued to spread without pressure from their original speakers. It will discuss the success of a language as a measurement of a population's willingness to adopt it and through a language's geographic spread because analyzing a language simply by its number of speakers can be misleading. Finally, it will examine how English became the world's first truly global language and why it is poised to retain that title.

Arabic

Arabic is believed to have originated in modern day Saudi Arabia with its earliest signs of life being recorded in the 4th century BC.⁷ Its earliest speakers were most likely Bedouin tribes who inhabited the Arabian deserts which were largely out of reach of the Roman/Byzantine empires. However, Arabic wouldn't stay in the periphery for long and today it is the official or co-official language of 23 countries.⁸

Within 25 years of the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632, Arabic-speaking groups moved east into Persia and north into Armenia and Azerbaijan. During the next decade, they had moved west through Egypt and into Tunisia. “Within two generations Arabic had become the medium of worship and government in a continuous band from” Morocco to Pakistan, commonly known today as “The Middle East.”



Figure 1 Arabic Today⁹

⁷ Ostler, “Empires,” 104.

⁸ Bassiouney, Reem. *Arabic sociolinguistics: Topics in Diglossia, Gender, Identity, and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2009) 15.

⁹ “About the Arab World,” *US-Arab Chamber of Commerce*, retrieved from usarab.org/arab-world/index.

The puzzling aspect of the Arab expansion is why it occurred at all. While historians are not sure as to why this expansion occurred, it is generally believed that the tremendous power vacuum left by the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west and the war-weakened Persian state in the east presented a fortuitous opportunity to the coming of age Arabs. However, the advances were not coordinated and united; they tended to be series of raids that simply continued to spread outward through the sparsely populated desert. The deserts of northern Africa and west Asia forced populations to cluster, generally around food and water sources, which allowed the Arab forces to quickly cover huge amounts of land as they were simply traveling from one town to the next with virtually no resistance along the way.¹⁰

While Arabic struggled with the Persians, Berbers, and Turks in West Asia and North Africa, it began to creep south down the eastern coast of Africa well before the 10th century. Namely through trade, which will prove to be of paramount importance to language spread, Arabic made its way as far south as Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. While Arabic is still spoken on the coasts of eastern Africa, its roots are clearly visible in other aspects of African lives. The Bantu language Swahili is a lingua franca spoken by over 40 million people in eastern Africa. Despite being learned as a second language later in life by roughly 90% of its speakers, it is the official language of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, the Comoros and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is widely spoken throughout their neighboring countries. Swahili shows a strong Arabic influence as up to 50% of its vocabulary is Arabic in origin¹¹ and even the word “Swahili” is derived from

¹⁰ Ostler, “Empires,” 105.

¹¹ Nurse, Derek, Spear Thomas. *The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society, 800-1500* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 15.

the Arabic word “sawahil” which means “coast”. While Arabic was lending itself to other languages, it was also developing within itself.¹²

Currently, there are a number of dialects of Arabic but this is not a unique occurrence. While every major language has numerous dialects, they are generally not unique enough to prevent communication. As Arabic speakers were spread across a vast region in a time of less-than-instant travel and communication, different accents slowly changed into different words and different words into different structures as a whole (while this explanation is an over-simplification of this process, it is used here for the sake of brevity). Indeed, a person from Morocco may be wholly unintelligible to a person from the Persian Gulf region despite speaking the “same” language. Like any other language, Arabic has multiple forms which can be accessed seamlessly depending on the context of one’s current social situation. Simply put, this is similar to speaking in a familiar and informal manner with a close friend as opposed to speaking “properly” in a professional or academic setting. However, in some cases two speakers of “Arabic” who cannot speak to each other in their usual tongue will often switch to the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), if known, and Qur’anic Arabic as a last resort. This is a classic case of “diglossia” where two varieties of the same language coexist within the same population.¹³ Modern Standard Arabic is rarely one’s first language. The average Arabic speaker will learn the colloquial dialect appropriate for their city or region and, later in life, pick up MSA in an educational setting. While MSA is spreading, it is doing so very slowly as the vast differences between it and colloquial Arabic can delay the process of learning. Many Arabic speakers can understand MSA due to its use as the language of

¹² Ostler, “Empires,” 105.

¹³ Bassiouney, “Arabic Sociolinguistics”, 10.

television programs and news broadcasts, but speaking with intricate details and contextual ideas can often be out of reach as proficiency in the dialect is not yet uniform.¹⁴

This disunity and lack of conformity can weaken a language's ability to spread and propagate itself. While English tends to be broken into a few major categories (British Isles, American, Singaporean, Australian, etc.) these dialects, while having somewhat different vocabularies and structures, are generally easy to comprehend by the others. This is largely due to the amount of time and technological change that has occurred since they were planted across the globe. As English covers more land geographically than does Arabic, it could be expected that there is also a wider variety of dialects. But, the spread of English took place within the last five hundred years and was aided by relatively rapid transportation and communication systems. This helped keep widely dispersed groups in somewhat constant contact which mitigated the risk of change within the language itself. The Arab tribesmen who spread outward from Saudi Arabia in the first millennium had no such technological advantage and their spread occurred over a period that was twice as long as that of the Latin-based languages and English.

¹⁴ Bassiouney, "Arabic Sociolinguistics", 15.

Spanish

The year 1492 marks a key divide in language spread.¹⁵ Previous to 1492 language spread generally took place over land routes which allowed for the drawing of a clearly contiguous map of a nation's colonial lands. After 1492 the oceans opened new opportunities and started a race, mainly amongst Europeans, to carve up and subjugate everything within their suddenly widened reach. Battles occasionally erupted between colonizers and treaties were signed in an effort to maintain peace in the new lands as they often bordered one another in distant regions.

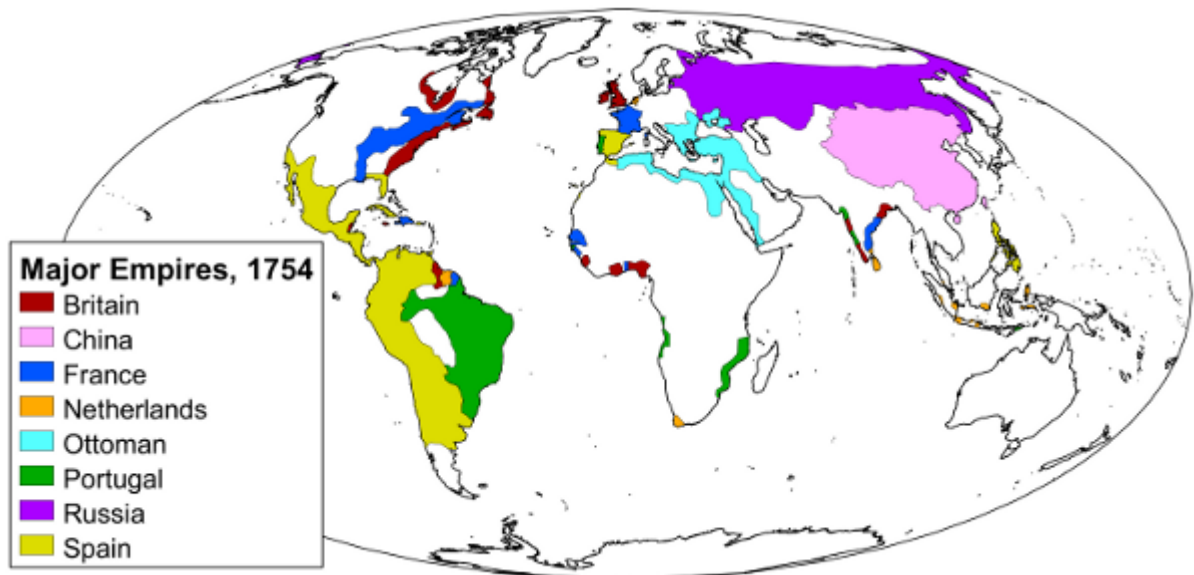


Figure 2 The World's Colonies in 1754¹⁶

¹⁵ Ostler, "Empires," 334.

¹⁶ "Colonialism," retrieved from <http://debitage.net/humangeography/colonialism.html>.

Often, the inhabitants and their cultures were an afterthought in which only academics and missionaries were interested. With that, the languages of indigenous populations could and did die for a multitude of reasons. Much of the native population was killed while actively resisting the European explorers and conquerors but the vast majority perished from the unintentional introduction of new diseases against which no defenses could be constructed. This was particularly the case in South and Central America after the Spanish and Portuguese brought small pox, typhus, influenza, measles, and diphtheria. The speed at which these ailments traveled easily outpaced the modern sailing techniques and a competitive desire for gold and glory of the explorers. Nicholas Ostler states:

The Spanish were not notably humane conquerors, but they had no interest in genocide. From the first days in Hispaniola, they had hoped to exploit the labour of the natives, and for this alone they were dismayed at the sudden and disastrous collapse in their numbers. Yet everywhere, the fact that the previous population was melting away would have materially aided the long-term spread of the conquerors' language, changing the balance in numbers by subtracting predominantly from the speaker communities of the indigenous languages.¹⁷

During the ensuing centuries, Spanish linguists led by the Count of Viñaza documented 493 distinct languages in the Spanish-occupied Americas. As we know now, there were roughly two thousand distinct languages spoken throughout the Americas as a whole with about 350 originating from Central Mexico.¹⁸ To efficiently manage an empire or colony, particularly when it is an ocean away, communication must be as simple and efficient as possible. These hundreds of languages could have offered more of a

¹⁷ Ostler, "Empires," 348.

¹⁸ Ostler, "Empires," 348.

hindrance for the conquistadors had another group—an indigenous one—not unintentionally aided their conquest.

Mexico, as we know it today, had been inhabited by aggressive expansionists for centuries before Europeans arrived. Throughout the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, the Aztec people conquered about 100,000 square kilometers of what is today Central Mexico. As they conquered new territory and populations they burned the writings of these peoples' history in an effort to "erase memories of a pre-Aztec past."¹⁹ Aztec leaders also imposed a required tribute from each group and placed officials in each city as administrators. While the Aztecs never replaced the languages of those they conquered, their own language Nahuatl became a sort of lingua franca. This process increased the ease with which the Spanish conquered Central Mexico as the foundations of many Central Mexican languages were already shaken and two speakers of Nahuatl were among the group who interacted with Cortés upon his landing in Mexico.²⁰ The Spaniard's timing proved unlucky for the Aztecs as their work served only to till the fields in which Spanish would grow.

In South America, the process of Spanish replacing many of the indigenous languages was less organized but equally effective. Less is known about the spread of the Mayans than that of the Incas but each group is believed to be substantially more peaceful than the Aztecs. The Incas spread in a somewhat more diplomatic fashion throughout the west coast of modern South America from Colombia to Chile. They negotiated with other groups and often absorbed them through treaties and arranged

¹⁹ Ostler, "Empires," 354.

²⁰ Ostler, "Empires," 355.

marriages.²¹ While there was no single lingua franca throughout the Incan empire, there were two or three languages which were somewhat predominant. This decentralized nature would eventually assist the spread of Spanish as no major barriers stood in its way. Whereas the Aztecs provided the framework upon which the Spanish would build, the decentralized nature of South America simply offered a myriad of weaker groups for conquest.²²

The propagation of Spanish throughout the Americas succeeded for multiple reasons. The Spanish would have been far outnumbered by the indigenous population had disease not severely thinned the population of native-language-speakers. With that, the technological advantage enjoyed by the Europeans allowed them to quickly subjugate the various indigenous groups while taking advantage of the already in-place social structures which allowed for relatively simple governance. As Spanish offered itself as a lingua franca amongst the hundreds of unique languages due to the dispersion of Spanish-speaking colonizers, it spread throughout the rapidly changing 16th and 17th centuries and is currently spoken throughout much of North and South America.

²¹ Ostler, "Empires," 357.

²² Ostler, "Empires," 357-364.

French

The journey of French is no less interesting than that of Spanish but it may be considered somewhat less successful in the long run. French, in a form close to what we know today, was decreed the official language of France in 1539 by King François I. Long before that, however, an early form of the language had spread across the English Channel after the Norman invasion of France which culminated in Hastings in 1066.²³ In the early second millennium, the amorphous boundaries of Western Europe allowed for much language migration. Due to France's political and religious strife, populations often moved to neighboring Belgium and Switzerland.²⁴ The effects of this migration are evident today as a co-official language of both nations is still French.

Though French was spread by the traditional imperialistic methods, it also enjoyed a status as a language of good taste and culture. For centuries France had the largest population and the most wealth in Europe which was largely due to its agricultural success. This wealth translated into relatively lavish lifestyles which were the envy of much of Europe. French also became the language of international business as Paris was not only the epicenter of European money but its location was ideal as it was essentially the center of Western Europe geographically.

²³ Ostler, "Empires," 460.

²⁴ Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2002) 37.

The height of the French culture's prestige roughly coincided with the reigns of Louis XIII and XIV (1610-1715). The crown undertook an effort during this period to ascertain why French culture was superior to those which failed to experience the same successes. The consensus was that it was the French language itself must be superior and the success of the French culture was a direct result. The French hoped to protect and cultivate this advantage by establishing the Académie Française 1635. The Académie's purpose was "to give certain rules to our language and to render it pure, eloquent and capable of treating the arts and sciences."²⁵ The creation of a government sponsored cabinet whose sole purpose was to protect and define a language "was a new step in language consciousness".²⁶ Indeed, the Académie Française still enjoys government sponsorship and a respectable level of influence. However, the belief in cultural superiority would lead to a different colonial strategy than that of the Spanish and the British and a wholly different, if not simply unsuccessful, outcome.

The peaceful spread of French was outmatched by its colonial expansion in the early 18th through 20th centuries. In fact, France would eventually enjoy the second largest colonial empire in the world on two occasions only to be surpassed by Spain—as previously discussed—and Great Britain which will be discussed in the next chapter.

French colonialism was late in reaching the Americas but their north to south approach is evident. Over seven million Canadians still speak French despite Canada's status as a British commonwealth.²⁷ This fiercely proud population, generally united

²⁵ Ostler, "Empires," 409.

²⁶ Ostler, "Empires," 409.

²⁷ CIA World Factbook, *Canada*, accessed 10 November, 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ca.html>.

only by their common language, has long called for Quebec to secede and establish a sovereign, French-speaking nation.²⁸ Elsewhere in the Americas, French has had a substantial but waning influence, particularly in Louisiana and the Caribbean. The huge French holdings simply named “Louisiana” stretched from modern day Louisiana to Montana and would eventually amount to about one third of the continental United States. However, as Louisiana was not more densely occupied, the influence of the French language is only evident in the southernmost parishes of Louisiana where the French established Baton Rouge and New Orleans as a military post and major port respectively.²⁹ The French Caribbean, on the other hand, is a string of islands settled largely as sugar plantations and ports to facilitate the slave trade remain heavily influenced by the French language. Today, four Caribbean islands remain officially under French rule: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Martin, and Saint-Barthélemy but other island nations are still heavily influenced by the French language: French Guiana, Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Haiti.³⁰ In all of these, French is the official administrative language but, more often than not, the people speak a French creole that includes influences from various African languages and English.

The second period of French expansion coincided with the reestablishment of the monarchy in 1815 (It can be argued that Napoleon was an expansionist as he invaded well into Eastern Europe, but from a linguistic perspective he spread nothing). In an effort to combat piracy in the Mediterranean, France invaded the pirates’ strongholds in

²⁸ Lucien Bouchard, Premier of Quebec “Positions De Quebec Dans Les Domaines Constitutionnel et Intergouvernemental de 1936 Mars 2001,” accessed 15 October, 2012, <http://www.saic.gouv.qc.ca/publications/Positions/index.pdf>.

²⁹ Bradley G. Bond, *French Colonial Louisiana and The Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2005), 43.

³⁰ CIA World Factbook, *French Guiana, Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Haiti*, accessed 22 November, 2012, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_cam.html.

Algeria and maintained it as a colony until conceding it in 1962 due to a popular uprising.³¹ While the Algerian offensive was arguably the most aggressive action France would take in Africa, it would not be the last. “The Scramble for Africa”, during which various European nations carved up Africa for colonial rights with little regard to the African population, saw France gain a large number of land holdings. While French influence continued to grow in Algeria, in the 1840s France colonized Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, and Gabon. Added to this from 1876 to 1885 was “French Equatorial Africa” from which (the remainder of) Gabon, the Congo, the Central African Republic, and Chad were to be carved. Then, from 1883 to 1894 France gained control of “French West Africa” which contained the Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Benin along with the remainder of modern Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. The number of African nations under francophone control would again swell after WWI when Cameroon and Togo were placed under French mandate while Rwanda and Burundi were allocated to Belgium.³² Eventually, the decline of European colonialism post-WWII and the costly Algerian revolution would end France’s official involvement in Africa. Despite the exit of the Europeans, they left behind a linguistic footprint. When Africans themselves regained power the ruling-elite often maintained their ex-colonial languages as a mark of “social distinction and the maintenance of power at the expense of the masses who, in most cases, did not have the required proficiency or sophistication in its use.”³³ The languages, particularly French, English, and Portuguese, were viewed as a status symbol and were believed to convey a sense of modernization upon those who spoke the colonial

³¹ Ostler, “Empires,” 416.

³² Ostler, “Empires,” 418.

³³ Herman M. Batibo, *Language Decline and Death in Africa: Causes, Consequences and Challenges*, (Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd. 2005) 20.

tongues. However, English has begun to edge out the other European tongues “due to [its] association with modernity, technological advancement, information flow and internationality.”³⁴ Indeed, the former president of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, hoped to promote Swahili as the lingua franca of his linguistically-diverse nation but fears of reducing the people’s proficiency in English made him hesitant. In 1984 he publicly acknowledged the importance of enacting policy that fosters international interaction by stating that “English is the [Swahili] of the world.”³⁵

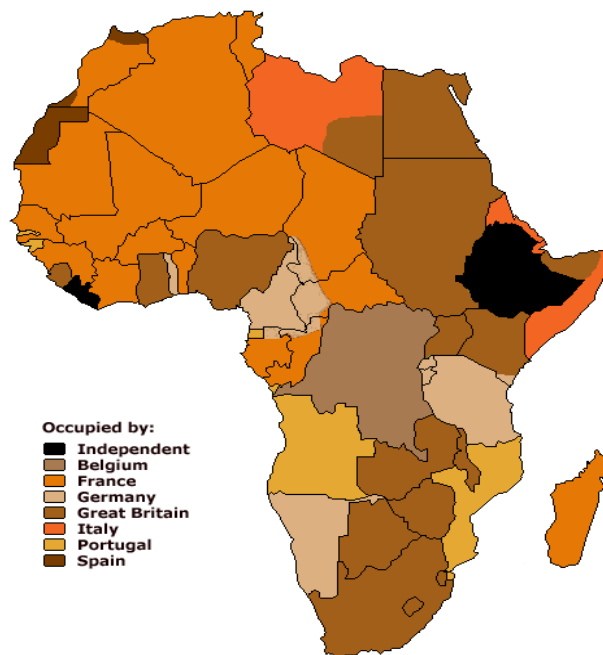


Figure 3 Colonized Africa³⁶

While much of Africa was recently under francophone control, and there is still a substantial number of French-speakers, why does the language show signs of decline?

³⁴ Batibo, “Language Decline,” 20.

³⁵ Batibo, “Language Decline,” 21.

³⁶ “Colonized Africa,” retrieved from hoffstrizz.typepad.com/.a/6a0128773aba66970c01347faf4ebb970c.

French still exhibits a substantial influence on the population of western Africa but many Africans are shifting in the direction of English whereas French-speaking Canadians are extremely dedicated to preserving their language.³⁷ The decline of French in Africa and protection of it in Canada is especially puzzling because Canada lacks any official tie with France whereas the African colonies were governed by the French and the Francophone Belgians.

The longevity of a colonial language depends largely on the manner in which it is used in the colony and the population itself. French rarely pervaded into the average citizen's day-to-day life in Africa. The language was widely used in administrative settings and, as stated above, the governing classes did not feel a need to impose the language on the people. Therefore, even where French was offered in an educational setting, it was spread too thin and failed to take root among the common African population which prevented any effective propagation of the language. Algeria is the exception to this generality as the largely Muslim population resisted the colonizers more and, therefore, required a much larger French presence on the ground which, in turn, led to a broader spread of the language.³⁸ The other languages discussed here required a certain level of "natural" spread—generally immigration/emigration or adoption for material advantage—to accompany the state-sponsored spread in order to take root and grow. In later chapters English will demonstrate this natural growth perfectly. In regard to French, the church, business owners, and trappers and traders of French Canada are prime examples. They willfully moved to the Americas to establish a new life, for whatever reason, and did just that. They lived in the Americas, had families, and created

³⁷ Batibo, "Language Decline," 20.

³⁸ Ostler, "Empires," 419.

communities of people with similar backgrounds and a shared language. In Africa, and eventually French Indo-China, mass immigration was non-existent. Ostler believes this to be the result of French professionalism. "A typical Frenchman abroad remained a military man, a doctor, a missionary or a teacher."³⁹ In short, they were rarely merchants or immigrants in search of a better life like the immigrants from Great Britain during this period

Offering a contemporary analysis of French's decline in Africa, statistics assembled by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie presents a rough census of populations of French-speakers by nation. These statistics show that the number of francophones in Africa and Canada are drastically different but the percentages of the population who speak French, with any proficiency, are somewhat similar. Of the African nations with a sizeable French-speaking population, the percentages of said population range from 3.2% in Egypt to 80% in Gabon with the average of the rest of the nations being around 30%. Roughly 35% of Canada's population speaks French with some proficiency.⁴⁰ The key to Canadians protecting the language and Africans slowly discarding it again involves material advantage. While Canadians generally enjoy the lives of the average "first-world" citizens, many Africans do not. Learning a global language can offer a means of economic mobility and that language is increasingly becoming English.⁴¹ Indeed, many African parents are showing a general apathy towards

³⁹ Ostler, "Empire," 419.

⁴⁰ Christian Valintin Et al, "La Francophonie Dans le Monde 2006-2007," *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, 17.

⁴¹ Batibo, "Language Decline," 20-22.

the propagation of their own mother-tongues amongst their children “as these languages are not associated with social advancement, job opportunities or the wider world.”⁴²

⁴² Batibo, “Language Decline,” 21-22.

English

With the Roman Empire in shambles in the 5th and 6th centuries AD, the British Isles were invaded first by Germanic tribes from the western coast of continental Europe and then later Norseman and Vikings from the northern coasts of Europe. In spite of their Latin-speaking rulers the majority of Britain's population spoke Celtic. While their Celtic showed a clear Latin influence, it was certainly the language of the people.⁴³ In the waning years of the Roman Empire tremendous amounts of societal change occurred. Latin's influence in Italy, Spain, and France is clearly evident. And while Celtic and Latin exerted some influence on English, why did it develop into a wholly unique language separate from their derivatives?

Historians can only theorize as to the reasons why Latin and Celtic faltered in England but a study done by David Key may provide a legitimate hypothesis as to why they failed to dominate English. When the Germanic invaders struck out for England they took the most direct routes which landed them on its eastern and southeastern seaboard (for the sake of brevity, the geographic areas discussed will be referred to using the contemporary names of the British Isles with "Britain" being the whole of the kingdom). They brought with them multiple West Germanic languages, namely Frisian, which is the closest living relative of English in its oldest form. Today, spoken Frisian, still used in the northern region of the Netherlands called Friesland, is strikingly similar

⁴³ Ostler, "Empires," 311.

to English and some historians postulate that if the Normans opted to stay in France instead of invading in 1066 we would be speaking a somewhat accented version of Frisian.⁴⁴ From the southeastern seaboard they established a beachhead and within 250 years they conquered much of England. Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, however, were not yet subjugated by the end of the 7th century which allowed Celtic a safe haven.⁴⁵ This influence is clearly evident as the Gaelic-based languages of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and even Breton in France are all members of the Celtic family.⁴⁶ Little language transference took place, however. The invaders traditionally lived in loosely connected communities away from the densely populated Roman cities. This simple lifestyle choice may have placed English's early ancestor in a prime position to claim Britain and, eventually, much of the entire world.

When the Germanic invaders settled in England trade with the Roman Empire ceased because they had long been at war. Wales, however, maintained trade with the empire and, in turn, likely brought the bubonic plague to Britain from the Mediterranean around 550 AD. This may have proven fortunate for the English language. As the plague swept through the tightly packed Romanesque cities of Britain it laid to waste huge portions of the population—the *Latin and Celtic-speaking population*.⁴⁷ The invaders were left relatively unscathed due to their settling habits. The huge blow to the Celtic-speaking population simply removed a major (arguably the biggest) hurdle in language transition: the people themselves. With the population of Britons drastically

⁴⁴ Melvyn Bragg, *Adventure of English* (Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003), 3.

⁴⁵ Ostler, "Empires," 313.

⁴⁶ Bragg, "Adventure of English," 2.

⁴⁷ Ostler, "Empires," 313.

declining and the invaders' numbers growing from increased settling, the likelihood of Latin and Celtic's survival decreased daily.

There may be hard evidence to support this theory as well. A study on the genetics of modern Englishmen and Welshmen shows that the two populations are quite distinct despite being separated by no natural border. The average English male has a common origin of 50 to 100 percent with that of their across the channel Frisian counterparts.⁴⁸ Much in the same manner as the indigenous languages in the Americas, this mass-replacement likely could not have happened without the help of an epidemic.

The first invaders would not rule the whole of modern Great Britain, however. Other Germanic groups, namely Vikings from Scandinavia made inroads into England from the opposite side of the island than did their largely Frisian counterparts. Coming south and east from the northern and western coasts of England, the Germanic invaders divided Britain and eventually signed an official treaty in 886 that solidified the division. This agreement would be broken less than 150 years later when the Norsemen invaded the whole of Britain from the north and defeated the original conquering tribes. By this point in history, English had begun to develop into its own language which we know as "Old English". Its Frisian foundations, however, were separated by about twenty generations from the Norse languages so while they were two unique tongues, there was a level of understanding and similarity that, with time, lent itself to a melding of the two. If an object or a concept needed a name it was often simply borrowed from one of the nearby languages and shaped to fit English's structure. In fact, about 7% of English's

⁴⁸ Michael E. Weale, Deborah A. Weiss, Rolf F. Jager, Neil Bradman, and Mark G. Thomas, "Y Chromosome Evidence for Anglo-Saxon Mass Migration," *Oxford Journal of Molecular Biology and Evolution* 19, no. 7 (2002): 1008-1019.

basic vocabulary (namely some verbs and third-person pronouns) are Norse in origin.⁴⁹ Combining that with its Frisian base and a touch of Celtic and Latin, English became a powerful lingua franca on a small island with multiple populations that spoke different languages.⁵⁰ Having already shown itself to be adept at absorbing and adapting other languages to its needs, English would soon face its next challenge from across the English Channel: French.

In 1066 Norman French invaders defeated the English royalty at the Battle of Hastings. By quickly gaining control of the crown, the Norman invaders almost instantly switched the official language of England to French. Everything from official legal proceedings to printed literature switched to French (or remained Latin as was the case with intellectual works). However, Norman France's hierarchical society was extremely rigid and the ability for one to drastically alter his or her place in that hierarchy was extremely limited. This created a distance between the French-speaking ruling elite and the English-speaking commoners, particularly due to the fact that French was never forced upon them. The distance between the two classes persisted for the next few centuries even as the crown fought to subjugate the rest of Britain in Scotland, Wales, and eventually Ireland.⁵¹

The decline of French in England would eventually be caused by the French themselves. Many of the Norman royalty had holdings in France *and* in England. England, however, never fell under the French crown; it was ruled autonomously by the invaders of French origin which made the French crown uneasy. In 1204 King Philip II

⁴⁹ Ostler, "Empires," 314.

⁵⁰ Bragg, "Adventure of English," 30-31.

⁵¹ Ostler, "Empires," 461.

of France defeated the Norman King John in battle thereby gaining control of what we know today as Normandy. This put the Norman-English nobility in a difficult situation as they could no longer hold property on both sides of the English Channel while simultaneously swearing allegiance to both often-warring kings. Therefore, those who stayed in England became decidedly English. As they spoke the minority language, the French-speaking ruling class eventually lost their language to the tongue of the people. The eventual death of French in England was hastened by yet another outbreak of the plague, this time the “Black Death” in 1348. Unlike the first bubonic plague outbreak in the 6th century, the nobility lived in close proximity to the rest of the population in the cities which made them more susceptible to the illness than were their country-dwelling predecessors. As England’s population was halved, the traditional feudal system was disrupted due to a lack of labor while the nobility suffered substantial losses as well. This allowed English—the language of the people—to undercut the French stronghold on governmental affairs and, over time, led to the nobility’s shift to English as their day-to-day language.⁵² While French never fully planted itself in the population of England, it did leave a massive footprint in the English language.

As England was newly “freed” from its French colonizers, English never would be. It is estimated that English absorbed roughly ten thousand French words in the three centuries of Norman rule. Many of these foreign words involved regulation and control. Vocabularies regarding war, social order, and law were co-opted by English as these were the basis of French rule. Influence spread beyond order, however, as much of the French culture also found its way into our language with almost five hundred words

⁵² Ostler, “Empires,” 466-468.

involving food and culinary arts alone. *Pork, sausage, bacon, fruit, biscuit, baguette, sugar, and cream* are all Anglicized forms of their French counterparts. With those, English has simply adopted hundreds of French phrases without drastically altering their spelling or pronunciation such as: *à la carte, à la mode, au jus, crème brûlée, faux pas, hors d'œuvre*.⁵³

From 1204 to the late 16th century English continued to develop within itself while further spreading throughout Britain. However, the language was spoken nowhere but within the Isles themselves. This would change in 1584 when English made its first expansionary move to the Americas.⁵⁴ Soon, English colonies would spread across the globe in the most widespread expansion the world has ever seen. This expansion is clearly evident today as roughly 1.5 billion people speak English with varying proficiencies.⁵⁵ Again, why was English more successful at its own propagation and spread than the previously-discussed languages? Of course, historical context has shown that languages have grown and faded and English may simply be the next in line, however, this may not be the case given its place in modern society. Its historical success relied on a variety of reasons. Nicholas Ostler states:

The motives for British settlements over three centuries were various: the glory of the realm, gains from piracy, founding new utopias, wealth from agriculture or mining, trade, personal glory, a stirring duty to spread the gospel, global strategy, windfall spoils from military victories, even in the end some sense of obligation to educate the native inhabitants. In this, they were unlike their greatest predecessors, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch and the French, who were moved by just one or a few of these. The British were in this sense the universal exponents of European

⁵³ Bragg, "Adventure of English," 37.

⁵⁴ Ostler, "Empires," 466-468.

⁵⁵ David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

imperialism.⁵⁶

Before continuing, it is important to note the fortuitous geography enjoyed by England (and later, North America). Scotland and Wales aside, England shares no land border with any nation. With the English Channel and North Sea acting as “moats” of sorts, Britain primarily focused on a navy for its security. A land army is essential, but with a powerful navy that need is mitigated when invaders cannot simply walk across your border. This focus on naval power and development lent itself to not only an expansion of colonies, but also of business, both private and royal. Napoleon himself described the English as being a “nation of shopkeepers” and they often lived up to this reputation.⁵⁷ Indeed, the British crown made the establishment and protection of British economic interests paramount in the formation of foreign policy. Whether those interests were piracy or legitimate trade, the crown paid particular interest to the development of those sources of income.⁵⁸

When Britain decided to enter the world of colonization it jumped in with both feet. The small island nation experienced three distinct phases of colonialization: The First British Empire (1583-1783), The Second British Empire (1783-1815), and what has been called The British Imperial Century or Pax Britannica (1815-1914).⁵⁹ The First British Empire coincided with the first establishment of colonies in the Americas and the ensuing American Revolution. During this two-century period England would wage war with the Dutch and the French over trade rights and land in the Americas and Asia, profit

⁵⁶ Ostler, “Empires,” 478.

⁵⁷ Ostler, “Empires,” 419.

⁵⁸ Ostler, “Empires,” 478-479.

⁵⁹ Canny, Nicholas, *The Origins of Empire, The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume I*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 12.

tremendously from the slave trade in the Americas and Caribbean, and establish the hugely influential East India Trading Company. The loss of the American colonies in 1783 marks the end of the first empire and Britain's pivot towards Asia. The exploration of Asia and the Southeastern Pacific was largely led by the East India Trading Company which enjoyed tremendous favor with the crown as it provided a substantial source of revenue. As such, they often enjoyed military assistance with trade negotiations and the establishment of trading posts abroad.⁶⁰ This also led to the settlement of Australia and New Zealand in 1788⁶¹ and 1840⁶² respectively, the establishment of Singapore as a British-held trading post in 1819⁶³, and Hong Kong as an economic center with a good natural port in 1841⁶⁴. The effect of this expansion is clearly evident today as Hong Kong was only recently returned to China, Singapore has its own official standard of English, and Australia and New Zealand are still a part of the British Commonwealth. With that, the British demonstrated a cunning not often seen with other world colonizers. Hong Kong and Singapore are still major economic centers while New Zealand and Australia are major suppliers of raw minerals. In short, their establishment was driven largely by economic motives, instead of militaristic ones, which aim to allow the greatest amount of access and ease of travel. This promoted the spread of English as it opened new avenues for business and communication in the newly-developing international markets.

⁶⁰ Ostler, "Empires," 478-479.

⁶¹ "European discovery and the colonisation of Australia," Australian Government Website, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/european-discovery-and-colonisation>.

⁶² "Europeans arrive to Aotearoa," Government of New Zealand Website, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://www.newzealand.com/us/feature/europeans-arrive-to-aotearoa>.

⁶³ "Founding of Modern Singapore," Government of Singapore Website, accessed November 20, 2012, <http://app.www.sg/who/32/Founding-of-Modern-Singapore.aspx>.

⁶⁴ Caroline Courtauld, May Holdsworth, Simon Vickers, *The Hong Kong story* (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1997) 38-39.

Contemporary English

English speaking nations have mastered a wholly unintentional and passive form of linguistic colonialism. They tend to govern the major global businesses, they established the internet, and they often pave the way in scientific research. Therefore, knowing English can greatly increase one's chances of accessing the global system.

It is estimated that roughly 400 million people speak English as their first language. With that, roughly 1 billion people are learning English as a second language or speak it with some proficiency.⁶⁵ The importance of these two numbers is where these people reside. "The population growth in areas where English is a second language is about three times that in areas where it is a first language. This means that second-language speakers of English will soon hugely exceed first-language speakers—a situation without precedent for an international language."⁶⁶

This widespread use of English in economic situations is paramount to the language's spread and its ensuing preeminence in contemporary global society. However, the two World Wars of the 20th century also had a hand in leading to the dominance of English in the world's economy. Despite the decline in colonialism in the early-to-mid 20th century, the former British colonies often maintained much of the language as a major mode of communication (India, Singapore, Kenya, etc.). After

⁶⁵ David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

⁶⁶ David Crystal, *World English: Past, Present, Future*, web, 1999, http://www.davidcrystal.com/DC_articles/English28.pdf.

WWII, Europe was in ashes and the United States and Russia emerged as global superpowers. Indeed, the United States' military prowess was matched only by its ability to produce manufactured goods and raw materials like coal and steel. The void in the global economy left by Europe's rapid decline was easily filled by the American manufacturing juggernaut.⁶⁷ As such, the US also exported its language through dealings with international buyers and business associates.

As the United States' economic output continued to outpace the rest of the world, English began to spread as an effective method of communication between two non-English speaking companies who also did not speak the same language. This process continues today and has led to the development of "Business English", a highly-specialized form of the language that focuses solely on everyday commercial concepts.⁶⁸ While it may not be sufficient for day-to-day use outside a professional setting, Business English is rapidly spreading in the global market. It was initially developed to facilitate operations between the United States and its foreign affiliates, but has since become a lingua franca amongst non-native English speakers who use it to conduct business with associates who speak a different language than their own. The language is far more standardized than English as its structures and grammar is mostly uniform throughout the world. A study performed by the Aalto University School of Economics in Finland and Radboud University Nijmegen in The Netherlands set out to measure the effectiveness and frequency of use of Business English between two Dutch and Finnish companies. Overall, they found that Business English's relatively stabilized and simple grammar

⁶⁷ Crystal, "English Worldwide," 427.

⁶⁸ Anne Kankaanranta, "BELF Competence as Business Knowledge of Internationally Operating Business Professionals" *Journal of Business Communication* 47, no. 4 (2010): 380.

allowed for effective communication and virtually every interviewee reported that they were no less confident communicating with a non-native English speaker than with a native English speaker. This confidence in the language itself will only serve to further implant it into the economic world. Most importantly to this work as a whole was the finding that “the interviewees hardly ever associated English with any specific native speaker model or with a national culture or its values such as the United Kingdom, the United States, or Australia; rather, the majority saw it as global and neutral.”⁶⁹ In short, English isn’t being imposed against their will and it’s not replacing their native languages; it is simply a means through which business can be conducted. In fact, knowing English is a highly desirable quality in the contemporary business system. As this process of Anglicization continues the need to know English will only increase and eventually it will become a requirement instead of résumé builder. In response to the increasing Anglicization, American universities are altering their own policies to more efficiently educate students in international business. While they recommend taking another language, International Business majors at the LeBow College of Business at Drexel University are no longer required to take foreign language courses as “half of all international business is conducted in English”.⁷⁰ With that, American universities have also begun to offer Business English classes to better prepare native English speakers to communicate effectively with non-native speakers.

As stated above, one of the biggest indicators of English’s success is the willingness shown by non-English-speaking nations to at least semi-officially adopt the

⁶⁹ Kankaanranta, “BELF Competency,” 388.

⁷⁰ “International Business,” [drexel.edu](http://catalog.drexel.edu/undergraduate/collegeofbusiness/internationalbusiness), 4 November 2012, <http://catalog.drexel.edu/undergraduate/collegeofbusiness/internationalbusiness>.

tongue. In 1999 David Crystal stated that over 70 nations use English in some sort of semi-official status. Many of these nations are former British colonies like Ghana, Nigeria, Singapore, and India. Singapore and India are of particular importance as Singapore is a paramount to the trade industry in SE Asia and India's population is currently over 1.2 billion. With that, India's population is expected to pass China's by 2025 and, in a geopolitical sense, this is beneficial for US interests as India tends to be a major ally in South Asia and the number of English-speakers within India could soon outnumber those of every other English-speaking nation combined.^{71,72} Within India there is a tremendous push to learn English as many western countries, the United States in particular, have outsourced jobs to India. The large population of English-speakers and the relatively inexpensive labor allows companies to effectively transfer work to India while still allowing for interaction with US-based customers.⁷³

Much as English has grown to dominate the business world, it has also grown to be the language of science internationally. During the first two decades of the 20th century three languages roughly shared scientific output: French, German, and English. World Wars I and II would again change that. After World War I German's use was officially banned at all major international science conferences and France was twice reduced to rubble in 40 years. The United States' academic institutions and research

⁷¹ "The World Factbook: Singapore," CIA.gov, accessed 14 November 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>.

⁷² Roberts, Sam, "In 2025, India to Pass China in Population, U.S. Estimates," *The New York Times*, accessed 10 October 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/16/world/asia/16census.html?_r=1&.

⁷³ John Helyar, "Outsourcing: A Passage Out of India," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, last updated March 15, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-03-15/outsourcing-a-passage-out-of-india>.

capability remained unscathed.⁷⁴ Figure 3 demonstrates the amount of scientific publications in various languages from 1880-1980.

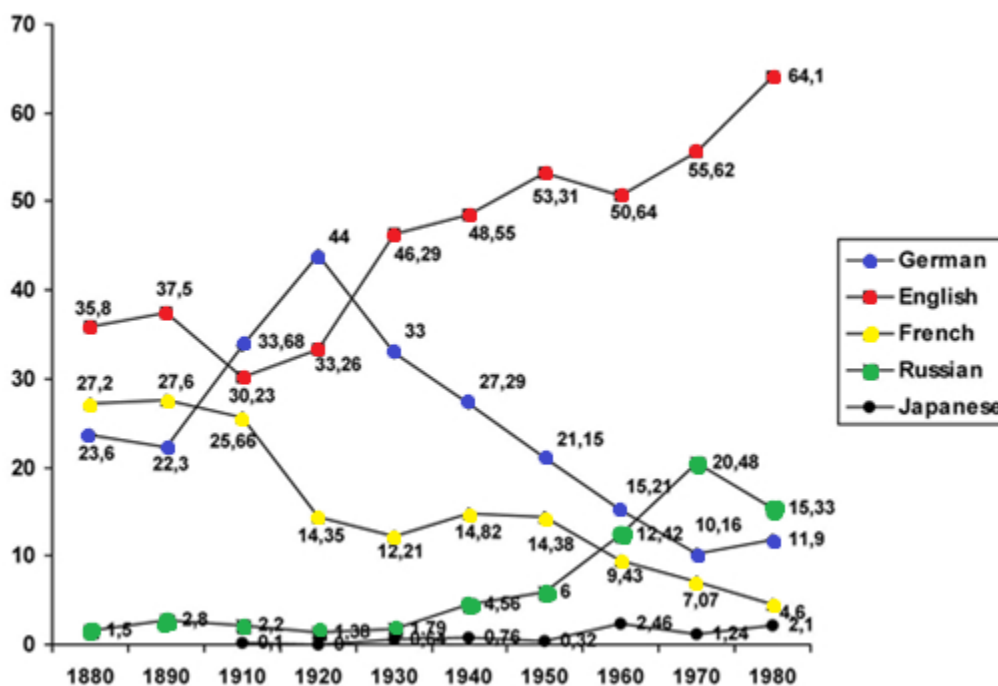


Figure 4 Number of scientific publications by language⁷⁵

Simply focusing on the quantifiable output of English publications fails to paint a complete picture, however. As English-speaking nations have the greatest research capacity in the world they also have a technological advantage as they are on the forefront of innovation. Innovation is not simply a matter of development and creation; technological advancements must be given names. As English-speaking nations continually modernize, the English language must keep up. As such, new technologies are given names in their creator's mother-tongue and, despite being spread throughout the world; they often retain their English monikers. This occurs even in languages that do

⁷⁴ Ulrich Ammon, *The Dominance of English as a Language of Science* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2001), 343-345

⁷⁵ Ammon, Ulrich. *The Dominance of English as a Language of Science: Effects on Other Languages and Language Communities*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001. *MLA International Bibliography*, accessed November 21, 2012, 344.

not use a Roman alphabet like Japanese and Mandarin which often simply incorporate a word with an indigenous pronunciation based on the spoken form of the word in English. Despite the technological capabilities of these two nations, they often incorporate the English name of certain products in speech while approximating its spelling in their own writing systems. Therefore, some words, as pronounced by Mandarin or Japanese speakers, show a clear resemblance to their English counterpart:

<u>English</u>	<u>Mandarin</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Japanese</u>
e-mail	yi meire	radio	rajio
microphone	maikefeng	headphone	heddohon
C.D.	C.D. ⁷⁶	fax	fakkusu ⁷⁷

The widespread use of English loan words has led nations to take action against the practice in an effort to protect the purity of their languages. In Japan, from the Meiji to the Taisho eras (1868-1926), Western civilization made a huge impact on Japanese culture as the island nation rapidly “modernized”. As Japanese militarism took hold of the higher levels of government in the 1930s loanwords were banned altogether. After WWII the United States oversaw virtually all of Japan’s reconstruction and, as such, many loanwords made their way into the language.⁷⁸ France, however, continues to fight the influx of English. The Académie Française created the “Dire, ne pas dire” (say, do not say) list which offers lists of words the French should not say and each word’s French translation. As the Académie enjoys government backing, French law requires that the use of English loanwords must be accompanied by subtitle or footnote which often offers

⁷⁶ Hall-Lew, Lauren A., “English Loan-words In Mandarin Chinese,” *The University of Arizona*, accessed 15 October 2012, lel.ed.ac.uk/~lhlew/Undergraduate%20Thesis.pdf. 50-52.

⁷⁷ Gillian Kay, “English Loanwords in Japanese,” *Wiley Online Library*, accessed 15 October 2012, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-971X.1995.tb00340.x/abstract> 67-70.

⁷⁸ Kay, “English Loanwords,” 68.

the Académie's French equivalent. They can be used, however, in news broadcasts and such.⁷⁹ However, many of the Académie's French translations fail to take root as they are simply inefficient for use in everyday conversation. A few examples of this are:

<u>English</u>	<u>French</u>
Web	toile d'araignée mondiale
iPod	diffusion pour baladeur
Wi-Fi	accès sans fil à l'internet ⁸⁰

During my personal travels within France, the English moniker for the above words was used without a second thought. Much in the same way as Chinese and Japanese, the words were pronounced with the French pronunciation so instead of "Wi-Fi", one would refer to "wee-fee". The iPod was the notable exception as the "I" was pronounced as it would be in English.

Fight as they may, English continues to spread. There are various examples of English being made the official mode of communication in the international setting. Increased technological advances have made travel fast and efficient. As such, more cultures come into contact on a daily basis today than ever before. The UN's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) promotes safety regulations for all international non-military flights for its 193 members. ICAO mandate states that pilots and air-traffic-controllers are allowed to operate in the language of their state during domestic flights but they must use one of the United Nation's six working languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) on international flights. Before 2008 proficiency in any of these was acceptable for use, but due to the overwhelming

⁷⁹ "Dire, Ne Pas Dire," [academie-francaise.fr](http://www.academie-francaise.fr/dire-ne-pas-dire), last modified 9 November 2012, <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/dire-ne-pas-dire>.

⁸⁰ Académie Française, "Dire, Ne Pas Dire".

number of flights that involve English-speaking crews the ICAO mandated that all pilots and air-traffic-controllers be proficient in English specifically. Testing for this began in March of 2008 and continues today. While the other five UN languages are still used, the need to learn them is lessened by the requirement that all crews know English. The mandate also has created a market for educational institutions whose advertisements for aeronautical English training are strewn throughout the ICAO's bi-monthly journal.⁸¹ Again, simply knowing English is a tremendous boost to one's attractiveness in the international workforce.

While not the official language of maritime travel, the UN's International Maritime Organization adopted the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) "following [an] agreement that a common language—namely English—should be established for navigational purposes where language difficulties arise".⁸² From the seas to international airspace to space itself, English has grown to dominate communication and coordination. The official language of the International Space Station is, in fact, English despite hosting astronauts from fourteen nations, of which only three (US, UK, and Canada) are English-speaking.⁸³

Aside from business and technological advances that have led to changes in language learning, the internet has redefined global communication by allowing for instant consumption and dissemination of information regardless of geographic distance.

⁸¹ "ICAO Promotes Aviation Safety by Endorsing English Language Testing," ICAO.int, last updated 13 October 2011, <http://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/icao-promotes-aviation-safety-by-endorsing-english-language-testing.aspx>.

⁸² "IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases," IMO.org, accessed 19 October 2012, <http://www.imo.org/ourwork/safety/navigation/pages/standardmarinecommunicationphrases.aspx>.

⁸³ "Station and Shuttle Missions" NASA.gov, accessed 19 October 2012, http://www.nasa.gov/topics/shuttle_station/index.html.

Developed jointly by academics and the government, the internet was conceived to increase communication efficiency and promote the sharing of ideas. However, the international aspect of the web was not their primary focus. It was originally developed to allow sharing between the east and west coasts of the United States and, as it was designed by Americans, computers were taught to speak English. Fair enough, “English” may be inaccurate. They were eventually coded using a uniform system of Roman alphanumeric characters called the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII). As ASCII developed it became the language of computer communication and quickly became the foundation of the internet. As such, early programmers needed to either be familiar with a language that used a Roman alphabet or have a consistent system of transliteration of one’s non-Roman writing system like that of Mandarin or Arabic. Numerous multi-lingual coding systems have been developed since the birth of the internet but the early lead given by its very DNA continues to be evident despite the world’s ever-increasing internet access.⁸⁴

Indeed, the use of the internet has fundamentally changed the way much of the world functions. Entire regions have been thrown into turmoil through the use of seemingly benign social media and the international development community gained an important tool in their efforts. As such, the United Nations General Assembly recently signed a resolution stating that internet access is a human right not to be infringed upon by governments.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Mary Brandel, “1963: The debut of ASCII,” CNN.com, last updated 6 July 1999, <http://edition.cnn.com/TECH/computing/9907/06/1963.idg/index.html>.

⁸⁵ “The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet,” [regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se), accessed 19 October 2012, <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/19/64/51/6999c512.pdf>.

Numbers of internet users and the language in which internet traffic takes place, which can be drawn from a compilation of various Internet Service Providers and Regional Internet Registries, offers an estimated but more tangible view of web usage. The total number of internet users around the world is about 2.4 billion people. Of this, Asia accounts for 45% with almost 1.1 billion users. China alone accounts for 50% of Asia's web users with India coming in a distant second with 11%. Therefore, China has more people who use the internet (538,000,000) than the United States has as its entire population (313,847,465)⁸⁶. It is also estimated that only 40% of China's population uses the internet so there is tremendous potential for growth within China which would greatly increase the use of Mandarin on the web.⁸⁷ However, the statistics fail to complete the portrait in regard to language propagation and spread. The languages of the internet must be examined through a geographic lens.

The two major languages of the internet are English and Mandarin, respectively, with Spanish sitting as a distant third. The Mandarin language accounts for roughly 24% of total internet traffic while English accounts for about 27%. This speaks to the size of the Chinese population and the breadth of English. Collectively, the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia account for less than 15% of the world's total internet traffic.⁸⁸ As cultural mosaics, these nations are far from wholly English-speaking which means that much of the traffic originating from these nations occurs in languages other than English. Therefore almost half of the world's English language internet usage originates

⁸⁶ "The World Factbook: The United States of America," CIA.gov, accessed 14 November 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>.

⁸⁷ "Internet Usage Statistics," internetworldstats.com, last updated 30 June 2012, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>.

⁸⁸ "Top 10 Languages in the Internet," internetworldstats.com, last updated 30 June 2012, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>.

elsewhere. Conversely, the vast majority of the web's Mandarin language traffic originates from within China. The success of English does not necessarily lie in its sheer number of web users, however. Being the most heavily used language of the internet is important, but the geographic spread of the language is a far more effective tool in evaluating its success.

With the internet as a medium for global communication came an increase in one of America's most controversial exports: culture. The US is far and away the dominant movie, television, and music producer on Earth. While this trade surplus has been greatly increased by the internet, the process largely resulted from the defining events of 20th century European history.

World Wars I and II again allowed the United States to take the lead in a lucrative business and the nation's entrepreneurs far outpaced the rest of the world. The development of the movie industry in Europe coincided with, and was thusly stunted by, the outbreak of World War I. While the US remained untouched, artists and producers in Southern California quickly set to work developing moviemaking technology and marketing the new form of entertainment. Eventually, America gave birth to "the feature film, the star system, the movie mogul and the grand studio, all based in Hollywood, California."⁸⁹ With that, once sound technology was developed it was used by those who made movies: Americans.⁹⁰ Today massive studio productions are distributed internationally and they often open abroad before they do in the US. Television networks have also taken advantage of the international appetite for American productions. With

⁸⁹ Crystal, "English Worldwide," 429.

⁹⁰ Crystal, "English Worldwide," 429.

individual episodes of shows selling for \$1.5 million apiece, American networks often take into account foreign tastes in the production of new series.⁹¹ Also, the massive music industry arguably has the biggest effect on the spread of the English language itself. While movies and television shows can be dubbed, music is rarely, if ever, dubbed into another language. With the spread of free music downloads online, the English language further ingrains itself into foreign cultures. In my experience, I have heard songs in English on the radio in Jordan, Bahrain, India, and Singapore. I have also seen TV shows in English in France, Singapore, and Dubai. Often, a person would know the lyrics to American songs and whether or not they comprehended the lyrics did not matter as they were already demonstrating the first steps in a largely one-way language transference.

⁹¹ Jeanne McDowell, "Helping TV Hits Translate Overseas," Time.com, last updated 17 October 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1547027,00.html>.

Conclusion

Indeed, English has demonstrated its power in absorbing words from other languages and its dynamism by adapting to a situation as necessary. This only increases its value as it can adapt to future needs. And as it is already so widely used, English may outpace any future language that challenges it. As stated above, learning English can drastically improve one's potential to earn a living in non-English speaking nations. This is one of the major factors that set English apart from its colonial predecessors. While it was, at one point or another, forced on an indigenous population, English has become a highly desirable skill which makes non-native speakers *actively seek* to learn the language. While this is not an overt form of colonialism, it can in the long run it can lead to diminished propagation of a group's original tongue as studies have shown that parents often choose to teach their children the new, more beneficial, language as their first. As shown above, the increasing levels of bilingualism are generally improving the level of English proficiency worldwide while occasionally resulting in the failure to propagate a group's indigenous language. As this process continues to spread the English language it will also result in the extinction of languages that fail to offer the same material advantage. As numerous cases of language preservation are currently being undertaken, they often fail to fully revitalize a language. Maori in New Zealand⁹², a contemporary

⁹² Helen Simmons, et al, "Nga Haerenga O Le Laumei: Pathways To Cultural Protection Through Language Preservation," *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Review* 22, no. 4 (2010): 44-56.

form of Hebrew in Israel⁹³, and efforts to revitalize Gaelic in the British Isles⁹⁴ are some of the more successful examples of revitalization efforts but they are generally the exception, not the rule. We must then ask ourselves whether the world is more improved by the ease of communication and transference of ideas offered by linguistic simplicity or is it lessened by the loss of various tongues and cultural identities. Regardless of our beliefs, however, the speed at which the world is losing its languages is ever-increasing and only promises to change the way the international community interacts in the future.

⁹³ Robert St. John, *Tongue of The Prophets: The Life Story Of Eliezer Ben Yehuda* (New York: Doubleday, 1952), 198-203.

⁹⁴ Alasdair MacCaluim, Wilson McLeod, "Revitalising Gaelic? A Critical Analysis of the Report on Public Funding of Gaelic," *Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh*, accessed December 1, 2012. <http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/celtic/poileasaidh/ipcamacpherson2.pdf>.