

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH



PART 1 – READING COMPREHENSION

Read the following text carefully and do the tasks that follow it.

Why can't everyone just speak English?

The concept of a *Lingua Franca* has been around a long time. Since the Roman Empire, languages such as Latin, French and Spanish have all taken their turn to dominate global commerce. Today, it is English that is usually chosen as the "bridge language" in business and politics. It is thanks largely to the dominance of former British colonies that English is so widely spread.

The foreigner's attitude to English is apparent within minutes in many non-English-speaking countries. While young Brits rush to drop languages at school, youngsters from countries such as Germany and Sweden spend as many school hours learning English as they do their mother tongue. Many students dedicate considerable time and energy to learning English, often seeing it as vital if they are to succeed in their chosen profession.

Thanks to its global dominance in media, film and music, English is considered fashionable. English is also dominant in technology, with a huge 56% of worldwide Internet content written in English. Most languages don't even bother to coin terms for things like "the Internet" or "text" or "hashtag."

Due to the global understanding that learning English is essential, the vast majority of native Anglophones are able to ignore foreign languages altogether. Luckily, most foreigners do appreciate the current value of English – but how long will this last?

Just as previous *Lingua Francas* have faded away to give another language its turn, it is unlikely that English will stick around forever. Some people have suggested that we should adopt an official universal language to facilitate international communication. But as I see it, choosing an existing language to use globally would be close to impossible and the creation – not to mention the learning – of a whole new language would require an incredible amount of time and effort. Moreover, would speakers of over 6500 languages worldwide really agree to abandon their language which many people link closely to their national identity? I don't think so.

Perhaps a new *Lingua Franca* will soon develop (Mandarin? Hindi? Portuguese?) and Anglophones worldwide will be forced out of their linguistic ignorance. Only time will tell!

Inc: <https://tmiparis.wordpress.com/2012/07/11/why-cant-everyone-just-speak-english> (adapted and abridged)

A. Choose the correct option.

The author of the text suggests that the English language ...

1. is more important than other languages;
2. should be the official universal language of communication;
3. will eventually lose dominance in the world;
4. will probably wash away other languages.

B. Explain what "lingua franca" means.

C. True (T) or False (F)? Quote from the text to justify all your answers.

1. English has always been the dominant language in international communication.
2. English gained its global status mainly due to the power of the British Empire.
3. Many young people consider learning English to be essential for their future career.
4. The dominance of English in the entertainment industry has made it very popular.
5. English will certainly maintain its power and influence in the future.

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