

Is English the global language?

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Introduction

The closer and closer the world becomes, the more necessary the global language should appear. Recently it is clear that English is very dominant in the world. According to Seth Mydans, David Graddol says that on the Internet, 80 percent are written in English, and although the numbers of native speakers of Chinese, Spanish, or Hindi are larger than the number of native English speakers, conversations between such different language speakers are held in English (gtd. in Seth Mydans). So one question has risen to me: Is English the global language? This paper tries to prove English is the global language.

According to Crystal, what makes a language the global language is not the number of people who speak the language but the power of the speakers (7). I agree that power plays an important role in making a language the global language, but I don't think the number of its speakers is not important. For example, in the Vatican, which has huge power in religion and politics, Italian is spoken. On the other hand, is Italian the global language? Of course, the answer is No. The reason why is, I think, that the number of people who speak Italian is much smaller than the number of people who

speak English, French, German or so on. Considering this fact, I am sure that the number of speakers also plays an important role in making a language the global language.

Thus, in this paper two points are discussed; one is about the number of people who use English. And the other is about that the power of the native English speakers on economy and politics.

The scale of English

The scale of English being used in the world proves that English is the most dominant language in the world. People who speak English are not only people who use English as their first language, but also people who are non-native speakers of English but who use it. Braj Kachru suggests that it is important to divide English speakers into three circles based on how to learn English; the first circle, Inner circle, refers to the countries in which English is spoken as the first language; the second one, Outer circle, refers to the countries in which English plays an important role as second language (it gets some official status); and the third one, Expanding circle, refers to the countries whose people know that English is important as a foreign

language (gtd. in Crystal, 60). According to Crystal, although the Inner circle has 320-380 million people, the Outer circle has 300-500 million people, and the Expanding circle has 500-1000 million people, we cannot understand the exact number because how well they can use it varies (60). So Crystal suggests that approximately 1.5 billion people can communicate in a useful level in English (69).

This means that one-fourth of the world population speak English. Some people say that it may not be enough, because three- fourths don't use it. But according to "Summary by area", there are 6909 languages in the world. Considering this, the fact that only one language has one- fourth of the world population would be impossible unless it is the global language.

And also, as is mentioned, the number of the native speakers of English is only 320- 380 million people, which is only 23% (only one-fourth.) of the English speakers. This shows English is well spread in the world and that the conversations between even non- native English speakers are very likely to be held in English. So the number of English speakers is one of the evidences which prove English is the global language.

In this paragraph, the focus is on how people feel about English being

the global language based on my survey. My survey was carried between 10 Americans (native English speakers) and 10 Asians (non-native English speakers) at Stanford Campus. To the question about whether they agree English is the global language or not, 3 Americans agree strongly, 6 Americans agree and only 1 American disagrees. On the other hand, 5 Asians agree strongly and 5 agree, which means no one disagrees. Considering the fact that totally 95% agree with the global status of English, not only statistics but also personal feelings show English is thought to be the global language.

And also, from my survey some interesting facts have risen; while almost all non-native speakers (8 people) most often use English when they go to a not-English-speaking country, or when they work with people from a not-English-speaking country, only 3 native speakers most often use English in that situation. The rest of native speakers tries to use the language spoken in that country, or spoken by the people around them. Many of them said that if their skill of speaking the foreign language is better than the people's English skill who they talk with, they would use the foreign language, and vice versa. So as a conclusion, non-native speakers are more

likely to rely on English. This is easily understood because as I mentioned before three-fourths of the English speakers are non-native speakers.

I don't want you to misunderstand. Even though native English speakers try to communicate in other language than English, English is likely to be used. It is because non-native speakers' English skills are very likely to be better than native speakers' other language skills. In my survey, all native English speakers have studied a foreign language, and also, all non-native speakers have studied a foreign language (English). But the time they have spent in learning the language is very different. See this graph.

	Native English Speaker	Non-native Speakers
Less than 1 year	1	0
1~3 years	3	0
4~7 years	2	0
7~10 years	3	7
More than 10 years	1	3

As you can see in the graph, Asians tend to spend much more time than Americans to study it. So even if Americans try to speak other language from English, English is more likely to be used because Asians' English seems to

be better.

The power of the English speakers

The power of English speakers on the world economy and the world politics also plays an important role in making a language the global language. Crystal suggests that Latin became the global language because “Romans were simply powerful,” because of the Roman Empire and Roman Catholicism (7). How about English? Does English have powerful speakers?

To solve this question, it is good to think about a part of the English history. In the 17th to 20th century, the British imperial and industrial power spread English around the world, and the British imperialism made English the language used in the courts, parliament, schools, and higher education establishments in many countries (“English as a global language”). That being said it is the U.S. that has kept English spreading. After the U.K. lost their power because of the WW1 and the WW2, the U.S. has had super power in economy, culture and politics (“English as a global language”). Thus, it is absolutely that English has had much power enough to make itself the global language.

In this context, one possible question will arise: although the U.S. has been suffering from the bad economy and has been losing its power, whether it has still enough power to support the position of English as the global language or not. To solve it, two questions are made; 1) do you agree that the U.S. is the most powerful country in politics? 2) Do you agree that the U.S. is the most powerful country economically? The results are very surprising. More Asians agree that the U.S. is the most powerful country in politics and in economy than Americans. (Refer to the graphs) Even though half of the Americans disagree with the second one, almost all Asians believe that the U.S is the most powerful country economically. As long as non-native English speakers believe that the U.S. is dominant, English will be learned. This means that for the U.S has still enough power to support the position of English as the global language.

Conclusion

As I mentioned, the fact that one- fourth of the world population speak English is good evidence, and also, my survey shows that actually many people believe English play important roles as the global language especially

for non- native English speakers. In addition, historically, English has had enough power to support its position, and although it is true that the U.S. has been losing their power compared to before, its power is still strong enough to make English the global language.

Questionary

Your Nationality _____

Do you agree the U.S. is the most powerful country in politics?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Do you agree the U.S is the most powerful economically?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5

When you go to another country in which English is not used, what language do you most often use?

When you work with people from a not-English-speaking country, what language do you most often use?

Have you ever studied a foreign language? Yes / No (what language? _____)

(If you are not a native speaker of English, English is Included.)

If so, how long did you study the foreign language?

Less than 1 year	1~3 years	4~7 years	7~10 years	More than 10 years
1	2	3	4	5

Do you agree that English is the global language, which means English is the most dominant in the world?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1) Do you agree that the U.S. is the most powerful country in politics?

1)	Native Speakers	Non Native Speakers
Strongly agree	2	4
Agree	4	4
Neutral	2	1
Disagree	2	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0

2) Do you agree that the U.S. is the most powerful country economically?

2)	Native Speakers	Non Native Speakers
Strongly agree	1	3
Agree	4	5
Neutral	0	1
Disagree	5	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0

7) Do you agree that English is the global language, which means English is the most dominant in the world?

7)	Native Speakers	Non Native Speakers
Strongly agree	3	5
Agree	6	5
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	1	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

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