

Reading Part 4

Read the text and answer the questions. Use a maximum of five words for each question.

Is Globish the new world language?

English is what matters. It has displaced rivals to become the language of diplomacy, business, science, the Internet and world culture. Many more people speak Chinese but even they, in vast numbers, are trying to learn English. So how did it happen and why? Robert McCrum's entertaining book tells the story of the triumph of English and the way in which the language is now liberated from its original owners.

The author's knack for finding nuggets enriches with interesting anecdotes what might otherwise seem a rather panoramic take on world history from Tacitus to *Twitter*. For example, take the beginnings of bilingualism in India, which stoked the growth of the biggest English-speaking middle class in the Anglosphere, stemming from a proposal by English historian, Thomas Macaulay, in 1835, to train a new class of English speakers: 'Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, opinion, morals and intellect'. At a stroke, English became the 'language of government, education and advancement, symbol of imperial rule and self-improvement'. India's English-speaking middle class is now one of the engines of that country's development and an asset in the race to catch up with China.

Gradually, English displaced French from diplomacy and German from science partly due to America's rise and the lasting bonds created by the British Empire. But the elastic, forgiving nature of the language itself was another reason for its success. English allows plenty of sub-variants, from Banglish in Bangladesh to Singlish in Singapore; the main words are familiar but plenty of new ones dot the lexicon, along with idiosyncratic grammar and syntax.

Now Globish has transcended the legacy of Empire – of English synonymous with the triumphs of English-speaking people – its bounds are set so wide that it belongs to the world and, as it spreads, it will reduce the international influence of English and eliminate the benefits long enjoyed by its native speakers.

Globish meets today's requirements for a universal 'other tongue' – a simple, neutral, intelligible medium for cross-cultural communication. English spoken by natives is different. The nuanced idiomatic language of Britons, North Americans, Antipodeans (and Indians) can be hard to understand but listen to a Korean businessman negotiating with a Pole in English and you will hear the difference: the language is curt, emphatic, stripped down. Yet within Globish, hierarchies are developing. Those who can make jokes or flirt in Globish, score over those who can't. Expressiveness counts, in personal and professional life.

The big shift is towards a universal written Globish. Computer software programs mean that anyone can communicate in comprehensible written English, a skill once requiring mastery of grammar and subtle syntax. The English of email, *Twitter* and texting is more mutually comprehensible than spoken English, fractured by differences in pronunciation, politeness and emphasis.

If in future the world's business is conducted in Globish, native Anglophones, like everyone else, will find themselves obliged to learn it.

1. What was created in 19th century India which contributes to its current success?

2. What, apart from the Empire, was the catalyst for the change in the status of English?

3. What has been one effect of the flexible nature of English?

4. What examples of sub-variants are given?

5. How will the spread of Globish disadvantage English native speakers?

6. What is it that makes English spoken by native speakers difficult to understand?

7. What might an advanced Globish user be able to do?

8. Why is full grammatical competence no longer essential?
