

How English Became a Global Language



by Jennifer Claerr

I. Read the text and fill in the blanks with the correct forms of the verbs in brackets.

English 1) _____ (evolve) naturally as a global language over time, despite the attempts of various people 2) _____ (create) artificial languages such as Esperanto, as global languages.

A language of global commerce

One important argument in favor of English as a global language is its effectiveness. In 1887, L.L. Zamenhof 3) _____ (publish) his treatise on Esperanto, an artificial language which he 4) _____ (construct) for the purpose of international communication. Today it is the most widely spoken artificial, constructed language, and even 5) _____ (have) native speakers. However, it 6) _____ (fail) to become a language of global commerce. English 7) _____ (appear) to have taken this role, becoming a lingua franca (a language widely used by non-native speakers). Esperanto, on the other hand, seems to have found its place as a cultural, educational and literary language. Since English 8) _____ (so widely/ speak), many non-native speakers 9) _____ (find) that they've been required 10) _____ (learn) it to stay in business. 11) _____ (do) business globally on eBay, I have found that there are a tremendous number of people from non-English speaking countries who speak English fluently. English has approximately 370 million native speakers, born in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries. However, it 12) _____ (estimate) that there are over a billion non-native speakers of English.

Widespread use

Today, English is widespread largely due to the fact that it 13) _____ (use) so heavily in television, film and music. Hollywood's global spread 14) _____ (contribute) strongly to the international popularity of English. It is also the predominant language on the internet. Pages in other languages even tend 15) _____ (have) an English translation. The British Empire and the dominant nature of American popular culture 16) _____ (contribute) overall to the spread of English across the planet.

Breaks barriers

There are still significant language barriers between people of different countries. If more people learn English, and come 17) _____ (speak) it fluently, these barriers 18) _____ (can) be broken down. A person in Holland 19) _____ (not/ need) to learn Chinese in order to 20) _____ (communicate) with his friends in China. Instead, he could use English as a neutral language.

Rewarding experience

While English can be very difficult to learn, 21) _____ (learn) it can be very rewarding. A knowledge of English 22) _____ (make) it possible for natives of non-English speaking countries 23) _____ (enjoy) English-language film, television, music, magazines, novels and nonfiction, among other things, without the need for any translation. English 24) _____ (make) communication with people of other countries and cultures possible. More importantly, English 25) _____ (offer) a wide range of possible expressions for similar concepts. For example: I am sad. I am unhappy. I am miserable. I'm in a rotten mood. I am down in the dumps. I am blue.

English in its modern form 26) _____ (use) for poetry, sonnets and songs for nearly five hundred years, and thus 27) _____ (allow) the speaker much more freedom 28) _____ (express) himself.

Grammar simplicity

Another thing in favor of English is relative simplicity of conjugation of verbs.

An international language

which 29) _____ (bridge) cultures and language barriers - I sincerely hope I live to see the day when English 30) _____ (eliminate) all communication boundaries worldwide.