

International Communication: Why English?

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Activity 1

In what ways are the following relevant to the history of communication? Discuss your ideas with your partner.

- a) The Tower of Babel b) Sanskrit c) Esperanto

Activity 2

Match the following explanations with points a), b) and c) in Activity 1 above.

1. Many different languages, including English, originate from this ancient language. It was used for about 3,000 years in India until the 19th century when modern Indian languages such as Hindi and Bengali became more popular.
2. There is a story which says that a long time ago people used to speak one language. They worked together to construct a building high enough to reach their paradise. Their god saw this and was angry. He stopped them by giving them different languages so that the builders couldn't understand each other.
3. This is an artificial language which was invented in 1887 by a Polish doctor called Zamenhof. It has no irregular verbs! Between two million and eight million people can speak this language.

Activity 3

Use the following questions to begin a conversation with your partner.

1. Would you like to be able to speak Esperanto? Do you think Esperanto is the language of the future? Why/not?
2. Why do languages die out (e.g. Latin)? Do you think English will ever die out? Why/not?
3. How different would life be different if we all spoke the same language? What would be the advantages and the disadvantages? Do you think that speaking one language could bring people of different nations closer together and improve the chances of world peace?
4. Approximately 1 in 4 people speak Chinese. In many countries Spanish is the first language. In the light of this information do you think English is the best choice for an international language. Why/not? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using English as the global language?
5. With your partner, suggest ways to make the English language easier to learn (e.g. abolish irregular verbs so 'bought' = 'bued').

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Activity 4

*Do you think English is the best choice for an international language? Why? Why not? You are going to take part in a discussion about this question on an Internet Forum at **EnglishClub.com**.*

Task 1

1. *Did most people agree or disagree that English is the best choice for an international language?*
2. *What was the most common reason given for agreeing or disagreeing?*

Task 2

1. *Read the post your teacher has put on the board at: <http://forum.englishclub.com/projects/> and summarize the main points.*
2. *Choose one point from your teacher's post which you strongly agree or disagree with and post a short paragraph in reply, stating your reasons and giving examples from your own experience where possible.*

Task 3

1. *Read the responses other students post to your teacher. Choose one you strongly agree with and one you strongly disagree with and post responses, explaining your opinion.*
2. *Make notes of the new words and phrases you have learned from participating in this Forum discussion activity that will help you to communicate your point of view on this subject in a classroom discussion.*

N.B. Netiquette!

**PLEASE CHANGE THE DEFAULT SUBJECT LINE
TO INDICATE THE OPINION/S IN YOUR POST BECAUSE IN A BUSY
THREAD IT HELPS PEOPLE TO DECIDE WHICH POSTS TO READ!**

Activity 5

Have you ever seen the film 'Anna and the King', starring Jodie Foster? This film is based on a true story about a woman who taught English at the court of the king of Siam (now Thailand). To what extent do you think the attitude to English in this film is relevant today? Why not try to see it in the original language?

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