

The continuing rise of English as the dominant language for global communication has sparked a great deal of controversy, and many question the wisdom of encouraging this trend. While there are many valid factors that have led some to perceive the spread of English as a threat, the fact remains that the concept of a “lingua franca” is hardly new, and the need for a common language in today’s globalized world is an undeniable reality. Having a global language for international communication is a necessity, and benefits everyone in a variety of ways.

The need for a common language has existed in human history ever since the rise of international trade, and this need is even more pressing today. For centuries, Latin was the dominant lingua franca, used for scholarly, religious, political, and trading purposes, and was later succeeded by French, which is still the official language for many international organizations today, such as the UN. As Graddol clearly illustrates in the graph depicting the number of languages worldwide (2006: 60), world languages have been in decline since the 1500s, and this continuing trend, though perhaps regrettable, is the result of an economically more interconnected world. Knowledge of, and some degree of fluency in, a common language, such as English, allows for a higher degree of access to the job market for individuals, but also makes it easier for companies to expand into international markets. The role that Latin and French played in global trade in past centuries has been taken on by English today, with great success.

In addition to being important for trade, the existence of a global language – in this case, English – offers a wealth of other opportunities for the international community. Having English as a common language can help to ensure equal access to information. 35.5% of internet users speak English as their first language (Thurlow et al. 2004: 12), meaning that a majority of the information available online is in English. English has also been “used increasingly as the medium of education in universities across the world” (Graddol 2006: 74-76), meaning that more and more scholarly research will be published in English. English as a common language not only facilitates the exchange of information and research, it also allows researchers, scholars, scientists and students to collaborate more easily, regardless of their location or first language. This has already had a positive effect on the advancement of science, for example, and this trend is likely to continue.

Regardless of whether or not English lasts as a lingua franca, the need for a common language is clear, and rather than resisting the spread of English, which seems to have taken on this role in the current century, authorities should encourage its use and instruction in order to facilitate international trade, communication, and access to information. This does not mean, however, that world cultures should feel threatened. While world languages may have been in decline for centuries, world cultures have remained strong and diverse; there is no reason why this cannot continue with English a global language.

Vocabulary Band 5**Justification**

The student uses a wide range of vocabulary appropriate for the task, including low-frequency items (e.g. *collaborate, facilitate, succeeded by, undeniable, scholarly*).

The text is free of inaccuracies. Repetition is avoided by paraphrase and the use of synonyms. The repetition of *meaning that* in the second body paragraph could be seen as a stylistic device.

The text uses an impressively wide range of idiomatic collocations (e.g. *has sparked a great deal of controversy, valid factors, perceive...as a threat, an undeniable reality, this need is even more pressing, to expand into international markets, offers a wealth of opportunities, ensures equal access to, this trend is likely to continue*). It is appropriate in style and register.

NB: This script represents band 5 for vocabulary, but the benchmark score cannot be generalised to other scale criteria.