**Text 3**

**THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH**

**BY GRAHAM BRADFORD**

It has long been accepted that English is a global language, used in all corners of the world as a means of communication. In many parts of the world, English is regarded as a basic skill, which children learn at an early age so they can study through English later. The latest statistics tell us that these days around 80 per cent of spoken English is spoken between non-native English speakers. A Japanese businessman and his French client will conduct their communication in English. But while English is accepted as being the language of science and technology, what does the future hold for everyday speakers of English?

While linguists agree that the situation of English today is at a global all-time record, they do not necessarily agree on where the language is heading. Two of the world’s leading experts on the English language, David Crystal and David Graddol, disagree on the path that English is likely to take.

David Graddol points out that although the number of people speaking English as a first language is rising, it is not rising as fast as the number of people speaking other languages around the world. He believes that English will soon be relegated to second place after Chinese and will be equal in dominance to Arabic, Hindi and Urdu.

With 25 per cent of the world’s population speaking English as a second language, David Crystal suggests that Graddol has underestimated the future dominance of English. He is keen to point out that nobody really knows what the future holds for English because at no other time in history has a language been in such a position. He draws attention to the escalating growth in the use of English between non-native speakers and sees no reason for this trend to stop.

Graddol thinks otherwise. While he does not dispute the fact that the number of people speaking English in the world is growing, he emphasises the fact that this is a recent trend. He disagrees with the idea that English will become a dominant world language to the exclusion of other languages. Just because people are learning English, it does not mean to say they are abandoning their own languages. They are instead becoming multilingual. He continues by suggesting that the growth of English is responsible for the spread of multilingualism and that native English speakers who are monolingual will necessarily become disadvantaged. Regardless of which David you agree with, one thing is certain – the future of English is just around the corner and whichever direction it chooses to take, it will be difficult to ignore its impact.

**VOCABULARY NOTES:**

1. *basic*: of, relating to, or forming a base; fundamental
2. *relegate*: to refer or assign (a matter or task, for example) for decision or action
3. *dominance*: control or ascendancy; rule
4. *trend*: a general tendency or course of events
5. *regardless*: in spite of everything; anyway
6. *disadvantaged*: deprived of some of the basic necessities or advantages of life, such as adequate housing, medical care, or educational facilities.
7. *multilingualism*: using or having the ability to use several languages
8. *abandon*: to cease trying to continue; desist from
9. *impact*: the effect or impression of one person or thing on another

**EXERCISE 1.**Correct the mistakes in this e-mail, which is a response to the article. The writer has misunderstood a few points. Find the four mistakes and correct them.

Dear Editor,

Your article was very interesting. It’s hard to believe that 50 per cent of spoken English is spoken between non-native English speakers. Both of the experts seem convincing.

However, I find it difficult to believe that English will soon find itself second to Arabic or, as David Crystal says, that 25 per cent of the world’s population speak English as a first language. He also mentions the rapid growth in English spoken between native speakers.

Regards,

W. Smith

**EXERCISE 2.**Match a word from the first column (1 to 5) with a word from the second (a to e) to make common collocations:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 basic | a expert |
| 2 leading | b growth |
| 3 escalating | c language |
| 4 first | d skill |
| 5 recent | e trend |

**EXERCISE 3.**Questions for discussion

1. Do you believe that the days of English as the world’s second language may (slowly) be ending?
2. Do you agree that English will have no successor because none will be needed? Technology will fill the need.
3. Why have people been interested in having one language that could be spoken throughout the world?
4. Why is English considered the most insatiable borrower of other languages?
5. What made English the global language?
6. How did English grow so quickly and seemingly so unexpectedly?
7. What factors lie behind the exponential growth of English as a global language?
8. Are we dependant on the English language? To what extent?
9. How has English changed in grammar and punctuation in order to integrate with the technology of the day and to facilitate the proper use of modern communication methods such as text messaging on mobile phones?
10. What changes will the English language undergo in the nearest one hundred years?
11. How long will it take for us to know which path English is on?

**EXERCISE 4.**Make your own predictions about the path that English is likely to take. Share it with other students.

**Text 4**

**INFORMATION SOCIETY**

**BY RICHARD SIDAWAY**

Once upon a time societies were organised around religion, farming, trade or industry. In many parts of the world today this is still true, but something else is becoming more important — the exchange of information, and the technology that we use to do this. Twenty-four-hour news, e-commerce, international call centres, mobile phones, global positioning systems . . . all these are making the world smaller and faster.

The growth in telecommunications is now giving more and more people access to democratic ideas, to the principles of international law and human rights, to the science that will help their country develop or to the medical knowledge that can fight disease. It is starting a real global village, which people only dreamed of a generation ago.

But how can everybody in the world share the recent technological advances? Millions of people cannot read these words because they don't have access to a computer. They don't understand English either, the language that 80 per cent of the information is written in. They don't even have a telephone. They are more worried about how far they will have to walk today to get clean water or if they can feed themselves and their families. For most people on this planet, information is not a priority.

The contrast between countries that have information technology and those that don't is called the 'digital divide'. Scandinavia and South-East Asia have a high number of people who use information communication technologies (ICT). Central Africa and the Pacific have almost none.

The United Nations is trying to make the information society a reality for more of the developing world. It wants to see rich countries transfer new technology and knowledge to poorer nations.

Ten years from now, the plan is that everybody in the world will have a radio or television and that 50 per cent of the world's population will have access to the Internet from schools and universities, health centres and hospitals, libraries and museums. This will improve medical care and education, science and agriculture, business opportunities and employment. At the same time, they say, local communities, languages and cultures will become stronger.

Just a dream? Certainly there are some contradictions. Does only good come with freedom of information? If information is power, why will people share it? Doesn't more technology mean fewer jobs? And how can the exchange of information keep local cultures alive if most of that information is only in one language?

It is much easier to get people connected to broadband or put government online in Europe than in South America or West Asia. However, developing countries often leapfrog the process that richer nations went through, and avoid their mistakes. Brazil collects most of its taxes online these days. There are cyber cities in Dubai and Mauritius. And Taiwan and Hong Kong have better access to ICT than the United Kingdom. Maybe the English language isn't so important after all.

Perhaps the spread of technology means that the old centres of power are also changing. The United States introduced internet technology in the 1970s. But people are asking why they should continue to be in charge. Why should a small organisation in California tell the rest of the world how computers talk to each other?

The USA says it makes the rules, but it doesn't control the flow of information. The domain name system (DNS) controls how internet addresses work, but not what a website or database contains. Many want a more international approach, however. But they also want the Internet to remain open and free for all to use.

Can the world create an information society for all? If a farmer in Bangladesh can read this in the year 2015, then maybe the answer is yes.

**VOCABULARY**

1. *e-commerce*: business done over the internet
2. *global positioning system*: is a space-based satellite navigation system that provides location and time information in all weather conditions
3. *global village*: the idea of a world made smaller by being connected via computers
4. *technological advances*: improvement or development in technology
5. *access*: a method or possibility of getting to something; *to haveaccess to something*
6. *priority:* something that is very important and must be dealt with before other things
7. *digital divide*: difference in wealth and opportunity measured by how many people use information technology
8. *developing world*: nations with a lower standard of living and underdeveloped industrial base
9. *the United Nations (UN)*: an international organization that was established in 1945 and aims to solve world problems in a peaceful way
10. *employment*: the fact of someone being paid to work for a company or organization
11. *to leapfrog*: to improve your position by going past other people quickly or by missing out some stages
12. *broadband*: large capacity internet cable connection
13. *tax*: (an amount of) money paid to the government that is based on your income or the cost of goods or services you have bought
14. *cyber city*: metropolitan area linked to other cities by information technologies
15. *domain name system*: is a hierarchical distributed naming system for computers, services, or any resource connected to the Internet or a private network
16. *database*: a large amount of information stored in a computer system in such a way that it can be easily looked at or changed

**EXERCISE 1. Use the vocabulary words to fill in the gaps in the sentences below:**

1. If you want to play games online, you really need a …… connection.
2. The ability of organisations to recruit staff in several different countries very quickly shows that the ……… is a reality.

3. I haven't got involved in ……… yet. I am still not confident that my money will be secure.

4. Levels are unlikely to rise significantly before the end of next year.

5. She ……….several older colleagues to get the manager's job.

6. I wonder how long it will be before the place I live in can be called a ……… I don't think having a few internet cafés will be enough.

7. There is a ……… between north and south Europe.

8. We're linked to the online ……. at our head office.

**EXERCISE 2. Questions for discussion**

1. Have advances in technology improved our lives or are we becoming too dependent?
2. Is technology destroying the minds of younger generation?
3. What are pros and cons of technology in human life?
4. Does only good come with freedom of information?
5. How can technology improve medical care and education, science and agriculture, business opportunities and employment?
6. How can the exchange of information keep local cultures alive if most of that information is only in English?
7. Does more technology mean fewer jobs?
8. Why is integration and manipulation of information is a significant economic, political, and cultural activity?
9. What can be the aim of information society?

**EXERCISE 3. Decide whether these sentences are TRUE or FALSE according to the text**

1. More than three-quarters of the information on the internet is in English.

2. The writer isn't sure if new technology can preserve local languages.

3. More people use information technology in the Pacific than in South-East Asia.

4. Poorer countries can often adopt technology quicker than richer countries.

5. An international organisation decides how computers communicate with each other.

6. Developing countries fail to leapfrog the process that richer nations went through, and avoid their mistakes.

7. Information is a priority for most people of the world.

**EXERCISE 4.**

Make a list of 10 potential technological advances in the future and share it with your group mates.

**EXERCISE 5.**

Make some predictions concerning problems and challenges in the information society and share your ideas with other students.