

Patricia Ryan: Don't insist on English

"If you can't think a thought, you are stuck. But if another language can think that thought, then, by cooperating, we can achieve and learn so much more."

In her talk, longtime English teacher Patricia Ryan asks a provocative question: Is the world's focus on English preventing the spread of great ideas in other languages? (For instance: what if Einstein had to pass the TOEFL?) It's a passionate defense of translating and sharing ideas.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Goals</u>	<u>Themes</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Upper-intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Second Conditional (revision)Vocab & Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The English languageLanguage & Cultural lossHigher educationGlobalization
Intro Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing that English has become a "universal language," learned around the world?Have you ever done a test like TOEFL, TOEIC or IELTS? Why did you do it? What was your experience like?Do you think institutions should require that students speak English? Are these kinds of tests necessary?Is it valuable to have access to many different languages rather than just one?	
Video	Students to watch Ryan's TED talk.	
Comprehension	True or False? <ol style="list-style-type: none">Ryan has lived and taught English in the Persian Gulf for over 30 years.She says that a language dies every 24 days.English education is now a massive international business. Part of the reason for this is the prestige associated with universities in English speaking countries.Ryan thinks that having English level requirements that are the same for all disciplines (e.g. the same for computer scientists and lawyers) is the best way to ensure academic progress.She says that all research should be written in English.	

6. Ryan thinks that having a global language is a good thing, but is against using it as a barrier.
7. Test fees are often prohibitive to so many millions of poor people.
8. Having access to other languages gives us new ways to think about and solve problems in many fields.

Vocabulary

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|--------------------|---|
| 1. Globalization | A. Something favorable, resulting in good. |
| 2. Modernize | B. Restricting, stopping or forbidding something. |
| 3. Beneficial | C. The international spread or influence of something across many countries. |
| 4. Gatekeeper | D. Something that will necessarily be true as a result of it's being expressed. |
| 5. Self-fulfilling | E. Unquestionable, accepted without doubt. |
| 6. Prohibitive | F. Having widely spread effects. |
| 7. Far-reaching | G. To adapt to current, contemporary or new needs. |
| 8. Undisputed | H. A person or organization that controls admission, progress or access. |

Complete the following using the vocab above:

1. Partly because of the _____ of American culture, English has become more widely spoken.
2. That English has very quickly become a global language over the past 100 years is an _____ fact.
3. The cost of English language tests is too _____ for people with low incomes.
4. It would be _____ for everybody if English were not a barrier to higher education.
5. Some people think that in order to _____ a country, its population must learn English.
6. We need to consider whether teachers should fulfill the role of _____ for universities and colleges.

7. The belief that English is a necessary tool for education is _____.
8. The loss of languages has _____ and serious consequences.

Test Acronyms:

- TOEIC – Test of English for International Communication
- TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language
- IELTS – International English Language Testing System

Grammar

Second Conditional – Hypotheticals

- The Second Conditional is similar to the first conditional in that we are still talking about the **present/future**. However, the likelihood of this situation occurring in the future is very low. It is **improbable** or **impossible**. It is a **hypothetical situation**.
- Note that we often use the subjunctive “were” instead of “was.”

IF	CONDITION	RESULT
	PAST SIMPLE	WOULD + Base Verb
If	I won the lottery,	I would buy a new car.
If	I were you,	I would study more often.
If	English were not the global language,	Another language would take its place.
If	The TOEFL test did not exist,	It would be easier for people to get in English speaking Universities.
“If	I met a monolingual Dutch speaker who had the cure for cancer,	would I stop him from entering my British University?”

Practice

Matching Clauses

- Students to work together in order to match clauses to form full sentences. It is possible to use this activity as a timed competition, or to use the conditional halves as writing prompts for sentences

Conditional Chains

- Students to use a chosen conditional from the previous activity to create “conditional chains” for which they must continually create new conditionals based on the last. See activities for examples.

Discussion

- What role do you think English should play in higher education? Should there be a minimum level of spoken English required for admission?
- Why are you learning English? If you could further your career or studies without doing so, would you?
- Should everybody learn English? What would the consequences of this be?
- Is speaking more than one language always an advantage?
- If tests like TOEFL, TOEIC and IELTS did not exist, how would students cope with the language barrier in higher education?
- If not English, is there another language that should be the globally accepted method of communication?
- What has your experience leaning English been like?
- Do you think that far-reaching English education is responsible for cultural loss? If so, how would you solve this problem?
- Ryan mentions that the U.K. benefitted from the shared oil wealth that resulted from greater cultural integration with Kuwait when the country began to use native-speaking teachers. Is English education a kind of imperialism or neo-colonialism in this way?
- Do students who use English to study in foreign universities lose some of their own culture, or just gain parts of another?
- Is globalization a good or a bad thing, and what part does language play in this process?
- What would you do if did not spend so much time studying English!?

Debate

- English is just another subject for many students, like math or chemistry. It is just a standard prerequisite and its necessity isn't a problem. Students just need to study and they will be admitted to the universities they apply to. It would be generally bad if we removed English as a prerequisite – students would not be able to learn anything or express their own ideas or insights.
- The English language learning industry is a new type of colonialism. "Western" countries force others to depend on English and take advantage of the new cultural and economic opportunities that this provides. This is unfair, and should change.
- This biggest problem with English education is the cultural loss it causes. Governments should find a way to regulate the growth of the ESL industry and protect their own languages and cultures.

REVIEW / HW

Writing Activity – Conditional questions

Students to write 1-2 paragraphs on one of the following:

- What do you think the world would be like if we did not have an emerging global language? Would it be better or worse?
- Why are you studying English? What would you do if you did not need to?
- If tests like TOEIC and TOEFL were easier, would this be a good thing? Should English language be a difficult process? Is prohibitive cost the main issue?