



# Beyond Babel Programme 3

## ACTUALITY CNN CLIPS

'Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall.'

'The ANC will pursue the struggle against the government as long as this violence of Apartheid continues.'

'The US will not stand this aggression against Kuwait.'

'All the planes from this...'

## Narrator

In the 20th century the world became a smaller place. The birth of satellite television news, driven by economic and political interests, brought events from once remote parts of the globe into the living rooms of the English-speaking world. The first global television broadcaster was CNN.

## Chris Cramer President, CNN International

It used to be a cozy support system for American travellers. They used to be able to go into hotels around the world and punch their TV set on in their hotel rooms and, you know, get news from back home. Now that's a dilemma because this year, you know, 2000, about 1% of the audience of CNN overseas is American, either travelling or ex-patriot. The majority of people who watch us overseas have English as a second language.

We've now got to a position where, you know, 9 out of 10 of our programmes aren't even transmitted in the USA so we've created a truly international version of CNN. So our use of the language has now got to be much more precise than it ever was a few years ago.

## Actuality CNN Clip

'... I must tell you that inside the building, it is filled with riot policemen and it is likely that now the police have managed to take control or at least to keep the crowd under control. Those tear gases dispersing...'

## Chris Cramer

We've deliberately tried to de-Americanize ourselves. At CNN, either the US version or the international version, is not an ambassador for US foreign policy but it can be perceived as such. Foreign, by the way - a banned word at CNN. Ted Turner banned the use of the word foreign in scripts or in conversations, you know, 10, 15 years ago. He did it not because he is, you know, just passionate about the world but because he believes.... "What does "foreign" mean? Foreign means alien." We don't broadcast to aliens, well, not just yet. We broadcast to people around the world and the simple, if you like, reconstruction of the English language

in that sense publicly to his staff... Senior managers like me get fined \$100 for every time we use the word foreign. So this interview has now cost me \$200.

### **Narrator**

The development of global news networks like CNN has been made possible by the widespread use of English, and is a reflection of the singular importance of America in the fate of the language.

That America became an English speaking country at all, rests entirely on the foundation of British colonial settlements in the 17th century.

### **Bill Fowler Director, Massachusetts Historical Society**

The people who settled in this place in 1630 were Puritans, English men and women who had decided that the Church of England was not pure enough for them. And so they came here to the New World to their New England. It very quickly became apparent to them that they were different from those they had left behind in England.

### **Narrator**

Separated from a distant authority in London the colony became increasingly resentful of British rule. And when parliament sought to impose taxation their anger knew no bounds.

### **Bill Fowler**

When they tried to impose these new laws, when they tried to collect taxes we resisted. As we resisted they stiffened and so you had this escalation, this tumult and eventually of course over the edge into violence, into war, into revolution and independence.

### **Narrator**

No longer British the newly independent colonies nevertheless set about framing a constitution, which eloquently asserted their cherished ideals of freedom in the language of the former oppressor.

### **Bill Fowler**

This is the printed copy of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was printed to be sent to the thirteen colonies and to be sent to the various elements of the American army. Washington read a copy of the Declaration to his army, and the Declaration was read here in Boston on the steps of the old State House. And this is the copy that indeed was circulated. This is the text that Americans first saw achieving, announcing their independence.

### **Geoff Nunberg Principal Scientist, Xerox PARC**

The United States when they became independent weren't even sure what language they were going to be speaking. They knew it would be something that derived from the language of the British Isles but English after all was the language of the

nation whose shackles they had just cast off and there was an important movement in this country that lasted really for the first 50 years of nationhood to re-define the language spoken here as American or federal. This was something supported not only by the American lexicographer Noah Webster but by figures like Jefferson and Adams so there was no question of declaring an official language.

## **Narrator**

But the dominance of America by people who could trace their family origins back to Britain was not to last for long. Within the first two decades of the 20th century more than fourteen and half million people poured into America, the majority of them from non-English speaking countries.

For the millions who passed through New York's Ellis Island, their first taste of America was a far remove from the Promised Land. Huddled in the cramped and impoverished tenements of the Lower East Side, they were excluded from the wider society by their inability to speak English. The remnants of these linguistic ghettos remain to this day.

## **Richard Kressler Big Apple Greeter**

I'm Dick Kressler and I'm a Big Apple Greeter. We are volunteers that show people around New York and today we've been asked to do a multi-ethnic tour showing the wave after wave of immigration that's come into the city. So we're setting off to the Lower East Side.

The city centre is over to our West. And this was the area that..the Chinese were here, the Italians were here and the Irish were here. Further up we're gonna see where the German came in at Thompson Square Park. And so it's had wave after wave of immigration.

I'd like to take you to the Henry Street Settlement House. It's one of the first charitable institutions that worked down here with the immigrants and has been through all the waves of immigration.

## **Actuality Conversation with Teacher**

'Henry Street has been helping the neighbourhood for years, right?'

'Education. Education is very important. You know, it opens ways for people to empower themselves. I came to America when I was fifteen years old and even though in Puerto Rico they teach you basic English, I felt humiliated because I was, you know, put in a class that no one knew a word of English. And you know, all my grades were, all my classes that I'd brought from Puerto Rico they were dropped and I had to start all over again. Because it's a problem that ever immigrant who comes here is going to encounter that.'

## **Actuality Street**

'Let these guys by, these are good guys...'

'Thank you, Thank you...'

'Fund raising for our men and women recovery home. We house, clothe and feed men and women who are homeless be it by drugs, ex-gang offenders, battered women. We do it through fund raising and donations. Would you guys like to be a blessing and give a small donation?'

## **Richard Kressler**

Well we're in Little Italy and I want to take you down a little further where we can find some nice Italian merchants. I'm going to show you Italian neighbourhoods. They were Italian areas but they were all segregated by where they were from. There were certain streets if you weren't Neapolitan you didn't live on, or if you weren't Sicilian, you didn't live on.

### **Actuality Conversation Little Italy**

'We're looking for Little Italy.'

'Little Italy? Its right down Mulberry Street.'

'She said go right down Mulberry, she doesn't know where the Italians are either.'

'We just wanted to see Little Italy'

'You want to see Little Italy?'

'Yeah. Where will we find...we want some good Italians to talk to.'

'I'm an Italian'

'Are you?'

'Yes, but I'm not very good...I'm an Italian, a Sicilian.'

'Were you born here?'

'I was born at Kenmere and Mott Street, in my godmother's bed, because my uncle and my father were drunk and they didn't make it to the hospital. Anyway, this is right here...'

'Is that the centre of Little Italy?'

'Yeah, where I'm pointing at right now is the centre. This is Mulberry, that's Mott and then you go about three or four blocks out that way until it become China Town.'

### **Actuality Conversation Shop Keeper**

'How many languages do you deal with?'

'Well I speak Spanish in here, I speak Chinese. I have a helper who speaks four different dialects of Chinese. And we have Russian customers, a lot of Spanish speaking, mostly English. Foreign people are moving to the area. A lot of Europeans, a lot of Australians. And it's really changed a lot from a heavily Jewish area to Chinese.'

### **Actuality China Town**

'I don't know about London, but the Orientals and Asians have taken over the fruit stand and vegetable business.'

'Do you speak English?'

'No, no English..'

'No, no English at all. Do you speak English?'

'Thank you.'

### **Actuality Conversation Community Health Centre**

'Within the Community Healthcare Network we have staff that speak thirteen different languages, because we have nine health Centres within New York State and staff in each Centre speak the language according to the community that we serve. Like here, we have Chinese staff here that do speak several different languages in the Chinese community. Most of the patients that we see does not

speak English, so we have interpreters here. This is an English speaking country, but sometimes people see English as the hardest language.'

### **Narrator**

The historic process by which America absorbed immigrants from around the world continues to this day. At the English Speaking Union in New York, new immigrants still grapple with the difficult process of learning a foreign language to gain access to the English speaking society.

### **Alice Boyne English Speaking Union**

The English Speaking Union is a non-profit membership organization. It was founded originally in Great Britain in 1918 and then two years later in the United States and the idea was to bring together people from both countries who used English as a first language for friendship and cultural exchange and for education. We do projects and programmes that have spun out of what we call the English in Action programme, between someone who speaks English as a first language and a new comer to the country. They can be either immigrants to the country or people here on short-term assignments of one kind or another.

### **Narrator**

The English Speaking Union uses volunteer New Yorkers who work on a one-to-one basis with new immigrants, helping them to develop their English language skills within the context of informal conversations.

### **Actuality English Speaking Union Language Class**

'They say more bang for the buck..'

'Exactly'

'Now that's American, purely American do you think? I mean do they have basketball in Columbia?'

'Of course, but you know the quality of our basketball is terrible. Maybe in South America...'

'... you say to that person, that's really off base. I don't want you to say that again.'

'Oh this is good. I can say it on the subway...'

### **Ratana Kay**

I was taking some classes in an ordinary school, which I got so bored because they only wanted to teach you grammar, and you study from the books...So my friends said why don't you just go to this English In Action and you can have one to one conversation.

### **Actuality English Speaking Union Language Class**

'The chief executive officer was really off base with his predictions about earnings...'

'It was outside..'

'It means he was wrong, completely wrong..'

## **Mike Stein**

The idea of being able to communicate with somebody and to communicate with ordinary everyday English and talk about idioms and all the expressions that are part of the English language. That's what's enjoyable.

### **Actuality English Speaking Union Language Class**

'Give me a compliment right now.'

'You are very well dressed.'

'And that's a compliment.'

'That's a bad sentence.'

'It isn't. I'm glad you detected that. It's not a great sentence. You could have changed that easily.'

'Can we say please. I plea you to help me?'

'No,no. Please, I ask you to help me or I beg you to help me. A person can use this word, say please do me a favour.'

## **Matt Messina**

I'm the last of five children of Sicilian immigrants. I was born here and we lived in Little Italy when it was inhabited by Italian immigrants. And I could see from my family, my parents especially, the language was a constant problem for them. And it hindered them in trying to enjoy the benefits of living in New York. And so I can understand a little bit what some people are going through when they're here and they have trouble communicating with other people. So it's something I feel is important to do and I enjoy doing it.

### **Actuality English Speaking Union Language Class**

'You're begging for something. You're asking for a favour...'

'Going back to off base and touching base...'

## **Alice Boyne**

We've so many cases of people whose lives have been changed by the advantages that they've been able to get through their partners here and that really is our job you know as a non profit organization our job is to change lives and we have we've done it.

## **Narrator**

While English has an established role as the first language of the United States, in South Africa it serves to underpin a richly multilingual society.

## **Mathatha Tsedu**

### **Deputy Editor, The Star**

This country has 11 official languages. We print The Star in English but that does not mean that now and then words that are of African origin, of African languages do not come into the Star so in headlines you find all kinds of other words that come in. Sometimes it's because it's convenient to use them. Sometimes it's a

deliberate effort to introduce other elements of the national heritage of languages that we have here to a wider circle of readers so that all people can start to understand each other. That is what language is all about.

### **Narrator**

Zanele Mngadi is a junior news reporter on The Star.

### **Actuality Office Briefing The Star Newspaper**

'Which one are we doing?'

'You're going to Randburg, it's the twenty year old who killed his parents. It's a wonderful, wonderful opportunity to write. It's going to be a very emotive story. You're going out to speak to the neighbours, to speak to the family.'

### **Zanele Mngadi Reporter, The Star**

The thing is we have to try to get more detail on what happened. Why was this guy angry? What made him kill his mother? And just for people to understand what exactly happened. I'm going to try and get a human-interest angle. I hope I do but I just have to speak to as many people as possible. Maybe I'll find out something that nobody knows yet.

### **Actuality Office The Star Newspaper**

'This is the guy who killed his mother with a fork, and his dog and his gardener.'

'Thanks...'

'Follow the leader.'

### **Charmeela Bhagawat News Editor, The Star**

The majority of the people we interview have a mother tongue other than English. For the most part our reporters go out and interview those people in that language so as to communicate more effectively. While they are doing this they've got to actually assimilate this information in English.

### **Actuality Zanele Interviewed in Van**

'How many different languages do you speak?'

'I speak Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, English, a bit of Afrikaans and a bit of Sesotho.'

### **Mathatha Tsedu**

The possibility of losing nuances and idiomatic expressions is always there in any translation and that is one of the big challenges that actually happens here. The bigger danger is actually when you send a white reporter to go out and interview a black person who might not even be proficient in English themselves.

### **Charmeela Bhagawat**

There was one very, very interesting story a little while ago. A young man who had been painted white in Balfour, and he was painted white by a white farmer, who was very, very scared, he said, when he saw this young black man trespassing on

his property. And always in situations like that it's very difficult to decide who you're going to send out on a story, because sometimes you need to send out a white reporter who can go and relate to the farmer because you're not going to get that...you'll get a great deal of hostility if you send a black reporter out who's going to speak an African language. At the same time you need to send a reporter out who can speak an African language because you want to go and interview that person's family and you want to get that side of the story. So not only time consuming but it can also be a bit of a drain on resources, because very often you then have to send two people so you get both sides.

### **Actuality Reporter Interviews Witnesses**

'It doesn't look like they're home.'

'When did it actually happen then?'

'I think it happened last night of early this morning. Apparently it was in full view of the neighbours. The neighbours actually saw him impaling his mother with this fork, garden fork. We're just going to find out across from...'

'...We don't know anybody....'

'I notice she broke into English a couple of times, why would she do that?'

'You sometimes, you express yourself better in a different language and you'll break into that language if you know the person you're talking to understands it. I obviously wouldn't, I wouldn't go and talk to her because I don't understand SePedi or Tswana or Zulu or Sesotho, but she does.'

'Even my brother doesn't know where I'm working. We haven't got any telephone number. ...'

'OK'

'We're still very new really...Thank you very much.'

### **M Tsedu**

English is one of those language that are understood by most of the people that we cater for number one but it also somehow escaped the legacy that Afrikaans as a language got itself saddled with being seen as the language of the oppressor. I don't know how English escaped that because the English were not necessarily freedom fighters for black people in this country.

### **Actuality Reporter Interviews Witnesses**

'Yeah well, the police instructed me I mustn't talk, but then you work together sometimes with the police. All I can tell you is that when my daughter came from the gym yesterday afternoon at quarter to six, she said "I see'd the neighbour boy sitting in the street with his bleeding hands and I think he was sitting here. The neighbour from next door came running when he heard the woman scream. Well, the son was killing her, you know. And we found the two dogs behind this wall lying neatly next to each other but stabbed to death with a garden fork, you know. And I found the gardener also totally motionless and ....'

'Where was the gardener?'

'He was in the garage, in the garage next to his bed lying on the floor.'

'... A little mirage, a little paradise and nothing happens and here you have a drama right on your doorstep, the worst thing you can image eh? This family crime is a tragic thing.'

'Thank you again, ma'am. Thank you, sir.'



## **Zanele Mngadi**

She was German and I'm Zulu and English is my second language and I think it's her second language as well so because we both have an understanding of the English language then it helped us communicate.

## **Milton Nkosi**

**Africa Bureau Editor, BBC News**

I think that English is increasingly dominating the international news channels because when we meet people in the townships, people who would be speaking Sesotho language, people would be speaking in Ndebele language or Shangan or Zulu or Xhosa. When they see that we are an international news team they immediately switch gear and they start speaking in English, however broken it may be but they try to convey their grievances or their story, try and tell it in such a way that we can understand it in the best possible way.

## **Narrator**

The role of English as a means conveying grievances beyond the narrower confines of South Africa's indigenous languages was crucial in the struggle against Apartheid. And even Afrikaaner leaders admit that the peaceful transition of government to the ANC would not have been possible without the lingua franca.

## **F W de Klerk**

Within the negotiation process English was really the fundamental tool of communication, so many of the leading ANC members have lived so long as they called it in exile that whatever knowledge they had of Afrikaans when they left flew out of the window. The result was that it was really the only language in which we could effectively communicate. It also became in the Government of national unity the only language, which all of us in the cabinet of National Unity could understand and therefore everything was done and is still being done to the best of my knowledge in English.

## **Njongonkulu Ndungane**

**Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town**

We have been very tolerant of a language that was used by our oppressors and colonizers has virtually become a lingua franca that although we are prisoners of history nevertheless we're not imprisoned by that history and so I think as a liberating factor in recognizing what is a useful tool and a useful medium for communication.

## **F W de Klerk**

The fact that English has for a century been one of the official languages in South Africa and that a very high percentage of all South Africans can speak or understand it, I think opens the doors to our country.

## **Milton Nkosi**

I doubt that South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki would have been the President if he could not speak English, you know. How would he have gone to the United

Nations and gave them the peoples' problems and grievances and struggles and conveyed that message of white oppression.

## **F W de Klerk**

The overwhelming majority of all South Africans realize that it's a world language. It's an important language especially in the economic field and the field of training and for that reason it is to the advantage of South Africa with its 11 official languages that English is one of them.

## **Narrator**

In many respects Europe has a similar problem to South Africa. The European Union is attempting to establish a political union out of nation states where linguistic traditions are even more deeply rooted. Operating with 15 official languages has created a translation culture of immense complexity.

## **David Crystal**

### **Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language**

When the European Union was just a small group of countries it was not difficult to maintain five or six languages. But once you get to eleven languages, or twelve or thirteen or fifteen and soon maybe twenty-one, and then maybe twenty-eight, and so we go on. Now you have real problems, it is absolutely impossible in financial, let alone practical terms, to have twenty equal languages. Equal in the sense that they are all co-equal officially. Often it's impossible to find translator pairs for all the languages of the European Union. And so you get the use of relay languages, you know somebody Greek translates into Finnish via English. You know, Greek into English, English into Finnish. And the problems going to get worse. Most people in the corridors of power in the European Union recognize the reality of the situation and use English.

## **Actuality Court of Human Rights**

'Madam President and distinguished judges of the honourable Court. It is a privilege for me to appear before you as a representative of the Turkish Government.'

## **David Crystal**

I remember being told a story once of an official World Bank meeting a few years ago, where everybody was being translated simultaneously by translators quite scrupulously until ten o'clock in the evening when the translators went off duty, their shift was over. The meeting was not over, so everybody just automatically switched into English and carried on the meeting thereafter. And this happens all the time.

## **Narrator**

This pragmatic acceptance of English as a useful working language, seems destined to continue in Europe, but its implications for the policy of linguistic equality are potentially grave.

## **David Crystal**

It's crucial now for the European Union to devise ways in which the languages of identity which are such an important feature of the Union, are given as it were equal prominence, are given a kind of status, a position which means that people can see that respect is being paid towards them and that they are being allowed to develop in the way that the individual communities want.

## **Narrator**

While the united states of Europe grapple with the rise of English, in America, the world's largest English speaking country, the language has had to weather the influx of millions of non-English speaking immigrants.

## **Bill Kretzschmar** **Linguistic Atlas Project, University of Georgia**

The statistics show that in the last decade or so we have half again as many Spanish speakers in the country as we used to. We have twice as many Chinese speakers or Korean speakers or Vietnamese speakers than we used to just in a relatively short period of time.

## **Mauro Mujica** **Chairman & CEO US English**

Once they become citizens they have the right to bring their relatives so there is a never ending group of people that are coming and they're mostly Hispanic, Spanish speaking and that's changing the entire South West.

## **Narrator**

The dramatic rise of Hispanic immigration into the United States threatens to change the linguistic character of the country, with a predicted 80 million Spanish speakers by the year 2050. This apparent move away from English is perceived by some Americans as a threat to nationhood and has given rise to the political lobby movement, US English.

## **Tim Schultz** **US English**

We have created a situation in the United States where in certain parts of the country you can come and really live without ever having to learn the English language and that's the first time in our history that that's really the case. There have always been pockets of immigrants around the country that come and for the first few years they're here, they sort of form little enclaves because that's where they're most comfortable and that makes sense. But what we're concerned about is that there is sort of an eternal or perennial situation where immigrants come, live, don't ever learn the language and ultimately what happens is the Balkanization of the United States.

## **Geoff Nunberg**

That's a completely absurd notion that America is becoming Balkanized. The first place the proportion of speakers of foreign language now, this is a quarter what it was at the turn of the 20th century. In fact, at the turn of the 20th century you

had large parts of America that were officially bilingual, not in the transitional way that we have in bilingual education programmes and so on but, there were cities that had two separate and distinct school systems. You could pass your life for one, two, three generations in one of the cities in the Midwest, in a farming community of Texas without ever having to use English.

### **Actuality US English Commercial**

'For generations people like me came to America and communicated with each other by using our common language English. But now bureaucrats think that they are helping by providing services in foreign languages. What they're really doing is they're taking away the incentives for immigrants to learn English. US English has over a million members saying we don't need to make our government multilingual, just help immigrants learn English...'

### **Mauro Mujica**

I'm asked all the time, why does an immigrant from Chile head an organization called US English and why am I trying to make English the official language. I am an American. I am not a Chilean American. I consider myself an American. I'm like millions of other people who came to the United States to become Americans. I know that the language of the country is English and to me it's important that we keep communicating with each other. Therefore I'm trying to make English the official language.

### **Pat Robertson**

#### **Founder & Chairman, Christian Broadcasting Network**

There's a movement in this country called "English Only" that I totally applaud. I think that a child, for example, of a Hispanic family is put into an English Immersion Programme they will pick the language up very quickly and then after that they can begin their regular courses in English. That in no way denigrates their cultural heritage or the fact that they might speak Spanish at home but I think that they will be condemned to be second class citizens in a predominately English speaking nation unless they learn the language. So if we're really compassionate for the Hispanic population we will insist that they learn English. We're not discriminating against them, we're helping them.

### **Tim Schultz**

We think the best way to prevent xenophobia is to welcome immigrants but to insist that they learn English quickly and that they become Americans and have their identity as Americans, not their identity as hyphenated Americans and not their identity as or worse as, you know, or as Italians or as Germans or as Mexicans. We think that when you get here your identity should be as an American.

### **Geoff Nunberg**

The countries of the English-speaking world have never defined themselves primarily in terms of language, certainly not in the official level. And my concern about the present movement is that it really seeks to redefine American identity, not in terms of a common commitment to a set of political values, what Jefferson called "The Great Experiment" but rather to make us a nation like every other nation like the Slovaks or the Czechs or the Croats and so on, defined a rather

narrow cultural and linguistic background and I think that's a terrible mistake and in a certain sense a betrayal of what Americas always stood for.

### **Actuality US English Commercial**

In some states you can take your drivers' licence test in as many as thirty three languages and you don't even have to understand English....so much for traffic signs. With over a million members US English is the largest organization trying to make English the official language of our government. Join us before it's too late....in the mean time may we suggest you look twice before crossing the street.

### **Mauro Mujica**

Unless you know English you're going to be frying eggs or parking cars in the United States. To get a decent job an immigrant or a person needs to speak English. And they're being told by their leaders, "No you don't need to learn the language of a country, we will take care of you. We'll give you what ever you need."

### **Actuality Festival**

'Buenos tardes, su nombre?'  
'Francisco Luque'

### **Teodoro Maus Mexican Consul General to Atlanta**

We know for a fact that the average day work of a Mexican labourer is 13 hours a day. They work in the most difficult jobs, and whoever wants for them to learn English after 13 hours a day of hard labour then to travel one hour to get to a school to study two hours, what I would wish them this that they would work 13 hours and then try to learn a foreign language.

### **Geoff Nunberg**

The first generation, the people who clean this building for instance, who come in the evenings with brooms to clean this building are people who are working nights, they're working with other Hispanics. They're living in largely Hispanic neighbourhoods. Some of them are undocumented and nervous about going to English classes and also it's just hard to learn a language very competently in the first generation. The second generation is the generation to watch.

### **Tim Schultz**

We believe that the moment they get here they ought to be taught English and that doesn't mean that they can never hear their native language in the classroom but it means that the overwhelming majority of their instruction is in the English language. Currently there are 25 states of our union that have an official English law. There's a 26th that has that issue on their ballot this November in Utah and we think that it will pass so we think that's an important step.

### **Teodoro Maus**

I got a call may be three or four days after that legislation passed from a court of law asking us for an interpreter. They had somebody who spoke Spanish, I said 'Well you know, we can't go against the law, you can't speak Spanish in the court.'

It's an English only state now' and he said, 'I don't give a damn about what laws are this or that we need somebody, you need to help this person, we need to understand what they're saying could you please send an interpreter'. It showed right away how ridiculous this thing was. What do you mean English only, what you need to do is communicate.

### **Geoff Nunberg**

The entire English Only movement is based on what is simply a canard, this idea that immigrants don't want to learn English or don't recognize its importance. They're not stupid.

### **Tim Schultz**

It's about the people of the country being united in spirit and if we don't have a common language and if we don't go in the direction of assimilation then we will not truly be a United States and that would sadden me and many Americans greatly.

### **Professor Thomas Patterson** **School of Government, Harvard University**

My own feeling is that, you know, that sense of diversity and equality in this country is strong enough that Americans are going to embrace it and at some point think it's a good deal. And you know we're also market place orientated enough so that if it improves our music and the food is better and there are places to go that are different and more lively and all of that and these are easy things for Americans to wrap their arms around.

### **Narrator**

The debate between Spanish and English in the United States is a clash between two of the world's major languages and neither's survival is seriously in question. However as languages like English, Spanish, Hindi and Chinese continue to grow, thousands of others face extinction.

### **David Crystal**

The figures vary a bit but people think there's something like 6000 or so languages in the world. Of these, half of those languages, some 3000 or so, are thought to be so seriously endangered that they are going to die out within the next 100 years. Some people think it's going to be less than that. Some people say it might be as little as 25%, some people say it's going to be as much as 80 or 80 per cent of the world's languages.

### **Narrator**

In Kyoto Japan, academics from around the world gathered to debate the issues surrounding this cultural catastrophe.

### **David Bradley** **La Trobe University**

People say that ninety per cent of the world's languages might disappear in the next hundred years. Now if it were the case that ninety per cent of plants or

ninety per cent of animal species were that threatened can you imagine what the ecological outcry would be? And yet this is something that's even more central to humanity. This is our concepts, this is our identity, this is our categorization, this is our knowledge of the world.

**Nicholas Ostler**  
**Foundation for Endangered Languages**

It's a very poignant situation and a lot of languages are inevitably going to die. We don't really know which ones those are and in, in, in these circumstances it really does depend on, on the response there is in different communities.

**Akira Yamamoto**  
**University of Kansas**

People say we don't need our ancestral languages. English is the language of opportunity. But when we go home you feel almost crying, because you can't communicate with your grandfather, grandmother, unless, you know, grandparents speak English.

**David Bradley**

English is the world's most dangerous language, because many countries are shifting educational system away from learning some language of the region towards learning English,.

**Actuality Language Conference**

'... where most of the people speak one language which is safe....!'

**David Bradley**

Every major national language is endangering the languages within that country.

**Actuality Language Conference**

'... that is why it is sometimes difficult for the people to realize the preciousness of using their mother tongue...'

**Danny Long**  
**Tokyo Metropolitan University**

Most of the languages that are endangered are endangered in the sense that they're about to disappear from the face of the earth. But the language that I'm dealing with is an indigenous language that's out on an island, the Boneen Islands in the middle of the Pacific. They're the descendants of Yankee whalers, and, European adventurers, who went there in the nineteenth century. And they speak English on the island and they use that as a part of their identity. So in this world where we think of English taking over the world and replacing all of these other smaller languages, and, and it is, and that's a real problem. And it's the irony in the situation is that to them in their small community English is their language and it's disappearing, it's being taken over by Japanese.

## **David Crystal**

The steamrollers that are crushing these languages are any dominant language that arrives in a country, in a culture where there are by definition minority languages threatened by that majority language. In South America, for example, the Indian languages have been dying for hundreds of years, not because of English but because of Spanish and Portuguese. And there have been lots of languages endangered by Arabic and Chinese and Russian and so on.

## **Nicholas Ostler**

Ultimately all the solutions are going to have to come from the willingness and the enthusiasm of the people in those different communities to go on rejoicing in their own traditions.

## **Narrator**

In this valley in Northern California, three native American tribes, the Hupa, Kuruk and Yuruk, are trying to preserve their individual languages against the depredations of English. These native languages, which have described a way of life for centuries, are now struggling to find a place in a world dominated by English.

## **Sarah Supahan Hoopa Elementary School**

All of the fluent speakers today, they're all in their 70s, 80s and some are still alive in their 90s. There was a tremendous gap there that the language was not passed on because of the efforts of the federal system to basically eliminate the Indian culture in the early part of the century.

## **Narrator**

In a deliberate attempt to destroy native American culture, Government policy compelled parents to send their children to so called 'Indian Boarding Schools', where under often cruel and abusive regimes they were systematically stripped of their culture, traditions and language.

## **Jimmy Jackson Tribal Elder**

I was one of them that was in this crowd that was playing marbles when a lady came out and told us, told I think it was one of the Hostler boys. He was talking in language and then she came out and say "Are you speaking your language?" He said, "yes" and he started to laugh. 'Well' she said "Next time I hear you talk that language I'll rub soap in your mouth" and that scared everybody, so we had no chance.

## **Narrator**

Although the boarding school system has long ceased, the damage to native languages has been devastating.



**Callie Lara**  
**Director, Hupa Language Programme**

When we look at the English language and what it has done for us and to us and the genocidal issues around the language because you take away the language you take away the heart so I think that there is a clash, it's a devastating clash and if we don't recognize that and start working towards building our own languages as a first language it's going to continue to be so.

**Keduescha Lara Colegrove**

I believe that the values that we speak of when we talk about the language, I think that they're eternal. You know as Hupa people we say '[Hupa phrase]' and that means 'I'm glad that you've done good by me' and that would be translated in the English language to mean 'Thank you'. That's one of our values that you are always giving and that you behave appropriately, you do what's expected of you and that's to be a good person and to be giving and to help your neighbour or to help your family member or somebody else that's in need and I think that those values are the values that are really inherent in the Hupa language.

**Silis-chi-tawn Jackson**

Our thought process is different, like there's no word for goodbye. We just say '[Hupa phrase]' 'I'll see you again' Our sense of direction is also different, we don't have a true East, West, North or South. Our directions are based on the river, up the river, down to the River, across the river, up hill, down hill. Like for East would be '[Hupa phrase]', up the river and up the hill.

**Danny Ammon**  
**Hupa Language Teacher**

The name of this place is Tark Lamithlene, the place where they stir up the acorns when they're cooking them. We used to have acorn ceremony, first acorns, and that was one of the ceremonies that were held here.....'Hojahonta', that's where like the little kids and women, they would sleep together in there. And then the 'Hojatique', the sweathouse, the men, older boys would sleep in there....My grandma, she was a fluent speaker, but she went to the Chimauiwa Indian Boarding School, it's kind of an horrendous story actually. They pretty much got it beat into them to not speak their language, so she didn't pass it on to my father, so I've been picking it up from elders that come to our class.

**Sarah Supahan**

You can preserve a language and you can document it, video tape, audio tape, write it down but all you're doing is preserving it for some study at some future point whereas communication means using it now, making it relevant to people here so that they use it every day.

**Callie Lara**

We have been trying to revitalize our language so that it's fluent in the homes and we started at a very young age. This process has only been going on for about twelve to fifteen years.

## Actuality Classroom

'Can you tell me what this is?'  
'Dog.' "Nokanaao.'  
'Good Tristin. And this one?'  
'Cow'  
'Mahdaholin'

## Sarah Supahan

The educational system of this country helped to squash languages and now here at least it's the same institution that is helping to bring it back which is a wonderful irony.

## K Lara Colegrove

What we try to teach our children and what we try to pass on is that when you know who you are, when you know where you come from and you can connect yourself with those people who've gone before you then you can do anything that you can succeed because you have a strong foundation. It's when you don't have that connection with your ancestors, when you don't have that connection with the land or that connection with this community here, that's when you have a difficult time going out into the dominant society and actually succeeding, because it's very different.

## Actuality Conversation with Students

'How long have you been learning the language Eric?'  
'I just started this year'  
'Is it difficult?'  
'It's difficult because, you know, it's pronounced different than English. You've got to learn new sounds and all that, but it's not really that hard. I like learning it because it's my language and it's where I'm from.'  
'It's our people's language and it's gone away, and we're trying to get it back, fighting to get it back. More people are starting to learn it.'  
'And do your family speak it?'  
'I try to teach them. They learn some quick, but still trying.'  
'And do you speak it with your friends now?'  
'Sometimes walking to the hall, say a couple of words'  
'I've been learning about ten years now'  
'Do you think you're going to attain fluency in the language?'  
Danny Ammon: 'I kinda go back and forth, sometimes I think I will and sometimes I think I won't, it's really difficult, it's a very difficult thing. Because it goes beyond just memorizing, you know, lists of words, you actually have to figure out a whole grammatical different structure. The way that we put things together in Hupa is nothing at all like English.'

## Actuality Classroom

'Today we're going to talk a little bit about numbers. Let's count.' 'dla, nahx, taq, dink, chubla, xohsta, xohkit, kenim, miqosta, minta. .... one more time'.

**Jacque Martins**  
**Hoopa Elementary School**

I'm teaching around 500 children. Some are very enthusiastic, others could take or leave it. It's only a half hour per week, per class, not enough time to learn a language.

**Jimmy Jackson**

We only teach it once, once a week. I would like to see it everyday. It's in the school but you've got to be fluent to speak that language. You get people that speak in here that really is not fluent. So that a lot of words that they use they don't pronounce them right, not the way we do.

**Jacque Martins**

It's very difficult to imitate the fluency and the exact dialect of a native speaker so we're imitating. We're imitators, but that's all we have.

**Callie Lara**

As long as we're here, as long as the valley is here, as long as our culture is alive, the language and teaching the language will be a part of what we do. Its out responsibility.

**Silis-chi-tawn Jackson**

If it's up to me this language is going to go on. Like I said I could be doing more but I have done a lot and I want the language to be more of a home setting when it's actually used in the home again. It would even be neat to have the tribe, have a bi-lingualism on the reservation, but that's going to take a while, that's going to take a lot of hard work but that's my goal.

**Jimmy Jackson**

If they work on it, the kids work on it, I think they can make it I'm quite sure. We did, I don't see why we're no different.

**Jacque Martins**

I'm hopeful but concerned, deeply concerned. Because if it doesn't happen within the next five years, we may very well lose our language with the exception of this our dictionary and I understand there are languages that can be revived by just the word but you know, how effective is that, without the speakers.