THE LANGUAGE REVOLUTION.

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In this book David Crystal examines the English language and its development in the whole world through time.

In the first chapter, called The Future of Englishes, Crystal talks about the Englishes, which are the different variants of English in different parts of the world.

First, he revolves around the present, throwing some data and some statistics of the English speakers whereas they are mother tongue speakers, or the ones who use it as a second language. He also talks about the concept of lingua franca and the specific development of the word through time; particularly since it arise in the 1950s. Then, Crystal moves into the past and explains the main reasons why English is so prominent currently.

I will try to keep it simple and give some examples. First, he mentions Politics, since the 85% of the official associations use English as the lingua franca to communicate and to write official documents, with the minor presence of French. Of course, politics status can be applied to Economics too, since the British Empire in the industry and trading spread in the nineteenth century. The Press comes later, and its reinforced support from the news agencies like Reuters, in London and arise of the New York Associated Press which transmitted the news through telegraph. Advertising could be considered as a modern thing, but it is not as such. During the nineteenth century, USA started the slogans and the famous and omnipresent “trade name”.

Broadcasting came a little bit earlier with the radio, and we have to take into account that the first language communicated by radio was English; as well as the first commercial radio station. Moving in the nineteenth century timeline, English became the celluloid leading language. Even now, English-language is still the most significant language in the cinematographic world. Same as Popular Music, since all the big companies of music had English-language origins and the Pop stars of USA and Great Britain have dominated the musical industry since the 1960s. We move then to the International travel and safety, but this is totally related to the fact that most of the countries have at least a basic knowledge English, if they are touristic countries, even more. Education and Communication come last. The reason of Crystal to add them is that in some areas as well as in the education business, English is essential and compulsory. Crystal also talks about the Net and how the protocols were first written in English alphabet.

In a new subdivision, he focuses on the fact that all users of English have the same right to use the language and add new words. “To have learned a language is immediately to have rights in it” he says. The future of English will depend not only on those who speak it as first language, but in the people who use it as a second language, and in the same measure.

The British English is now a smaller variant of World English, and even American English it is only spoken by the 15 percent of the speakers. Crystal explains then that every single variety of English develops its own language and vocabulary in the same way as English has always done, and it can even mix with another language, creating a certain kind of English. He mentions for instance, the Spanglish, Chinglish, and Denglish. This is an example of language diversification, and it is called Code-Switching, the switching from the linguistic system of one language or dialect to that of another (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2013).

Crystal also draws some parallels with Latin, and how the Vulgar Latin was kind of the Englishes of nowadays, and the development of the language came with the literature, as well as English. He talks about the centrifugal and centripetal force and how these forces are the main reasons why English will not have the same destiny as Latin, because Latin did not have these forces, being the main reason “people need to be able to understand each other, both within a country and internationally”. It’s true that English was originated in one place and then move in a circular path expanding from the center, but Latin lacked of the centripetal force, English being a way of grouping people together for a purpose.

Crystal also illustrates the three levels of English that I will only mention due the size of this essay: first, the base level or our family dialect; second, is the national variety of Standard English and the third level is the International Standard English.

In chapter 2 he starts talking about the borrowing of some words of other languages that have to exist since a language is always in contact with another. He clarifies “The more a language becomes a national, then an international, then a global language, the more it ceases to be in the ownership of its originators”. He also deals with the languages in danger and how one third of the languages have still not been documented. To help these languages next to extinction, it exists the revitalization process.

In chapter 3, we find the role of Internet and how the term “revolutionary” is often applied to it. Crystal discusses the controversial topic that when you are writing it is not the same kind of communication as when you speak. And the difference is that in writing communication you don’t have the face to face communication. He also explains the concept “framing”. Crystal reviews some of the new vocabulary that computers and internet users practice.

In chapter 4, the author tries to explain what is going to happen to languages, but first he makes a summary of all the points he had dealt with. He makes clear that languages change through generations; therefore, it is never the same as its predecessor. So, any approach to multilingualism has to take for granted that changing its part of it. Then, he moves to the death of languages, which the author thinks it’s caused because very few people are aware that many languages are indeed being less used and disappearing.

In the fifth chapter, he touches the language themes for the 21th century. It is worth mentioning his description of the “world of language” and the “Millennium Dome”, a space where everything would be devoted to the world of language, such as writing, speech, meaning and the study of language, and that project was not finished.

To sum up, Crystal makes pretty clear his point of view about English, and it’s quite optimistic about its future too. He considers that English will not have the same destiny as Latin, since English has forces that Latin did not have. Also, the world of internet is pushing and changing English quicker than ever, so it is not necessary to see the changes as something bad. He, indeed, thinks that language is underrated, and has to be taken into account because a great number of languages are disappearing.

For me, it was an entertaining book related to the expansion of English and its future. I focused more on the first chapters, since I think the Internet topic was fully explored in his other book, *Language and the Internet*. I have found quite interesting the concept of “world of language”, a place dedicated to the language, and the ideas of centrifugal and centripetal forces, which kind of reminded me of the wave theory, changings moving in a wave motion, expanded from a center.

On the other hand, I think Crystal repeats himself over the fact that English is changing and that changes have to be considered, this being the main point of focus of every chapter.

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