

English in Argentina: a sociolinguistic profile

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ABSTRACT: The status of English as a global language has made it not only widely available in Argentina but increasingly necessary to the average Argentinian as well. In the past decade those seeking a job or a promotion or those pursuing a graduate university education have become acutely aware that proficiency in English is an essential requirement. As a symbol of prestige and modernity, it has become a 'means of social ascension' (Friedrich, 2000: 222). This paper sets out to provide insight into the dimensions and dynamics of English in Argentina by drawing a sociolinguistic profile of this language in a South American setting. It begins with an overview of the languages and cultures represented in Argentina and the historical presence, contact and availability of English from the eighteenth century on. It describes the users and uses of English in terms of Kachru's (1992) framework, and Argentinian attitudes towards English. The sources of the availability and status of English are traced to the strong cultural legacy of the British which has influenced the teaching of English, its contemporary presence and prestige, and to the shift of economic power to the USA in tandem with developments in communication technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Argentina, situated in the southern cone of South America, is politically divided into 23 provinces, a National Territory and an autonomous city. Geographically, four distinct regions can be identified: the sub-tropical northeast plains, the Pampa, Patagonia, and the Andes. The mountains stretch throughout the entire length of the country and serve as a natural border with Chile to the west. Other bordering countries are Bolivia and Paraguay to the north, and Brazil and Uruguay to the east. In the countries bordering Argentina, Spanish has official status, except for Brazil, where the official language is Portuguese. Eighty-five percent of Argentina's 36,223,947 inhabitants (Ministerio de Economía INDEC, 2002), are of European origin, while only 15 percent are mestizo, that is, of European/Indian origin (Crystal, 1993). Over a third of the entire population lives in the capital city of Buenos Aires and its outskirts. Other densely populated areas are the cities of Rosario, Córdoba, and Santa Fe.

Argentina, as most Latin American countries, is a Spanish speaking country. The first Spanish settlers arrived in the sixteenth century. Because Argentina was a Spanish colony until 1816, the status of Spanish is that of a national (and official) language. Amerindian languages have become practically extinct and those that still exist are spoken in some remaining aboriginal communities in different parts of the country. These include Aymará, Araucano, Toba, Mataco and Guaraní – which belong to the Quechua family of languages, the official language of the Incas and now a lingua franca among the different aboriginal groups. Guaraní is spoken by approximately three million people, mainly by non-Indians in the Argentinian provinces of Misiones and Corrientes as well as in the Republic of Paraguay (Crystal, 1987: 323).

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The 3,761,274 square kilometers (1,452,229 square miles) of territory known today as Argentina was originally a Spanish colony: the Viceroyalty of the River Plate. After independence from Spain in 1816, the settlement of the vast Argentine territory began. An immigration policy was established with the hope that immigrants, from northern Europe in particular, would populate the interior and work the land. Contrary to what was expected, the immigrants came mainly from the south of Europe, primarily Italy and Spain. In the last decades of the nineteenth century 70 percent of the immigrants were of Italian origin, 15 percent were Spanish and smaller percentages were French, German, English, Lebanese, Syrian, Middle Eastern and Swiss (Gallo, 1990). In the early years of the twentieth century, the flow of immigration changed and the Spanish accounted for 60 percent of the immigrants (Luna, 1984a).

Between 1869 and 1947 the population increased nine-fold from 1,737,076 to 15,893,827 inhabitants, the greatest increase being in the 1880s (Gallo, 1990). Immigrants settled in different regions of the country, forming fairly closed communities that preserved their cultural identity. The non-Spanish speaking newcomers learned Spanish in order to communicate with the locals, their employers, or their customers (as many became traders), but maintained use of their mother tongue in the private domain. However, in most cases, after a couple of generations Spanish became the language of communication among the members of the community. In some remote and isolated locations it took longer.

Amongst the newcomers was a small percentage of speakers of English: Irish, Scots, Welsh, and English. The Irish, Welsh and the Scots came to Argentina escaping adverse conditions at home, and settled mainly in the countryside as farmers. The English came to work for the prosperous British companies that had set up business in Argentina, mostly as skilled labor for the railway, white-collar workers, and managerial staff, as will be illustrated below. They were few in number compared to the Italians and Spaniards, but their influence in the shaping of the new nation was immense.

ENGLISH PRESENCE AND CONTACT

English is now part of most of the population's everyday lives. Argentinians have more opportunities for contact with English through access to satellite and cable TV channels, of which most are broadcast in English, and might or might not be subtitled in Spanish. Technology, especially represented by computers, has put a large percentage of the population in contact with English. The use of computers and the Internet has become an essential tool in schools and universities and consequently has put students in contact with English given that a large portion of the information available on the web is in English.

Since the days of the Spanish Viceroyalty it has been used in the River Plate. In the early nineteenth century British merchants sold manufactured goods worth millions of pounds in the River Plate estuary and in the interior (Ferns, 1968). British presence in Argentina reached its peak towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. British investment was the largest during the first decade of the twentieth century (Luna, 1984b). Funds went mainly to diverse enterprises.

British stock companies bought large amounts of land and began a large scale farming business run by British administrators. The farms were mainly in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, and Patagonia, where surnames such as Bell, Casey, Duggan, Drabble, Lynch, Gibson, Fox, and Corbett were associated with farming in Argentina. Such was the

case of the Southern Land Co. that owned some 865,000 acres in the Patagonian provinces of Rio Negro and Chubut. Other companies were the Patagonia Sheep Farming Co., the Southern Patagonia Farming Co., and the South American Land Co. The Leach Argentina Estate had sugar plantations in the northern province of Jujuy. The Forest Land, Timber and Railway Co. owned over two and a half million acres of forest in the north of the province of Santa Fe, where they developed a strong wood and tannin industry.

In the 1890s Britain not only held most of Argentina's foreign debt (Dorfman, 1982) but it also owned four banks in Buenos Aires – London Bank, British Bank of South America, Anglo-Argentine Bank and English Bank – by means of which it played an important financial role in the city. By 1914, the railway system covered 35,500 kilometers (57,129 miles) of which over 80 percent was owned and run by British companies (Wright, 1974). The meat processing industry was another strong 'English speaking' business. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, British companies began developing a profitable meat industry, whose business was to export chilled and frozen meat to the UK. At the beginning of the twentieth century, US companies took over most of this business and, as the century progressed, US investment in Argentina gradually grew from 10 percent in 1910 (Phelps, 1938) to 42 percent in 1997 (Fundación Invertir Argentina, 2001). The main investments were in the automotive, oil, mining, chemical and consumer goods industries.

In 1918, the American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina was founded to represent the US business community. Its main function has been to support its members' efforts to build their companies and generate wealth for the country. With more than 600 corporate members it represents the American business presence in the country and accounts for most of the bilateral trade of more than 8 billion dollars and investment of more than 47 billion dollars in the period 1990–9 (American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina, 2002).

Despite the extent of US investment in Argentina, an American community never really developed. American families that came to Argentina did so for the term of their business contract. They lived primarily in the northern suburbs of the city of Buenos Aires and sent their children to the American school. In the last 20 years, the scenario has changed mainly because in the 1970s executives of multinational corporations and their families had become potential terrorist targets. Subsequently, American corporations have been inclined to appoint local (South American) managers who have been trained at the corporation's headquarters or other subsidiaries rather than transfer Americans and their families. For example, in the past 20 years S. C. Johnson & Son of Argentina has not had a single local American CEO, and IBM Argentina has had only one.

Although English is neither a national language nor an official language in Argentina, it is definitely the most important foreign language in the country. The English speaking community, though much smaller than the Spanish or Italian, had a social prestige and economic power that was incomparably superior. These powers reached their peak in the first half of the twentieth century when English speakers could be found all over the country (but not engaged in hard manual labor). They gathered in fairly closed communities and did not mingle much with the 'natives', as they contemptuously referred to the local middle and lower classes. They sent their children to British-model schools and attended their own private social clubs. When in need of medical attention they went to the British hospital, and when searching for news, they read the local English language newspapers.

Newspapers in English have had a long tradition in Argentina. The first Argentine

newspaper to be published in English was *The Standard and River Plate News*, published by M. G. and E. T. Mulhall from 1861 to 1959 with a sales circulation of 3,000. *The Buenos Aires Herald*, first published in 1876 by William Cathcart, is still published as a daily newspaper with a weekday sales circulation of 16,000. Its Sunday edition reaches some 18,000 readers. *The Buenos Aires Herald* once served mainly as a newspaper for the English speaking community and expatriates. In the last 15 years its role has changed by becoming more international and business-oriented in scope (Eayrs, 2000). Written in English, except for its very well-known editorial that is printed in Spanish as well as English, the *Herald* reports both local and international news, and includes sections on sports, the arts, and humor. Another of the English language newspapers is the *The Southern Cross*, first published by Dean Patrick Dillon in 1875 as a weekly and now published as a monthly paper with a sales circulation of 5,000. It is the newspaper of the Irish community in Argentina and primarily prints community news and events.

Theater in English has existed in Argentina since the British community began. British-model schools usually staged one play a year and theater groups did not take long in being organized. At present there are seven English speaking theater groups: the Acting Group, Actors Repertory Group, Artspot, The Buenos Aires Players, The Group, The Performers and The Suburban Players. The latter is the oldest and has the best reputation. These groups began as amateur groups whose purpose was to promote theater in English, the English language, and to have fun.

English was and is also present in sport. The foreign communities, especially the British, introduced most of the open field sports played in Argentina. The most outstanding example is football (soccer). Originally played by the employees of the British companies, it soon became the favorite sport of the Argentinians. Some of the most famous clubs still have British names: Alumni, Newell's Old Boys, Racing Club, River Plate, just to mention a few. Other sports introduced by the British were boxing, rowing, yachting, rugby, tennis, turf polo and golf (Luna, 1984c). Terms such as 'round', 'match', 'scrum', 'line-out', 'game', 'set', 'link', and 'green' and such names as 'Yacht Club Argentino', 'Tigre Boat Club', 'Buenos Aires Rowing Club', 'Buenos Aires Cricket and Rugby Club', 'Buenos Aires Lawn Tennis Club' reflect their British origin.

Contact with English has also been fostered by cultural associations, for example, the Instituto Cultural Argentino Norteamericano (Argentine North American Institute of Culture) and the Asociación Argentina de Cultura Inglesa (Argentine Association of English Culture), whose main purpose is the teaching of the English language and promoting the American and British cultures, respectively.

USERS OF ENGLISH

The status of English in Argentina is that of a foreign language. Therefore, Argentina belongs to the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1992). As other Expanding Circle countries, Argentina depends on the Inner Circle to provide the model of English to be used. Textbooks and material used in teaching English are published in the Inner Circle (mainly the UK), although a small number of the textbooks are written especially for the local education program.

One of the areas in which the users of English have increased the most is the business world. During the 1990s, Argentina offered one of the most attractive business environments in the region. Its economy was 'one of the most open in the world and one of the

most attractive for foreign investors' (Eayrs, 2000: 2), a situation that resulted in a considerable increase in international trade and investment in Argentina, most of which, as already mentioned, was American. This has brought about a greater demand for English. Employees of local companies are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to be able to communicate with foreign customers and/or suppliers. Some have to interact with company headquarters abroad, whether on the phone, via e-mail, or face-to-face, and English is necessary for regional and/or international meetings, in-service training, as well as international conferences. This has led to an increase in the number of English courses offered, which are either organized by the companies or taken by the employees privately. During the 1990s, most of the tuition was financed by the companies or corporations, further encouraging employees to learn English.

Another area in which the users of English have increased is education. In recognition of the importance of foreign languages, the Federal Law of Education (implemented in 1996) has made the teaching of a foreign language compulsory beginning in year four (age 9) of primary education. Fourteen of the twenty-three provinces have opted for English as the only foreign language to be taught. The provinces of La Rioja and Tucuman have chosen English and French, the province of Misiones, on the Brazilian border, prefers English and Portuguese. Another six allow schools to choose between English, Portuguese, and, in some cases, French. With the introduction of foreign language instruction in the fourth year of EGB (basic general education, or primary school), it continues throughout the rest of compulsory education (to year nine) and into Polimodal (three years of high school). Students are exposed to two contact hours of a foreign language a week. On average, students attend school for 38 weeks a year. Thus, in theory, they are exposed annually to 76 contact hours in the classroom. The first students to graduate from high school within the new education system will be doing so in 2004. This will considerably increase the number of potential users of English. Although English is not compulsory at most national universities, Argentinians seeking graduate or postgraduate degrees need to be proficient in English to gain admittance either to universities abroad or to some of the local private universities.

The teaching of English at schools has become so widespread that the main publishers that market EFL textbooks in Argentina have edited new course books especially to suit the needs of the EGB and Polimodal students which, according to Ministerio de Economía INDEC (1999), numbered 8,890,589.

There is yet another small group of users of English: the Anglo-Argentines who use English as a community language (see Cortés-Conde, this volume, for more on this community). They still regularly speak English at a number of locations and settings, which include community centres, the English Club and the American Club, Anglican and American community churches, the British hospital, the Argentine-British Community Council, the British and American Benevolent Society, the University Women's Club, a number of amateur theater groups, St. Andrews Society of the River Plate, amongst others.

Proficiency levels

Based on the present education system in which children learn English at school as part of the official curriculum, it could be argued, as Yong and Campbell (1995: 378) do when discussing English in China, that educational level is a 'valid indicator of English proficiency'. By the time students in Argentina have finished their basic general education

(EGB), they will have been exposed to English for approximately 458 contact hours. During high school they will have added another 228 hours. Therefore, by the time a student completes his or her schooling, he or she will have completed approximately 686 contact hours. This extent of contact and exposure in theory (but not taking into account the difficulty the individual learners may have), enables students to pass an English as a foreign language examination equivalent to a Cambridge Preliminary English Test. Although international assessment has no official recognition in Argentina, international EFL exams of the type of TOEFL, Cambridge PET, or the Michigan Test, to mention just a few, have a great deal of prestige among students and employers. Levels of proficiency are comparatively higher at bilingual schools than other school types because they offer students more contact hours per week. Consequently students attending these schools are able to pass higher level standardized international examinations.

USES OF ENGLISH

The use of English in Argentina is represented to some extent in each of the four functions of the Kachruvian framework: the interpersonal, instrumental, regulative, and innovative.

Interpersonal function

Due to the history of the English language in Argentina, it still retains a certain degree of the social prestige it enjoyed during the first half of the twentieth century. This symbolic function is mainly manifested in names of consumer goods, businesses, in advertising and fashionable expressions. Stanlaw (1987), when discussing English loan words in Japan, argues that they convey a connotation of sophistication and modernity, and that the advertising business makes the most of it. This argument holds for Argentina. Brand names of clothes (Kill, John L. Cook, Polo, Key Biscayne, and Legacy), consumer goods (Skip, Shout, Mr. Muculo); or businesses (Brand Point, The Kitchen Company, and Woodland) are just a few examples. Broadcast advertising and print ads often use catchy slogans in English, especially in the case of international brands. An example is Nike's 'Just do it', or, more recently, Toyota's 'New sensation' in promoting a new model Corolla.

Added to its historical prestige, the English language enjoys its global language status in Argentina as much as it does in the rest of the world, and as such serves as a link language. It is undoubtedly the language preferred by speakers of other languages when dealing with Argentinians.

With a varied and attractive climate and landscape, Argentina attracts a large number of international tourists, and, as in other domains, English is chosen for cross cultural communication when Spanish is not the shared language. Although Brazil is the most influential of Argentina's neighboring countries and its partner in MERCOSUR – the trade agreement among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay – few Argentinians speak or learn Portuguese. Exceptions are those in the province of Misiones on the Brazilian border where Portuguese and English are taught as foreign languages.

During the 1990s, due to national economic policy, traveling abroad was comparatively reasonable for Argentinians. Travelers, except those going to neighboring countries, would communicate to varying degrees of proficiency in English. The United States was a popular destination.

The interpersonal function is also achieved through media technology. English is used to access information on the Internet that is in English. Even those who use a language other than English for Internet communication still need some proficiency in English to navigate the net. Either cable or satellite television is present in most homes, giving access to several English speaking news, sports and movie channels, some of which are not subtitled, as is the case for BBC World, CNN, ABC News, and ESPN. Those with Spanish subtitles are E! Entertainment Television, Sony, HBO, Cinemax, Cinecanal, and People and Arts. Films at movie theaters are subtitled – only those intended for children or young audiences are dubbed into Spanish. Music has also contributed to the interpersonal function via many of the songs broadcast on FM radio stations – whether soul, jazz, pop, disco or rock to mention a few – that have lyrics in English, which are enjoyed by people of different age groups.

Instrumental function

In Argentina English is used as a medium of instruction in a range of school types: British-model schools, bilingual schools, American schools, EFL courses, teacher training colleges, and graduate and post-graduate courses at university.

British-model schools. British-model schools have a long tradition in Argentina with the first, St. Andrew's Scots School, founded in 1838. These institutions started as schools for the children of the British community who could not afford or did not want to part with their children by sending them 'home', i.e. to England, Scotland, or Ireland for their education. English was not considered a foreign or even second language in these schools since the children had all their instruction in English, the language already spoken at home. Whether boarding schools or day schools, teachers were brought on contract from Britain and a curriculum set up based on the Cambridge Examinations for Overseas Students; students sat for their 'O' Level, Subsidiary, and 'A' Level exams, which would enable them to attend university back in Britain. Students attended either the full curriculum, i.e. the English medium curriculum and the Spanish curriculum (official), or the English medium curriculum only, the latter of which was more common among the female students.

Today students at these schools attend courses that lead to the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education and Advanced International Certificate of Education examinations, go on for the International Baccalaureate, or any combination of these. Nowadays these British-model schools are highly prestigious day schools, and tuition is so expensive that only those parents in the highest socioeconomic classes can afford to send their children to them for an education. Headmasters or headmistresses and a segment of the middle and high school teachers are expatriates. This tradition differentiates the British-model schools from the newer bilingual schools.

Bilingual schools. The success and prestige of the British-model schools has been so great that bilingual schools based on this archetype have flourished over the past decade and a half. They offer an English medium curriculum in the morning or the afternoon and the Spanish (official) curriculum in the other half of the day. The English curriculum includes subject areas other than English language. Teachers at bilingual schools are local, but the teaching material they use comes from Inner Circle countries.

American residents have their own school for their children. The Lincoln School, founded in 1936, is a private, coeducational day school which offers an academic program from pre-school education (age three) through grade 12 for students of all nationalities.

The school year comprises semesters extending from early August to late December and from mid-February to mid-June, which differs from the official Argentinian school year that extends from March to December. The Lincoln School has recently added a Spanish curriculum alongside the English medium curriculum. Its teachers in the middle and high school are mostly American expatriates, and the school has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States since 1939, which qualifies graduates for colleges and universities in the United States.

Private language schools. Outside the bilingual school system, a very large sector of private language institutes offer programs to students of all ages. Varying in frequency and duration, they are generally based on the language courses marketed by the English language teaching publishing houses. Some of the best known international EFL institutions in Argentina are Berlitz, ELS Language Centers, Fisk, International House, and The Wallstreet Institute. Their main objective is the teaching of English as a foreign language, though some of them are known to have organized TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) methodology courses in addition to literature seminars and workshops. These institutions claim that their teachers are native speakers of English.

There is also a network of about 30 Argentine-British Cultural Institutes, known as the 'Culturas' that function independently. They are situated in the major cities of the country and function as EFL centers that offer English courses – at varying degrees of quality – as well as other cultural activities in English. The Asociación Argentina de Cultura Inglesa (Argentine Association of English Culture) founded in 1927, whose main objective is the teaching of the English language and promoting British culture, works with the support of the British Council office in Argentina.

Another respected institution is the Instituto Cultural Argentino Norteamericano (Argentine North American Institute of Culture), best known as 'ICANA', founded in 1927 with the purpose of teaching English and stimulating the cultural and educational exchange of teachers and students. ICANA works in close connection with the US Embassy in Argentina and, since 1997, runs the Lincoln Center Library – formerly a unit within the US Embassy – which is one of the most prestigious English language libraries in the country due to the diversity of material it contains.

All of these institutes offer a variety of courses to students of different ages and with different interests and needs. These courses generally lead to an international EFL examination, among which a variety of British and American exams are available in Argentina. The British examinations include the East Anglia Examination Syndicate, the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate, Edexcel International, the Institute of Linguistics, Oxford Examinations Board, Pitman, and Trinity International Examination Board. American examinations, taken under the supervision of ICANA, are such English competency exams as ECCE (Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English), ECPE (Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), and TSE (Test of Spoken English). American graduate school examinations, such as GMAT (Graduate Management Aptitude Test) and GRE (Graduate Record Exam), can also be taken.

Higher education. English is also used as a medium of instruction at a great many colleges and universities that train teachers of English, translators and interpreters. Private

universities belong to a number of international student exchange programs, many of which require English as the language of communication. Specific language courses have been organized to satisfy the students' requirements. Agreements between local and foreign universities have enabled students to obtain degrees that are valid in more than one country. In this case students attend classes in Argentina and go abroad for part of their tuition, or professors from the foreign universities deliver their lectures in Argentina. If Spanish is not the common language, the lectures are mostly in English. Some French universities use only French or at least prefer it as the medium of instruction.

Regulative function

Foreign investment in Argentina has generated an enormous number of business and commercial contracts and agreements. The official language in Argentina being Spanish, all contracts must be in Spanish. In 1973, Congress passed a law creating the Buenos Aires Sworn Translators Association. Sworn translators have to register with the Association. To be legally valid in Argentina, all documents have to be translated into Spanish by a sworn translator and the translator's signature on the document has to be legalized by the Translators' Association. Whenever a non-Spanish speaker has to appear in court or make a deposition, a sworn translator is called in to perform the court interpreting. The need for sworn translators has given rise to a university career that trains students in legal matters as well as the foreign language. There are over 16 universities in Argentina that train students to become sworn translators of English.

Innovative function

Borrowings from English and their nativization are frequent. Computer technology is basically English. Terms such as 'mouse', 'pad', 'printer', 'scanner', 'CD', are used with their local pronunciations i.e. /maus/pad/printer/eskaner/. Other English terms frequently used locally are 'shopping' for a shopping mall (pronounced /ʒopin/), 'mailing' for a mailing list, 'sale' for an end of season sale, 'pub' for a bar (pronounced /pab/), and 'country' for a country club (pronounced /kantri/), just to mention a few. Football (soccer) terminology is a typical example of nativization of words. As mentioned before, 'fútbol' (as it is written in Spanish) was introduced by the British and soon became the most popular sport in the country. The English terms are still used with local pronunciation – /refèri/ 'referee', /orsaid/ 'offside', /fu:l/ 'foul play', /gol/ 'goal', /lineman/ 'linesman' – instead of the respective Spanish equivalents; 'árbitro', 'posición adelantada' 'falta', 'gol', and 'juez de línea'.

ATTITUDES

Given its historical presence in Argentina, English is still considered a prestigious language. There is little real feeling that English, or any other foreign language, might endanger Spanish or Argentinian culture. There are of course isolated cases that cry out against the spread of English, like that of the mayor of Escobar, a city neighboring Buenos Aires, who banned English – and all other foreign languages – from all billboards, posters, or signs in streets or commercial areas. (See Friedrich, this volume, for an account of MBA students' attitudes.)

Due to its global status, English is undoubtedly recognized as the language of international communication and consequently seen as a 'social and economic mobilizer'

(Yong and Campbell, 1995: 384). The belief is that the higher the proficiency level, the better the chances of getting a job (or a better job). People who are proficient in English are seen as having an advantage over others. At the time of writing, in a depressed Argentinian economy with 21.5 percent of the population unemployed and 12.7 percent underemployed (Ministerio de Economía, 2002), this is not necessarily so. Learning English is perceived as a must, but not necessarily enjoyed. English is compulsory at school and it is seen as necessary in seeking further university education. At universities the English language courses are the most popular of the foreign language courses.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly the historical and socioeconomic status allotted to English is related to Britain's economic power at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. In that period, English was used not only by the powerful British community, but was also learned by members of the upper classes who could afford to pay the high costs of private tuition. As the power of the British community declined after World War II, improved communication technologies aided in spreading English around the world and its becoming what is often described as a 'global language'. In the process, affordable and accessible English instruction became more available to the middle classes particularly through English as a foreign language centers or language institutes that opened in Buenos Aires and the major cities. Since the implementation of the Federal Law of Education, English is available to all socioeconomic classes, as even the poorest schools in the country have to comply by including a foreign language in their curriculum. Consequently as of the year 2004 there will be greater numbers of users of English and, more significantly, these users – all trying to ascend the social ladder – will come from different socioeconomic classes.

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