TRANSCRIPT

Richard: I've come here to the British Council who work hard to build cultural relations between Britain and the rest of the world, and the English language is a big part of that. Let's find out more.

The British Council provides resources for people learning English, and also teachers of English. Martin Peacock is the Director of Global English Product Development.

Richard: Martin, tell me about English as a global language.

Martin: OK, well many people talk about English as being a global language. And the reasons for that are the widespread use of English. It's used in education, it's used in science and technology and, importantly, English is also used in business.

Richard: Are there many global languages?

Martin: Well, no, not really. I mean there’s ‘the’ global language which is English in the sense that English is used in these many different contexts; there’s only one. There are other languages which are used very widely and spoken by many people in many different places: Cantonese, for example, a variant of Chinese, is spoken in many different places so it's global in a geographic sense and it can be global in the numbers, but in terms of the use in different areas of education, science, research, English is the only global language.

Richard: Are there different types of English?

Martin: Well, yes, there are lots of different types. There's different accents of English. I come from the North of England, where I have a particular accent. So within England itself, within the UK, there are many variations in English pronunciation and that extends globally, so you see English in America and used in Australia, which is different in accent and also in usage as well.

Richard: And what about the impact of technology on a language?

Martin: In the past, new words were coined by people - it might have been in a speech or a newspaper article or in a book - they were written down and then other people adapted them and used them and that could be quite a slow process and new words might come into a language over a long period: 10, 20 years. So technology allows languages to evolve much more quickly.