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## **BRIDGING CULTURES: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN HISTORY AND SOCIETY**

Introduction. Language is one of the most important communication tools in our lives. An integral part of our existence, it expresses the culture and ethnicity of a specific territory's people (often a country). It allows us to communicate with each other, share our feelings, desires and intentions. Language can also be powerful information weapon that, used to manipulate or subjugate people's thoughts.

The purpose of the work is to investigate the history and changing popularity of languages during the 20th and 21st centuries. It examines the reasons behind a language's rise to prominence, focusing on the case of English surpassing French.

The methods for spreading a language range from forced learning to voluntary adoption. Throughout history, conquerors violently imposed their culture and language on conquered territories [1]. However, language can also be a bridge, facilitating communication with a wider range of people. This ability to connect across cultures is a powerful tool for fostering understanding and cooperation. We can observe how languages have flourished through trade routes, artistic movements, and technological advancements. By examining these historical trends, we gain valuable insights into the factors that influence the spread and decline of languages.

Let us turn our focus to the European continent, a fascinating tapestry of languages. Here, we find a remarkable phenomenon: a large share of European languages share a common ancestor – Latin. This linguistic lineage is evident in languages like Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian. However, languages are not static entities. Over time, the influence of historical events and

the passage of time itself can cause the prominence of certain languages to wane. Languages are constantly evolving, mixing with each other, and even giving birth to entirely new tongues. This dynamic process of change is a hallmark of human communication.

French, for example, enjoyed remarkable relevance during the Middle Ages. This influence continued from the 17th century through the 20th century, permeating all spheres of life – diplomacy, art, and science – and reaching its peak during the French Kingdom’s reign. Speaking French was a mark of prestige, signifying wealth, status, and belonging to the bourgeois elite. Authors of the time often incorporated French phrases into their works to convey sophistication and elegance. William Shakespeare, for instance, frequently employed French terms and expressions, even in his famed tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* [2]. Consider the inclusion of phrases like “mon amour” (my love), “je t’aime” (I love you), “je suis fou de toi” (I am crazy about you), and “dans tes bras” (in your arms). These French additions served to heighten the romantic atmosphere of the scenes.

The mid-20th century witnessed a decline in the popularity of French, particularly following World War II [1]. As the United States and the United Kingdom rose to prominence in the political and economic spheres, their influence permeated all aspects of life. French, with its perceived difficulty compared to English, became a less pressing priority. The tide shifted towards mass English language learning, solidifying its position as the language of international relations. This shift can be partly attributed to the relative ease of learning English. Furthermore, proficiency in English grammar is believed to facilitate the acquisition of other languages. This perception has led to a societal emphasis on early childhood English language education, often seen as a marker of education and social status.

The pervasiveness of English is undeniable, readily encountered in music, literature, and even casual conversation. It has become commonplace to hear speakers integrate English words into their native language, or adopt them

entirely. Examples include terms like “ex-president” (replacing “ex-former” or “past”), “coach” (instead of “trainer”), “startup”, and “case”.

Conclusion. History demonstrates that language prominence can shift alongside political and economic power. The case of English underscores how factors like ease of acquisition, prestige, and a vast speaker base can propel a language to global prominence. Despite this, both French and English retain their inherent beauty and melodic qualities.

#### REFERENCES

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