

“Task 2 Academic - English-Medium Universities” @ <http://www.youtube.com/ESL4free>

It is an excellent development that universities in many non-English-speaking countries use English as the medium of instruction.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your knowledge and experience.

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### MODEL RESPONSE

I am very doubtful whether it is a good idea that universities in countries that do not use English as a mother tongue should offer courses that are taught using English. I think there could be some benefits but these are more likely to be cancelled out by the drawbacks.

I am aware that it is a trend in some countries to offer degree courses that are taught in English and I think I can understand some of the reasons that are advanced for this. Our world is global which means that most trade is not confined to national borders and mobility of labour is transnational too. Therefore, there is a great need that people think and work in the language of international commerce which is English. No other language comes

anywhere near its usefulness in its global spread and sheer volume of speakers. The argument is that if young graduates are fully conversant in English it will give them and their own societies a great advantage when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge. Naturally, if university students are functionally bilingual, they will benefit from being able to read all kinds of books written in English without the need to wait for translations into their own language.

However, I feel that there are significant disadvantages to studying at an advanced level in a language that is not your own. Principally, it sends out the message that in some way the language of the country is not adequate for the purpose of tertiary education. I believe that is a grave mistake because all languages are capable of expressing finer shades of meaning that our modern world requires. Why cannot students study degrees in their own language but use their additional knowledge of other languages to help them? I know certain universities in Northern Italy that have switched some courses to English which I feel discriminates against competent students who do not happen to have a very good command of the English language. The Italian language is being subordinated to a foreign language. If this trend continues, it might damage the education of young Italians.

Overall, I see this as a dangerous development because its consequences might not become apparent for many years. My guess is that levels of education will drop because some university students will not be able to cope with the demands of a second language.