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Bragg's Book on English Is Translated to Russian

By Breffny Morgan

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British media personality Melvyn Bragg arrived in Moscow last week to launch a Russian retranslation of his classic book "The Adventure of English," a fast-reading but extensively researched tale of how the English language evolved from the vocabulary of a small group of tribes into the lingua franca of international business.

"It is no longer the English language, I think. It is still English, but it is now a world language, and more, many more people speak it who are not English than who are English, and they often speak it better," Bragg said about the internationalization of English.

Lord Bragg — ennobled in 1998 — is the author of over thirty books, the presenter of "The South Bank Show" for ITV/SkyArts, and on the BBC he is the host of "In Our Time," a weekly hit show about the history of ideas.

The book launch accompanied a roundtable conference hall discussion about cross-border

communication. "In the television films that I made about artists ... These have gone around the world and they've been translated, dubbed, and reached other countries, just as the work of other countries has reached our country," Bragg said. "And that too is an example of cross-border communication. I'm in a rather lucky position, that, by chance, the language that I speak is now being taken over by the world."

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Johan Nordstrom from the Education First company was also in attendance and commented on the spread of the English language: "What we see in a lot of organizations right now is that English-language training is going from being a perk, something nice, to something necessary ... To something strategic."

Bragg's book gets to the bottom of how this happened. It also addresses what English is: its components, its character — in short, a biography of the language. Bragg narrates how English developed through invasions, ideology and commerce, and how it continues to spread and permeate the world.

However, though the English-language can be said to permeate, Bragg notes that the notion of English dominance must be avoided. After all, the book is being reprinted into Russian for a simple reason: Russians aren't going to stop speaking Russian any time soon, and nor should they! The Cyrillic alphabet will of course persist in the world, as will many of the myriad native languages and dialects.

This book, in its present local Russian retranslation, stands to be a great study companion for native Russians, adding a bit of character and backstory to the relationship embarked on between a student and their new language.

The book launch was part of the fourteenth annual Russia & CIS HR Directors Summit, a two-day event populated by board members of LUKoil, MTS, and others. All of whom, and nearly everyone else present, were able to switch from their native languages and converse in English instantly and almost flawlessly. Here in Russia, the adventure of English continues.

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