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denied. The death of even a single individual was experienced as a community loss and the community rallied to help the bereaved family. Popular belief in an afterlife was reflected in the inscriptions on gravestones, which also stressed physical decay, the brevity of life, and the grim certainty of death.

From the mid-18th to the mid-19th centuries, however, Americans became more attached to life and less certain of an existence after death. The dead were not so readily relinquished as before; spiritualism came into vogue. Death was sentimentalized and made less morbid: cemeteries were landscaped; cemetery art, formerly of skull-and-crossbones severity, became cherub-and-flowers poetic; embalming came into practice; and mourning jewelry was popular.

Since the end of the 19th century, which marked the beginning of the third phase, increasing attachment to life has been accompanied by urbanization, by rapid advances in medicine, and by an increasingly temporal outlook. Americans are less and less willing to involve themselves in death and dying. People are allowed to die in institutions and to be buried under unadorned, uninscribed tombstones. There is often no sense of community loss. Our secular society no longer believes in the certainty of afterlife, so natural death and physical decomposition have become too horrible to contemplate or discuss.

Jackson sees hints in recent months of a renewed willingness to discuss death in the United States. Whether or not this marks the start of a new era, he says, depends on our ability to recognize that death, even of a single individual, has significance and dignity.

Lingua Franca Spoken Here

"English Dethroned" by S. Frederick Starr, in *Change* (May 1978), NBW Tower, New Rochelle, N.Y. 10801.

The remarkable predominance of English as a world language has seriously discouraged foreign language study in the United States. There are signs, however, that the use of English may be waning, says Starr, secretary of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies.

Beyond its strength as a native language (of 350 million people), English is an official language in numerous countries where it is not commonly spoken by the population at large. It is the world's leading second language, promoted by school systems in many countries. In the non-English-speaking world—excluding China—71 million of the estimated 93 million secondary-school students are studying English.

As a lingua franca, English is used by Japanese airline pilots seeking landing instructions at Paris and by Chinese technicians working on projects in Tanzania. It is the premier language for research in the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. More than 50 percent of world scientific research is published in English.

But Starr argues that this dominance is unlikely to endure. Not only is the birthrate of native English-speaking peoples declining, but

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former colonies are abandoning English as an official language because it tends to perpetuate the notion of educated, cosmopolitan elites and impedes vertical integration of economic classes. In Tanzania, for example, use of Swahili is spreading at the expense of both lesser local dialects and English; the same is happening in Nigeria with Hausa.

Meanwhile, America's growing dependence on foreign raw materials and markets provides an economic incentive for foreign language study in this country. American businessmen abroad already find it profitable to use local languages even when their hosts have a nominal command of English.

It is difficult to predict where and how much the use of English will decline, says Starr. But Americans should prepare now for a world of linguistic egalitarianism.

PRESS & TELEVISION

Was Agnew Right?

"What the *Times* and *Post* Are Missing,"
by Nick Kotz, in *The Washington Monthly*
(Mar. 1977), 1028 Connecticut Ave. N.W.,
Washington, D.C.

More than 1,200 newspaper reporters are accredited to cover the activities of Congress and the federal government in Washington, but only a small fraction of them work for newspapers that are read regularly in Washington or New York. To a remarkable degree, says Kotz, a prize-winning former Washington reporter, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* dominate the treatment of news. They shape the agenda, not only for the Manhattan-based television networks and weekly newsmagazines, but also for the hundreds of papers that subscribe to the *Times* or *Post-Los Angeles Times* news services.

According to Kotz, Washington correspondents for the so-called "provincial press" complain that their reporting, some of it exclusive and worthy of national attention, "seldom becomes a major part of the political chemistry that occurs in the interaction between the federal government and the press."

Even their important exposés, such as a 1975 *Des Moines Register* series on abuses in the nation's multi-billion dollar commodity exchanges, have trouble getting broad visibility. The local-minded regional bureaus of the AP and UPI wire services seldom pick up such stories to send back to Washington and New York so politicians and other newsmen can read them and react.

Without better monitoring of the provincial press by all the news media, says Kotz, there will continue to be some truth in former Vice President Spiro Agnew's charge that the newsworthiness of a given event is determined by a few eastern newspapers.