Why are more African countries adopting English as an official language?

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English: a world language

[Politics]
- 85% of international organizations use English as official language
- official working language of most international political gatherings

[Economy]
- The “global language of business”

[Academia]
- Language of majority of academic publications—80-90%! 
Language in Africa

- **800** languages
- About **50** African languages have more than **500,000** fluent speakers
Tanzania

Patrick in Tanzania
Ethiopia
Why English?

- **Language of Commerce**
  - International trade
  - International tourism
  - Foreign Investment

- **Regional Trade & Relations**
  - Cuts through linguistic & cultural barriers

- **Language of Unity**
  - Rwanda post-genocide
  - South Sudan after independence
English & Education in Africa

- Most African Universities teach in English
- Secondary...or younger?
- Examples:
  - Rwanda
  - Ethiopia

*SHARED UNDERSTANDING* of importance of English language acquisition
English & Education in Africa

- “Local Buy In”
  - Somalia
  - Mother tongue instruction as “second class”
- 2005 Pan African reading conference
- Limited educational resources in mother tongue
  - 800 languages!
Books For Africa Case Study

Photo: Betty Press
Books For Africa Container Shipments and Shipping Grants (1990-2013)

- Containers Shipped (BFA Warehouse)
- Shipping Grants
Books For Africa Case Study

- BFA is demand driven and the demand is increasing
- Increased shipments to Rwanda since 2008
- 21% of countries served by BFA do NOT use English as an official language
- Demand in traditionally French speaking nations
  - Burundi
  - Cameroon
Negative Implications

- Language of Imperialism?
- Loss of cultural identity
- Loss of local & tribal languages
- Imperfect education
Conclusions

1. There is a growing demand for English language usage across Africa
2. This demand is going to stick around
3. There are some negative consequences