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### **New book examines why English is such a prominent yet elusive language**

PITTSBURGH—English has become the language of choice for global economic, political, and cultural exchange. Many developing nations, as well as former Soviet bloc countries, have little choice but to “buy into English” as a path to progress. However, as Catherine Prendergast reveals in her new book, investing in English has not always been easy and has often disappointed expectations.

In *Buying into English: Language and Investment in the New Capitalist World*, Prendergast presents a fascinating study of how language lives in the imagination as much as in the world. Based on extensive fieldwork in Slovakia, she offers an astute analysis of the factors that have made English so prominent and yet so elusive. Prendergast deconstructs the myth of guaranteed viability for new states and economies through English.

“My book reveals the human toll of the worldwide chase to learn English,” Prendergast explains. “I am correcting the flawed notion that the global spread of English will result in a universally intelligible, useful, and beneficial lingua franca.”

*Buying into English* chronicles Prendergast’s experiences of teaching English in Slovakia after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In many cases, she was the first American her students had ever met. She was traveling in Slovakia “at the millennial moment, when America and English had lost their status as global beacons of freedom,” she states.

Prendergast is professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of *Literacy and Racial Justice: The Politics of Learning after Brown v. Board of Education*.

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