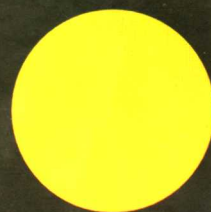




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# 英语的未来？ The Future of English?

(英国) David Graddol 著

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# The Future of English?

A guide to forecasting the popularity of the  
English language in the 21st century

David Graddol

## What is this book about?

This book is about the English language in the 21st century: about who will speak it and for what purposes. It is a practical briefing document, written for educationists, politicians, managers – indeed any decision maker or planning team with a professional interest in the development of English worldwide.

*The Future of English?* takes stock of the present, apparently unassailable, position of English in the world and asks whether we can expect its status to remain unchanged during the coming decades of unprecedented social and economic global change. The book explores the possible long-term impact on English of developments in communications technology, growing economic globalisation and major demographic shifts. *The Future of English?* examines the complex mix of material and cultural trends which will shape the global destiny of the English language and concludes that the future is more complex and less predictable than has usually been assumed.

The book has been commissioned by the British Council to complement the many texts already available about the teaching and learning of English, the history and development of English and the diversity of forms of English worldwide. It is intended to stimulate constructive debate about

the future status of English which can inform policy developments both in the British Council and other organisations concerned with the promotion of English language teaching and learning.

The book is divided into five main sections, each followed by a summary of main points and references. The first section explains how English came to reach its present position in the world. Section two examines techniques of forecasting, identifies the patterns which underlie typical linguistic change and describes the way large corporations have used 'scenario planning' as a strategy for coping with unpredictable futures. Section three outlines significant global trends which will shape the social and economic world in the 21st century. Section four discusses the impacts these trends are already having on language and communication in everyday life.

The last section summarises implications for the English language and outlines ways in which we might reach a better understanding of the status which English will hold in the 21st century world. This concluding section also argues for a reassessment of the role played by British providers of ELT goods and services in promoting a global 'brand image' for Britain.



# Overview

English is widely regarded as having become the global language – but will it retain its pre-eminence in the 21st century? The world in which it is used is in the early stages of major social, economic and demographic transition. Although English is unlikely to be displaced as the world's most important language, the future is more complex and less certain than some assume.

## Why worry now?

Why worry now about the global future of the English language? Is it not the first language of capitalism in a world in which socialism and communism have largely disappeared? Is it not the main language of international commerce and trade in a world where these sectors seem increasingly to drive the cultural and political? Has it not more cultural resources, in the sense of works of literature, films and television programmes, than any other language? Is it not, as *The Economist* has described it, 'impregably established as the world standard language: an intrinsic part of the global communications revolution'? (*The Economist*, 21 December 1996, p. 39) Isn't it obvious, in other words, that the English language will continue to grow in popularity and influence, without the need for special study or strategic management?

The simple answer to all these questions is probably 'yes'. There is no imminent danger to the English language, nor to its global popularity – a fact which is recognised by the majority of people who are professionally concerned with the English language worldwide (Figure 1). The press release for the launch of the British Council's English 2000 project in 1995 summarised the position of English:

World-wide, there are over 1,400 million people living in countries where English has official status. One out of five of the world's population speak English to some level of competence. Demand from the other four fifths is increasing. ... By the year 2000 it is estimated that over one billion people will be learning English. English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising.

## Fin de siècle

The position of English as a world language may seem to be so entrenched and secure that agonising over 'where we are' and 'where we are going' might be regarded as no more than a fin de siècle indulgence. The end of the 19th century was characterised by much heart searching over the state of society – evident in social behaviour and experimentation, fiction, scientific writing and legislative reform – prompted by a concern at the social consequences of the industrial revolution. How much greater might be the mood of self-reflection at the end of a millennium, when the communications revolution and economic globalisation seem to be destroying the reassuring geographical and linguistic basis of sovereignty and national identity. How many titles of social and economics books include the word 'end' or the prefix 'post': 'post-modernism', 'post-capitalism', 'post-feminism'. There is a general awareness of change, but no clear vision of where it may all be leading. It seems we are not yet living in a new era, but have fallen off the edge of an old one.

## A world in transition

But there are reasons why we ought to take stock and reassess the place of English in the world. The future of the English language may not be straightforward: celebratory statistics should be treated with caution.

This book examines some facts, trends and ideas which may be uncomfortable to many native speakers. For example, the economic dominance of OECD countries – which has helped circulate English in the new market economies of the world – is being eroded as Asian economies grow and become the source, rather than the recipient, of cultural and economic flows. Population statistics suggest that the populations of the rich countries are ageing and that in the coming decades young adults with disposable income will be found in Asia and Latin America rather than in the US and Europe. Educational trends in many countries suggest that languages other than English are already providing significant competition in school curricula.

*The Future of English?* identifies such significant global trends – in economics, technology and culture – which may affect the learning and use of English internationally in the 21st century. We suggest that the close of the 20th century is a time of global transition and that a new world order is emerging. The period of most rapid change is likely to last about 20 years and can be expected to be an uncomfortable and at times traumatic experience for many of the world's citizens. During this period, the conditions will be established for more settled global relations which may stabilise about 2050. Hence the next 20 years or so will be a critical time for the English language and for those who depend upon it. The patterns of usage and public attitudes to English which develop during this period will have long-term implications for its future in the world.

In this book we argue that the global popularity of English is in no immediate danger, but that it would be foolhardy to imagine that its pre-eminent position as a world language will not be challenged in some world regions and domains of use as the economic, demographic and political shape of the world is transformed.

## A language in transition

As the world is in transition, so the English language is itself taking new forms. This, of course, has always been true: English has changed substantially in the 1500 years or so of its use, reflecting patterns of contact with other languages and the changing communication needs of people. But in many parts of the world, as English is taken into the fabric of social life, it acquires a momentum and vitality of its own, developing in ways which reflect local culture and languages, while diverging increasingly from the kind of English spoken in Britain or North America.

English is also used for more purposes than ever before. Everywhere it is at the leading edge of technological and scientific development, new thinking in economics and management, new literatures and entertainment genres. These give rise to new vocabularies, grammatical forms and ways of speaking and writing. Nowhere is the effect of this expansion of English into new domains seen more clearly than in communication on the Internet and the development of 'net English'.

But the language is, in another way, at a critical moment in its global career: within a decade or so, the number of people who speak English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers. The

## WWW

### ENGLISH 2000

<http://www.britcoun.org/english/enge2000.htm>

### ENGLISH CO UK LTD

<http://www.english.co.uk/>

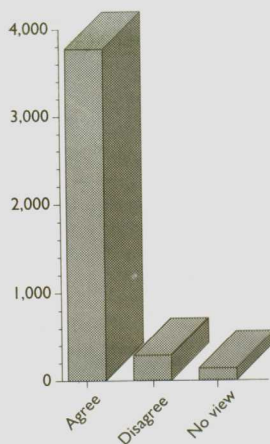


Figure 1 Will English remain the world's language? Composite responses to the British Council's English 2000 Global Consultation Questionnaire

The future of English will be more complex, more demanding of understanding and more challenging for the position of native-speaking countries than has hitherto been supposed.

implications of this are likely to be far reaching: the centre of authority regarding the language will shift from native speakers as they become minority stakeholders in the global resource. Their literature and television may no longer provide the focal point of a global English language culture, their teachers no longer form the unchallenged authoritative models for learners.

### Contradictory trends

Many of the trends that are documented here are not simply 'driving forces' whose impact and consequences can be easily predicted. And in so far as they are understood they appear to be leading in contradictory directions – tendencies to increasing use of English are counterposed by others which lead to a reducing enthusiasm for the language. On the one hand, the use of English as a global lingua franca requires intelligibility and the setting and maintenance of standards. On the other hand, the increasing adoption of English as a second language, where it takes on local forms, is leading to fragmentation and diversity. No longer is it the case, if it ever was, that English unifies all who speak it.

These competing trends will give rise to a less predictable context within which the English language will be learned and used. There is, therefore, no way of precisely predicting the future of English since its spread and continued vitality is driven by such contradictory forces. As David Crystal has commented:

There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. There are therefore no precedents to help us see what happens to a language when it achieves genuine world status. (Crystal, 1997, p. 139)

The likelihood, as this book demonstrates, is that the future for English will be a complex and plural one. The language will grow in usage and variety, yet simultaneously diminish in relative global importance. We may find the hegemony of English replaced by an oligarchy of languages, including Spanish and Chinese. To put it in economic terms, the size of the global market for the English language may increase in absolute terms, but its market share will probably fall.

### A new world era

According to many economists, cultural theorists and political scientists, the new 'world order' expected to appear in the 21st century will represent a significant discontinuity with previous centuries. The Internet and related information technologies, for example, may upset the traditional patterns of communication upon which institutional and national cultures have been built. We have entered a period in which language and communication will play a more central role than ever before in economic, political and cultural life – just at the moment in history that a global language has emerged.

There are signs already of an associated shift of social values which may have a significant impact on the future decision-making of organisations, governments and consumers. Some commentators predict that, just as environmental issues were once regarded as less important than the need for profit, so issues of social equity will form a third 'bottom line' in the global business environment. This suggests that those who promote the global use of English will be burdened with new social responsibilities and may have to engage with a more complex public agenda, including ethical issues relating to linguistic human rights.

### Questioning the future

*The Future of English?* thus explores a range of topics with a common theme: the changing world which affects our use of language. Its primary purpose is to stimulate informed debate about the global future of English and the implications both for British providers of English language services and the institutions and enterprises with which they work overseas. For this reason, the book aims to provide thought-provoking ideas rather than firm predictions. It points to areas of uncertainty and doubt where an understanding of local issues will be as valuable as that of global trends. Many of the issues the book addresses will be of interest to a wide range of people, both specialists and professionals, but also members of the general public. These issues raise such questions as:

- How many people will speak English in the year 2050?
- What role will English play in their lives? Will they enjoy the rich cultural resources the English language offers or will they simply use English as a vehicular language – like a tool of their trade?
- What effects will economic globalisation have on the demand for English?
- Will the emergence of 'world regions' encourage lingua francas which challenge the position of English?
- How does English help the economic modernisation of newly industrialised countries?
- Is the Internet the electronic 'flagship' of global English?
- Will the growth of global satellite TV, such as CNN and MTV, teach the world's youth US English?
- Will the spread of English lead to over half of the world's languages becoming extinct?
- Is it true that the English language will prove to be a vital resource and benefit to Britain in the coming century, giving it a key economic advantage over European competitors?

Commentators vary greatly in attitudes towards, and expectations of, global English. At one extreme, there is an unproblematic assumption that the world will eventually speak English and that this will facilitate the cultural and economic dominance of native-speaking countries (especially the US). Such a view is challenged, however, by the growing assertiveness of countries adopting English as a second language that English is now *their* language, through which they can express their own values and identities, create their own intellectual property and export goods and services to other countries.

The spread of English in recent years is, by any criterion, a remarkable phenomenon. But the closer one examines the historical causes and current trends, the more it becomes apparent that the future of English will be more complex, more demanding of understanding and more challenging for the position of native-speaking countries than has hitherto been supposed.

This book is neither triumphalist nor alarmist, but seeks to chart some of the territory, to stimulate a more informed debate which can, in turn, help all those concerned with the future of English prepare for the significant changes the 21st century will bring.

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Jurassic Park grossed \$6m in India in 1994. But in what language?  
p. 47

385 million people will be employed in world tourist services by 2006. Will they all need English?  
p. 36

How many people will speak English in 2050?  
p. 27

What have been the heroic failures of the past in predicting the number of English speakers?  
p. 18

# Book highlights

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## 1 English and the international economy

The shifting patterns of trade and new working practices (such as the growing prevalence of screen-based labour) which follow globalisation are affecting the use of the English language in complex ways. At present there is a considerable increase in the numbers of people learning and using English, but a closer examination of driving forces suggests that the long-term growth of the learning of English is less secure than might at first appear.

## 2 English and global culture

As the number of people using English grows, so second-language speakers are drawn towards the 'inner circle' of first-language speakers and foreign-language speakers to the 'outer circle' of second-language speakers. During this status migration, attitudes and needs in respect of the language will change; the English language will diversify and other countries will emerge to compete with the older, native-speaking countries in both the English language-teaching industry and in the global market for cultural resources and intellectual property in English.

## 3 English as a leading-edge phenomenon

English is closely associated with the leading edge of global scientific, technological, economic and cultural developments, where it has been unrivalled in its influence in the late 20th century. But we cannot simply extrapolate from the last few decades and assume this trend will continue unchanged. In four key sectors, the present dominance of English can be expected to give way to a wider mix of languages: first, the global audio-visual market and especially satellite TV; second, the Internet and computer-based communication including language-related and document handling software; third, technology transfer and associated processes in economic globalisation; fourth, foreign-language learning especially in developing countries where growing regional trade may make other languages of increasing economic importance.

## 4 A bilingual future

There is a growing belief amongst language professionals that the future will be a bilingual one, in which an increasing proportion of the world's population will be fluent speakers of more than one language. For the last few hundred years English has been dominated by monolingual speakers' interests: there is little to help us understand what will happen to English when the majority of the people and institutions who use it do so as a second language.

## 5 Social value shifts

The spread of English has been made more rapid in recent years as a consequence of decisions and actions taken by governments, institutions and individuals. This process has been guided by a logic of 'economic rationalism'. However, significant social value shifts may occur in public opinion, making social equity as important a factor in public policy as economic issues, and quality of life as important as income in personal life choices. Such value shifts would foreground the complex ethical issues associated with the world dominance of a single language and cause a reassessment of the impact of English on other cultures, national identities and educational opportunities for the world's non-English speaking citizens. The economic argument for English may also be challenged as developing countries make more careful evaluations of the costs and benefits of mass educational programmes in the English language.

## 6 Need for scenario building

This book suggests that development work should be put in hand towards the building and testing of 'scenarios' which encompass a range of possible futures for English in key areas. A 'Delphi panel' of experts (p. 23) in different regions of the world could be invited to respond to the scenarios and help establish local understandings of the changing role of English. Such qualitative work should go hand-in-hand with the collection of key statistics and trend data.

## References

- Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The Economist (1996) *Language and Electronics: the coming global tongue*. 21 December, pp. 37-9.

## Further reading

There are many books now available which examine the social and linguistic contexts in which English developed historically. *The Future of English?* has been written to complement the following books in particular:

- Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graddol, D., Leith, D. and Swann, J. (1996) (eds) *English: history, diversity and change*. London: Routledge/Open University.

- Maybin, J. and Mercer, N. (1996) (eds) *Using English: from conversation to canon*. London: Routledge/Open University.
- Mercer, N. and Swann, J. (1996) (eds) *Learning English: development and diversity*. London: Routledge/Open University.
- Goodman, S. and Graddol, D. (1996) (eds) *Redesigning English: new texts, new identities*. London: Routledge/Open University.

## Sources

A composite list of sources for the tables and figures in this book can be found on the inside back cover.

## Note

All references to \$ in this text are to US\$. 1 billion = 1,000 million; 1 trillion = 1,000,000 million

## ● The legacy of history

Britain's colonial expansion established the pre-conditions for the global use of English, taking the language from its island birthplace to settlements around the world. The English language has grown up in contact with many others, making it a hybrid language which can rapidly evolve to meet new cultural and communicative needs.

## ● English in the 20th century

The story of English in the 20th century has been closely linked to the rise of the US as a superpower that has spread the English language alongside its economic, technological and cultural influence. In the same period, the international importance of other European languages, especially French, has declined.

## ● Who speaks English?

There are three kinds of English speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future.

## ● Language hierarchies

Languages are not equal in political or social status, particularly in multilingual contexts. How does English relate to other languages in a multilingual speaker's repertoire? Why does someone use English rather than a local language? What characteristic patterns are there in the use of English by non-native speakers?

Looking at the past is an important step towards understanding the future. Any serious study of English in the 21st century must start by examining how English came to be in its current state and spoken by those who speak it. What factors have ensured the spread of English? What does this process tell us about the fate of languages in unique political and cultural contexts? In what domains of knowledge has English developed particular importance and how recently?

English is remarkable for its diversity, its propensity to change and be changed. This has resulted in both a variety of forms of English, but also a diversity of cultural contexts within which English is used in daily life. The main areas of development in the use and form of English will undoubtedly come from non-native speakers. How many are there and where are they located? And when and why do they use English instead of their first language? We need to be aware of the different place that English has in the lives of native speakers, second-language users and those who learn it as a foreign language.

This section examines the development of English, identifies those languages which have historically rivalled English as a world language and explains the special place that English has in multilingual countries and in the repertoires of multilingual speakers. By showing how our present arose from the past, we will be better equipped to speculate on what the future might hold in store.



# The legacy of history

Britain's colonial expansion established the pre-conditions for the global use of English, taking the language from its island birthplace to settlements around the world. The English language has grown up in contact with many others, making it a hybrid language which can rapidly evolve to meet new cultural and communicative needs.

## The colonial period

The English language has been associated with migration since its first origins – the language came into being in the 5th century with patterns of people movement and resettlement. But as a world language its history began in the 17th century, most notably in the foundation of the American colonies. Many European powers were similarly expanding: French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish became established as colonial languages, the latter two still important outside Europe in Latin America. But in the 19th century the British empire, with its distinctive mix of trade and cultural politics, consolidated the world position of English, creating a 'language on which the sun never sets'.

## The rise of the nation state

In Europe of the middle ages, power was distributed between Church, sovereign and local barons, creating multiple agencies of social control, government and land management. Even in the 1500s, a monarch such as Charles V ruled geographically dispersed parts of Europe. But by the 17th and 18th centuries, the nation state had emerged as a territorial basis for administration and cultural identity. Yet language diversity was extensive and many language boundaries crossed the borders of newly emerging states. Each nation state required therefore an internal lingua franca, subject like other instruments of state to central regulation, which could act as a vehicle of governance and as an emblem of national identity. 'National' languages, not existing in Europe prior to the creation of nation states, had to be constructed. Consequently, the English language was self-consciously expanded and reconstructed to serve the purposes of a national language.

Profound cultural as well as political changes affected the English language. Modern institutions of science were founded, such as the Royal Society in Britain; language was added to the scientific agenda and made an object of study alongside investigations of the natural world. New words and ways of writing in English were developed. For a time, scholars and clerics who regularly travelled across the boundaries of national languages continued to use Latin as their lingua franca. But as knowledge of Latin declined and the rise of merchant and professional classes produced travellers unschooled in Latin, people sought alternative means of international communication.

The idea of a national language being a requirement for a nation state has remained a powerful one. The 20th century process of decolonisation created a drive to establish new national languages which could provide an integrated identity for multi-ethnic states set up on the European model. Few countries were as bold as Singapore, in adopting a multi-language formula which reflected the ethnic languages of the new state. Even in India, Hindi is the sole national language and English technically an 'associate'. In some countries a new national language had to be created – such as Bahasa Malaysia which raised the status of Malay into a national

language in a way similar to the 17th century extension of English in vocabulary and function.

Nation states are getting more plentiful – there are now over 180 states represented at the UN – and one consequence of the break-up of larger territories into separate states has been the emergence of new national languages. Simultaneously, the role of the nation state is being weakened as economic globalisation, regional trading blocs and new multilateral political affiliations limit national spheres of control. Nevertheless, the death of the nation state is much exaggerated. National education systems, for example, play a major role in determining which languages in the world are taught and learned. The role of nation states is changing but is by no means abolished.

## The emergence of national varieties

The attempt to fix and 'ascertain' the English language, made in the 18th and 19th centuries, was never entirely successful: the language has continued to adapt itself swiftly to new circumstances and people. And it was not just Britain which desired a national language from English. Noah Webster's proposed reforms of the American spelling system, some of which give it a distinctive appearance in print, were intended explicitly to create a national linguistic identity for the newly independent country:

The question now occurs; ought the Americans to retain these faults which produce innumerable inconveniences in the acquisition and use of the language, or ought they at once to reform these abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the orthography of the American tongue? ... a capital advantage of this reform ... would be, that it would make a difference between the English orthography and the American. ... a national language is a band of national union. ... Let us seize the present moment, and establish a national language as well as a national government. (Webster, 1789)

There are an increasing number of national standards, including those related to the 'New Englishes' which have appeared in former colonial countries such as Singapore. Each standard is supported (or soon may be) by national dictionaries, grammars and style sheets. Nevertheless, no central authority has ever existed, either nationally or globally, which can regulate the language.

## A hybrid and flexible language

English has always been an evolving language and language contact has been an important driver of change. First from Celtic and Latin, later from Scandinavian and Norman French, more recently from the many other languages spoken in the British colonies, the English language has borrowed freely. Some analysts see this hybridity and permeability of English as defining features, allowing it to expand quickly into new domains and explaining in part its success as a world language.

One of the few certainties associated with the future of English is that it will continue to evolve, reflecting and constructing the changing roles and identities of its speakers. Yet we are now at a significant point of evolution: at the end of the 20th century, the close relationship that has previously existed between language, territory and cultural identity is being challenged by globalising forces. The impact of such trends will shape the contexts in which English is learned and used in the 21st century.

?

Is English the most widely spoken language in the world today?  
p. 8

Will future language use be shaped by time zone rather than geography in the 21st century?  
p. 53

# Seven ages of English

This page provides an overview of the history of English, from its birth in the 5th century to the present day

## 1 Pre-English period (– c. AD 450)

The origins of English are, for a language, surprisingly well documented. At the time of the Roman invasion c.55 BC, the indigenous languages of Britain were Celtic, of which there were two main branches (corresponding to modern Gaelic and Welsh). The Romans made Latin an 'official' language of culture and government, probably resulting in many communities in Britain becoming bilingual Celtic-Latin. Garrisons of troops then arrived from elsewhere in the Roman empire, particularly Gaul, another Celtic area. In some points, the English language has repeated this early history of Latin: it was brought into many countries in the 17th to 19th centuries as the language of a colonial power and made the language of administration, spoken by a social elite, but not used by the majority of the population. It served, moreover, as an international lingua franca amongst the elites of many countries. But the use of Latin rapidly declined in the 17th and 18th centuries. Will English share this fate?

## 2 Early Old English (c.450–c.850)

The English language developed after the Anglo-Saxon invasion c.449 AD, when the Romans left Britain and new settlers brought Germanic dialects from mainland Europe. Latin was still an important written language because of the Church and many Latin words were introduced into Old English during this early period, but the language developed a new form: the first English literary texts appeared.

Gefeng þa be feaxe (nalas for fæhðe mearn)  
Guð-Geata leod Grendles modor;  
brægd þa beadwe heard, þa he gebolgen wæs,  
feorhgeniðlan, þæt heo on flet gebeah.  
Beowulf seizes Grendel's mother by the hair: a fragment  
from the epic Old English poem composed c. 750

## 3 Later Old English (c.850–1100)

This was a time of invasion and settlement from Scandinavia (the Vikings) and a time of language change. In the north of England dialects of English were extensively influenced by Scandinavian languages. In the south, King Alfred, concerned about falling educational standards, arranged for many Latin texts to be translated into English.

## 4 Middle English (c.1100–1450)

The Norman Conquest (1066) and rule brought about many linguistic changes. French, now the official language in England, affected English vocabulary and spelling. The grammar of English was also radically transformed. Whereas Old English expressed grammatical relations through inflections (word endings), Middle English lost many inflections and used word order to mark the grammatical function of nouns. Educated people probably needed to be trilingual in French, Latin and English. It was a flourishing period for English literature. Writers included Geoffrey Chaucer, whose language is beginning to look like modern English.

And preie God save the king, that is lord of this langage,  
and alle that him feith berith and obeieþ, everich in his  
degre, the more and the lasse. But considere wel that I  
ne usurpe not to have founden this werk of my labour  
or of myn engyn.

Prologue of *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*  
Geoffrey Chaucer, 1391

## 5 Early Modern English (c.1450–1750)

This period spans the Renaissance, the Elizabethan era and Shakespeare. It is the period when the nation states of Europe took their modern form. The role of the Church and Latin declined. In England, key institutions of science, such as the Royal Society, were established and, by the end of the 17th century, theoreticians like Isaac Newton were writing their discoveries in English rather than Latin.

Britain grew commercially and acquired overseas colonies. English was taken to the Americas (first colony at Jamestown, Virginia 1607) and India (first trading post at Surat 1614). With the rise of printing (first printed book in English 1473) English acquired a stable typographic identity. Teaching English as a foreign language began in the 16th century, first in Holland and France.

A common writing: whereby two, although not  
understanding one the others language, yet by the helpe  
thereof, may communicate their minds one to another. ...  
The harshness of the stile, I hope, will be corrected by  
the readers ingenuity.

Preface to *A Common Writing* Francis Lodwick, 1647

## 6 Modern English (c.1750–1950)

English had become a 'national' language. Many attempts were made to 'standardise and fix' the language with dictionaries and grammars (Johnson's *Dictionary* 1755, the *Oxford English Dictionary* 1858–1928). The industrial revolution triggered off a global restructuring of work and leisure which made English the international language of advertising and consumerism. The telegraph was patented in 1837, linking English-speaking communities around the world and establishing English as the major language for wire services. As Britain consolidated imperial power, English-medium education was introduced in many parts of the world. The international use of French declined. The first international series of English language-teaching texts was published from Britain in 1938 and the world's first TV commercial was broadcast in the US in 1941. English emerged as the most popular working language for transnational institutions.

## 7 Late Modern English (c.1950–)

With Britain's retreat from the empire, local and partially standardised varieties of English have emerged in newly independent countries. ELT has become a major private-sector industry. In the aftermath of World War II, the US became a global economic and cultural presence, making American English the dominant world variety. The first geostationary communications satellites were launched (Early Bird 1965) and the Internet was invented (US 1970s). A world market in audio-visual products was created and soap operas such as *Dallas* circulated the globe. Worldwide English language TV channels began (CNN International launched 1989). Meanwhile, English has acquired new electronic forms, as the fragment of a textual interaction from a north European reflector for Internet Relay Chat shows:

Moonhoo joined (total 22)

<Moonhoo>	cam someone ping me please
<NorthBoy>	action fires a harpoon at Moonhoo.
<Wiz09>	whispers: U all dont sound to awfully excited :(
<BigMix>	North the host is a geek though
<NorthBoy>	Moonhoo: you're lagged bigtime.

# English in the 20th century

The story of English in the 20th century has been closely linked to the rise of the US as a superpower that has spread the English language alongside its economic, technological and cultural influence. In the same period, the international importance of other European languages, especially French, has declined.

## The rise of the US

By the end of the 19th century, Britain had established the pre-conditions for English as a global language. Communities of English speakers were settled around the world and, along with them, patterns of trade and communication. Yet the world position of English might have declined with the empire, like the languages of other European colonial powers, such as Portugal and the Netherlands, had it not been for the dramatic rise of the US in the 20th century as a world superpower. There were, indeed, two other European linguistic contenders which could have established themselves as the global lingua franca – French and German. Eco (1995) suggests:

Had Hitler won World War II and had the USA been reduced to a confederation of banana republics, we would probably today use German as a universal vehicular language, and Japanese electronic firms would advertise their products in Hong Kong airport duty-free shops (*Zollfreie Waren*) in German. (Eco, 1995, p. 331)

This is probably a disingenuous idea: the US was destined to be the most powerful of the industrialised countries because of its own natural and human resources. The US is today the world's third most populous country with around 260 million inhabitants. Not surprising therefore that it now accounts for the greater proportion of the total number of native English speakers. According to Table 1, which uses data generated by the engco forecasting model (described more fully on p. 64), only Chinese has more first-language users. While such league tables beg as many questions as they answer, (and we will later discuss the serious problems attached to statistics relating to language use) they do make provocative reading – Hindi, Spanish and Arabic are close behind English, but how secure their place will be in the 21st century is a matter of speculation.

Language	engco model	Ethnologue
1 Chinese	1,113	1,123
2 English	372	322
3 Hindi/Urdu	316	236
4 Spanish	304	266
5 Arabic	201	202
6 Portuguese	165	170
7 Russian	155	288
8 Bengali	125	189
9 Japanese	123	125
10 German	102	98
11 French	70	72
12 Italian	57	63
13 Malay	47	47

Table 1 Major world languages in millions of first-language speakers according to the engco model and comparative figures from the *Ethnologue* (Grimes, 1996)

For the spread of English, the aftermath of World War II was decisive. American influence was extended around the world. As George Steiner has observed:

English acted as the vulgate of American power and of Anglo-American technology and finance. ... In ways too intricate, too diverse for socio-linguistics to formulate precisely, English and American-English seem to embody for men and women throughout the world – and particularly for the young – the 'feel' of hope, of material advance, of scientific and empirical procedures. The entire world-image of mass consumption, of international exchange, of the popular arts, of generational conflict, of technocracy, is permeated by American-English and English citations and speech habits. (Steiner, 1975, p. 469)

Steiner captures the complex mix of the economic, technological, political and cultural which is evident in the international domains of English at the end of the 20th century. Those domains, listed in Table 2, are discussed more fully later in the book. Here, we briefly examine how this situation arose in the second half of the 20th century.

## World institutions

After the war, several international agencies were established to help manage global reconstruction and future governance. The key one has proved to be the United Nations and its subsidiary organisations. Crystal (1997) estimates that 85% of international organisations now use English as one of their working languages, 49% use French and fewer than 10% use Arabic, Spanish or German. These figures probably underestimate the *de facto* use of English in such organisations. The International Association for Applied Linguistics, for example, lists French as a working language (and is known by a French acronym AILA), but English is used almost exclusively in its publications and meetings. In Europe, the hegemony of English – even on paper – is surprisingly high. Crystal (1997) estimates 99% of European organisations listed in a recent yearbook of international associations cite English as a working language, as opposed to 63% French and 40% German.

French is still the only real rival to English as a working language of world institutions, although the world position of French has been in undoubted rapid decline

- 1 Working language of international organisations and conferences
- 2 Scientific publication
- 3 International banking, economic affairs and trade
- 4 Advertising for global brands
- 5 Audio-visual cultural products (e.g. film, TV, popular music)
- 6 International tourism
- 7 Tertiary education
- 8 International safety (e.g. 'airspeak', 'seaspeak')
- 9 International law
- 10 As a 'relay language' in interpretation and translation
- 11 Technology transfer
- 12 Internet communication

Table 2 Major international domains of English



Will the growth of the Internet help maintain the global influence of English?  
p. 50

What effect will changing patterns of trade have on the use of English?  
p. 33



since World War II. Its use in international forums is unlikely to disappear entirely, however, because it retains a somewhat negative convenience in being 'not English', particularly in Europe. It is the only alternative which can be used in many international forums as a political gesture of resistance to the hegemony of English. As a delegate from Ireland once addressed the League of Nations many years ago, explaining his use of French, 'I can't speak my own language, and I'll be damned if I'll speak English' (cited in Large, 1985, p. 195).

### Financial institutions

English has been spread as a world language not only via political initiatives. Key financial institutions have been established in the 20th century, again after World War II and with major American involvement. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank were established after the 'Bretton Woods' conference in 1944. Through the Marshall plan, the US became closely involved in the post-war economic reconstruction of Europe, Japan and other parts of the Asia Pacific region. The Korean and later the Vietnamese war continued the process of spreading American influence. Cultural, economic and technological dependency on America were soon a concern for nations across the world. The Bretton Woods system has since played a significant role in regulating international economic relations and in introducing free-market regimes in countries where control has been traditionally centralised. As more countries have been rendered 'open' to global flows of finance, goods, knowledge and culture, so the influence of English has spread.

### Scientific publishing

English is now the international currency of science and technology. Yet it has not always been so. The renaissance of British science in the 17th century put English-language science publications, such as the *Philosophical Transactions* instituted by the Royal Society 1665, at the forefront of the world scientific community. But the position was soon lost to German, which became the dominant international language of science until World War I. The growing role of the US then ensured that English became, once again, the global language of experiment and discovery.

Journals in many countries have shifted, since World War II, from publishing in their national language to publishing in English. Gibbs (1995) describes how the Mexican medical journal *Archivos de Investigación Médica* shifted to English: first publishing abstracts in English, then providing English translations of all articles, finally hiring an American editor, accepting articles only in English and changing its name to *Archives of Medical Research*. This language shift is common elsewhere. A study in the early 1980s showed nearly two-thirds of publications of French scientists were in English. Viereck (1996) describes how all contributions in 1950 to the *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie* were in German, but by 1984 95% were in English. The journal was renamed *Ethology* two years later.

As might be expected, some disciplines have been more affected by the English language than others. Physics is the most globalised and anglophone, followed a close second by other pure sciences. Table 3 shows the percentage of German scholars in each field reporting English as their 'de facto working language' in a study by Skudlik (1992).

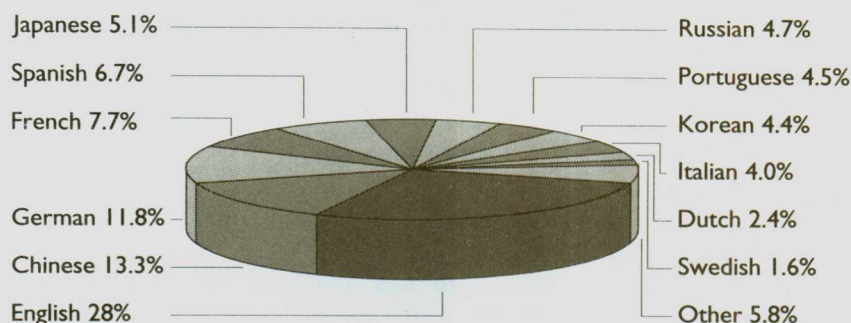


Figure 2 The proportion of the world's books annually published in each language. English is the most widely used foreign language for book publication: over 60 countries publish titles in English. Britain publishes more titles than any other country, thus generating more intellectual property in the language than the US. Some UK publishers, however, adopt US English house-styles and this, together with the fact that print runs in North America are typically much longer than in the UK, ensures that books published in US English receive a wider circulation than those in British English. In the 21st century there is likely to be considerable growth in English language publishing in countries where English is spoken as a second language

It is not just in scientific publishing, but in book publication as a whole that English rules supreme. Worldwide, English is the most popular language of publication. Figure 2 shows the estimated proportion of titles published in different languages in the early 1990s.

Unesco figures for book production show Britain outstripping any other country in the world for the number of titles published each year. In 1996, a remarkable 101,504 titles were published in Britain (*Independent*, 25 February 1997, p. 11). Although there are countries which publish more per head of the population and many countries which print more copies, none publishes as many titles. Many of these books are exported, or are themselves part of a globalised trade in which books may be typeset in one country, printed in another and sold in a third.

It is difficult to decide the relative cultural influence of huge numbers of copies of few titles available on the one hand, against many titles printed in short runs on the other. However, the statistics show the enormous amount of intellectual property being produced in the English language in an era where intellectual property is becoming increasingly valuable.

### English in the 21st century

The position of English in the world today is thus the joint outcome of Britain's colonial expansion and the more recent activity of the US. Any substantial shift in the role of the US in the world is likely to have an impact on the use and attractiveness of the English language amongst those for whom it is not a first language. Later, we will see how the economic dominance of the US is expected to decline, as economies in Asia overtake it in size. The question remains whether English has become so entrenched in the world that a decline in the influence of the US would harm it. Are its cultural resources and intellectual property so extensive that no other language can catch up? Or will other languages come to rival English in their global importance, pushing English aside much in the same way as Latin was abandoned as an international lingua franca 300 years ago?

Physics	98%
Chemistry	83%
Biology	81%
Psychology	81%
Maths	78%
Earth Sciences	76%
Medical Science	72%
Sociology	72%
Philosophy	56%
Forestry	55%
Vet. Sciences	53%
Economics	48%
Sports Sciences	40%
Linguistics	35%
Education	27%
Literature	23%
History	20%
Classics	17%
Theology	12%
Law	8%

Table 3 Disciplines in which German academics claim English as their working language



# Who speaks English?

There are three kinds of English speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future.

## Three types of English speaker

There are three types of English speaker in the world today, each with a different relationship with the language. First-language (L1) speakers are those for whom English is a first – and often only – language. These native speakers live, for the most part, in countries in which the dominant culture is based around English. These countries, however, are experiencing increasing linguistic diversity as a result of immigration. Second-language (L2) speakers have English as a second or additional language, placing English in a repertoire of languages where each is used in different contexts. Speakers here might use a local form of English, but may also be fluent in international varieties. The third group of English speakers are the growing number of people learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

Leith (1996) argues that the first two kinds of English-speaking community result from different colonial processes. He identifies three kinds:

In the first type, exemplified by America and Australia, substantial settlement by first-language speakers of English displaced the precolonial population. In the second, typified by Nigeria, sparser colonial settlements maintained the precolonial population in subjection and allowed a proportion of them access to learning English as a second, or additional, language. There is yet a third type, exemplified by the Caribbean islands of Barbados and Jamaica. Here a precolonial population was replaced by a new labour from elsewhere, principally West Africa. ... The long-term effect of the slave trade on the development of the English language is immense. It gave rise not only to black English in the United States and the Caribbean, which has been an important influence on the speech of young English speakers worldwide, but it also provided the extraordinary context of language contact which led to the formation of English pidgins and creoles. (Leith, 1996, pp. 181–2, 206)

Each colonial process had different linguistic consequences. The first type created a diaspora of native speakers of English (US, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand), with each settlement eventually establishing its own national variety of English. The second (India, West Africa, East Africa) made English an elite second language, frequently required for further education and government jobs.

The linguistic consequences of the third type were complex, including the creation of new hybrid varieties

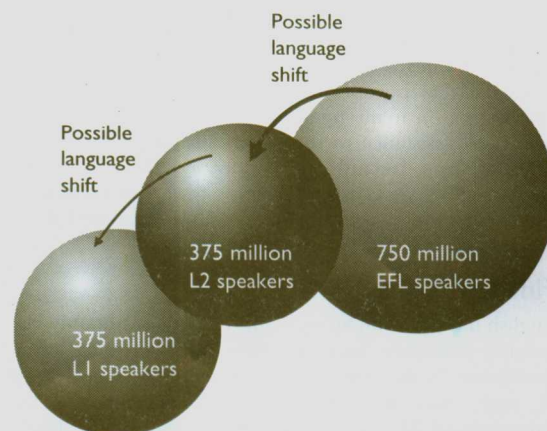


Figure 4 Showing the three circles of English as overlapping makes it easier to see how the 'centre of gravity' will shift towards L2 speakers at the start of the 21st century

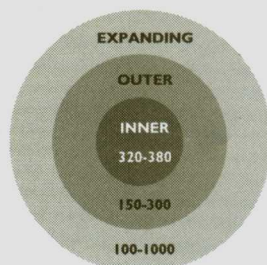


Figure 3 The three circles of English according to Kachru (1985) with estimates of speaker numbers in millions according to Crystal (1997)

Table 4 Native speakers of English (in thousands) incorporating estimates by Crystal (1997)

(\*indicates territories in which English is used as an L1, but where there is greater L2 use or significant use of another language)

Antigua and Barbuda	61	Guam*	56	Papua New Guinea*	120	Trinidad and Tobago	1,200
Australia	15,316	Guyana	700	Philippines*	15	UK (England, Scotland, N. Ireland, Wales*)	56,990
Bahamas	250	Hong Kong*	125	Puerto Rico*	110	UK Islands (Channel*, Man)	217
Barbados	265	India*	320	Sierra Leone*	450	US*	226,710
Belize*	135	Irish Republic	3,334	St Kitts and Nevis	39	Virgin Is (British)	17
Bermuda	60	Jamaica	2,400	St Lucia	29	Virgin Is (US)	79
Brunei*	10	Liberia*	60	St Vincent and Grenadines	111	Zambia*	50
Canada	19,700	Malaysia*	375	Singapore*	300	Zimbabwe*	250
Cayman Is	29	Montserrat	11	South Africa*	3,600		
Gibraltar*	25	Namibia*	13	Sri Lanka*	10		
Grenada	101	New Zealand	3,396	Suriname	258		



Those who speak English alongside other languages will outnumber first-language speakers and, increasingly, will decide the global future of the language.

## The first-language countries

Using a tripartite division as a starting point for analysis, we can find English spoken as a first language in over 30 territories (Table 4). Crystal (1997) calculates that worldwide there are a little over 377 million speakers of English as a first language, including creole. It is a figure in line with other recent estimates and the figures generated by the engco model (Table 1, p. 8, see also p. 64).

## The second-language areas

In the 19th century, it was common to refer to English as 'the language of administration' for one-third of the world's population. It is interesting to compare this figure with Crystal's present-day estimate (1997) that the aggregated population of all countries in which English has any special status (the total number of people 'exposed to English'), represents around one-third of the world's population. It is not surprising that the figures are similar, since the more populous of the 75 or so countries in which English has special status (Table 5) are former colonies of Britain.

Competence in English among second-language speakers, like that in EFL speakers, varies from native-like fluency to extremely poor, but whereas in EFL areas English is used primarily for communication with speakers from other countries, in an L2 area English is used for internal (intranational) communication.

Areas in which English is used extensively as a second language usually develop a distinct variety of English which reflects other languages used alongside English. Parts of the world where such varieties ('New Englishes') have emerged are the former colonial territories in South Asia, South-east Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Although these local forms of English have their own vitality and dynamic of change, there is often an underlying model of correctness to which formal usage orients, reflecting the variety of English used by the former colonial power. In the majority of countries this is British (Figure 5), with some exceptions such as the Philippines and Liberia, which orient to US English.

## The foreign-language areas

The number of people learning English has in recent years risen rapidly. This, in part, reflects changes in public policy, such as lowering the age at which English is taught in schools. Like L2, the EFL category spans a wide range of competence, from barely functional in basic communication to near native fluency. The main distinction between a fluent EFL speaker and an L2 speaker depends on whether English is used within the speaker's community (country, family) and thus forms

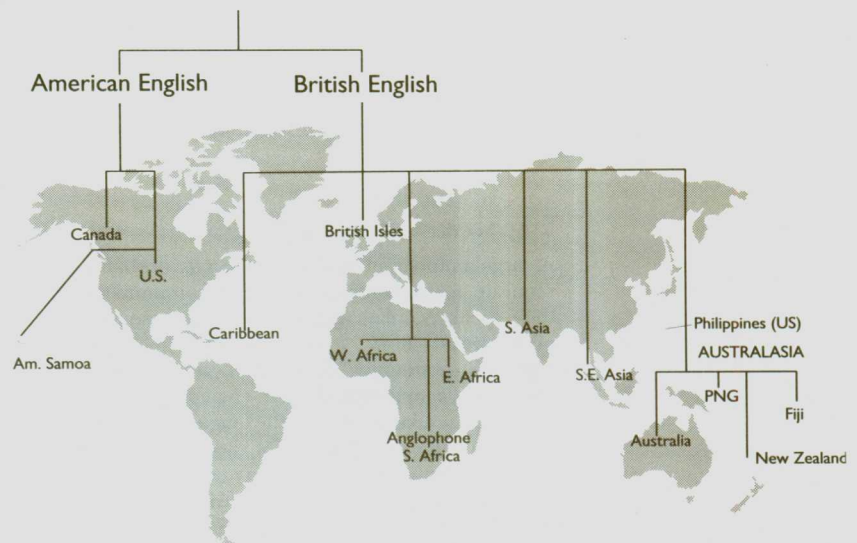


Figure 5 The branches of world English

part of the speaker's identity repertoire. In the EFL world there is, by definition, no local model of English, though speakers' English accents and patterns of error may reflect characteristics of their first language.

## Language shift

In many parts of the world there are ongoing shifts in the status of English. These are largely undocumented and unquantified, but will represent a significant factor in the global future of the language. In those countries listed in Table 6, the use of English for intranational communication is greatly increasing (such as in professional discourse or higher education). These countries can be regarded as in the process of shifting towards L2 status. In existing L2 areas, a slight increase in the proportion of the population speaking English (for example, in India, Pakistan, Nigeria and the Philippines), would significantly increase the global total of secondlanguage speakers.

In many L2 areas, there is a trend for professional and middle classes who are bilingual in English (a rapidly growing social group in developing countries) to adopt English as the language of the home. English is thus acquiring new first-language speakers outside the traditional 'native-speaking' countries. Yet the number of new second-language speakers probably greatly offsets the children in L2 families who grow up as first-language speakers – a trend shown graphically in Figure 4.

Argentina  
Belgium  
Costa Rica  
Denmark  
Ethiopia  
Honduras  
Lebanon  
Myanmar (Burma)  
Nepal  
Netherlands  
Nicaragua  
Norway  
Panama  
Somalia  
Sudan  
Surinam  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
United Arab Emirates

Table 6 Countries in transition from EFL to L2 status

Table 5 (below)  
Second-language speakers of English (in thousands)  
(\*indicates a larger number of L1 English speakers)

Australia*	2,084	Hong Kong	1,860	Nepal	5,927	Solomon Is	135
Bahamas*	25	India	37,000	New Zealand*	150	South Africa	10,000
Bangladesh	3,100	Irish Republic*	190	Nigeria	43,000	Sri Lanka	1,850
Belize*	30	Jamaica*	50	Northern Marianas	50	Surinam	150
Bhutan	60	Kenya	2,576	Pakistan	16,000	Swaziland	40
Botswana	620	Kiribati	20	Palau	16,300	Tanzania	3,000
Brunei	104	Lesotho	488	Papua New Guinea	2,800.00	Tonga	30
Cameroon	6,600	Liberia	2,000	Philippines	36,400	Tuvulu	600
Canada*	6,000	Malawi	517	Puerto Rico	1,746	Uganda	2,000
Cook Is	2	Malaysia	5,984	Rwanda	24	UK*	1,100
Dominica	12	Malta	86	St Lucia*	22	US*	30,000
Fiji	160	Marshall Is	28	Samoa (American)	56	US Virgin Is*	10
Gambia	33	Mauritius	167	Samoa (Western)	86	Vanuatu	160
Ghana	1,153	Micronesia	15	Seychelles	11	Zambia	1,000
Guam	92	Namibia	300	Sierra Leone	3,830	Zimbabwe	3,300
Guyana*	30	Nauru	9,400	Singapore	1,046		



# Language hierarchies

*Languages are not equal in political or social status, particularly in multilingual contexts. How does English relate to other languages in a multilingual speaker's repertoire? Why does someone use English rather than a local language? What characteristic patterns are there in the use of English by non-native speakers?*

## English and other languages

A large number of native speakers is probably a prerequisite for a language of wider communication, for these speakers create a range of cultural resources (works of literature, films, news broadcasts) and pedagogic materials (grammars, dictionaries, classroom materials) and provide opportunities for engaging in interactions which require knowledge of the language.

But a full understanding of the role of English in a world where the majority of its speakers are not first-language speakers requires an understanding of how English relates to the other languages which are used alongside it. The European concept of bilingualism reflects an idea that each language has a natural geographical 'home' and that a bilingual speaker is therefore someone who can converse with monolingual speakers from more than one country. The ideal bilingual speaker is thus imagined to be someone who is like a monolingual in two languages at once. But many of the world's bilingual or multilingual speakers interact with other multilinguals and use each of their languages for different purposes: English is not used simply as a 'default' language because it is the only language shared with another speaker; it is often used because it is culturally regarded as the appropriate language for a particular communicative context.

Languages in multilingual areas are often hierarchically ordered in status. To the extent that such relationships are institutionalised, the hierarchy can be thought of as applying to countries as much as to the repertoire of individual speakers. Shown schematically in Figure 6 is a language hierarchy for India, a complex multilingual area where nearly 200 languages exist with differing status. At the pyramid base are languages used within the family and for interactions with close friends. Such languages tend to be geographically based (or used by migrant communities) and are the first languages learned by children. Higher up the pyramid are languages which are found in more formal and public domains and which

have greater territorial 'reach'. For example, in the second layer from the base will be languages which in India form the medium of primary education, newspapers, radio broadcasts and local commerce. Above these in the hierarchy will be languages used in official administration, secondary education and so on to the highest level, in which will be found the languages of wider and international communication. The taper of the pyramid reflects the fact that fewer language varieties occupy this position: greatest linguistic diversity is found at the base amongst vernacular languages. Indeed, very few of the world's languages are used for official administration and in other public forums.

Not all speakers will be fluent in language varieties at the higher levels. The normal pattern of acquisition will begin with those languages at the base. Many of the world's population never require the use of varieties at the uppermost layer because they never find themselves in the communicative position which requires such language. For example, an Indian from the state of Kerala whose mother tongue is a tribal language may also speak Tulu (2 million speakers) and the state language Malayalam (33 million), or the neighbouring state language of Kannada (44 million). If they know any Hindi or English, it is likely to be their fourth or fifth language. However, more and more people in the world will learn languages in the uppermost layer as a result of improved education and changing patterns of communication in the world.

Although a simple pyramid figure captures something of the hierarchical relationship between language varieties, it perhaps suggests too neat a pattern of language use. For the majority of the world's population, a particular language will exist at more than one level (for example, serve as a public language as well as a language in the family), though where a language serves different communicative functions in this way it usually also takes a variety of forms. For example, the classic sociolinguistic pyramid used to describe British English (Trudgill, 1974, p. 41) shows a similarly layered structure in which vernacular, informal varieties, often with strong geographical basis, exist at the lowest layer, whilst at the apex is a standard form of English, showing little regional variation and used for public and formal communication. All speakers can be expected to modify their language to suit the communicative situation; even a monolingual English speaker will adapt accent, vocabulary, grammar and rhetorical form to suit the context.

## English and code-switching

Where English has a place alongside other languages in a local language hierarchy, speakers will normally use their first language in different contexts from those in which they use English. Whereas the first language may be a sign of solidarity or intimacy, English, in many bilingual situations, carries overtones of social distance, formality or officialdom. Where two speakers know both languages, they may switch between the two as part of a negotiation of their relationship. Indeed, they may switch between languages within a single sentence. In the following example a young job seeker comes into the manager's office in a Nairobi business. The young man begins in English, but the manager insists on using Swahili, 'thus denying the young man's negotiation of the higher status associated with English' (Myers-Scotton, 1989, p. 339). Bilingual speakers use code-switching as a communicative resource, varying the mix



Figure 6 A language hierarchy for India



English is not used simply as a 'default' language; it is often used because it is culturally regarded as the appropriate language for a particular communicative context.

of the two languages, for example, Swahili and English, in a way which only a member of the same speech community can fully understand.

Young man: Mr Muchuki has sent me to you about the job you put in the paper.

Manager: *Ulituma barua ya application?* [DID YOU SEND A LETTER OF APPLICATION?]

Young man: Yes, I did. But he asked me to come to see you today.

Manager: *Ikiwa ulituma barua, nenda ungojee majibu. Tutakuita ufike kwa interview siku itakapofika.* [IF YOU'VE WRITTEN A LETTER, THEN GO AND WAIT FOR A RESPONSE. WE WILL CALL YOU FOR AN INTERVIEW WHEN THE LETTER ARRIVES]

Leo sina la suma kuliko hayo. [TODAY I HAVEN'T ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY]

Young man: *Asante. Nitangoja majibu.* [THANK YOU. I WILL WAIT FOR THE RESPONSE]

One of the global trends we identify later is the development of world regions composed of adjacent countries with strong cultural, economic and political ties. As such regions develop, so it is likely that new regional language hierarchies will appear. The European Union, for example, may be in the process of becoming a single geolinguistic region like India (Figure 7). A survey in 1995 by the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages reported that 42% of EU citizens could communicate in English, 31% in German and 29% in French (cited in Crystal, 1997). Surveys of European satellite TV audiences (p. 46) confirm the widespread understanding of English – over 70% of viewers claim they can follow the news in English and over 40% could do so in French or German. (Sysfret, 1997, p. 37).

It is possible to conceptualise a world hierarchy, like that outlined for Europe or India, (Figure 8), in which English and French are at the apex, with the position of French declining and English becoming more clearly the global lingua franca. Later, we argue that English is also steadily 'colonising' lower layers in this hierarchy for many of the world's speakers, whereas the majority of the world's languages – found at present only at the base – are likely to become extinct.



Figure 7 A language hierarchy for the European Union

## Non-native speaker interactions

English increasingly acts as a lingua franca between non-native speakers. For example, if a German sales manager conducts business in China, English is likely to be used. Little research has been carried out on such interactions, but they are likely to have characteristic features, reflecting complex patterns of politeness and strategies for negotiating meaning cross-culturally. Firth (1996), for example, analysed international telephone calls involving two Danish trading companies and identified several conversational strategies. The exchange below, between a Dane (H) and a Syrian (B), shows one strategy which he termed 'let it pass' – where one person does not understand what has been said, but delays asking for elucidation in the hope that the meaning will emerge as talk progresses or else become redundant.

B: So I told him not to send the cheese after the blowing in the customs. We don't want the order after the cheese is blowing.

H: I see, yes.

B: So I don't know what we can do with the order now. What do you think we should do with this all blowing, Mr Hansen?

H: I'm not uh (pause). Blowing? What is this, too big or what?

B: No, the cheese is bad Mr Hansen. It is like fermenting in the customs' cool rooms.

H: Ah, it's gone off!

B: Yes, it's gone off.

Experienced users of English as a foreign language may acquire communicative skills which are different from those of native speakers, reflecting the more hazardous contexts of communication in which they routinely find themselves. However, the strategies employed by non-native speakers remains an under-researched area of English usage, despite the fact that there may already be more people who speak English as a foreign language than the combined totals of those who speak it as a first and second language.

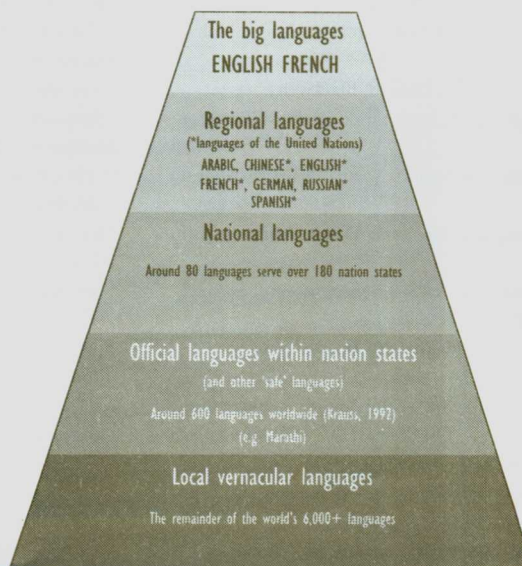


Figure 8 The world language hierarchy

?

Will English become a language for work, like a 'coat worn at the office but taken off at home'?  
p. 42

Will the spread of English be responsible for the extinction of thousands of lesser used languages?  
p. 38



# Summary

## 1 The development of the language

The English language has changed substantially in vocabulary and grammatical form – often as a result of contact with other languages. This has created a hybrid language; vocabulary has been borrowed from many sources and grammatical structure has changed through contact with other languages. This may cause problems for learners, but it also means that speakers of many other languages can recognise features which are not too dissimilar to characteristics of their own language. Although the structural properties of English have not hindered the spread of English, the spread of the language globally cannot be attributed to intrinsic linguistic qualities.

## 2 The spread of English

There have been two main historical mechanisms for the spread of English. First was the colonial expansion of Britain which resulted in settlements of English speakers in many parts of the world. This has provided a diasporic base for the language – which is probably a key factor in the adoption of a language as a lingua franca. In the 20th century, the role of the US has been more important than that of Britain and has helped ensure that the language is not only at the forefront of scientific and technical knowledge, but also leads consumer culture.

## 3 English and other languages

The majority of speakers of English already speak more than one language. An important community for the future development of English in the world is the 'outer circle' of those who speak it as a second language. English often plays a special role in their lives and the fate of English in the world is likely to be closely connected to how this role develops in future. English, for example, is becoming used by many EFL and L2 speakers for a wider range of communicative functions. This process, by which English 'colonises' the lower layers of the language hierarchy in many countries, means that English may take over some of the functions currently served by other languages in the construction of social identity and the creation and maintenance of social relationships.

## 4 A single, European, linguistic area

Western Europe is beginning to form a single multilingual area, rather like India, where languages are hierarchically related in status. As in India, there may be many who are monolingual in a regional language, but those who speak one of the 'big' languages will have better access to material success. Other world regions may develop in a similar way. This book focuses particularly on emergent trends in Asia, but significant developments are likely to occur also in the Americas, in Russia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

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## 14 The Future of English?