

BACKGROUND · TO
**English-speaking
Countries**

英语国家背景 [英]

—— RICHARD MUSMAN ——



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English is the most widespread language on earth and is second only to Mandarin Chinese in the number of people who speak it.

"Outside Britain... a number of third world Englishes are evolving to join the older Englishes in Britain, America, Australia and elsewhere."

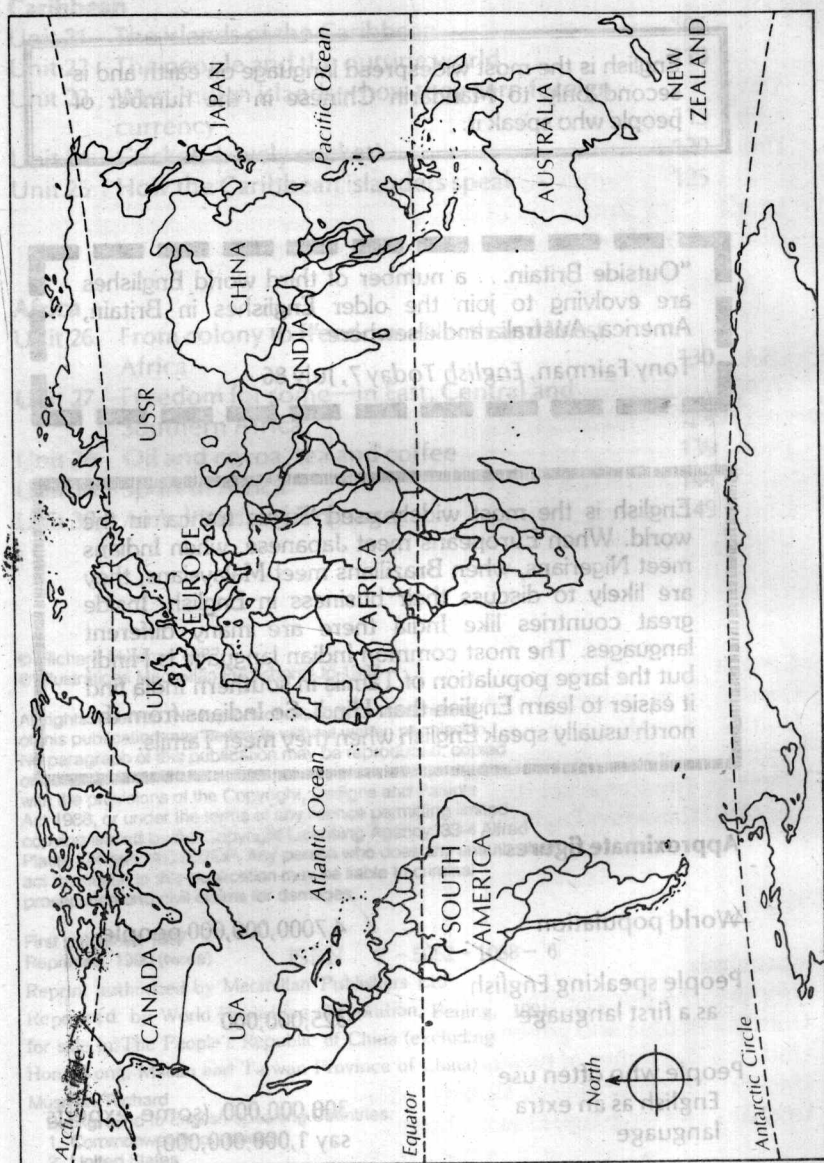
Tony Fairman, *English Today* 7, July 86

English is the most widely used 'lingua franca' in the world. When Europeans meet Japanese, when Indians meet Nigerians, when Brazilians meet Malaysians, they are likely to discuss their business in English. Inside great countries like India there are many different languages. The most common Indian language is Hindi, but the large population of Tamils in southern India find it easier to learn English than Hindi. So Indians from the north usually speak English when they meet Tamils.

Approximate figures

World population	4.7000,000,000 people
People speaking English as a first language	325,000,000
People who often use English as an extra language	300,000,000 (some experts say 1,000,000,000)

The English - speaking world



Key ◆ main language spoken by the native people

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◆ the official language, or one of the official languages, in a multi-language country—used in Parliament, business, colleges, etc.

◆ not the official language, but an important extra language in countries once part of the British Empire

AE American English

Africa

West Africa and southern Africa

- ◆ Gambia
- ◆ Sierra Leone
- ◆ Ghana
- ◆ Nigeria
- AE ◆ Liberia
- ◆ South Africa (English and Afrikaans)
- ◆ Namibia—South African dependency (English and Afrikaans)
- ◆ Botswana
- ◆ Lesotho
- ◆ Swaziland

East Africa

- ◆ Kenya (English and Swahili)
- ◆ Tanzania (Swahili and English)
- ◆ Zimbabwe
- ◆ Uganda
- ◆ Malawi

North Africa

- ◆ Sudan

Pacific

- ◆ Australia
- ◆ New Zealand
- ◆ Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Gilbert Islands, Ellis Islands

Asia

- ◆ India (English and Hindi)
- ◆ Pakistan (English and Urdu)
- ◆ Sri Lanka (Sinhala)
- ◆ Bangladesh (Bengali)
- ◆ Malaysia (Malay, Chinese and Indian languages)
- ◆ Singapore (English, Chinese, Tamil)
- ◆ Hong Kong (English, Chinese)
- AE ◆ Philippines (English and Pilipino)
- ◆ Seychelles
- ◆ Mauritius

South America and islands of the South Atlantic

- ◆ Guyana
- ◆ Falkland Islands
- ◆ Saint Helena
- ◆ Ascension Island
- ◆ Tristan da Cunha

Central America and Caribbean

- ◆ Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Saint Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago
- ◆ Saint Lucia, (English and mixed English and French dialect)
- ◆ Puerto Rico (English and Spanish)

North America

- ◆ Canada (English and French)
- AE ◆ USA

Europe

- ◆ UK
- ◆ Eire (English and Irish Gaelic—but many more speak English than Gaelic)
- ◆ Gibraltar (still a British colony)
- ◆ Malta (English and Maltese)

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The English-speaking world

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UK



1 Who are the British?

'GB' on the back of British cars abroad is short for Great Britain, which is the name for England, Scotland and Wales. 'The UK' is short for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. However, most people call the UK 'Britain', and many foreigners simply say 'England', which is incorrect and particularly annoys the Scots.

The Scots, Welsh and Irish are Celts, but the English are Anglo-Saxons. The Scots are prouder of being Scottish than British and they are proud of their names. One and a half million Scottish names in Britain begin with M', Mc or Mac, which means 'son of' in Gaelic, the old Celtic language of the Scots. The publisher of this book has a Scottish name. Welsh names are quite different. Names beginning with 'Ll' are Welsh, like Llewellyn and the first name, Llyn. Other common Welsh names you will find in the telephone book, wherever you go in Britain, are Lewis, Davies, Morgan, Edwards.

The names of most English people, too, come from their ancestors*, the Germanic Angles and Saxons, who invaded* Britain in the fifth century AD. The commonest English name is Smith, which, like the German name, Schmidt, means 'a worker in metal'. Some English families have Norman French names which go back to the Norman Conquest of 1066: D'Arcy, Beaufort, Beauchamp (pronounced 'Beecham'). But for centuries there have been marriages between Anglo-Saxons, Celts and Normans. John Smith could have more Celtic or Norman blood in him than Anglo-Saxon.

There are about 800,000 people called Smith in England and Wales, and about 1,700,000 in the USA.

The ancestors of the Welsh were the Ancient Britons, who escaped from the invading Angles and Saxons and found shelter in the wild mountains of Wales. The Welsh defended their freedom for 1000 years and were not conquered by the English until 1536. However, the modern Welsh keep alive their past. The people who live in the hills and valleys still

*ancestor your great-great-great-great grandfather/mother etc.
invade to enter another country using force

...speak their ancient Celtic language. In fact, about a quarter of the Welsh nation still speak Welsh as their first language, though nearly all of them also speak perfect English. Throughout the year they have festivals of song and dance and poetry called *Eisteddfodau*, and on these occasions many of them wear Welsh costumes. The great event of the year is the National Eisteddfod. It is so popular that there is not a hotel room free for miles around. The big moment of this Eisteddfod is the poetry competition and the giving of the prize to the winner. The Welsh are great rivals of the English and they show their fiery patriotism* at rugby matches against England. Before the match they sing their national song, *Mae Hen Wlas Fy Nhadan (Land of Our Fathers)*. The band no longer plays *God Save the Queen*, because some of the Welsh crowd called it the English national song, and they used to shout and whistle.

'Of all the languages spoken at the present time in mainland Britain, Welsh has been here by far the longest.'

Glanville Price *Languages of Britain* (Edward Arnold 1985)

Some Germanic Angles settled in the Scottish lowlands and in the borderlands between Scotland and England, but they never invaded the Highlands, where the Scots remained safe in their mountain glens and on their islands. Scots still love to remind Englishmen that they destroyed the English army at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, and they are proud that the English never conquered them. The union of the two countries in 1707 took place by agreement between them. The Scots have their own Church, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Strict Presbyterians believe there should be no work or pleasure on the Lord's Day (Sunday). But times are changing. There are still elderly Presbyterians who spend Sunday reading the Bible, but pubs now open on

*patriotism love of your country

Sunday and good Scottish Presbyterians drink their 'wee dram of Scotch' (little drop of whisky) after church. Only about 80,000 Highlanders still speak Gaelic.

'Seeing Scotland, Madam, is only seeing a worse England'.

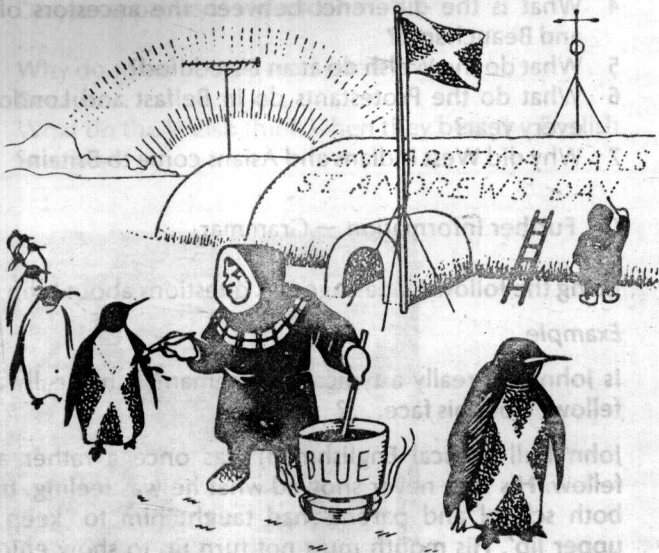
Samuel Johnson, 1778

Three centuries ago Scots and English Protestants were sent to live in Northern Ireland. It was hoped that they would help to stop the Irish Catholics from causing trouble. When English armies came to Ireland to fight the rebellious Irish, the Northern Ireland Protestants fought on the side of the English. Every year they remind the Catholics of their victories by marching through the streets of Belfast and Londonderry with drums, and waving flags. Since 1922 Eire has been independent.

The killings in Northern Ireland today are the result of this history. The most fanatical Protestants will never agree to share any power with the Catholics who form a third of the population. The terrorist group, the IRA (Irish Republican Army), which claims it is 'protecting' the Catholics in Northern Ireland, wants a united Ireland run by themselves. Many IRA members are not Catholics. Some are Marxists. The British Government and the Government of Eire are now working together to bring peace to Northern Ireland. Both governments, as well as the Catholic Church, are against any form of violence. There are also Protestant terrorist groups.

The terrible potato famine of 1845-6 in Southern Ireland left behind an undying hatred of the British. In all parts of the world there are still Irish people who cannot forgive the British for letting more than a million die of starvation.

Many of the black people you meet in any British city today are 'second generation' British citizens with local accents like Cockney (London) or 'Brum' (Birmingham). Since the Second World War, West Indians, Indians, Pakistanis, have been coming to Britain to find work and to escape the terrible poverty in their homelands. It has not been easy for them to find decent jobs or decent places to live. There are laws to protect them from unfair treatment, but these laws do not always work successfully. Most of the non-whites in Britain are British citizens and they now form about 4% of the population.



A Scotsman's Scottishness increases with his distance from Scotland

A Vocabulary

- 1 What is the opposite of *incorrect*?
- 2 What is the meaning of *conquest*?
- 3 Name something which is made of *metal*.
- 4 On what occasions do people look for *shelter*?
- 5 Find another way of saying *keep alive the past*.
- 6 What is the difference between *Scotch* and *Scottish*?

B Questions

- 1 What is the difference between the United Kingdom and Great Britain?
- 2 What is the meaning of the name *Macdonald*?
- 3 What happened at the Battle of Bannockburn?
- 4 What is the difference between the ancestors of Smith and Beauchamp?
- 5 What do the Welsh do at an Eisteddfod?
- 6 What do the Protestants do in Belfast and Londonderry every year?
- 7 Why did West Indians and Asians come to Britain?

C Further Information — Grammar

Using the following passage, ask questions about John Bull.

Example.

Is John Bull really a typical Englishman? Is he really a quiet fellow? Does his face...?

John Bull (typical Englishman) was once a rather a quiet fellow. His face never showed what he was feeling, because both school and parents had taught him to 'keep a stiff upper lip'. His mouth must not turn up to show enjoyment or down to show sorrow, even if his best friend died. Of course he never cried. Jane Bull was very like her husband. They were fond of one another, but they hid their feelings.

The British today are no longer afraid of showing their feelings.

D Function

Like/dislike

I/They like/don't like/quite like — I/They love/hate — I/They enjoy/don't enjoy — It's/They're terrific/awful/all right/fairly nice — I/They approve/don't approve

Choose the right phrase to fill in the gaps below.

Friend What do you think of your own country?

You ...

Friend Do you like your own name?

You ...

Friend How do you feel about learning English?

You ...

Friend Do you approve of violence?

You ...

Friend Why do some people read poetry?

You Because...

Friend What do the Welsh think when they beat the English at rugby?

You ...



A Pakistani butcher's shop
in London

2 The UK government and how the British vote

THE QUEEN Head of Government, but she is a constitutional monarch (which means she governs through Parliament).
PARLIAMENT House of Commons (635 elected members); House of Lords (Dukes, Lords, Peeresses, etc, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and 24 senior Bishops). Both Houses debate and vote on bills introduced by ministers. It is the vote of the House of Commons that counts. The House of Lords can make changes in bills. When passed, bills become Acts of Parliament, which eventually become law.

PRIME MINISTER Leader of the Party which forms the government (gets the most seats in a general election—Margaret Thatcher 1983).

CABINET Council of about 30 ministers chosen by the Prime Minister.

CIVIL SERVICE Permanent non-party political administrators* who run government departments, eg Foreign Office, Home Office, etc. They advise ministers and carry out their policies.

The United Kingdom is not a federation. The Scots have charge of their own education, police, housing and agriculture* and they have their own legal system*, but not their own Assembly. Northern Ireland once had its own Parliament for local affairs, but will go on being governed from Westminster so long as violence continues. Wales has a nationalist party, *Plaid Cymru* (Welsh for 'Party of Wales', pronounced 'Plide Cumry'), but in a referendum in 1979 the Welsh voted against a separate Assembly. So did the Scots.

Britain has a form of democratic government which has grown over the centuries and is made up of hundreds of Acts of Parliament. This constitution, as it is called, has gradually taken away more and more power from the monarch, so that today the King or Queen has no political power. But the British people love the Royal Family, who are much more free and easy than they used to be. They walk among the crowds and talk to people with humour and real interest.

***administrator** person who runs a government or business office

agriculture farming

legal system the way the laws of a country are dealt with