International English

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International English is the concept of the English language as a global means of communication in numerous dialects, and also the movement towards an international standard for the language. It is also referred to as Global English, World English, Common English, General English. Sometimes these terms refer simply to the array of varieties of English spoken throughout the world.

Sometimes "international English" and the related terms above refer to a desired standardisation, i.e. Standard English; however, there is no consensus on the path to this goal.

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Historical context

The modern concept of International English does not exist in isolation, but is the product of centuries of development of the English language.

The English language evolved from a set of West Germanic dialects spoken by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who arrived from the Continent in the 5th Century. Those dialects came to be known as Englis (literally "English"), the language today referred to as Anglo-Saxon or Old English (the language of Beowulf). English is thus more closely related to West Frisian than to any other modern language, although less than a quarter of the vocabulary of Modern English is shared with West Frisian or other West Germanic languages because of extensive borrowings from Norse, Norman French, Latin, and other languages. It was during the Viking invasions of the Anglo-Saxon period that Old English was influenced by contact with Norse, a group of North Germanic dialects spoken by the Vikings, who came to control a large region in the North of England known as the Danelaw. Vocabulary items entering English from Norse (including the pronouns she, they, and them) are thus attributable to the on-going-off again Viking occupation of Northern England during the centuries prior to the Norman Conquest (see, e.g., Canute the Great). Soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066, the English language ceased being a literary language (see, e.g., Ormulum) and was replaced by Norman French as the written language of England. During the Norman Period, English absorbed a significant component of French vocabulary (approximately one-third of the vocabulary of Modern English) with this new vocabulary, additional vocabulary borrowed from Latin (with Greek, another approximately one-third of Modern English vocabulary, though some borrowings from Latin and Greek date from later periods), a simplified grammar, and use of the orthographic conventions of French instead of Old English orthography, the language became Middle English (the language of Chaucer). The "difficulty" of English as a written language thus began in the High Middle Ages, when French orthographic conventions were used to spell a language whose original, more suitable orthography had been forgotten centuries of nonuse. During the late medieval period, King Henry V of England (lived 1387-1422) ordered the use of the English of his day in proceedings before him and before the government bureaucracies. That led to the development of Chancery English, a standardized form used in the government bureaucracy. (The use of so-called Law French in English courts continued through the Renaissance, however.)

The emergence of English as a language of Wales results from the incorporation of Wales into England and also dates from approximately this time period. Soon afterward, the development of printing by Caxton and others accelerated the development of a standardised form of English. Following a change in vowel pronunciation that marks the transition of English from the medieval to the Renaissance period, The language of the Chancery and Caxton became Early Modern English (the language of Shakespeare's day) and with relatively moderate changes eventually developed into the English language of today. Scots, as spoken in the lowlands and along the east coast of Scotland, developed independently from Modern English and is based on the Northern dialects of Anglo-Saxon, particularly Northumbrian, which also serve as the basis of Northern English dialects such as those of Yorkshire and Newcastle upon Tyne. Northumbria was within the Danelaw and therefore experienced greater influence from Norse than did the Southern dialects. As the political influence of London grew, the Chancery version of the language developed into a written standard across Great Britain, further progressing in the modern period as Scotland became united with England as a result of the Acts of Union of 1707.

There have been two introductions of English to Ireland, a medieval introduction that led to the development of the now-extinct Yola dialect and a modern introduction in which Hibernian English largely replaced Irish as the most widely spoken language during the 19th Century, following the Act of Union of 1800. Received Pronunciation (RP) is generally viewed as a 19th Century development and is not reflected in North American English dialects, which are based on 18th Century English.

The establishment of the first permanent English-speaking colony in North America in 1607 was a major step towards the globalisation of the language. British English was only partially standardised when the American colonies were established. Isolated from each other by the Atlantic Ocean, the dialects in England and the colonies began evolving independently. In the 19th century, the standardisation of British English was more settled than it had been in the previous century, and this relatively well-established English was brought to Africa, Asia and Oceania. It developed both as the language of English-speaking settlers from Britain and Ireland, and as the administrative language imposed on speakers of other languages in the various parts of the British Empire. The first form can be seen in New Zealand English, and the latter in Indian English. In Europe English received a more central role particularly since 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles was composed not only in French, the common language of diplomacy at the time, but also in English.

The English-speaking regions of Canada and the Caribbean are caught between historical connections with the UK and the Commonwealth, and geographical and economic connections with the U.S. In some things, and more formally, they tend to follow British standards, whereas in others they follow the U.S. standard.

Methods of promotion

Unlike proponents of constructed languages, International English proponents face on the one hand the belief that English already is a world language (and as such, nothing needs to be done to promote it further) and, on the other, the belief that an international language would inherently need to be a constructed one (e.g., Esperanto in Chinese is generally just referred to as Shìjièyǔ (世界语) or "world language"). In such an environment, at least four basic approaches have been proposed or employed toward the further expansion or consolidation of International
English, some in contrast with, and others in opposition to, methods used to advance constructed international auxiliary languages.

1. Laissez-faire approach. This approach is taken either out of ignorance of the other approaches or out of a belief that English will more quickly (or with fewer objections) become a more fully international language without any specific global legislation.

2. Institutional sponsorship and grass-roots promotion of language programs. Some governments have promoted the spread of the English language through sponsorship of English language programs abroad, without any attempt to gain formal international endorsement, as have grass-roots individuals and organizations supporting English (whether through instruction, marketing, etc.).

3. National legislation. This approach encourages countries to enshrine English as having at least some kind of official status, in the belief that this would further its spread and could include more countries over time.

4. International legislation. This approach involves promotion of the future holding of a binding international convention (perhaps to be under the auspices of such international organizations as the United Nations or Inter-Parliamentary Union) to formally agree upon an official international auxiliary language which would then be taught in all schools around the world, beginning at the primary level. While this approach allows for the possibility of an alternative to English being chosen (due to its necessarily democratic approach), the approach also allows for the eventuality that English would be chosen by a sufficient majority of the proposed convention's delegates so as to put international opinion and law behind the language and thus to consolidate it as a full official world language.

**Modern global language**

Braj Kachru divides the use of English into three concentric circles. The inner circle is the traditional base of English and includes countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States, and, loosely, the (historically mainly white) former colonies: Australia, New Zealand, some islands of the Caribbean, and the anglophone population of Canada. (South Africa is regarded as a special case.) English is the native language or mother tongue of most people in these countries.

In the outer circle are those countries where English has official or historical importance ("special significance"). This means most of the Commonwealth (the former British Empire), including populous countries such as India and Nigeria, and others under the American sphere of influence, such as the Philippines. Here English may serve as a useful lingua franca between ethnic and language groups. Higher education, the legislature and judiciary, national commerce and so on may all be carried out predominantly in English.

The expanding circle refers to those countries where English has no official role, but nonetheless is important for certain functions, notably international business. This use of English as a lingua franca by now includes most of the rest of the world not categorised above.

A recent development is the role of English as a lingua franca between speakers of the mutually intelligible Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish). Older generations of Scandinavians would use and understand each others' mother tongue without problems. However today's younger generations lack the same understanding and have begun using English as the language of choice[1].

Research on English as a Lingua Franca in the sense of "English in the Expanding Circle" is comparatively recent. Linguists who have been active in this field are Jennifer Jenkins, Barbara Seidlhofer, Christiane Meierkord and Joachim Grzega.

**English as a lingua franca in foreign language teaching**

*See also: English language learning and teaching*

English as an additional language (EAL) usually is based on the standards of either American English or British English. English as an international language (EIL) is EAL with emphasis on learning different major dialect forms; in particular, it aims to equip students with the linguistic tools to communicate internationally. Roger Nunn considers different types of competence in relation to the teaching of English as an International Language, arguing that linguistic competence has yet to be adequately addressed in recent considerations of EIL. [1] (http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/September_05_rn.php).

Several models of "simplified English" have been suggested for teaching English as a foreign language:

- **Basic English**, developed by Charles Kay Ogden (and later also I. A. Richards) in the 1930s, a recent revival has been initiated by Bill Templer
- **Threshold Level English**, developed by van Ek and Alexander
- **Globlish**, developed by Jean-Paul Nerrière
- **Basic Global English**, developed by Joachim Grzega

Furthermore, Randolph Quirk and Gabriele Stein thought about a Nuclear English, which, however, has never been fully developed.

**Varying concepts**

**Universality and flexibility**

International English sometimes refers to English as it is actually being used and developed in the world, as a language owned not just by native speakers, but by all those who come to use it.

Basically, it covers the English language at large, often (but not always or necessarily) implicitly seen as standard. It is certainly also commonly used in connection with the acquisition, use, and study of English as the world's lingua franca ('TEIL: Teaching English as an International Language'), and especially when the language is considered as a whole in contrast with American English, British English, South African English, and the like. — McArthur (2002, p. 444-45)

It especially means English words and phrases generally understood throughout the English-speaking world as opposed to localisms. The importance of non-native English language skills can be recognized behind the long-standing joke that the international language of science and technology is broken English.

**Neutrality**

International English reaches towards cultural neutrality. This has a practical use:

"What could be better than a type of English that saves you from having to re-edit publications for individual regional markets! Teachers and learners of English as a second language also find it an attractive idea — both often concerned that their English should be neutral, without American or British or Canadian or Australian coloring. Any regional variety of English has a set of political, social and cultural connotations attached to it, even the so-called 'standard' forms." — Peters (2004, *International English*)

According to this viewpoint, International English is a concept of English that minimizes the aspects defined by either the colonial imperialism of Victorian Britain or the so-called "cultural imperialism" of the 20th century United States. While British colonialism laid the foundation for English over much of the world, International English is a product of an emerging world culture, very much attributable to the influence of the United States as well, but conceptually based on a far greater degree of cross-talk and linguistic transculturation, which tends to mitigate both U.S. influence and British colonial influence.

The development of International English often centers around academic and scientific communities, where formal English usage is prevalent, and creative and flowery use of the language is at a minimum. This formal International English allows entry into Western culture as a whole and Western cultural values in general.
Opposition

The continued growth of the English language itself is seen by many as a kind of cultural imperialism, whether it is English in one form or English in two slightly different forms.

Robert Phillipson argues against the possibility of such neutrality in his Linguistic Imperialism (1992). Learners who wish to use purportedly correct English are in fact faced with the dual standard of American English and British English, and other less known standard Englishes (namely Australian and Canadian).

Edward Trimnell, author of Why You Need a Foreign Language & How to Learn One (2005) argues that the international version of English is only adequate for communicating basic ideas. For complex discussions and business/technical situations, English is not an adequate communication tool for non-native speakers of the language. Trimnell also asserts that native English-speakers have become "dependent on the language skills of others" by placing their faith in international English.

Appropriation theory

There are also some who reject both linguistic imperialism and David Crystal's theory of the neutrality of English. They argue that the phenomenon of the global spread of English is better understood in the framework of appropriation (e.g. Spichtinger 2000), that is, English used for local purposes around the world. Demonstrators in non-English speaking countries often use signs in English to convey their demands to TV-audiences around the globe, for instance.

In English language teaching Bobda shows how Cameroon has moved away from a mono-cultural, Anglo-centered way of teaching English and has gradually appropriated teaching material to a Cameroonien context. Non Western-topics treated are, for instance, the rule of Emirs, traditional medicine or polygamy (1997:225). Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) describe how Western methodology and textbooks have been appropriated to suit local Vietnamese culture. The Pakistani textbook "Primary Stage English" includes lessons such as "Pakistan My Country", "Our Flag", or "Our Great Leader" (Malik 1993: 5,6,7) which might well sound jingoistic to Western ears. Within the native culture, however, establishing a connection between ELT, patriotism and Muslim faith is seen as one of the aims of ELT, as the chairman of the Punjab Textbook Board openly states: "The board...takes care, through these books to inculcate in the students a love of the Islamic values and awareness to guard the ideological frontiers of your [the students] home lands" (Punjab Text Book Board 1997).

Many Englishes

There are many difficult choices that have to be made if there is to be further standardisation of English in the future. These include the choice over whether to adopt a current standard, or move towards a more neutral, but artificial one. A true International English might supplant both current American and British English as a variety of English for international communication, leaving these as local dialects, or would rise from a merger of General American and standard British English with admixture of other varieties of English and would generally replace all these varieties of English.

We may, in due course, all need to be in control of two standard Englishes—the one which gives us our national and local identity, and the other which puts us in touch with the rest of the human race. In effect, we may all need to become bilingual in our own language. — David Crystal (1988: p. 265)

This is the situation long faced by many users of English who possess a 'non-standard' dialect of English as their birth tongue but have also learned to write (and perhaps also speak) a more standard dialect. Many academics often publish material in journals requiring different varieties of English and change style and spellings as necessary without great difficulty. As far as spelling is concerned, the differences between American and British usage became noticeable due to the first influential lexicographers (dictionary writers) on each side of the Atlantic. Samuel Johnson's dictionary of 1755 greatly favoured Norman-influenced spellings such as centre and colour; on the other hand, Noah Webster's first guide to American spelling, published in 1783, preferred spellings like center and the Latinate color. The difference in strategy and philosophy of Johnson and Webster are largely responsible for the main division in English spelling that exists today. It must be said, however, that these differences are extremely minor. Spelling is but a small part of the differences between dialects of English, and may not even reflect dialect differences at all (except in phonetically spelled dialogue). International English refers to much more than an agreed spelling pattern.

Dual standard

Two approaches to International English are the individualistic and inclusive approach and the new dialect approach. The individualistic approach gives control to individual authors to write and spell as they wish (within purported standard conventions) and to accept the validity of differences. The main division in English spelling that exists today. It must be said, however, that these differences are extremely minor. Spelling is but a small part of the differences between dialects of English, and may not even reflect dialect differences at all (except in phonetically spelled dialogue).

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The new dialect approach appears in The Cambridge Guide to English Usage (Peters, 2004) which attempts to avoid any language bias and accordingly uses an idiosyncratic international spelling system of mixed American and British forms (but tending to prefer the more phonetic American English spellings).

References

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See also

- English as a second language
- English as a lingua franca for Europe


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