English
A member of the West Germanic group of the *Germanic languages*, its closest relative being *Frisian*. Historically, the following periods are identified: Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) (up to c.1100), Middle English (1100–1500), Modern English (1500 to the present). The last of these is sometimes further subdivided into early Modern English (1500–1700), later Modern English (1700–1900) and Present English (20th c.), but it is perhaps better to treat the period as a whole and use Present English for the most recent state of the language. In Europe, its spread is mainly confined to the British Isles (including the Channel Islands), in some parts of which it is spoken alongside indigenous languages (*Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Irish, Channel Islands French*, and some would add *Scots*) or recently arrived *community languages*; it is also the dominant language in the British colony of Gibraltar and is an official language (with *Maltese*) in Malta. World-wide, it is estimated to be the first language of some 377 million speakers.

*Old English*

*Origins and the early period.* ‘Old English’ is the term now normally used for the earliest period of the English language, as distinct from ‘Anglo-Saxon’, the older term, now used of the people, their history and archaeology. The origins of the language lie with the Germanic tribes living along the North Sea coast of the Continent, in modern terms from southern Denmark to Holland. Small groups from these tribes were employed by the Romans in defending the eastern and southern coasts of Britain during the last years of Roman rule in the province, but the main infiltrations were in the period following the departure of the Roman legions in the early 5th c. The period between about 500 and 600 was one of gradual penetration of Britain by groups of Germanic settlers. There seems never to have been a large-scale invasion, rather groups of raiders and settlers, sometimes reaching far inland via the large rivers, like Thames and Trent, established settlements next to or in place of the local Celtic inhabitants. By the early 7th c. there were what could be called Anglo-Saxon kingdoms side by side with Celtic ones, in the north, for example, the English *Deira* besides the Celtic *Elmet*. Wales and Cornwall and the more northerly parts of Scotland were not penetrated by the new settlers.

Celtic and the Germanic languages of the early settlers would have been mutually unintelligible. The diplomatic contact between neighbouring kingdoms was no
doubt carried out through interpreters and it is difficult to see a general need for either group to learn the language of the other. There is no way of knowing what kind of everyday contact there was between the ordinary Germanic settlers and their Celtic neighbours but place-name evidence suggests that co-existence was at least as common as the fire and sword described by the early chroniclers. Early place-names with *Walh meaning ‘Briton’ rather than ‘slave’, e.g. Walton, Walcot, and with *Cumbre meaning ‘British’ (cf. Welsh Cymro ‘Welshman’, Cymru ‘Wales’), e.g. Cumberland, Comberbatch, suggest recognition by Germanic-speakers of continuing Celtic settlement, less certainly suggested by the purely Celtic topographical names, e.g. Thames, Severn, Calder, Avon. There are still very few certain Celtic borrowings into English of the period, but it is likely that on a local, and perhaps temporary, level there were far more.

Besides language, the other great difference between Celts and Anglo-Saxons lay in their beliefs. The Celts had been converted to Christianity whilst still under Roman rule and had an organized church. The Anglo-Saxons were still pagan. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons began in the 6th c. and was largely complete (though not always lasting) by the end of the 8th c.

Scripts. Christianity meant not only a new religion but also a new language and access to a new means of recording events and ideas. The Anglo-Saxons, like their north Germanic neighbours, used *runes. What survives suggests, however, that both before and after the coming of Christianity runes were used for commemoration, to express ownership, empowering (of weapons, in particular) and, perhaps in all cases, decoration rather than communication. Though it is possible that messages cut in wood formed an everyday practical use for runes, no unequivocal evidence has survived from England. A very few, very brief inscriptions survive from the pagan Anglo-Saxon period, cut on bone or impressed on pottery, but the majority are later. Even these are not numerous or on the whole very long. The Ruthwell cross (Dumfriesshire) inscription, with 290 existing runes and at least a further 100 lost through the 17th-c. breaking up of the cross, is the longest.

The frequency of writing Latin after the coming of Christianity and the relatively easy adaptation of its alphabet for the writing of English no doubt made it inevitable that Roman rather than runic letter forms would become the norm. Though primarily used for cutting in stone, bone or clay, and therefore straight-sided, runes could have been adapted, but with a highly developed series of alphabets derived from Roman capital and cursive already in existence there was little need to do so. The only additions to the Roman alphabet were the runic letters <Ƿ> (ƿynn) for [w] and <Ƿ> (thorn) for [θ] or [ð], and the adapted <d>, <ð> (eth), used side by side with <Ƿ>. It should not be imagined that adoption was immediate and uniform. In the early stages experiments were clearly made. There are early examples of <th> rather than <Ƿ>, and <u> or <uu> is used sporadically throughout the period side by side with <Ƿ>.

Dialects. As runic inscriptions and written vernacular texts make clear, there were a number of dialects in Anglo-Saxon England, possibly as a result of the differing
regions of the Continent from which the early settlers came but as likely from differences which developed after settlement in widely separated areas of England. Broad differences existed between Anglian in the midlands and north, West Saxon in the south and Kentish in the south-east, but there are also variations within these areas, particularly Mercian and Northumbrian within Anglian. Since early records are few, most of the evidence for dialect variations, as for all linguistic features, comes from the 8th c. and later. By the 10th c. West Saxon, because of the political dominance of the West Saxon kings, had become widespread throughout England as an administrative language and had also achieved something of the status of a standardizing literary language into which earlier works were copied. Before that happened, however, the relative stability of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was to be broken.

Scandinavian and other influences. From the late 8th c. onwards Scandinavian marauders subjected the east and south coasts of England to a series of raids culminating in the mid-9th c. in larger-scale invasions. After a series of defeats the English eventually rallied under Alfred, king of the West Saxons, and a settlement was made dividing England into the Danelaw, under Scandinavian control, north and east of a line roughly drawn from London to Chester, and Wessex, under English control, to the south and west. There are two major differences between this settlement and the earlier Germanic one of Celtic Britain: first, the relationship between English and the Scandinavian languages was close as they were branches of earlier Germanic, and secondly, whereas the Celts gradually lost control of eastern, central and southern Britain, the Scandinavians for a time ruled the northern and eastern parts of England which they had overrun, and then later (11th c) gained control for a time of the whole of England. As with the earlier Germanic settlement, however, it was once again a matter of Christian inhabitants and pagan invaders. Little is known of the early linguistic interaction but the Scandinavian settlement left a varied and lasting residue of Scandinavian words and forms of every grammatical category, as well as influencing the forms and meanings of some English words. Largely due no doubt to the dominance of West Saxon in the 10th c., these words and forms do not appear in texts in any number until after the end of the Old English period. (Nouns: bracken (1300), keel (1398), law (1000), leg (1300), sky (1289), window (1225); adjectives: awkward (1425), flat (1330), ill (1200); verbs: call (1225), die (1175), drown (1325), get (1200), hit (1075), lift (1200), raise (1200), scrape (1225), take (1100), want (1200); prepositions: fro (1200), till (800); pronouns: they, them, their (1200). Dates given are of the earliest recorded uses according to MED or OED.)

The Scandinavian languages were not the only sources of new words. A number of Latin borrowings of a largely non-Christian kind existed early in the Germanic languages either brought from the Continent or taken over from Latin-speaking Celts in Britain. From the time of the arrival of the Christian missionaries with new concepts and a language carrying the prestige of the new religion, words were taken into English from Latin but, since the Germanic process of creating new words from within the language was still dominant at that time, new borrowings existed side by
side with numerous new creations, largely loan-formations or loan-translations, in the area of the new religion. Probably from contact while still on the Continent are: street (OE stréet), mile (OE mil), mint, from Lat. moneta ‘coin’ (OE mynet), silk (OE sioluc); from British–Latin contacts: strap (OE strepp), pail (OE pæzel), pot (OE pott), cat (OE catt(e)), cock (OE cocc); later borrowings and new creations: abbot (OE abbod), mass (OE messe), alms (OE ælmesse); OE Prowung = Lat. Passio ‘Passion’, OE (leornung-)cniht = Lat. discipulus ‘disciple’, OE mildheortnesse = Lat. misericordia ‘mercy’; OE Prymnes = Lat. Trinitas ‘Trinity’.

By the time of the Norman Conquest of 1066 the process had already begun whereby English gradually lost almost all of the inflectional system which had marked distinctions between classes of nouns, verbs and adjectives as well as gender, case, tense and number. No doubt interaction between two distinct but similar Germanic languages had some effect through the stressing of stem rather than inflection, but the main cause is likely to have been the tendency of English stress to fall on the first syllable thereby leaving inflections weakly stressed or not stressed at all.

Old English literature. The Old English period traditionally ends with the Conquest though nothing like so sharp a break actually existed. At the time of the conquest, English possessed a flourishing literature – poetry: secular, heroic (e.g. Beowulf) and elegiac (e.g. The Wife’s Lament, The Ruin), and religious (e.g. Dream of the Rood, Judith); prose: saints’ lives (by, for example, Ælfric), the Anglo–Saxon Chronicle, homilies (e.g. Blickling Homilies), scientific works (e.g. Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion). Though Latin remained the primary language of learning and religion, English through translation and original composition had achieved a position of considerable prestige. It was also the common administrative language, used for law codes as well as charters, grants of land and wills.

Middle English

French influences. The Norman Conquest marks a considerable change in the linguistic context of English, its first effect being to move English from its position of administrative prestige as second only to Latin. In origin the Norman invaders were Scandinavian but they had adopted the language of the land they had conquered and consequently introduced a further language, Norman French or *Anglo-Norman, into England. There had been contact between Anglo–Saxon England and France before the Conquest – such as to leave a small inheritance of loan-words (e.g. castle, tower, bacon, proud) – but the major influence of Norman French on English comes in the period of social dominance in the late 11th and 12th centuries. Norman–French–speakers fairly quickly took over the dominant positions in secular and religious affairs thus creating after a while a prestige language of religious and social life and administration.

This new linguistic invasion differed markedly from its predecessors. Once again mutually unintelligible languages had come together but this time with one as a socially dominant partner which had to be learnt and understood in some form by at least some of the members of the other language community. As a result, the two
languages remained functioning separately, in different parts of the community, each influencing the other.

Norman French in England gradually developed its own form of the language, Anglo-Norman, and its own literature. The loss of Normandy in 1204 did not mean the loss of English possessions in France and there is a continuing French influence, from Anglo-Norman within the country and its sphere of influence, and from Central French, especially that of Paris, abroad – no longer influence through invasion but through cultural desirability.

By the middle of the 14th c. Anglo-Norman was giving way to English as the language of administration. Signs of this are the Statutes of Pleading, which made English rather than French the language of the law-courts, and the opening of Parliament in English, both in 1362. French as a teaching medium in schools also appears to have been giving way to English at this time, and the 14th c. sees the burgeoning of literature in English: chronicles, romances, lyrics, poetry of every kind. As a literary medium French was almost entirely superseded in England by the end of the 14th c., but by that time English was a vastly different language from the one it had been at the time of the Conquest. The most notable legacy of French (both Anglo-Norman and Central French) was in the vocabulary, and words were introduced in every area of human activity and ultimately penetrated every level of society, often producing French/English pairs which have later become differentiated in meaning, e.g. mutton/sheep, royal/kingly; or Anglo-Norman/Central French pairs e.g. warden/guardian, cattle/chattel, catch/chase. The spelling system also had been much affected: <ch, qu, sh, z> were all French innovations.

Dialects and the standard. The fact that English was not subject to the standardizing influences and needs of areas like administration during the period before the 14th c. meant that dialectal differences, already present in the Old English period and heightened by the Scandinavian settlement in the north and east, established themselves in written form. Five generally distinctive areas are usually distinguished: Northern, East Midland, West Midland, Southern and Kentish, and in addition, by the end of the period, Scottish. No one of these carried greater prestige than another and all produced a considerable number of literary texts, but with the development of London as a metropolitan centre a particular form of English began to develop which, though based on East Midland forms, was also affected by speakers from other areas of England.

By the 14th c. the earlier establishment of the Chancery at Westminster showed signs of producing an inclination towards a ‘correct’ form of the language for administrative use. The end of the 15th c. saw the introduction of printing into England and Caxton, the first printer, expressed concern about varieties of English and the need to find appropriately acceptable and lasting forms of words for the language. This cluster of influences contributed to the growth of a standard written English, though it is unlikely that the feeling of this as a ‘correct’ form at first spread far outside London, or even isolated groups within London.
Middle English literature. Despite the social prestige of Anglo-Norman in the early part of the period, English retained a place in literature – not only sermons and religious instruction (in the case of a work like Ancene Wisse (A Guide for Anchoresses) of high literary as well as didactic value) but also secular and religious history and legend in works like Lajamon’s Brut and the Cursor Mundi. By the end of the period English was again the dominant literary language represented in particular in the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland and the anonymous author of the poems of the Gawain/Pearl manuscript in the later 14th c. The 15th c., though not perhaps matching the earlier period in quality, established English in a new and expanding range of literary work, so that with the advent of printing at the end of the century it was English as much as Latin works that were published.

Modern English

Despite the wide variety of developments affecting the English language in the 15th c., geographically it remained a language confined almost to the boundaries that contained it at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. The only extensions were of a small kind in Ireland, Wales and Cornwall. The 16th c. began the outward expansion of English. It also saw further extensions in the range of the vernacular, largely through translation, into areas of scholarship once entirely Latin. The Reformation established English as the language of religion and the Renaissance helped to create a new self-consciousness in English literary and linguistic endeavour in its attempts to match the achievement of Latin.

Early foreign contacts and the English overseas. At first, rather than exporting the English language, trade, and later simply travel, brought English-speakers into contact with a variety of new languages, and with familiar ones in a new context, resulting in varied and extensive borrowing. At the same time there was extended contact with other languages through printed works of every kind. Borrowings from Spanish came about to a great extent as a result of trading in the New World – new situations and new names for new objects – and there was not just borrowing of Spanish words but also of words from the indigenous languages of the New World through the medium of Spanish. Some recorded early borrowings were: sherris (later sherry) 1540, primero (the card game) 1533, tornado 1556, alligator (al lagarto = ‘the lizard’) 1568, armadillo 1577, mosquito (= ‘little fly’) 1583; and from native languages: canoe (Sp. from Haitian) 1555, maize (Sp. from Cuban) 1585, banana 1597. Examples of later borrowings are: vanilla 1662, avocado 1697, barbecue 1697 – the latter two from native languages. The same is true to a more limited extent of Portuguese in Africa and Asia. From Portuguese were, for example: flamingo 1565, molasses 1582, madeira 1595, caste 1613, dodo 1628; yam (? African word) 1588, assagai (Port. from Arabic from Berber) 1625, macaw 1668, mandarin (Port. from Malay) 1589, pagoda (Port. from an Indian language) 1634. There was a continued borrowing of words from French, and, on a smaller scale, from Dutch. From French: trophy 1513, pioneer 1523, viceroy 1524, genteel 1599, rendezvous 1591, machine 1549 (a Scottish use), hautboy 1575, promenade n. 1567, v. 1588, moustache

Later in the 16th c. Italian words began to appear. A few had existed already in Middle English but the vast majority date from the 17th c. and later, partly as a result of Italian dominance in many areas, artistic and domestic, partly as a result of the growing importance of the grand tour. Many have remained specific to Italian circumstances, the country and its way of life, but many began as specific but later became generalized. Some have retained their original form, and to an extent pronunciation, many have become wholly Anglicized: of the 16th c. are: *nuncio*, *podesta*, *doge*, *duomo*, *piazza*, *madrigal*, *stanza*; of the 17th c: *capriccio*, *vermicelli*, *recitative*, *cameo*, *model*, *miniature*, *intrigue*, *gazette*, *bulletin*, *opera*, *volcano*. Dating of word borrowing is always difficult since the first recorded use is all there is to go by and words borrowed orally rather than in written form can exist for some time without record. This was true of Scandinavian in the late Old English period and Norman French in the early Middle English, and it is true again of borrowings from other European languages in the early modern period. The main difference lies in the volume and variety of English literature and the new interest in language.

Though Latin retained its position as the primary learned language, every kind of literature was now produced in English from printed ephemera like broadside ballads to philosophic and scientific treatises. The growth of learned writing in English, often translation from Classical originals, meant that everyday (and exotic) words were entering English not only from the living languages of Europe and the wider world but also from the Classical languages. This 'foreign contact' was entirely a paper one. Often with the intention of improving the language, its 'beauty' (as they saw it) or its range, large numbers of learned words were borrowed from Latin. This was largely a literary matter, but so extreme did the borrowing of Latin words become that a body of opinion arose condemning the overuse of these 'inkhorn terms', as they were abusively called, words born of the inkpot not the human mind.

Many of the borrowings survive and no longer seem outlandish, eg. *conscious, reciprocal, defunct, spurious, inflate* (v.), *strenuous*, many hardly survived their first appearance (except in dictionaries of 'hard words'), eg. *obstufact*, *furibund*, *oblatrantly*, *magnificate*. All the words quoted here, Ben Jonson holds up to ridicule in his play *The Poetaster* (1602). The later borrowings from the Classical languages, Latin and Greek, or in some cases words created on Classical models, were largely scientific. Latin had from its first appearance in England been a source of technical words of all kinds because it was the language of all learning. It was the expansion of science (in its modern meaning) and the taking-over of the area by English that produced the
new influx of borrowings or creations, e.g. from Latin in the 17th c.: *specimen, spectrum, formula, stamen, nebula, antenna, momentum*. Another area in which the influence of Latin was felt was in the (sometimes quite erroneous) remodelling of the spelling of words on the lines of their supposed originals, e.g. *doute* from French, re-spelt *doubt* because of Latin *dubitum*.

*Early language study.* The condemnation of ‘inkhorn terms’ is a sign of another characteristic of 16th-c. England, an interest for the first time in the language for itself, or for the sake of improving and regulating it. One of the first weaknesses of the language to catch attention was orthography, where the mismatch between spelling and pronunciation was apparent. Those who considered that spelling should reflect pronunciation were drawn into the first systematic investigations of the pronunciation of English as well as into an examination of English spelling practices. John Harte’s *Orthographie* (printed 1569) was one of the earliest and most remarkable of these, providing a new orthography as well as an analysis of English spelling and pronunciation. In the course of the 17th c., phonetics became an independent study, partly at least because of the concern with teaching English to foreigners. Christopher Cooper late in the century, gives a remarkably full account of English pronunciation (*English Teacher*, 1687). The early attempts at radical spelling reform, however, having failed to gain general acceptance, gave way to regularization of traditional spellings, something which printers had been doing since the late 16th c. By the beginning of the 18th c., spelling was by and large fixed in its present form.

Early attention was also given to lexicography. Latin–English glossaries of a limited kind had existed since the Old English period. Somewhat fuller vocabularies were produced in the 15th c. (*Promptorium Parvulorum* c. 1440 and *Catholicon Anglicum* 1487) and in a similar form continued into the 16th c. It was not until the later 16th c. that there was a call for an English dictionary (Bullokar 1580, Mulcaster 1582). In the same century a number of bilingual dictionaries appeared: French–English (Palsgrave 1530), Italian–English (Thomas 1567, Florio 1598), Spanish–English (Percyvall 1591). Springing partly from the influx of new words and partly from the new self-awareness in language matters, the first English dictionary appeared in 1604, Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabetical, conteyning and teaching the true writing, and understanding of hard vsuall English wordes*. As its title suggests, it is little more than an alphabetically ordered glossary. It was followed in 1616 by John Bullokar’s *English Expositor*. A series of dictionaries appeared during the 17th c. and early 18th c. The number of words is continuously expanded, often by the inclusion of what would now be considered encyclopedic or gazetteer information, and matters such as etymology, and register were touched on sporadically and inadequately. Elisha Coles’s *An English Dictionary* (1676) includes large numbers of regional and archaic words. It was not until the early 18th c. that something like a comprehensive dictionary as opposed to a dictionary mainly concerned with explaining unusual words was produced.

A systematic treatment was also given to grammar, starting with William
Bullokar’s *Bref Grammar* (1586). Grammar is treated along with pronunciation in a number of works of the early 17th c. culminating in John Wallis’s *Grammatica Linguæ Anglicæ* (1653), which attempts to take the description of English grammar out of the Latin mould. Wallis demonstrates the influence of antiquarianism by including a history of the language.

Interest in language also extended to areas like slang and thieves’ cant and in the 17th c. to dialect vocabulary and idiom. This very broad interest, however, was overshadowed by the growing desire amongst scholars to establish and retain a ‘true’ form of the language.

**Literature from Reformation to Restoration.** The 16th c. and early 17th c. was a period of unprecedented literary activity, beginning with the new translations of the Bible early in the 16th c. (Coverdale, Tyndale), expanding into areas of religious debate and extensive translations of the Classics (Plutarch, Pliny, Euclid) and contemporary European languages (Ariosto, Montaigne), and achieving an exceptional richness in original writing in prose, poetry and drama (Bacon, Nashe; Spenser, Sidney; Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster). One of the most important linguistic results of the activities of the playwrights was that, because of the remarkable range of language registers represented, for the first time the full variety of English speech was reflected in literature. As the 17th c. progressed drama took a second place to poetry (Milton, Dryden), and even to a still-developing prose writing (Bunyan, Hobbes, Milton, Dryden), though it revived to some extent after the reopening of the theatres at the Restoration.

**Later developments in language study.** The 17th c. had seen the growth of interest in an academy as a means of refining the language and fixing it in a true and permanent form. The existence of the Italian (1582) and French (1635) academies provided a stimulus and Dryden and later Swift, among others, advocated some form of academy. The Royal Society (1662) might have served the purpose but in the end turned its back on language study, which thus remained uninstitutionalized.

The desire for improving the language and preventing change went hand-in-hand with a desire for standardization and regularization. Though some advocated the importance of current usage as a guide, the apparently uncontrolled variety of this was uninviting to most writers of the time. Instead appeals were made to logic, etymology and analogy (the ‘genius of the language’) to provide authoritative guidance as to what should be considered ‘correct’. It should be said that the notion of a ‘correct’ form of the language was a desirable one for those who had to teach and those who wanted to learn the language.

One of the most remarkable achievements in the systematic study of the language at the time was Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). Johnson’s Dictionary demonstrates the settling of lexicographical practice very largely into what is that of later historical dictionaries. Johnson improves on his predecessors in his definitions, which are on the whole fuller and more analytic, in his coverage, where he reduces the encyclopedic content and expands the number of
ordinary words, and by his inclusion of quotations to illustrate the use of words. His work dominated the dictionary-making of the 18th c. and as a basis for other dictionaries lasted well into the 19th c. Thomas Sheridan (1780) and John Walker (1791) used Johnson’s as the basis for their definitions but expanded and improved the information on pronunciation in their Pronouncing Dictionaries. Dictionaries continued to appear throughout the 19th c. but until the advent of the New English Dictionary there were no major developments in England. In America the work of Noah Webster not only resulted in an important dictionary (1828) but also established the different system of spelling for American English.

Concern with establishing a standard in grammatical usage led to the prescriptive grammars of Robert Lowth (1762) and most influentially Lindley Murray (1794). These undoubtedly had a standardizing effect on many elements of the written language, which in some cases lasted until the 20th c.

The historical study of the language had begun in the 16th c. through the investigation of Old and Middle English texts for evidence of the antiquity of the English church as an independent institution. A dictionary of Old English had been published in 1659 and in 1689 the great grammar of George Hickes appeared. Despite these early beginnings the study did not move forward until the late 18th c., with Sir William Jones’s work on Sanskrit, and the 19th c. through the activities of continental scholars, for example Rasmus Rask in Denmark and the brothers Grimm in Germany. The extensive re-examination of manuscripts and the publication of texts to which this gave rise joined with the movement for creating a new dictionary on historical principles proposed by the Philological Society in 1858. The Early English Text Society was founded in 1864 at least partly to provide texts for the new dictionary.

**English overseas.** Most important for later developments in the spread of English world-wide was the setting up of English colonies on the eastern seaboard of North America from Virginia in the south to New England in the north in the early 17th c. In 1783, with the conclusion of the War of American Independence, the United States of America became a separate state which developed its own pronunciations, spellings and traditions of English. At present nearly two-thirds of the world’s English-speakers are American. Also in the 16th c. a rather shifting series of island and mainland colonies was developing in the Caribbean, soon to be populated predominantly by black African slaves. These ex-colonies also developed their own Englishes which in turn were brought back to Britain with the immigration of the 1950s and later. Developments on the other side of the world were a feature of the late 18th c. (1788 Botany Bay, the first penal settlement in Australia; gradual settlement in New Zealand from the 1790s). South Africa is largely a 19th-c. development and West African colonies also mainly developed in the 19th c., though contact had existed from early in the 16th c. The British presence in East Africa is late 19th-c. and 20th-c. Regular contact with the Indian sub-continent dates from 1612 (trading station at Surat) and grew in importance during the 18th c.

English remained the first language in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and parts
of Canada. In other ex-colonies it has usually retained a place in some form: as the official language, in general use in administration and education, as a second language, sometimes without any official status. In a number of countries a *creole based on English has developed.

The expanding vocabulary. The vocabulary continued to grow during the 18th and 19th centuries through ordinary contact with its European neighbours and to a growing extent through colonial contact with languages in the rest of the world. A wide variety of words have been borrowed from Europe: 18th c. from Italian: *alfresco, *casino, *semolina, *crescendo, *fracas, *firm (sb.), *lotto; 19th c. *graffiti (originally an art term), *salami (originally plural), *gorgonzola, *spaghetti, *cadenza, *fiasco, *studio, *scenaria; 18th c. from Portuguese: *veranda, *ayah (from Indian vernacular); 18th c. from Dutch: *gin, *caboose, *mangle; 19th c. *spook, *waffle, *boss (all three probably via USA); 18th c. from Spanish: *stevedore (via USA), *quadirille, *cigar.


Besides the continuing influence of other European languages the period also saw a large increase in technical vocabulary, either direct from Latin and Greek, formed on the model of Classical words, or created through the use of Latin or Greek elements (affixes or stems); 18th c. from Latin: *nucleus, *inertia, *auditorium, *deficit, *habitat; 19th c.: *dementia, *pupa, *incunabula, *sanatorium, *aquarium, *bacillus; 18th c. formed with Greek stems and/or affixes: *chronometer 1735; 19th c.: *anthropoid, adj. 1837, *archaeopteryx 1859, *bronchitis 1836, *biochemistry 1881, *eucalyptus 1809, *geophysics 1889, *heliotropism 1854. Most of the examples given have entered the main word-stock of the language, but there are many technical words that remain in restricted use.

English continues to accept and to use words from other languages, not only in the technical and scientific sphere but in all areas of human activity. Some examples of borrowings in the 20th c. are: *conga (American Spanish) 1935, *cosmonaut (Greek elements) 1959, *bourgette (French) 1931, *diabolo (Italian) 1907, *dirndl (German dialect) 1937, *espresso (Italian) 1945, *fascist (Italian) 1921, *gopak (Russian) 1929, *kibbutz (Hebrew) 1931, *numbat (Australian Aborigine) 1923, *shashlik (Russian/Turkish) 1925, *shubunkin (Japanese) 1917. Words are also borrowed from

**Present situation of English**

English in the late 20th c. has developed into a wide range of more and less closely related ‘Englishes’. This combined with the economic dominance of the USA has turned English into a world language. By far the largest number of speakers are in the USA (c.221 million), with Britain next with c.56 million. The other countries make up the remaining 100 million (Crystal 1995: 109). English is also learnt as a second language by possibly a further 98 million people. Besides this there are a large number of speakers of creoles and pidgins with English as a base.

The world-wide use of English and the diversity of its origins and early developments mean that there are considerable differences between the various Englishes. Between the two largest of these, American and British English, the differences are, however, small. By and large, grammar is the same; there are numerous semantic differences but not such as seriously to inhibit communication; and the differences in spelling, though immediately obvious, are not significant.

If ‘standard’ implies a generally recognized and accepted form of the language in grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation, then a standard British English does not exist. A ‘standard’ is required for teaching purposes and even there there has been debate about what form it should take. It is safe only to say that British English spelling has achieved and maintained standardization, that a standard grammar is broadly accepted for writing, that there is a common word-stock which constitutes a ‘standard’ vocabulary, though the borders could not be rigidly defined, and that there is no single ‘standard’ pronunciation. RP or Received Pronunciation (a form abstracted from SE English speech) seemed 50 years ago to be on the way to becoming an accepted pronunciation for British English. Now its primary use is for comparative purposes in linguistic analysis and for using as a form in teaching foreign, and to a very limited extent, native learners. It has become a variety of English amongst many but still retains some social prestige. Regional dialects generally survive though some of the variety has disappeared (see map 4). Regional accents are now a common feature of broadcasting.

English remains a major literary language. Not only British and American English but a large number of other Englishes have made a major contribution in the 20th c., sometimes side by side with writings in native languages, sometimes at odds with them. Novels, plays and poetry are all represented.

English is estimated to be the first language of 377 million speakers world-wide. Britain itself is now home not only to speakers of British English, Irish, Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Channel Islands French but also to those speaking
varieties of world English and languages from the Indian sub-continent and elsewhere. What effect this will have on British English in the future remains to be seen.


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