



## THE ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND STEPS OF SPREADING

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**Annotation.** The article talks about the various information on the history of the English Language including its original language family with the earliest forms spoken by inhabitants as well as spreading of modern English, and its geographical distribution.

**Key words:** early medieval, dialects, core vocabulary, remain unchanged, standardized, belongs to, set their own language policies, mostly spoken, borrow, worldwide influence, native speakers

**Introduction.** English is a **West Germanic language** in the **Indo-European language family**, with its earliest forms spoken by the inhabitants of **early medieval England**. It is named after the **Angles**, one of the ancient **Germanic peoples** that **migrated** to the island of **Great Britain**. Existing on a **dialect continuum** with **Scots** and then most closely related to the **Low Saxon** and **Frisian languages**, **Modern English** is **genealogically Germanic**. Although its grammar and core vocabulary are mostly West Germanic, it has borrowed many words from **French** (about **28% of English words**) and **Latin** (also about **28%**), as well as some grammar and core vocabulary from **Old Norse** (a **North Germanic language**). Speakers of English are called **Anglophones**.

The earliest forms of English, collectively known as **Old English** or "Anglo-Saxon", evolved from a group of **North Sea Germanic dialects** brought to Great Britain by **Anglo-Saxon settlers** in the 5th century; these dialects generally resisted influence from the then-local **Common Brittonic** and **British Latin** languages. However Old English dialects were later influenced by **Old Norse-speaking Viking settlers and invaders** starting in the 8th and 9th centuries. At the time, Old Norse even retained considerable mutual intelligibility with certain dialects of Old English (especially more northern dialects). **Middle English** began in the late 11th century after the **Norman Conquest** of England, when considerable **Old French** (especially **Old Norman French**) and **Latin-derived vocabulary** was incorporated into English over some three hundred years. **Early Modern English** began in the late 15th century with the start of the **Great Vowel Shift** and the **Renaissance** trend of borrowing further Latin and Greek words and roots into English, concurrent with the introduction of the **printing press** to **London**. This era notably culminated in the **King James Bible** and the **works of William Shakespeare**. The printing press greatly standardized English spelling, which has remained largely unchanged since then, despite a wide variety of later sound shifts in different English dialects.

**Modern English grammar** is the result of a gradual change from a typical **Indo-European dependent-marking pattern** with a rich **inflectional morphology** and relatively **free word order** to a mostly **analytic** pattern with little inflection and a fairly fixed **subject-verb-object word order**. Modern English relies more on **auxiliary verbs** and **word order** for the

expression of complex [tenses](#), [aspects](#) and [moods](#), as well as [passive constructions](#), [interrogatives](#), and some [negation](#).

Modern English has spread around the world since the 17th century as a consequence of the worldwide influence of the [British Empire](#) and the [United States of America](#). Through all types of printed and electronic media in these countries, English has become the leading language of international [discourse](#) and the [lingua franca](#) in many regions and professional contexts such as science, [navigation](#), and law. English is the [most spoken language](#) in the world and the [third most spoken native language](#) in the world, after [Standard Chinese](#) and [Spanish](#). It is the most widely learned [second language](#) and is either the official language or one of the official languages in [59 sovereign states](#). There are more people who have learned English as a second language than there are native speakers. As of 2005, it was estimated that there were over two billion speakers of English. English is the majority native language in the [United Kingdom](#), the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), and the [Republic of Ireland](#) (see [Anglosphere](#)) and is widely spoken in some areas of the [Caribbean](#), [Africa](#), [South Asia](#), [Southeast Asia](#), and [Oceania](#). It is a [co-official language of the United Nations](#), the [European Union](#), and many other international and regional organizations. English accounts for at least 70% of speakers of the Germanic language branch of the Indo-European family.

#### Classification

English is an [Indo-European language](#) and belongs to the [West Germanic](#) group of the [Germanic languages](#). [Old English](#) originated from a Germanic tribal and [linguistic continuum](#) along the [Frisian North Sea](#) coast, whose languages gradually evolved into the [Anglic languages](#) in the [British Isles](#), and into the [Frisian languages](#) and [Low German/Low Saxon](#) on the continent. The Frisian languages, which together with the Anglic languages form the [Anglo-Frisian languages](#), are the closest living relatives of English. Low German/Low Saxon is also closely related, and sometimes English, the Frisian languages, and Low German are grouped together as the [Ingvaeonic](#) (North Sea Germanic) languages, though this grouping remains debated. Old English evolved into [Middle English](#), which in turn evolved into Modern English. Particular dialects of Old and Middle English also developed into a number of other Anglic languages, including [Scots](#) and the extinct [Fingallian](#) and [Forth and Bargy \(Yola\)](#) dialects of [Ireland](#).

Like [Icelandic](#) and [Faroese](#), the development of English in the British Isles isolated it from the continental Germanic languages and influences, and it has since diverged considerably. English is not [mutually intelligible](#) with any continental Germanic language, differing in [vocabulary](#), [syntax](#), and [phonology](#), although some of these, such as Dutch or Frisian, do show strong affinities with English, especially with its earlier stages.

Unlike Icelandic and Faroese, which were isolated, the development of English was influenced by a long series of invasions of the British Isles by other peoples and languages, particularly [Old Norse](#) and [Norman French](#). These left a profound mark of their own on the language, so that English shows some similarities in vocabulary and grammar with many languages outside its linguistic [clades](#)—but it is not mutually intelligible with any of those languages either. Some scholars have argued that English can be considered a [mixed language](#) or a [creole](#)—a theory called the [Middle English creole hypothesis](#). Although the great influence of these languages on the vocabulary and grammar of Modern English is widely acknowledged, most specialists in language contact do not consider English to be a true mixed language.



English is classified as a Germanic language because it shares [innovations](#) with other Germanic languages such as [Dutch](#), [German](#), and [Swedish](#). These shared innovations show that the languages have descended from a single common ancestor called [Proto-Germanic](#). Some shared features of Germanic languages include the division of verbs into [strong](#) and [weak](#) classes, the use of [modal verbs](#), and the sound changes affecting [Proto-Indo-European](#) consonants, known as [Grimm's](#) and [Verner's laws](#). English is classified as an Anglo-Frisian language because Frisian and English share other features, such as the [palatalisation](#) of consonants that were velar consonants in Proto-Germanic.

### Spread of Modern English

By the late 18th century, the [British Empire](#) had spread English through its colonies and geopolitical dominance. Commerce, science and technology, diplomacy, art, and formal education all contributed to English becoming the first truly global language. English also facilitated worldwide international communication. England continued to form new colonies, and these later developed their own norms for speech and writing. English was adopted in parts of North America, parts of Africa, Oceania, and many other regions. When they obtained political independence, some of the newly independent [states](#) that had multiple [indigenous languages](#) opted to continue using English as the official language to avoid the political and other difficulties inherent in promoting any one indigenous language above the others. In the 20th century the growing economic and cultural influence of the United States and its status as a [superpower](#) following the Second World War has, along with worldwide broadcasting in English by the [BBC](#) and other broadcasters, caused the language to spread across the planet much faster. In the 21st century, English is more widely spoken and written than any language has ever been.

As Modern English developed, explicit norms for standard usage were published, and spread through official media such as public education and state-sponsored publications. In 1755 [Samuel Johnson](#) published his [A Dictionary of the English Language](#), which introduced standard spellings of words and usage norms. In 1828, [Noah Webster](#) published the [American Dictionary of the English language](#) to try to establish a norm for speaking and writing American English that was independent of the British standard. Within Britain, non-standard or lower class dialect features were increasingly stigmatised, leading to the quick spread of the prestige varieties among the middle classes.

In modern English, the loss of grammatical case is almost complete (it is now only found in pronouns, such as *he* and *him*, *she* and *her*, *who* and *whom*), and SVO word order is mostly fixed. Some changes, such as the use of [do-support](#), have become universalised. (Earlier English did not use the word "do" as a general auxiliary as Modern English does; at first it was only used in question constructions, and even then was not obligatory. Now, do-support with the verb *have* is becoming increasingly standardised.) The use of progressive forms in *-ing*, appears to be spreading to new constructions, and forms such as *had been being built* are becoming more common. Regularisation of irregular forms also slowly continues (e.g. *dreamed* instead of *dreamt*), and analytical alternatives to inflectional forms are becoming more common (e.g. *more polite* instead of *politer*). British English is also undergoing change under the influence of American English, fuelled by the strong presence of American English in the media and the prestige associated with the US as a world power.



## Geographical distribution

As of 2016, 400 million people spoke English as their [first language](#), and 1.1 billion spoke it as a secondary language. English is the [largest language by number of speakers](#). English is spoken by communities on every continent and on islands in all the major oceans.

The countries where English is spoken can be grouped into different categories according to how English is used in each country. The "inner circle" countries with many native speakers of English share an international standard of written English and jointly influence speech norms for English around the world. English does not belong to just one country, and it does not belong solely to descendants of English settlers. English is an official language of countries populated by few descendants of native speakers of English. It has also become by far the most important language of international communication when people who share no native language meet anywhere in the world.

### English as a global language

English has ceased to be an "English language" in the sense of belonging only to people who are ethnically [English](#). Use of English is growing country-by-country internally and for international communication. Most people learn English for practical rather than ideological reasons. Many speakers of English in Africa have become part of an "Afro-Saxon" language community that unites Africans from different countries.

As decolonisation proceeded throughout the British Empire in the 1950s and 1960s, former colonies often did not reject English but rather continued to use it as independent countries setting their own language policies. For example, the view of the [English language](#) among many Indians has gone from associating it with colonialism to associating it with economic progress, and English continues to be an official language of India. English is also widely used in media and literature, and the number of English language books published annually in India is the third largest in the world after the US and UK. However, English is rarely spoken as a first language, numbering only around a couple hundred-thousand people, and less than 5% of the population speak fluent English in India. David Crystal claimed in 2004 that, combining native and non-native speakers, India now has more people who speak or understand English than any other country in the world, but the number of English speakers in India is uncertain, with most scholars concluding that the United States still has more speakers of English than India.

Modern English, sometimes described as the first global [lingua franca](#), is also regarded as the first [world language](#). English is the world's most widely used language in newspaper publishing, book publishing, international telecommunications, scientific publishing, international trade, mass entertainment, and diplomacy. English is, by international treaty, the basis for the required [controlled natural languages Seaspeak](#) and [Airspeak](#), used as [international languages](#) of seafaring and aviation. English used to have parity with French and German in scientific research, but now it dominates that field. It achieved parity with [French](#) as a language of diplomacy at the [Treaty of Versailles](#) negotiations in 1919. By the time of the foundation of the [United Nations](#) at the end of [World War II](#), English had become pre-eminent and is now the main worldwide language of diplomacy and international relations. It is one of six official languages of the United Nations. Many other worldwide international organisations, including the [International Olympic Committee](#), specify English as a working language or official language of the organisation.





Many regional international organisations such as the [European Free Trade Association](#), [Association of Southeast Asian Nations](#) (ASEAN), and [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](#) (APEC) set English as their organisation's sole working language even though most members are not countries with a majority of native English speakers. While the European Union (EU) allows member states to designate any of the national languages as an official language of the Union, in practice English is the main working language of EU organisations.

Although in most countries English is not an official language, it is currently the language most often taught as a [foreign language](#). In the countries of the EU, English is the most widely spoken foreign language in nineteen of the twenty-five member states where it is not an official language (that is, the countries other than Ireland and [Malta](#)). In a 2012 official Eurobarometer poll (conducted when the UK was still a member of the EU), 38 percent of the EU respondents outside the countries where English is an official language said they could speak English well enough to have a conversation in that language. The next most commonly mentioned foreign language, French (which is the most widely known foreign language in the UK and Ireland), could be used in conversation by 12 percent of respondents.

A working knowledge of English has become a requirement in a number of occupations and professions such as medicine and computing. English has become so important in scientific publishing that more than 80 percent of all scientific journal articles indexed by *Chemical Abstracts* in 1998 were written in English, as were 90 percent of all articles in natural science publications by 1996 and 82 percent of articles in humanities publications by 1995.

International communities such as international business people may use English as an [auxiliary language](#), with an emphasis on vocabulary suitable for their domain of interest. This has led some scholars to develop the study of English as an auxiliary language. The trademarked [Globish](#) uses a relatively small subset of English vocabulary (about 1500 words, designed to represent the highest use in international business English) in combination with the standard English grammar. Other examples include [Simple English](#).

The increased use of the English language globally has had an effect on other languages, leading to some English words being assimilated into the vocabularies of other languages. This influence of English has led to concerns about [language death](#), and to claims of [linguistic imperialism](#), and has provoked resistance to the spread of English; however the number of speakers continues to increase because many people around the world think that English provides them with opportunities for better employment and improved lives.

Although some scholars mention a possibility of future divergence of English dialects into mutually unintelligible languages, most think a more likely outcome is that English will continue to function as a [koineised](#) language in which the standard form unifies speakers from around the world. English is used as the language for wider communication in countries around the world. Thus English has grown in worldwide use much more than any [constructed language](#) proposed as an [international auxiliary language](#), including [Esperanto](#).

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