

Denne bog er beskyttet i medfør af gældende dansk lov om ophavsret. Kopiering må kun ske i overensstemmelse med loven. Det betyder fx, at kopiering til undervisningsbrug kun må ske efter aftale med Copydan Tekst og Node.

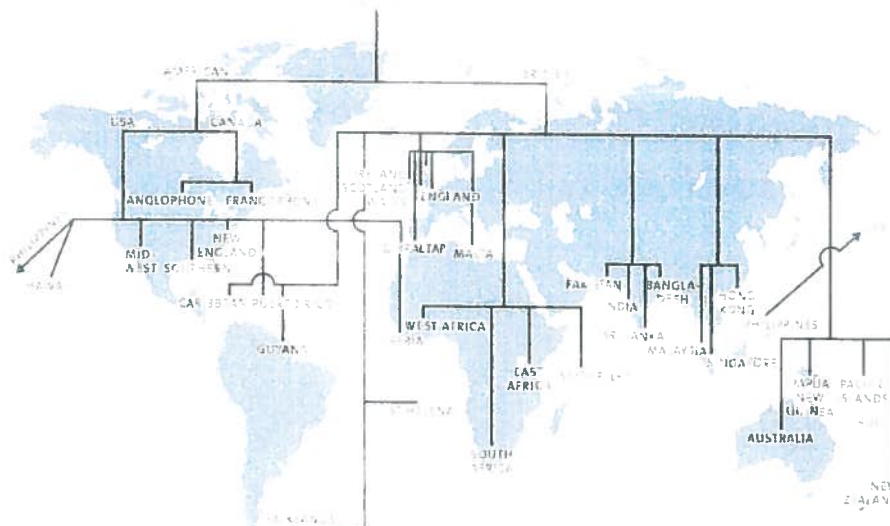
Grafisk tilrettelæggelse og produktion: Systime

Omslagsillustration: iStockphoto.com/CribbVisuals

Global English

2. udgave, 1. oplag

ISBN 978-87-616-9914-5



A family tree representation of the way English has spread around the world, showing the influence of the two main branches of American and British English.

That English is a world language cannot be argued. In Denmark its importance is easily seen in the fact that learning English begins in the first year at school, giving Danish pupils and students a minimum of nine years of English. Why this is so can be explained by two major factors. Britain's history of having been the largest colonial empire in the world is one. America's status as being one of the most dominant nations in the modern world is the other.

Wherever the British colonists went, they brought along their language and introduced it as the language of government, administration, commerce*, education, etc. Even when the British had left, many of the former colonies chose to maintain English as their second – or even first – language. Therefore, there is much truth in the following comment written in a Canadian newspaper at the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997:

“ The British Empire may be in full retreat* with the handover of Hong Kong. But from Bengal to Belize and Las Vegas to Lahore, the language of the sceptred isle* is rapidly becoming the first global lingua franca*.”

The Canadian Mail, Toronto, 12 July 1997

commerce *so* handel • retreat *so* tilbagetrækning • the sceptred isle *poetisk for* Storbritannien • lingua franca *so* fælles sprog

It is not the whole truth, however. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the USA has played an increasingly important role all over the world, politically as well as culturally, and this has contributed to the world-wide use of (American) English as a common* means* of communication. Consequently, it would be more correct to say that the British Empire ensured that English became a world language but what has made it remain a world language must be ascribed* to the USA's role as a superpower.

It is estimated* that the majority of the world's population now speak English – either as their first, second or foreign language. But is it the same English they speak?

According to the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe,

“ The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission* to different kinds of use.

Chinua Achebe: Morning yet on creation day. Anchor Press, 1975.

and linguistics professor David Crystal would agree:

“ When people adopt a language, they adapt* it, to make it suit their need.

David Crystal: The language revolution. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004.

As we saw in the previous chapter, this is definitely true of the American variety of English. But as you probably know, there are many other varieties of English, which have their roots in the colonial past, such as Caribbean English, Australian English, (South) African English, Black English and Indian English – to mention some of those whose pronunciation* is easily identified. And it does not stop there. People who use English as a second or foreign language are now in the majority; in 2020 it is estimated* that there are 378 million native speakers of English but more than 740 million non-native speakers. It is obvious that the English they speak cannot be identical with the English that started it all. A language is what its speakers need it to be, so a person from Hong Kong will naturally have a different kind of English than a Canadian, a Nigerian and an Englishman.

We are already seeing Danish poets and authors choosing to write in a Danish-coloured variety of English or with English words and sentences interspersed in their writing.

English as a Lingua Franca

You might be thinking that you need to be able to speak good English because you will be communicating with native speakers of English – Americans, Britons, Australians, etc. However, as the texts about Global English have shown, this might not be the case at all.

common adj fælles • **means** sb middel • **ascribe** vb tilskrive • **estimate** vb vurdere, anslå • **submission** sb underkastelse • **adapt** vb tilpasse • **pronunciation** sb udtale

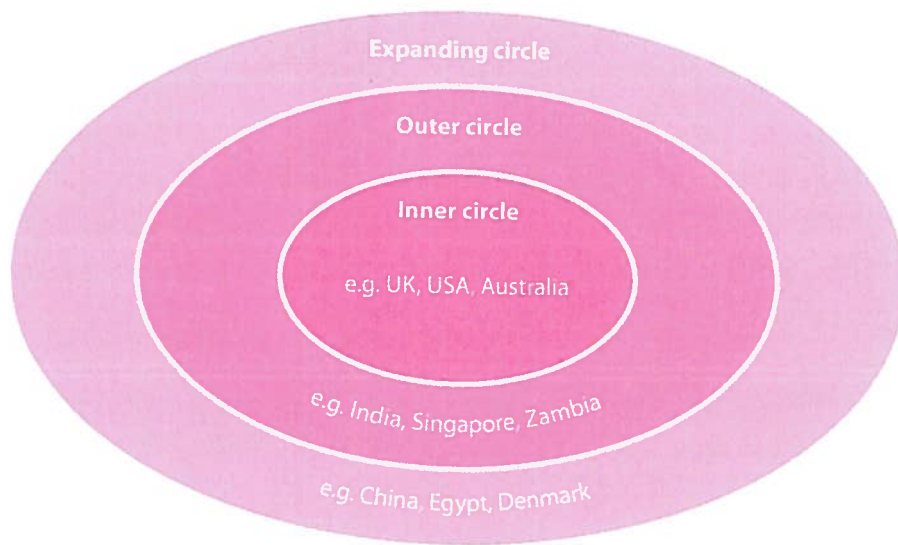
Where English used to be the language used in situations with British or American people at the head of the table, so to speak, English is now used in many other situations in which there might not be a single native-speaking person present.

In these situations, English is simply chosen as it is spoken and understood by all, who do not understand each other's native languages. Even in Denmark, you will find several examples of schools, colleges, universities and workplaces where English is used as the main language, and your fellow students or colleagues might be from anywhere but Britain or America or other English-speaking countries. Maybe they are all from Denmark.

On an international level, a telling* example is the fact that English has not (yet) been rejected as the EU's major working language, despite Britain having left the union on 31 December 2020.

In the 1980s, Indian linguist* Braj Kachru developed the model of the three circles of English to describe the use of English in different countries. According to this model, the inner circle represents the native English-speaking countries, and the English used here is *norm-providing*: it sets the standards that other, non-native speakers are expected to follow. Next, we find the outer circle which includes former colonies, where English is not the native tongue, but plays a role in the nation's institutions, for instance as an official or co-official language. Finally, the expanding circle includes all other nations, where English is learned for communication with the first two circles.

Kachru's Model



telling adj sigende, tydelig • linguist sb sprogforsker

Today however, people also learn English to communicate with other non-native speakers as much as or perhaps even more than with Britons or Americans. You might say that they have broken out of the expanding circle and are creating a new kind of English, English as a lingua franca, "a shared language of communication used between people whose main languages are different" as it is defined in the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*.

But is English as a lingua franca (ELF) noticeably different from Standard British or Standard American English? Yes, it is. In the EU, for instance, some call the English used there "Globish", while others refer to it as simply "broken English", and in Britain, it is a long-standing discussion whether the global use of English is a blessing* or a curse*.

Some agree with Professor Crystal that it enriches* English and ensures its survival, and others claim that English is being polluted or maybe even destroyed by it. When you see Danish signs like the ones below, you might agree with the latter*.

LINGUISTIC MISTAKES



1. In pairs, study the texts in the photos, identify the linguistic mistakes and correct them.
2. Discuss whether the message is still understandable.

blissing sb velsignelse • curse sb forbandelse • enrich vb berige • latter adj sidstnævnt

What is important to notice about ELF is that it is not a 'proper' language. There is no fixed grammar or vocabulary or pronunciation*; instead grammar and vocabulary are created on the spot by those who need to communicate via ELF in a specific situation. Thus, though we as Danish English learners may have a laugh at the signs in the task above, others may not blink an eye, because to them, the language makes perfect sense – or at least it communicates what is important.

Still, we can detect some general characteristics of ELF. According to a study from 2004, the following grammatical features appear frequently* and systematically and, interestingly perhaps, without causing communication problems.

- Dropping the third person present tense -s, e.g. *he take* instead of *he takes*.
- Confusing* the relative pronouns *who* and *which*, e.g. *the woman which ...*
- Leaving out articles like *a* and *the* where they are obligatory in native-speaker English, or putting them in where they do not occur in native-speaker English, e.g. *She works as doctor, an important job in the society*.
- Using countable* forms of uncountable nouns, e.g. *informations* instead of *information, social medias* instead of *social media*.
- Inserting* prepositions where they are not needed, as in *we have to study about ...*
- Overusing certain verbs which are very general in meaning, such as *do, have, make, put, take*.
- Replacing infinitive constructions with that-clauses, as in *I want that we go swimming* instead of *I want us to go swimming*.

Grammar seems to be the area where ELF is most consistent*. When it comes to pronunciation* and vocabulary, we find much more variation, determined by the speakers' native languages and the specific communication situation.

You might think that native speakers would gain* the upper hand* in communication involving both native and non-native English speakers, but studies show that sometimes they lose out in global business because their non-native counterparts* misunderstand what they say or hold back and instead make deals with people they feel more linguistically competent with.

Actually, several studies show that native English speakers increasingly fail to be understood in English – in ELF communication. Their language is too complicated and they speak too fast. The reason for this, some say, is that native English speakers know little about communicating in a foreign language, having always been able to manage with English all over the world and therefore not used to being in a situation where they have trouble making themselves understood.

pronunciation sb udtale • **frequent** adj hyppig • **confuse** vb blande sammen • **countable** adj tællelig • **insert** vb indsætte • **consistent** adj konsekvent • **gain** vb få • **the upper hand** id overtaget • **counterpart** sb modstykke