1

The Future of Englishes

The emergence of English as a genuine world language is the earliest of the three trends which achieved especial prominence during the 1990s. The word 'genuine' is crucial. The possibility that English might evolve a global role had been recognized as early as the eighteenth century. In 1780 the future US president John Adams said: 'English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last or French is in the present age.'[1] But it took nearly 200 years before he was proved right. Only a relatively short time ago the prospect of English becoming a truly global language was uncertain. Indeed, it was only in the 1990s that the issue really came to the fore, with surveys, books and conferences trying to explain how it is that a language can become truly global, what the consequences are when it happens, and why English has become the prime candidate.[2] But, in order to speculate about the future of English – or, as I shall explain below, Englishes – we must first understand where we are now, and how the present situation has arisen.

The present

A characterization, to begin with; then some statistics. A language does not achieve a genuinely global status until it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. This role will be most obvious in countries where large numbers of the people speak it as a first language – in the case of English, this would mean the USA, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, several Caribbean countries and a scattering of other territories. However, no language has ever been spoken by a mother-tongue majority in more than a dozen or so countries, so mother-tongue use by itself cannot give a language global status. To achieve such a status, a language has to be taken up by other countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within their communities, even though they may have few (or no) mother-tongue speakers.

There are two main ways in which this can be done. First, the language can be made the official (or semi-official) language of a country, to be used as a medium of communication in such domains as government, the law courts, the media and the educational system. To get on in such societies, it is essential to master the official language as early in life as possible. This role is well illustrated by English, which as a result of British or American history now has some kind of special administrative status in over seventy countries, such as Ghana, Nigeria, India, Singapore and Vanuatu. This is far more than the status achieved by any other language (French being closest). Second, the language can be made a priority in a country's foreign-language teaching. It becomes the language which children are most likely to be taught when they arrive in

school, and the one most available to adults who – for whatever reason – never learned it, or learned it badly, in their early educational years. Over 100 countries treat English as just such a foreign language; and in most of these it is now recognized as the chief foreign language to be taught in schools.

Because of this three-pronged development – of first-language, second-language and foreign-language speakers – it is inevitable that a world language will eventually come to be used by more people than any other language. English has now reached this stage. Those who have learned it as a first language are estimated to be around 400 million – though estimates vary greatly, because few countries keep statistics about numbers of speakers. Those who have learned it as a second language are also difficult to estimate, for now we must take into account the levels of fluency achieved. If we take a basic level of conversational ability as the criterion – enough to make yourself understood, though by no means free of errors, and with little command of specialized vocabulary – the figure is also some 400 million. The significance of these two figures should not be missed: as many people now use English as a second language as use it as a mother-tongue. And because the population growth in areas where English is a second language is about three times that in areas where it is a first language, second-language speakers of English will soon hugely exceed first-language speakers – a situation without precedent for an international language. When the number of people who speak English as a foreign language is taken into account, this contrast becomes even more dramatic. Here too estimates are uncertain – no-one knows, for example, how many people are learning English in China – but the British Council has estimated that roughly a billion people are learning English around the world at any one time. Excluding the complete begin-

ners, it would seem reasonable to take two-thirds of these as a guess at the number of foreign learners with whom it would be possible to hold a reasonable conversation in English – say 600 million.

If, now, we add the three totals – the 400 million or so who use it as a first language, plus the 400 million or so who use it as a second language, and the 600 million or so who use it as a foreign language – we will end up with a grand total of about 1,400 million. This in round terms is a quarter of the world's population (just over 6,000 million in 2000). No other language is used so extensively – either numerically, or with such geographical reach. Even Chinese, found in eight different spoken languages, but unified by a common writing system, is known to 'only' some 1,100 million, and most of these are mother-tongue speakers in a few territories. Of course, we must not overstate the situation. If one in four of the world's population speaks English, three out of four do not. We do not have to travel far into the hinterland of a country – away from the tourist spots, the airports, the hotels, the restaurants – to encounter this reality. But even so, one in four is impressive, and unprecedented. And we must ask: Why? It is not so much the total, as the speed with which this expansion has taken place, very largely since the 1950s. What can account for it?

An obvious factor, of course, is the need for a common language, or *lingua franca* – a concept probably as old as language itself. But the prospect that a lingua franca might be needed for the whole world is something which has emerged strongly only in the twentieth century, and since the 1950s in particular. The chief international forum for political communication – the United Nations – dates only from 1945, and then it had only fifty-one member states. By 1960 this had risen to over eighty members. But the independence movements which began at that time led to

a massive increase in the number of new nations during the next decade, and this process continued steadily into the 1990s. In 2003 there were 191 members in the UN – nearly four times as many as there were fifty years ago. The need for lingua francas is obvious, and pressure to find a single lingua franca is a consequence, the alternative being expensive and often impracticable multi-way translation facilities.

The past

But why English? There is of course nothing intrinsically wonderful about the English language that it should have spread in this way. Its pronunciation is not simpler than that of many other languages, its grammar is no simpler – what it lacks in morphology (in cases and genders) it certainly makes up for in syntax (in word-order patterns) – and its spelling certainly isn't simpler. A language becomes a world language for one reason only – the power of the people who speak it. But power means different things: it can mean political (military) power, technological power, economic power and cultural power. Each of these influenced the growth of English at different times. Political power emerged in the form of the colonialism that brought English around the world from the sixteenth century, so that by the nineteenth century, the language was one 'on which the sun never sets'. Technological power is associated with the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when over half of the scientists and technologists who made that revolution worked through the medium of English, and people who travelled to Britain (and later America) to learn about the new technologies inevitably had to do so

through English. The nineteenth century saw the growth in the economic power of the United States, rapidly overtaking Britain as its population hugely grew, and adding greatly to the number of world English speakers. The point was recognized by Bismarck as early as 1898: asked by a journalist what he considered to be the decisive factor in modern history, he is said to have replied, 'The fact that the North Americans speak English.'[3] And in the twentieth century, we indeed saw the fourth kind of power, cultural power, manifesting itself in virtually every walk of life through spheres of chiefly American influence.

As a result of these different manifestations of power, it is possible to recognize ten domains in which English has become pre-eminent.

Politics

Most pre-twentieth-century commentators would have had no difficulty giving a single, political answer to the question, 'Why world English?' They would simply have pointed to the growth of the British Empire. This legacy carried over into the last century. The League of Nations was the first of many modern international alliances to allocate a special place to English in its proceedings: English was one of the two official languages (the other was French), and all documents were printed in both. I have already mentioned the UN, which replaced it. But English now plays an official or working role in the proceedings of most other major international political gatherings, in all parts of the world. The extent to which English is used in this way is often not appreciated. According to recent issues of the *Union of International Associations' Yearbook*, there are about 12,500 international organizations in the world. A sample showed that 85 per cent made official use of English – far more than any other language. French was

the only other to show up strongly, with 49 per cent using it officially.

International politics operates at several levels and in many different ways, but the presence of English is usually not far away. A political protest may surface in the form of an official question to a government minister, a peaceful lobby outside an embassy, a street riot or a bomb. When the television cameras present the event to a world audience, it is notable how often a message in English can be seen on a banner or placard as part of the occasion. Whatever the mother-tongue of the protesters, they know that their cause will gain maximum impact if it is expressed through the medium of English. A famous instance of this occurred a few years ago in India, where a march supporting Hindi and opposing English was seen on world television: most of the banners were in Hindi, but one astute marcher carried a prominent sign which enabled the voice of his group to reach much further around the world than would otherwise have been possible. His sign read: 'Death to English.'

Economics

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Britain had become the world's leading industrial and trading nation. Its population of 5 million in 1700 more than doubled by 1800, and during that century no country could equal its economic growth, with a gross national product rising, on average, at 2 per cent per year. By 1800, the chief growth areas, in textiles and mining, were producing a range of manufactured goods for export which led to Britain becoming known as the 'workshop of the world'. Steam technology revolutionized printing, generating an unprecedented mass of publications in English. The early nineteenth century saw the rapid growth of the international

banking system, especially in Germany, Britain and the USA, with London and New York becoming the world's investment capitals. In 1914, Britain and the USA were together investing over $10 billion abroad – three times as much as France and almost four times as much as Germany. The resulting 'economic imperialism' brought a fresh dimension to the balance of linguistic power. 'Money talks' was the chief metaphor – and the language in which it was talking was chiefly English.

The press

The English language has been an important medium of the press for nearly 400 years. The nineteenth century was the period of greatest progress, thanks to the introduction of new printing technology and new methods of mass production and transportation. It also saw the development of a truly independent press, chiefly fostered in the USA, where there were some 400 daily newspapers by 1850, and nearly 2,000 by the turn of the century. Censorship and other restrictions continued in Continental Europe during the early decades, however, which meant that the provision of popular news in languages other than English developed much more slowly. Today, about a third of the world's newspapers are published in countries where English has special status, and the majority of these will be in English.

The high profile given to English in the popular press was reinforced by the way techniques of news gathering developed. The mid-nineteenth century saw the growth of the major news agencies, especially following the invention of the telegraph. Paul Julius Reuter started an office in Aachen, but soon moved to London, where in 1851 he launched the agency which now bears his name. By 1870 Reuters had acquired more territorial news monopolies

than any of its Continental competitors. With the emergence in 1856 of the New York Associated Press, the majority of the information being transmitted along the telegraph wires of the world was in English.

Advertising

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a combination of social and economic factors led to a dramatic increase in the use of advertisements in publications, especially in the more industrialized countries. Mass production had increased the flow of goods and was fostering competition; consumer purchasing power was growing; and new printing techniques were providing fresh display possibilities. In the USA, publishers realized that income from advertising would allow them to lower the selling price of their magazines, and thus hugely increase circulation. Two-thirds of a modern newspaper, especially in the USA, may be devoted to advertising. During the nineteenth century the advertising slogan became a feature of the medium, as did the famous 'trade name'. 'It pays to advertise' itself became a US slogan in the 1920s. Many products which are now household names received a special boost in that decade, such as those produced by Ford, Coca Cola, Kodak and Kellogg. The media capitalized on the brevity with which a product could be conveyed to an audience – even if the people were passing at speed in one of the new methods of transportation. Posters, billboards, electric displays, shop signs and other techniques became part of the everyday scene. As international markets grew, the 'outdoor media' began to travel the world, and their prominence in virtually every town and city is now one of the most noticeable global manifestations of English language use. The English advertisements are not always more numerous in countries where

English has no special status, but they are usually the most apparent. American English ruled: by 1972, only three of the world's top thirty advertising agencies were not US-owned.

Broadcasting

It took many decades of experimental research in physics, chiefly in Britain and America, before it was possible to send the first radio telecommunication signals through the air, without wires. Marconi's system, built in 1895, carried telegraph code signals over a distance of one mile. Six years later, his signals had crossed the Atlantic Ocean; by 1918, they had reached Australia. English was the first language to be transmitted by radio. Within twenty-five years of Marconi's first transmission, public broadcasting became a reality. The first commercial radio station, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, broadcast its first programme in November 1920, and there were over 500 broadcasting stations licensed in the USA within two years. A similar dramatic expansion affected public television twenty years later. We can only speculate about how these media developments must have influenced the growth of world English. There are no statistics on the proportion of time devoted to English-language programmes the world over, or on how much time is spent listening to such programmes. But if we look at broadcasting aimed specifically at audiences in other countries (such as the BBC World Service, or the Voice of America), we note significant levels of provision – over a thousand hours a week by the former, twice as much by the latter. Most other countries showed sharp increases in external broadcasting during the post-war years, and several launched English-language radio programmes, such as the Soviet Union, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany. No

comparative data are available about how many people listen to each of the languages provided by these services. However, if we list the languages in which these countries broadcast, it is noticeable that only one of these languages has a place on each of the lists: English.

Motion pictures

The new technologies which followed the discovery of electrical power fundamentally altered the nature of home and public entertainment, and provided fresh directions for the development of the English language. The technology of this industry has many roots in Europe and America during the nineteenth century, with England and France providing an initial impetus to the artistic and commercial development of the cinema from 1895. However, the years preceding and during the First World War stunted the growth of a European film industry, and dominance soon passed to America, which oversaw from 1915 the emergence of the feature film, the star system, the movie mogul and the grand studio, all based in Hollywood. As a result, when sound was added to the technology in the late 1920s, it was the English language which suddenly came to dominate the movie world. And despite the growth of the film industry in other countries in later decades, English-language movies still dominate the medium, with Hollywood coming to rely increasingly on a small number of annual productions aimed at huge audiences. It is unusual to find a blockbuster movie produced in a language other than English, and about 80 per cent of all feature films given a theatrical release are in English. The influence of movies on the viewing audience is uncertain, but many observers agree with the view of director Wim Wenders: 'People increasingly believe in what they see and they buy what they believe in. . . . People

use, drive, wear, eat and buy what they see in the movies.'[4] If this is so, then the fact that most movies are made in the English language must surely be significant, at least in the long term.

Popular music

The cinema was one of two new entertainment technologies which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century; the other was the recording industry. Here too the English language was early in evidence. When in 1877 Thomas A. Edison devised the phonograph, the first machine that could both record and reproduce sound, the first words to be recorded were 'What God hath wrought', followed by a recitation of the nursery-rhyme 'Mary had a little lamb'. Most of the subsequent technical developments took place in the USA. All the major recording companies in popular music had English-language origins, beginning with the US firm Columbia (from 1898). Radio sets around the world hourly testify to the dominance of English in the popular music scene today. Many people make their first contact with English in this way. By the turn of the century, Tin Pan Alley (the popular name for the Broadway-centred song-publishing industry) was a reality, and was soon known worldwide as the chief source of US popular music. Jazz, too, had its linguistic dimension, with the development of the blues and many other genres. And by the time modern popular music arrived, it was almost entirely an English scene. The pop stars of two chief English-speaking nations were soon to dominate the recording world: Bill Haley and the Comets and Elvis Presley in the USA; the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in the UK. Mass audiences for pop singers became a routine feature of the world scene from the 1960s. No other single source has spread the English

language around the youth of the world so rapidly and so pervasively.

International travel and safety

The reasons for travelling abroad are many and various. Each journey has immediate linguistic consequences – a language has to be interpreted, learned, imposed – and over time a travelling trend can develop into a major influence. If there is a contemporary movement towards world English use, therefore, we would expect it to be particularly noticeable in this domain; and so it is. For those whose international travel brings them into a world of package holidays, business meetings, academic conferences, international conventions, community rallies, sporting occasions, military occupations and other 'official' gatherings, the domains of transportation and accommodation are chiefly mediated through the use of English as an auxiliary language. Safety instructions on international flights and sailings, information about emergency procedures in hotels, and directions to major locations are now routinely in English alongside local languages. Most notices which tell us to fasten our seatbelts, find the lifeboat stations or check the location of the emergency stairs give us an option in English.

A special aspect of safety is the way that the language has come to be used as a means of controlling international transport operations, especially on water and in the air. English has emerged as the international language of the sea, in the form of Essential English for International Maritime Use – often referred to as 'Seaspeak'. Progress has also been made in recent years in devising systems of unambiguous communication between organizations which are involved in handling emergencies on the ground – notably, the fire service, the ambulance service and the

police. There is now 'Emergencyspeak', trying to cope with problems of ambiguity at the two ends of the Channel Tunnel. And of course there is 'Airspeak', the language of international aircraft control. This did not emerge until after the Second World War, when the International Civil Aviation Organization was created. Only then was it agreed that English should be the international language of aviation when pilots and controllers speak different languages. Over 180 nations have since adopted its recommendations about English terminology – though it should be noted that there is nothing mandatory about them.

Education

English is the medium of a great deal of the world's knowledge, especially in such areas as science and technology. And access to knowledge is the business of education. When we investigate why so many nations have in recent years made English an official language or chosen it as their chief foreign language in schools, one of the most important reasons is always educational – in the broadest sense. Sridath Ramphal, writing in 1996, provides a relevant illustration:

> Shortly after I became Secretary-General of the Commonwealth in 1975, I met Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Colombo and we talked of ways in which the Commonwealth Secretariat could help Sri Lanka. Her response was immediate and specific: 'Send us people to train our teachers to teach English as a foreign language.' My amazement must have showed, for the Prime Minister went on to explain that the policies her husband had put in place twenty years earlier to promote Sinhalese as the official language had succeeded so well that in the process Sri Lanka – so long the pearl of the English-speaking world in Asia – had in fact lost English, even as a second language

> save for the most educated Sri Lankans. Her concern was for development. Farmers in the field, she told me, could not read the instructions on bags of imported fertiliser – and manufacturers in the global market were not likely to print them in Sinhalese. Sri Lanka was losing its access to the world language of English.[5]

Since the 1960s, English has become the normal medium of instruction in higher education for many countries – including several where the language has no official status. No African country uses its indigenous language in higher education, English being used in the majority of cases. The English language teaching (ELT) business has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the past thirty years.

Communications

If a language is a truly international medium, it is going to be most apparent in those services which deal directly with the task of communication – the postal and telephone systems and the electronic networks. Information about the use of English in these domains is not easy to come by, however. It is thought that three-quarters of the world's mail is in English. But as no-one monitors the language in which we write our letters, such statistics are highly speculative. Only on the Internet, where messages and data can be left for indefinite periods of time, is it possible to develop an idea of how much of the world's everyday communications (at least, between computer-owners) is actually in English. This domain will receive separate discussion in chapter 3, but the relevant point can be anticipated here. The Internet began life as an English-language medium, and English has retained its dominance. It started out as ARPANET, the Advanced Research Pro-

jects Agency network, in the late 1960s, conceived as a decentralized national network, its aim being to link important American academic and government institutions in a way which would survive local damage in the event of a major war. Its language was, accordingly, English; and when people in other countries began to form links with this network, it proved essential for them to use English. The dominance of this language was then reinforced when the service was opened up in the 1980s to private and commercial organizations, most of which were (for the reasons already given) already communicating chiefly in English. There was also a technical reason underpinning the position of the language at this time. The first protocols devised to carry data on the Net were developed for the English alphabet, and even today no browser is able to handle all aspects of multilingual data presentation. However, the number of non-English-language users on the Internet is growing all the time, and now exceeds the number of new English-speaking users. The consequences of this for minority languages are explored in chapter 3.

The future

When a language becomes a world language, what happens to it, and what happens to other languages as a consequence? There are no precedents, because no language has ever been spoken by so many people in so many countries before. But several major trends can already be seen, and each of them is going to play a significant role in forming the new linguistic climate of the twenty-first century.

However, before considering the case of English in greater detail, we should ask: is English going to continue

in its present position, or is its global status likely to be challenged by other languages? History teaches us one thing: there are never grounds for complacency in considering a language's position. A thousand years ago, the position of Latin would have seemed unassailable. Who knows what the position of any language will be in a thousand years' time? Language status, as we have seen, is intimately bound up with political, military, economic and cultural power, and as these variables alter, so languages rise and fall. Futurologists do not find it difficult to envisage scenarios in which, for example, Arabic, Chinese or Spanish becomes the next world language. Spanish is in fact the world's fastest-growing mother-tongue at present. But for the foreseeable future, it is unlikely that another language is going to replace English in its global role. The factors which brought English to its present position are still very largely in place. English has achieved a presence and momentum which will be extremely difficult to dislodge. People continue to learn English in increasing numbers all over the world. Whatever the attitude towards the cultures who use it, the value of the language as a functional tool is widely accepted. Even those who are most opposed to it find themselves having to use it, if only to achieve a universal audience for their opposition. There is no real sign of this position weakening within the first decade of the new millennium.

English may be relatively stable in its world status, but it is certainly not stable in its linguistic character. Indeed, the language is currently changing more rapidly than at any time since the Renaissance. Several factors are involved, but the chief one is undoubtedly the change in the language's centre of gravity. It is a point often forgotten, especially by native speakers, that a language which has come to be spoken by so many people has ceased to be owned by any of its constituent communities – not the

British, with whom the language began 1,500 years ago, nor the Americans, who now comprise its largest mother-tongue community. The total number of mother-tongue speakers in the world, some 400 million, as seen above, is actually falling, as a proportion of world English users, because of the differential in population growth between first-language countries and those where English is a second or foreign language. Three out of four English speakers are now non-native.

All these users have a share in the future of English. Language is an immensely democratizing institution. To have learned a language is immediately to have rights in it. You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it, as you will. And it is just as likely that the future course of English is going to be influenced by those who speak it as a second or foreign language as by those who speak it as a mother-tongue. Fashions count, in language, as anywhere else; and fashions are a function of numbers. It is perfectly possible for a linguistic fashion to be started by a group of second-language or foreign-language learners, or by those who speak a nonstandard variety, which then catches on among mother-tongue speakers. Rapping is a recent case in point. And as numbers grow, and second/foreign-language speakers gain in national and international prestige, usages which were previously criticized as 'foreign' – such as *three person*, *he be running*, *many informations* – can become part of the standard educated speech of a locality, and eventually appear in writing. An example is *Welcome in Egypt*, which has come to be widely used in that country, and now appears in English textbooks there. The biggest thing that native speakers of English are going to have to get used to, in the twenty-first century, is that they are no longer in charge of language trends. The English language as spoken in Britain is now a minority dialect of World

English – amounting to some 4 per cent of the global English-speaking population. Even speakers of English in the USA only amount to some 15 per cent of the world total. In India, there are probably now more speakers of English than in the whole of Britain and the USA combined.

What happens when large numbers of people adopt English in a country? They develop an English of their own. There are now many new varieties of spoken English developing around the world, in such countries as India, Singapore and Ghana. They have been called 'New Englishes'. Why have they arisen? Because of the need to express national identity. Imagine the situation in one of the newly independent nations of the 1950s and 1960s. With newfound independence comes an urge to manifest identity in the eyes of the world. And one of the most important ways of manifesting this identity is through the medium of the language. So, which language will you use? Many of the new countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, found that they had no alternative but to continue using English – the alternative was to make an impossible choice between the many competing local ethnic languages – over 400, in the case of Nigeria. However, we can also appreciate the widely held feeling that to continue with English would be an unacceptable link with the colonial past. So how could this dilemma be resolved? The solution was for a country to continue with English, but to shape the language to meet its own ends – in particular, by adding local vocabulary, focusing on local cultural variations, and developing new forms of pronunciation. It is a largely unconscious process, of course, but promoted by local initiatives, such as regional dictionary surveys. It is not difficult to quickly accumulate several thousand local words, in countries which have a wide range of local fauna and flora, diverse ethnic customs and regular daily contacts with

different languages. The emerging literatures of the Commonwealth countries – the novels from West Africa, India or South-east Asia, the poetry from the countries of the Caribbean – illustrate how quickly new identities can emerge. The term 'New Englishes' reflects these identities.

When a language spreads, it changes. The simple fact that parts of the world differ from each other so much physically and culturally means that speakers have innumerable opportunities to adapt the language to meet their communicative needs and to achieve fresh identities. The bulk of the adaptation will be in vocabulary – not just new words, but new meanings of words, and new idiomatic phrases – as this is the area which most closely reflects living conditions and ways of thinking. There is a country's biogeographical uniqueness, which will generate potentially large numbers of words for animals, fish, birds, plants, rocks, and so on – and all the issues to do with land management and interpretation. There will be words for foodstuffs, drinks, medicines, drugs and the practices associated with eating, health-care, disease and death. The country's mythology and religion, and practices in astronomy and astrology, will bring forth new names for personalities, beliefs and rituals. Oral and perhaps also written literature will give rise to distinctive names in sagas, poems, oratory and folktales. There will be a body of local laws and customs, with their own terminology. The culture will have its own technology which will have its technical terms – such as for vehicles, house-building, weapons, clothing, ornaments and musical instruments. The world of leisure and the arts will have a linguistic dimension – names of dances, musical styles, games, sports – as will distinctiveness in body appearance – such as hair styles, tattoos, decoration. Virtually any aspect of social structure can generate complex naming systems – local government, family relationships, clubs and societies, and so on.

So, when a community adopts a new language, and starts to use it in relation to all areas of life, there is inevitably going to be a great deal of lexical adaptation. It only takes a year or so for the process to begin. The first permanent English settlement in North America was in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607; and loan words from Native American languages were introduced into contemporary writing virtually immediately. Captain John Smith, writing in 1608, describes a *racoon*; *totem* is found in 1609; *caribou* and *opossum* are mentioned in 1610. Here is a recent example from an edition of the South African *Sunday Times* in the 1990s: 'Diplomatic indabas only rarely produce neatly wrapped solutions to problems.' *Indaba*, from Nguni, was originally a tribal conference, but has now been extended to mean any conference between political groups. These are examples of words being borrowed from local indigenous languages. In addition, some words will change their meaning, as they come to be applied to new settings and take on different senses. This has often happened in the language's history: for example, in the Anglo-Saxon period Christian missionaries took over pagan words (such as *heaven*, *hell*, *God* and *Easter*) and gave them new meanings. Today we see it in the way a biological species in the new country similar in appearance to one found in the old will often keep the old name, even though it is not the same entity – *pheasant* in South Africa is usually found for certain species of francolin. Every area of society is affected. *Robot* is the South African term for traffic-light.

How many words will grow in these ways? It does not take long before word-lists and dictionaries contain several thousand entries. There were over 3,000 items recorded in the first edition of *A Dictionary of South African English* (1978). *The Concise Australian National Dictionary* (1989) has 10,000 items in it. There are over 15,000 entries in the

Dictionary of Jamaican English (1967).[6] English speakers have always adopted an inclusive attitude towards loan words. English is a vacuum-cleaner of a language, readily sucking in words from whichever other languages it meets – well over 350 of them in the history of British English. Because of this, although English is historically a Germanic language, the bulk of its vocabulary is not – it is largely Classical and Romance in origin, with Greek, Latin and French loans especially important. And its diversified lexical character is especially increasing in parts of the world where there are many contact languages. In Nigeria, where over 400 source languages are available, the eventual lexical distinctiveness of Nigerian English is bound to be considerable.

The totals are small compared with the size of English vocabulary as a whole, which is well over a million words; but the effect of even fairly small numbers of localized words can be great. The new words are likely to be frequently used within the local community, precisely because they relate to distinctive notions there. Also, these words tend not to occur in isolation: if a conversation is about, say, local politics, then several political terms are likely to come together, making it impenetrable to outsiders. 'Blairite MP in New Labour Sleaze Trap, say Tories' might be a British newspaper example. Six words with British political meanings or overtones are found in quick succession, and the sentence will not be immediately interpretable to anyone unfamiliar with the world of British political discourse. Exactly the same kind of piling up of alien expressions can be found in areas where New Englishes are emerging. In this example from the South African *Sunday Times*, all the local words are Afrikaans in origin: 'It is interesting to recall that some verkrampte Nationalists, who pose now as super Afrikaners, were once bittereinder bloedsappe' [*verkramp*, bigoted; *bittereinder*, die-hard; *bloedsappe*, staunch member of

the United Party, formerly the South African Party, or SAP].

It is easy to see how things might develop further. It wasn't just an Afrikaans noun which was distinctive in this last example; it was a noun phrase – a combination of adjective and noun. So, if a phrase, why not something bigger than a phrase? Add a verb on, perhaps, or make it a whole clause – in much the same way as in English we might borrow a whole sentence from French and say *Je ne sais quoi* or *c'est la vie*. Parts of an originally English sentence can easily come to contain large chunks of borrowed language. And in many parts of the world, where English is a second or foreign language, it is precisely this process which has been used with unprecedented frequency. People using English, even at a fairly advanced level, become stuck for a word, phrase or sentence; or, although using English as a lingua franca, find that a particular utterance in their mother-tongue suits better what they want to say. If they are talking to someone from their own language background, there is no problem in switching into the other language to solve the communication problem. A dialogue may move out of English, then back in again, several times in quick succession. The same situation obtains the other way round, too: people begin in their mother-tongue, then switch into English when they find their first language does not allow them to say what they want. This often happens when they get onto a subject-matter which they have learned only in English, such as computing – or even having a baby. I know a French-speaking mother who had a baby while living in Britain for a year. Back in France, she found herself switching into English every time she wanted to talk about the experience – much to the confusion of her French friends, whose baby-bearing experience had been resolutely francophone.

When people rely simultaneously on two or more languages to communicate with each other, the phenomenon is called *code-switching*. We can hear it happening now all over the world, between all sorts of languages, and it is on the increase. Because English is so widespread, it is especially noticeable there, in writing as well as in speech. In *The English Languages*, Tom McArthur gives an example of a bilingual leaflet issued by the HongkongBank in 1994 for Filipino workers. The Tagalog section contains a great deal of English mixed in. For example:

> Mg-deposito ng pera mula sa ibang HongkongBank account, at any Hongkongbank ATM, using your Cash Card. Mag-transfer ng regular amount bawa't buwan (by Standing Instruction) galang sa inyong Current o Savings Account, whether the account is with HongkongBank or not.[7]

This kind of language is often described using a compound name – in this case, Taglish (for Tagalog-English). We also have Franglais, Tex-Mex (for the Mexican Spanish used in Texas), Japlish, Spanglish, Chinglish, Denglish (Deutsch English), Wenglish (Welsh English), and many more. Traditionally, these names were used as scornful appellations. People would sneer at Tex-Mex, and say it was neither one language nor the other. It was 'gutter-speak', by people who had not learned to talk properly, or 'lazy-speak', by people who were letting themselves be too much influenced by English. But in the new century, we are going to have to rethink. We can hardly call a language like Taglish gutter-speak when it is being used in writing by a major banking corporation! Linguists have spent a lot of time analysing these 'mixed' languages, and found that they are full of complexity and subtlety of expression – as we would expect if people have the resources of two languages to draw upon.

Mixed languages are on the increase as we travel the English-speaking world; and it is important to realize the extent to which this is happening. They will probably be the main linguistic trend of the twenty-first century. Code-switching is already a normal feature of communication in the speech of millions who have learned English as a second or foreign language. I live in a Welsh-speaking part of Wales, and I hear code-switching between Welsh and English around me all the time. Indeed, globally, there are probably now more people who use English with some degree of code-switching than people who do not. And if these speakers are in the majority, or at least represented by significant numbers – as in the case of India – our traditional view of the language has to change. It is quite wrong to think of the 'future of World English' as if it is simply going to be a more widely used version of British English, or of American English. These varieties will stay, of course, but they will be supplemented by other varieties which, although perhaps originating in Britain or the USA, will display increasing differences from them.

The evidence of linguistic diversification – new Englishes, with increased code-mixing – has been around a long time, but the extent of its presence has only recently come to be appreciated. It is not something we usually see in print – except insofar as a novelist captures it in a conversation, or it turns up in informal writing in a newspaper. But we readily encounter it when we travel to the countries concerned – usually in the form of a breakdown of comprehension. We speak to somebody in English, and they reply – but we cannot understand what they are saying, because their English is so different. And we ain't seen nothin' yet. All over the world, children are being born to parents with different first-language backgrounds who speak English as a lingua franca. Their English often contains a great deal of code-mixing or nonstandard usage.

If these parents choose to speak to their children in this English, as often happens, we now have the prospect of code-mixed and nonstandard English being learned as a mother-tongue – and by millions of the world's future citizens. The distinction between English as a first language and English as a foreign language ceases to be significant in such cases.

With these trends in mind, can we avoid the conclusion that, left to itself, English is going to fragment into mutually unintelligible varieties, just as Vulgar Latin did a millennium ago? The forces of the past fifty years, which have led to so many newly independent nation-states, certainly suggest this outcome. English has come to be used, in several of these countries, as the expression of a sociopolitical identity, and received a new character as a consequence, conventionally given such names as Nigerian English and Singaporean English. And if significant change can be noticed within a relatively short period of time – a few decades – must not these varieties become even more differentiated over the next century, so that we end up with an English 'family of languages'? An answer suggests itself if we examine the apparent parallel with Latin.

Latin revisited?

The parallels between the situations of English and Latin are certainly striking. During the first millennium, Latin became the universal language of educated European society – though we need to say Latins, for in Europe at that time it existed in several varieties. There was the prestige variety – the classical literary Latin written throughout the Roman Empire (chiefly in the West). Then there were the everyday spoken varieties of the language, referred to now as Vulgar Latin. Even as early as the

first century BC, we find Cicero commenting on the provincial pronunciation heard in the Latin spoken in Cisalpine Gaul. By the eighth century, there is evidence of considerable shift, so much so that the way of referring to the language was changing: the 'lingua latina' was being described as 'lingua romana' or 'rustica romana lingua'. Certainly, by *c.*900, when we find the first texts representing the spoken language of Gaul, we can no longer talk of Latin, but must speak of Old French; and the other Romance languages begin to emerge at around the same time.

The situation facing Latin then was very similar to the situation facing English now. On the one hand, there was written Classical Latin, apparently alive and well and being taught in a standard way throughout the Western civilized world. On the other hand, there was clear evidence of emerging mutual unintelligibility among communities, with those who had once spoken Vulgar Latin in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Romania and elsewhere increasingly diverging from each other. There may even have been speculation about the future of Latin, given these already existing trends. Would the language fragment totally? Would Latin remain as a world lingua franca? Would there be anyone still learning the standard form in a thousand years? A millennium on, we know what happened. The standard forms of these languages are now indeed mutually unintelligible. Standard Latin is still used, but only by small numbers of clerics and scholars, chiefly within the Roman Catholic Church. A body of stalwart classicists, in universities and schools, try to maintain a tradition of Latin teaching, but do not find it easy. Latin, for most intents and purposes, is a dead language now. But its daughter-languages are very much alive.

Could this scenario happen to English? Certainly, there are some noteworthy parallels. English spread around the

modern world in a time-frame not too dissimilar from that which must have affected Latin. Rome became a Republic in 509 BC, and the First Punic War (264–241 BC) resulted in the acquisition of its first overseas province, Sicily. Some two centuries later, Augustus established the Empire (31 BC), which lasted in the West until AD 476. So, basically, we are talking about a period of almost 1,000 years, with something like 750 years as the period of real expansion. Now consider English from the time of Bishop Aelfric – the first to put an English conversation down on paper (in his *Colloquy*, written around 1000). Another period of almost 1,000 years; and signs of language change very early on. During the eleventh century, a new variety of English began to develop in Scotland, much influenced by the refugees who had fled north in the years following the Norman Conquest; this Middle Scots was the basis of the very distinctive Scots English we know today. But the first overseas development was not until the end of the twelfth century, when English rule was imposed on Ireland by Henry II in 1171; the influence of Irish Gaelic on English must have been heard not long after. And from then until the twentieth century, covering the major period of English expansion around the world, we have – just like Latin – 750 years.

We can push the parallel a little further. What we consider to be the 'classics' of Latin literature – the 'Golden Age' of Augustus, with Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Livy *et al.* – emerged during the first century BC, some 400 years after the beginning of the Republic and some 200 years after the First Punic War. The first 'classic' of English literature, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, was written some 400 years after our Y1K starting-point, and some 200 years after the Irish expedition. Let us move on another 200 years. This was a very significant century for both languages. During the third century AD the barbarian invasions

began throughout Europe, becoming incessant in the next hundred years, and eventually leading to the decline of the Western Empire. Classical Latin became increasingly an elite language, and as lines of communication with Rome became more tenuous, so speech differences on the ground increased. Latin began its period of decline, as a spoken lingua franca. Another 200 years in England also brought a turning-point. We are now at the end of the sixteenth century. This was a time when the merits of English vs other languages, especially Latin, were being hotly debated, and there was much talk of decline. Richard Mulcaster, the headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School, was one of the strongest supporters of English, arguing for its strengths as a medium of educated expression, alongside Latin. But even he concluded that English could not compete with Latin as an international language. Writing in 1582, he says: 'Our English tongue is of small reach – it stretcheth no further than this island of ours – nay, not there over all.' And he reflects: 'Our state is no Empire to hope to enlarge it by commanding over countries.'[8] There was no real literature to be proud of, either, not since the time of 'Father Chaucer', as people would say, 200 years before – and Chaucer's English, because of the major pronunciation changes which had taken place in the early fifteenth century, had become virtually a different language.

1582. What a time to be saying such a thing. In the course of the next generation, things changed totally, both in politics and in literature. Within two years, Walter Raleigh's first expedition to America was to set sail, and although this was a failure, the first permanent English settlement was in place, in Jamestown, Virginia, a generation later. As we have seen, loan words from Indian languages into the English spoken there – which as a result started to turn into American English – become a signifi-

cant feature of contemporary writing virtually immediately, and reference is soon being made to a distinctive American accent. And as for literature, 1582 was also significant, as it was the year in which a young man in Stratford, Warwickshire, fell in love – not with Gwyneth Paltrow (that came later), but with Anne Hathaway (his marriage licence is dated 27 November of that year). Soon after – we do not know how or when – he moved to London, and not long after that was being talked about as a writer. Within a generation, English literature would never be the same again.

Six hundred years into the spread of both Latin and English, there was a turning-point. In the case of Latin, it was the onset of fragmentation. In the case of English, it was the onset of expansion. Some 4–5 million people spoke English late in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. This had grown to a quarter of the world's population, some 1.5 billion, late in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. The contrast between Latin and English at this point seems total. But if history is any guide, it would appear that this period of expansion in English contained the seeds of its fragmentation. We do not talk about the 'Latin languages', but the 'Romance languages'. And, as we have seen, there is a book called *The English Languages*. History does seem to be repeating itself.

Centrifugal vs centripetal forces

However, history may no longer be a guide to what is happening to English today. The parallel with Latin is not perfect. One of the consequences of globalization is that through the media we have immediate access to other languages, and to varieties of English other than our own, in ways that have come to be available but recently; and this is altering the manner in which people are aware

of the language. A British Council colleague told me recently that in India he had seen a group of people in an out-of-the-way village clustering around a television set, where they were hearing BBC News beamed down via satellite. None of these people, he felt, would have heard any kind of English before – at least, not in any regular or focused way – other than the Indian variety of English used by their school-teacher. But with a whole range of fresh auditory models becoming routinely available, it is easy to see how the type of English spoken in India could move in fresh directions. And satellite communication being, by definition, global, it is easy to see how a system of natural checks and balances – also well attested in the history of language – could emerge in the case of World English. In this scenario, the pull imposed by the need for identity, which has been making Indian English increasingly dissimilar from British English, is balanced by a pull imposed by the need for intelligibility, on a world scale, which will make Indian English increasingly similar. And this could happen anywhere.

Both centrifugal and centripetal forces operate on English. Alongside the need to reflect local situations and identities, which fosters diversity, there is the need for mutual comprehensibility, which fosters standardization. People need to be able to understand each other, both within a country and internationally. There has always been a need for lingua francas. And as supra-national organizations grow, the need becomes more pressing. The 191 members of the UN are there not simply to express their identities, but also because they want to talk to each other (at least, some of the time). And whatever languages are chosen by an organization as lingua francas, it is essential – if the concept is to work – for everyone to learn the same thing, a standard form of the language. In the case of English, when people get together on inter-

national occasions, or read the international press, or write books for international publication, what they use is Standard English.

In fact, Standard English isn't identical everywhere – the differences between British and American spelling are one obvious point – but it is very largely the same, especially in print. It is somewhat less established in speech, where differences will frequently be heard identifying people as British, American, Australian, and so on. However, these are still very few, and they may well diminish as international contacts increase. It is a cliché, but the world *has* become a smaller place, and this has an obvious linguistic consequence – that we talk to each other more, and come to understand each other more. British people can now watch American football on TV each week, and their awareness of that game's technical vocabulary increases as a result. A series on sumo wrestling on television a few years ago increased my knowledge of Japanese words in English tenfold. When we reflect on the opportunities for contact these days, the chances are that the standard element in international English will be strengthened. Satellite television, beaming down American and British English into homes all round the world, is a particularly significant development. An increasingly standardized spoken English is a likely outcome.

That is the reason why the history of Latin is no guide to the future of English. These centripetal forces were lacking a thousand years ago. Once the Roman Empire had begun to fragment, there was nothing to stop the centrifugal forces tearing spoken Latin apart. The numbers of Standard Latin speakers around Europe were small, and communication between groups was difficult. The whole globe now is communicatively smaller than Europe was then. It is the relative isolation of people from each other that causes a formerly common language to move in different

directions. In the Middle Ages, it was very easy for communities to be isolated from the rest of the world. Today it is virtually impossible.

Both centrifugal and centripetal forces exist in the modern world, and we need both. We want to have our linguistic cake and to eat it. We want to express our identity through language and we want to communicate intelligibly through language. We want to be different and we want to be the same. And the splendid thing about humans using language, of course, is that this is perfectly possible. It is the kind of situation the multifunctional brain handles very well. We *can* have our cake and eat it. One of the main insights of twentieth-century linguistics was to demonstrate the extraordinary capacity of the brain for language. One of the consequences was the observation that bilingualism, multilingualism, is the *normal* human condition. Well over half of the people in the world, perhaps two-thirds, are bilingual. Children learn their languages – often several languages – at extraordinary speed. Evidently, there is something in our make-up which promotes the acquisition of speech. I therefore see no intrinsic problems in the gradual emergence of a tri-English world – a world, that is, in which a home dialect (often very mixed in character), a national standard dialect and an international standard dialect comfortably coexist. It is a prospect which our Latin forebears would have envied.

Let me illustrate the way three levels of English work from my own background:

- The base level, the place where we all start, is the home, our family dialect. In my case, this was Wales, and my home dialect was a Welsh English so strong in accent that when my family moved to Liverpool, when I was 10, I was immediately dubbed Taffy, and remained so even after my accent had moved in the

direction of Liverpudlian. I am fluent today in both Welsh English and Scouse. I have two home dialects. Everybody has at least one.

- The second level is the national variety of Standard English which most people learn when they go to school. (With a minority of people, in the UK especially in South-east England, the home dialect is already Standard English.) In my case, this was British Standard English. I learned to write it, and gradually to speak it, avoiding such features as *ain't* and double negatives, and learning a different range of grammatical constructions and vocabulary than was found in my home dialect.
- The third level is an International Standard English – an English, in other words, which in its grammar and vocabulary is not recognizably British, American or anything else. When working abroad, many people become skilled in using a variety which lacks some of its original Britishness, because they know they are talking to people from outside the UK. International Standard Spoken English is not a global reality yet, but it is getting nearer.

Similar distinctions are to be found in other language settings too. Many foreign learners of English will have an ethnic or ancestral language for level one, and a national language for level two – such as (in Northern Spain) Basque for the first and Spanish for the second. The first two levels may also be very different forms of the same language, such as (in Southern Italy) Neapolitan and Standard Italian, respectively.

The new revolution

The twenty-first century is likely to see most educated first-language speakers of English becoming tri-dialectal –

triglossic is a term often used – whether in the UK, USA, Ghana, Singapore or anywhere that English has a significant national presence. Thanks to media exposure, these speakers are already tri-dialectal (at least) in their ability to comprehend regional varieties of English; and they will become increasingly tri-dialectal in their production too. Foreign-language learners will also find themselves needing to cope with these variations – developing a sense of international norms alongside the national norms which are currently the focus of teaching. Teachers already routinely draw attention to local lexical and grammatical differences, such as UK *pavement*, US *sidewalk* and Australian *footpath*, but the perspective is invariably from one of these varieties towards the others. Someone teaching British English draws attention to American alternatives, or vice versa. It may not be many years before an international standard will be the starting-point, with British, American and other varieties all seen as optional localizations.

I do not know how long it will take for such a scenario to become fully established. But I do know that it will not be an easy transition, as it will involve significant changes in our methods of teaching and examining. The situation is unprecedented, with more people using English in more places than at any time in the language's history, and unpredictable, with the forces promoting linguistic identity and intelligibility competing with each other in unexpected ways. For those who have to work professionally with English, accordingly, it is a very difficult time. After all, there has never been such a period of rapid and fundamental change since the explosions of development that hit the language in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. For the first time in 400 years, we are experiencing what happens when English goes through a period of particularly dramatic change. It amounts to another revolution in

the way the language is used – an exciting time to be a linguist, of course, to be in at the beginning of it, but a problematic time to be a teacher, having to guide others through it. Doubtless traditional practices in teaching language production will continue with little change for the time being, but there are already signs of a broadening of practice with respect to the teaching of listening comprehension. We are already living in a world where most of the varieties we encounter as we travel around the world are something other than traditional British or American English. Teachers do students a disservice if they let them leave their period of training unprepared for the brave new linguistic world which awaits them.

This chapter has focused on what is likely to happen to English as it copes with the pressures of becoming a global language in such a relatively short period of time. But there is another side to the coin. When a language becomes dominant within a country, there are always implications for other local languages: how do they maintain their identity? When a language becomes global, such implications affect all languages. A different set of questions arise as a consequence. Will the influence of English be so strong that it will permanently change the character of all other languages? And could English kill off other languages altogether? A world in which there was only one language left – an ecological intellectual disaster of unprecedented scale – is a scenario which could in theory obtain within 500 years. During the 1990s, people began to think seriously about such a possibility as a result of becoming aware of the second dimension to the language revolution.