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# English as a global language

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## Preface

It has all happened so quickly. In 1950, any notion of English as a true world language was but a dim, shadowy, theoretical possibility, surrounded by the political uncertainties of the Cold War, and lacking any clear definition or sense of direction. Fifty years on, and World English exists as a political and cultural reality. How could such a dramatic linguistic shift have taken place, in less than a lifetime? And why has English, and not some other language, achieved such a status? These are the questions which this book seeks to answer.

The time is right to address these issues. Thanks to progress in sociolinguistics, we now know a great deal about the social and cultural circumstances which govern language status and change, and several encyclopedic surveys have made available detailed information about world language use. There is also an increasingly urgent need for sensitive discussion. In several countries, the role of English has become politically contentious, and arguments have raged about its current and future status. Have matters developed to the point where the rise of English as a world language is unstoppable? To debate this question, we need to be aware of the factors which will influence the outcome.

It is difficult to write a book on this topic without it being interpreted as a political statement. Because there is no more intimate or more sensitive an index of identity than language, the

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## Why English?

### The historical context

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'Why is English the global language, and not some other?' There are two answers to the question: one is geographical-historical; the other is socio-cultural. The geo-historical answer shows how English reached a position of pre-eminence, and this is presented below. The socio-cultural answer explains why it remains so, and this is presented in chapters 3 and 4. The combination of these two strands has brought into existence a language which consists of many varieties, each distinctive in its use of sounds, grammar, and vocabulary, and the implications of this are presented in chapter 5.

The historical account traces the movement of English around the world, beginning with the pioneering voyages to the Americas, Asia, and the Antipodes. It was an expansion which continued with the nineteenth-century colonial developments in Africa and the South Pacific, and which took a significant further step when it was adopted in the mid twentieth century as an official or semi-official language by many newly independent states. English is now represented in every continent, and in islands of the three major oceans – Atlantic (St Helena), Indian (Seychelles) and Pacific (in many islands, such as Fiji and Hawaii). It is this spread of representation which makes the application of the label 'global language' a reality.

The socio-cultural explanation looks at the way people all over the world, in many walks of life, have come to depend on English

for their well-being. The language has penetrated deeply into the international domains of political life, business, safety, communication, entertainment, the media and education. The convenience of having a lingua franca available to serve global human relations and needs has come to be appreciated by millions. Several domains, as we shall see, have come to be totally dependent on it – the computer software industry being a prime example. A language's future seems assured when so many organizations come to have a vested interest in it.

### Origins

How far back do we have to go in order to find the origins of global English? In a sense, the language has always been on the move. As soon as it arrived in England from northern Europe, in the fifth century, it began to spread around the British Isles. It entered parts of Wales, Cornwall, Cumbria and southern Scotland, traditionally the strongholds of the Celtic languages. After the Norman invasion of 1066, many nobles from England fled north to Scotland, where they were made welcome, and eventually the language (in a distinctive Scots variety) spread throughout the Scottish lowlands. From the twelfth century, Anglo-Norman knights were sent across the Irish Sea, and Ireland gradually fell under English rule.

But, compared with later events, these were movements on a very local scale – within the British Isles. The first significant step in the progress of English towards its status as a global language did not take place for another 300 years, towards the end of the sixteenth century. At that time, the number of mother-tongue English speakers in the world is thought to have been between 5 and 7 million, almost all of them living in the British Isles. Between the end of the reign of Elizabeth I (1588) and the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth II (1952), this figure increased almost fiftyfold, to some 250 million, the vast majority living outside the British Isles. Most of these people were, and continue to be, Americans, and it is in sixteenth-century North America that we first find a fresh dimension being added to the history of the language.

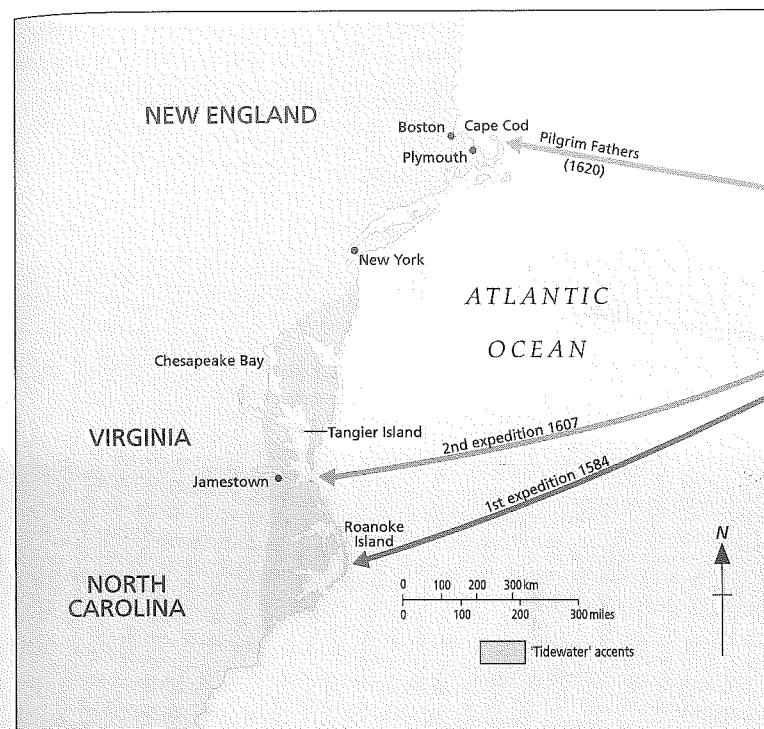
## America

The first expedition from England to the New World was commissioned by Walter Raleigh in 1584, and proved to be a failure. A group of explorers landed near Roanoke Island, in what is now North Carolina, and established a small settlement. Conflict with the native people followed, and it proved necessary for a ship to return to England for help and supplies. By the time these arrived, in 1590, none of the original group of settlers could be found. The mystery of their disappearance has never been solved.

The first permanent English settlement dates from 1607, when an expedition arrived in Chesapeake Bay. The colonists called their settlement Jamestown (after James I) and the area Virginia (after the 'Virgin Queen', Elizabeth). Further settlements quickly followed along the coast, and also on the nearby islands, such as Bermuda. Then, in November 1620, the first group of Puritans, thirty-five members of the English Separatist Church, arrived on the *Mayflower* in the company of sixty-seven other settlers. Prevented by storms from reaching Virginia, they landed at Cape Cod Bay, and established a settlement at what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts.

The group was extremely mixed, ranging in age from young children to people in their 50s, and with diverse regional, social, and occupational backgrounds. What the 'Pilgrim Fathers' (as they were later called) had in common was their search for a land where they could found a new religious kingdom, free from persecution and 'purified' from the church practices they had experienced in England. It was a successful settlement, and by 1640 about 25,000 immigrants had come to the area.

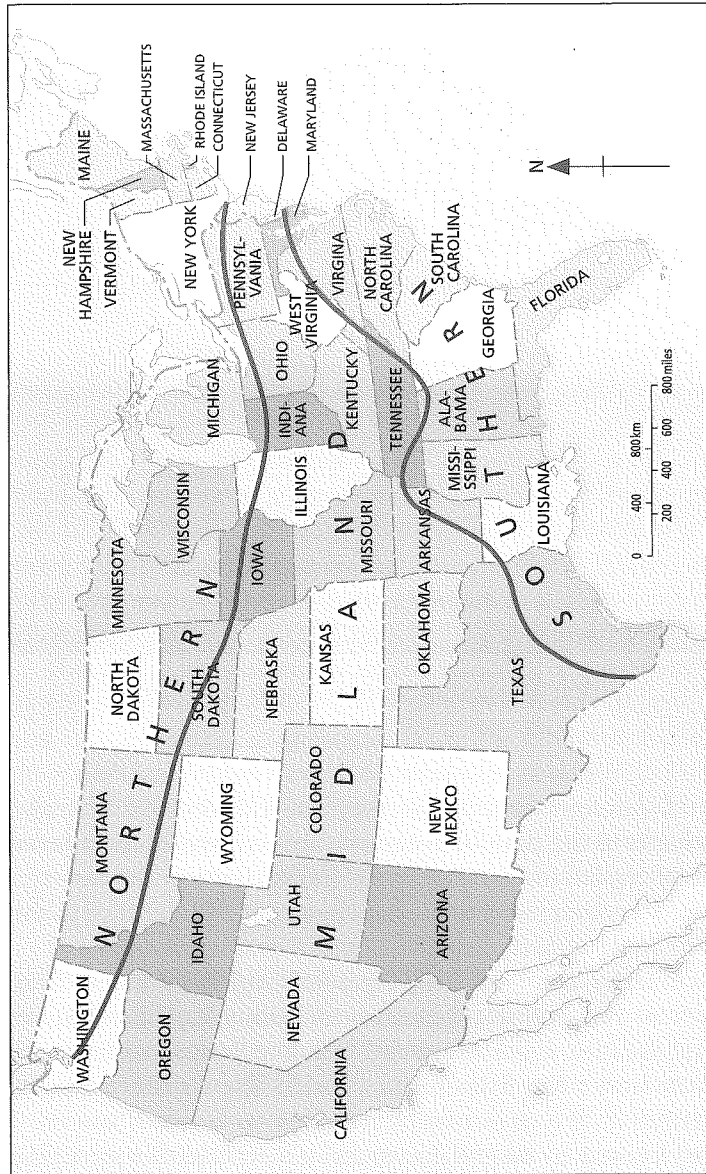
The two settlements – one in Virginia, to the south, the other to the north, in present-day New England – had different linguistic backgrounds. The southern colonists came mainly from England's 'West Country' – such counties as Somerset and Gloucestershire – and brought with them its characteristic accent, with its 'Zummerzet' voicing of *s* sounds, and the *r* strongly pronounced after vowels. Echoes of this accent can still be heard in the speech of communities living in some of the isolated valleys and islands in the area, such as Tangier Island in Chesapeake Bay.



Early English-speaking settlement areas in America

These 'Tidewater' accents, as they are called, have changed somewhat over the past 300 years, but not as rapidly (because of the relative isolation of the speakers) as elsewhere in the country. They are sometimes said to be the closest we will ever get to the sound of Shakespeare's English.

By contrast, many of the Plymouth colonists came from counties in the east of England – in particular, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Essex, Kent and London, with some from the Midlands, and a few from further afield. These eastern accents were rather different – notably, lacking an *r* after vowels – and they proved to be the dominant influence in this area. The tendency 'not to pronounce the *r*' is still a feature of the speech of people from New England.



Major dialect areas in the USA: Northern, Midland, Southern

The later population movements across America largely preserved the dialect distinctions which arose out of these early patterns of settlement. The New England people moved west into the region of the Great Lakes; the southerners moved along the Gulf Coast and into Texas; and the midlanders spread throughout the whole of the vast, mid-western area, across the Mississippi and ultimately into California. The dialect picture was never a neat one, because of widespread north-south movements within the country, and the continuing inflow of immigrants from different parts of the world. There are many mixed dialect areas, and pockets of unexpected dialect forms. But the main divisions of north, midland, and south are still found throughout America today.

During the seventeenth century, new shiploads of immigrants brought an increasing variety of linguistic backgrounds into the country. Pennsylvania, for example, came to be settled mainly by Quakers whose origins were mostly in the Midlands and the north of England. People speaking very different kinds of English thus found themselves living alongside each other, as the 'middle' Atlantic areas (New York, in particular) became the focus of settlement. As a result, the sharp divisions between regional dialects gradually began to blur.

Then, in the eighteenth century, there was a vast wave of immigration from northern Ireland. The Irish had been migrating to America from around 1600, but the main movements took place during the 1720s, when around 50,000 Irish and Scots-Irish immigrants arrived. By the time independence was declared (1776), it is thought that one in seven of the colonial population was Scots-Irish. Many stayed along the coast, especially in the area of Philadelphia, but most moved inland through the mountains in search of land. They were seen as frontier people, with an accent which at the time was described as 'broad'. The opening up of the south and west was largely due to the pioneering spirit of this group of settlers.

By the time of the first census, in 1790, the population of the country was around 4 million, most of whom lived along the Atlantic coast. A century later, after the opening up of the west, the population numbered over 50 million, spread throughout

the continent. The accent which emerged can now be heard all over the so-called Sunbelt (from Virginia to southern California), and is the accent most commonly associated with present-day American speech.

It was not only England which influenced the directions that the English language was to take in America. The Spanish had occupied large parts of the west and south-west. The French were present in the northern territories, around the St Lawrence River, and throughout the middle regions (French Louisiana) as far as the Gulf of Mexico. The Dutch were in New York (originally New Amsterdam) and the surrounding area. Large numbers of Germans began to arrive at the end of the seventeenth century, settling mainly in Pennsylvania and its hinterland. In addition, there were increasing numbers of Africans entering the south, as a result of the slave trade, and this dramatically increased in the eighteenth century: a population of little more than 2,500 black slaves in 1700 had become about 100,000 by 1775, far outnumbering the southern whites.

The nineteenth century saw a massive increase in American immigration, as people fled the results of revolution, poverty, and famine in Europe. Large numbers of Irish came following the potato famine in Ireland in the 1840s. Germans and Italians came, escaping the consequences of the failed 1848 revolutions. And, as the century wore on, there were increasing numbers of Central European Jews, especially fleeing from the pogroms of the 1880s. In the first two decades of the present century, immigrants were entering the USA at an average of three-quarters of a million a year. In 1900, the population was just over 75 million. This total had doubled by 1950.

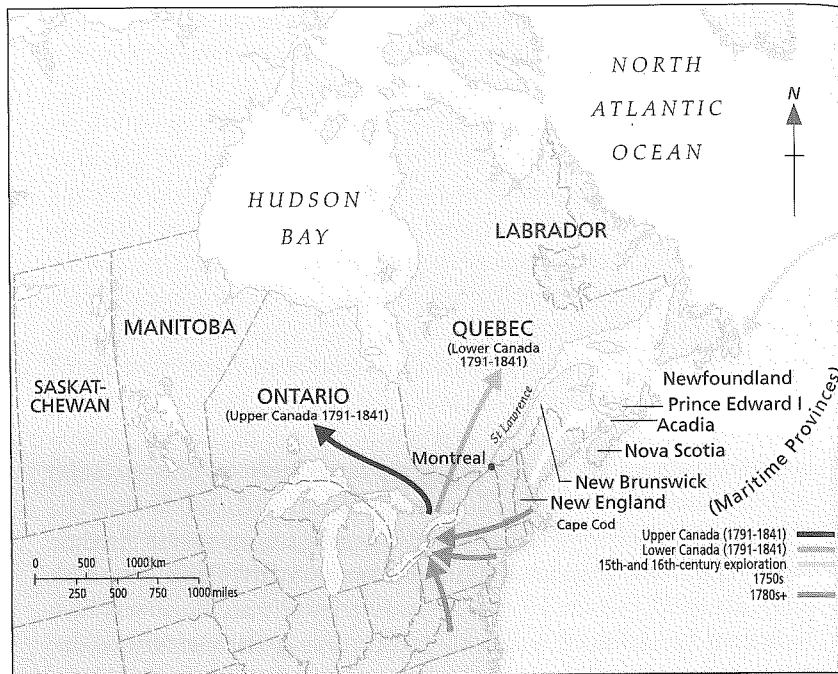
Within one or two generations of arrival, most of these immigrant families had come to speak English, through a natural process of assimilation. Grandparents and grandchildren found themselves living in very different linguistic worlds. The result was a massive growth in mother-tongue use of English. According to the 1990 census, the number of people (over five years of age) who spoke only English at home had grown to over 198 million – 86 per cent of the population. This was almost four times as many mother-tongue speakers as any other nation.

Some commentators have suggested that the English language was a major factor in maintaining American unity throughout this period of remarkable cultural diversification – a ‘glue’ which brought people together and a medium which gave them common access to opportunity. At the same time, some minority groups began to be concerned about the preservation of their cultural and linguistic heritage, within a society which was becoming increasingly monolingual. The seeds of a conflict between the need for intelligibility and the need for identity were beginning to grow – a conflict which, by the later decades of the twentieth century, had fuelled the movement in support of English as the official language of the USA (see chapter 5).

### Canada

Meanwhile, the English language was making progress further north. The first English-language contact with Canada was as early as 1497, when John Cabot is thought to have reached Newfoundland; but English migration along the Atlantic coast did not develop until a century later, when the farming, fishing, and fur-trading industries attracted English-speaking settlers. There was ongoing conflict with the French, whose presence dated from the explorations of Jacques Cartier in the 1520s; but this came to an end when the French claims were gradually surrendered during the eighteenth century, following their defeat in Queen Anne’s War (1702–13) and the French and Indian War (1754–63). During the 1750s thousands of French settlers were deported from Acadia (modern Nova Scotia), and were replaced by settlers from New England. The numbers were then further increased by many coming directly from England, Ireland, and Scotland (whose earlier interest in the country is reflected in the name *Nova Scotia* ‘New Scotland’).

The next major development followed the US Declaration of Independence in 1776. Loyalist supporters of Britain (the ‘United Empire Loyalists’) found themselves unable to stay in the new United States, and most left for Canada, settling first in what is now Nova Scotia, then moving to New Brunswick and further inland. They were soon followed by many thousands (the



The movement of English into Canada

so-called 'late Loyalists') who were attracted by the cheapness of land, especially in the area known as Upper Canada (above Montreal and north of the Great Lakes). Within fifty years, the population of this province had reached 100,000.

Because of its origins, Canadian English has a great deal in common with the rest of the English spoken in North America, and those who live outside Canada often find it difficult to hear the difference. Many British people identify a Canadian accent as American; many Americans identify it as British. Canadians themselves insist on not being identified with either group, and certainly the variety does display a number of unique features. In addition, the presence of French as a co-official language, chiefly spoken in Quebec, produces a sociolinguistic situation not found in other English-speaking countries.

## The Caribbean

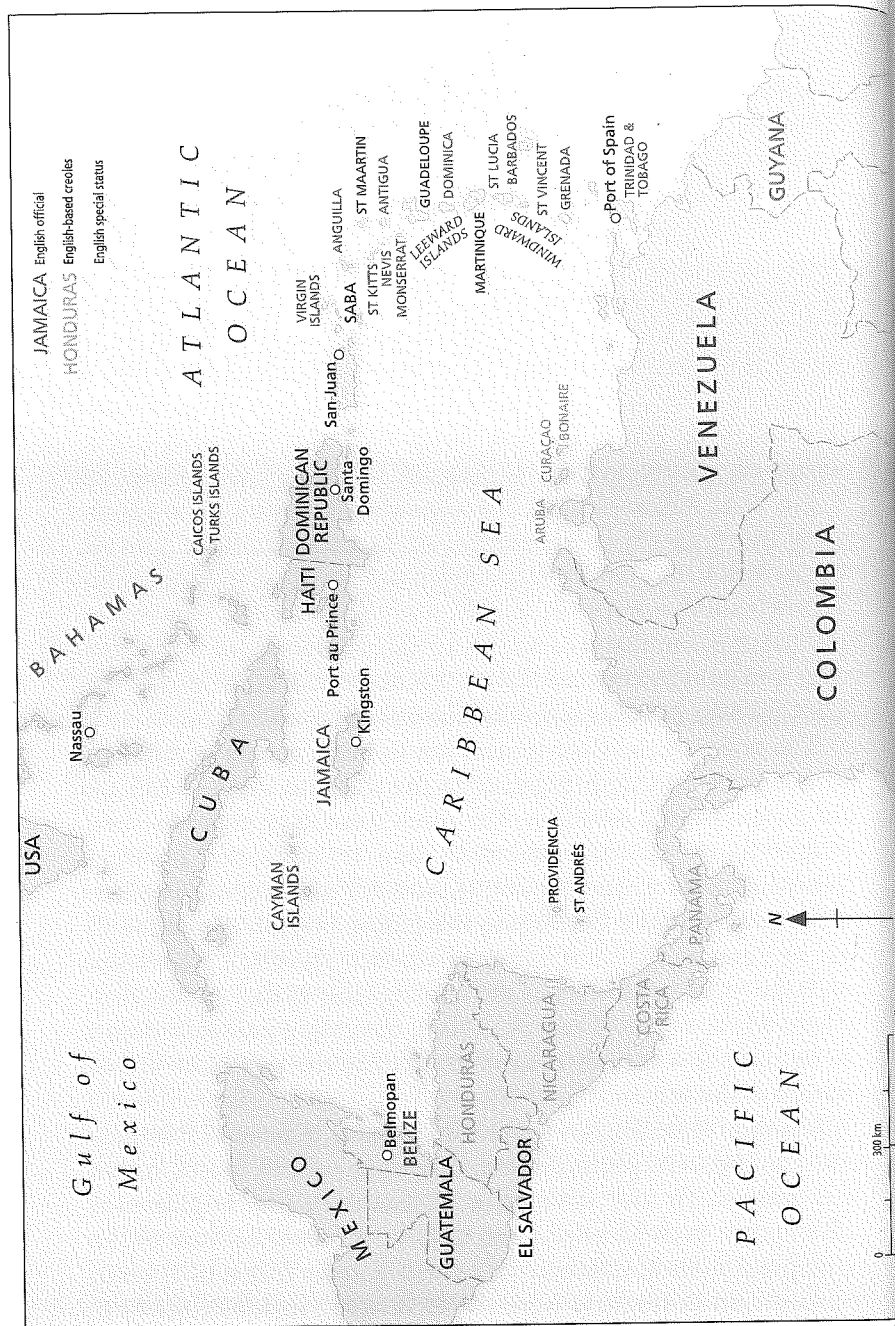
During the early years of American settlement, the English language was also spreading in the south. A highly distinctive kind of speech was emerging in the islands of the West Indies and the southern part of the mainland, spoken by the incoming black population. This was a consequence of the importation of African slaves to work on the sugar plantations, a practice started by the Spanish as early as 1517.

From the early seventeenth century, ships from Europe travelled to the West African coast, where they exchanged cheap goods for black slaves. The slaves were shipped in barbarous conditions to the Caribbean islands and the American coast, where they were in turn exchanged for such commodities as sugar, rum, and molasses. The ships then returned to England, completing an 'Atlantic triangle' of journeys, and the process began again. The first twenty African slaves arrived in Virginia on a Dutch ship in 1619. By the time of the American Revolution (1776) their numbers had grown to half a million, and there were over 4 million by the time slavery was abolished, at the end of the US Civil War (1865).

The policy of the slave-traders was to bring people of different language backgrounds together in the ships, to make it difficult for groups to plot rebellion. The result was the growth of several pidgin forms of communication, and in particular a pidgin between the slaves and the sailors, many of whom spoke English. Once arrived in the Caribbean, this pidgin English continued to act as a means of communication between the black population and the new landowners, and among the blacks themselves. Then, when their children were born, the pidgin gradually began to be used as a mother tongue, producing the first black creole speech in the region.

It is this creole English which rapidly came to be used throughout the southern plantations, and in many of the coastal towns and islands. At the same time, standard British English was becoming a prestige variety throughout the area, because of the emerging political influence of Britain. Creole forms of French, Spanish and Portuguese were also developing in and around the





Caribbean, and some of these interacted with both the creole and the standard varieties of English. The Caribbean islands, and parts of the adjacent Central and South American mainland, thus came to develop a remarkably diverse range of varieties of English, reflecting their individual political and cultural histories. Moreover, West Indian speech did not stay within the Caribbean islands, but moved well outside, with large communities eventually found in Canada, the USA and Britain.

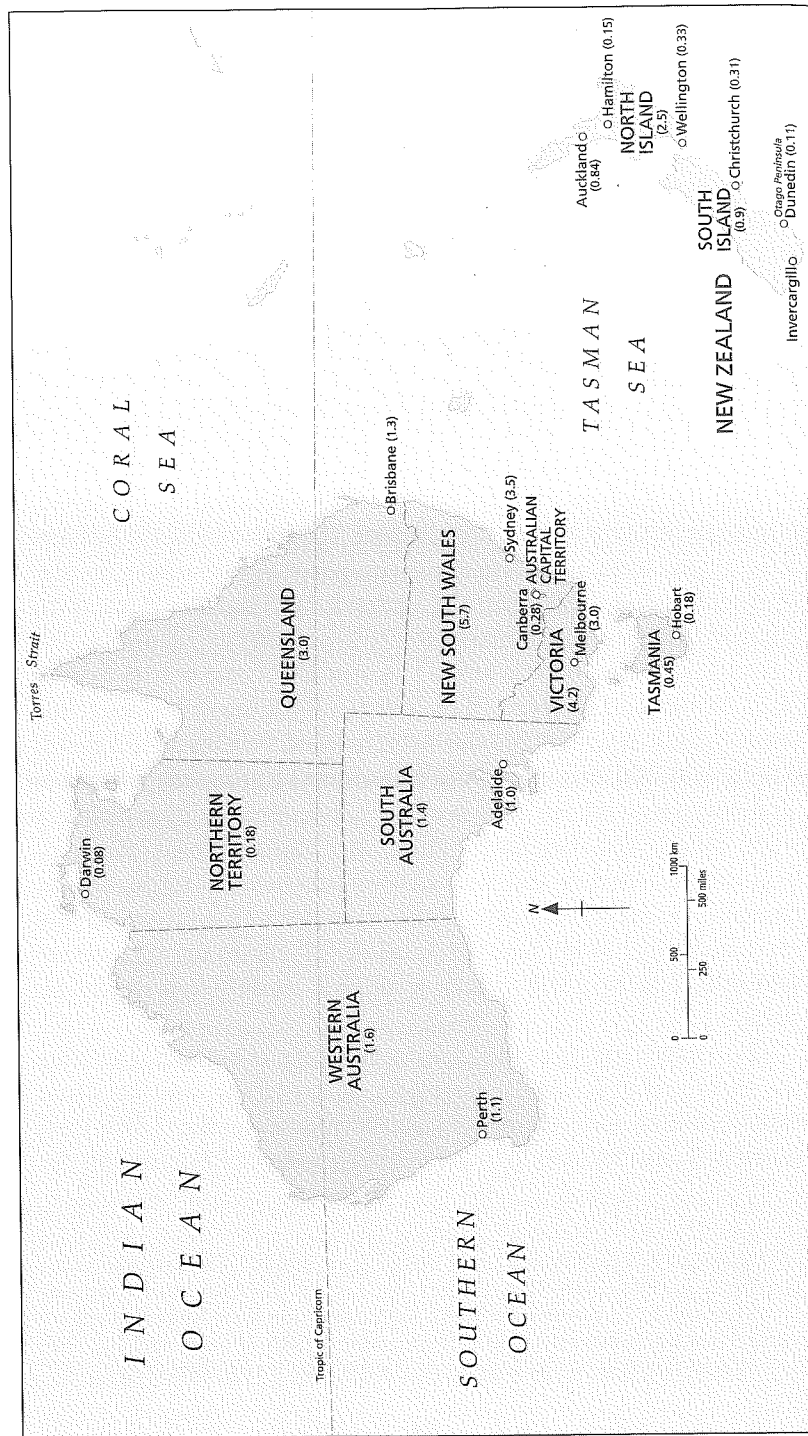
### Australia and New Zealand

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the continuing process of British world exploration established the English language in the southern hemisphere. The numbers of speakers have never been very large, by comparison with those in the northern hemisphere, but the varieties of English which have emerged are just as distinctive.

Australia was visited by James Cook in 1770, and within twenty years Britain had established its first penal colony at Sydney, thus relieving the pressure on the overcrowded prisons in England. About 130,000 prisoners were transported during the fifty years after the arrival of the 'first fleet' in 1788. 'Free' settlers, as they were called, also began to enter the country from the very beginning, but they did not achieve substantial numbers until the mid-nineteenth century. From then on, immigration rapidly increased. By 1850, the population of Australia was about 400,000, and by 1900 nearly 4 million. Today, it is nearly 18 million.

The British Isles provided the main source of settlers, and thus the main influence on the language. Many of the convicts came from London and Ireland (especially following the 1798 Irish rebellion), and features of the Cockney twang of London and the

(*Opposite*) The Caribbean Islands, showing (a) countries where Standard English is an official language; in these areas, English-based creoles are also widely used; (b) countries where a language other than English is the official language, but an English-based creole is none the less spoken. The special standing of US English in Puerto Rico is noted separately.



brogue of Irish English can be traced in the speech patterns heard in Australia today. On the other hand, the variety contains many expressions which have originated in Australia (including a number from Aboriginal languages), and in recent years the influence of American English has been noticeable, so that the country now has a very mixed linguistic character.

In New Zealand (whose Maori name is *Aotearoa*), the story of English started later and moved more slowly. Captain Cook charted the islands in 1769–70, and European whalers and traders began to settle there in the 1790s, expanding the developments already taking place in Australia. Christian missionary work began among the Maori from about 1814. However, the official colony was not established until 1840, following the Treaty of Waitangi between Maori chiefs and the British Crown. There was then a rapid increase in European immigration – from around 2,000 in 1840 to 25,000 by 1850, and to three-quarters of a million by 1900. As early as the turn of the century visitors to the country were making comments on the emergence of a New Zealand accent. The total population in 1996 was over 3.5 million.

Three strands of New Zealand's social history in the present century have had especial linguistic consequences. Firstly, in comparison with Australia, there has been a stronger sense of the historical relationship with Britain, and a greater sympathy for British values and institutions. Many people speak with an accent which displays clear British influence. Secondly, there has been a growing sense of national identity, and in particular an emphasis on the differences between New Zealand and Australia. This has drawn attention to differences in the accents of the two countries, and motivated the use of distinctive New Zealand vocabulary. Thirdly, there has been a fresh concern to take account of the rights and needs of the Maori people, who now form over 10 per cent of the population. This has resulted in an increased use of Maori words in New Zealand English.

(Opposite) Map of Australia and New Zealand showing 1991 rounded population figures for states, territories and chief cities. Population totals are given in millions, e.g. 1.1 = 1,000,000; 0.08 = 80,000.

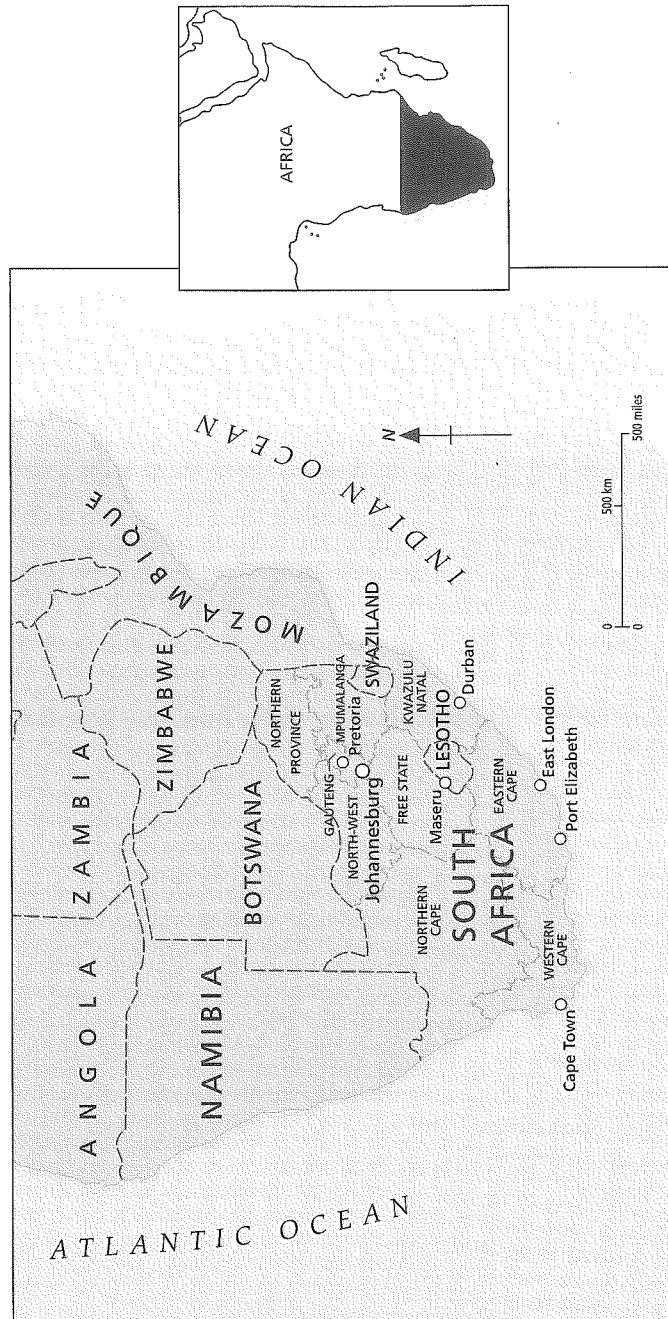
## South Africa

Although Dutch colonists arrived in the Cape as early as 1652, British involvement in the region dates only from 1795, during the Napoleonic Wars, when an expeditionary force invaded. British control was established in 1806, and a policy of settlement began in earnest in 1820, when some 5,000 British were given land in the eastern Cape. English was made the official language of the region in 1822, and there was an attempt to anglicize the large Afrikaans-speaking population. English became the language of law, education, and most other aspects of public life. Further British settlements followed in the 1840s and 1850s, especially in Natal, and there was a massive influx of Europeans following the development of the gold and diamond areas in the Witwatersrand in the 1870s. Nearly half a million immigrants, many of them English-speaking, arrived in the country during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The English language history of the region thus has many strands. There was initially a certain amount of regional dialect variation among the different groups of British settlers, with the speech of the London area prominent in the Cape, and Midlands and northern British speech strongly represented in Natal; but in due course a more homogeneous accent emerged – an accent that shares many similarities with the accents of Australia, which was also being settled during this period.

At the same time, English was being used as a second language by the Afrikaans speakers, and many of the Dutch colonists took this variety with them on the Great Trek of 1836, as they moved north to escape British rule. An African variety of English also developed, spoken by the black population, who had learned the language mainly in mission schools, and which was influenced in different ways by the various language backgrounds of the speakers. In addition, English came to be used, along with Afrikaans and often other languages, by those with an ethnically mixed background ('coloureds'); and it was also adopted by the many immigrants from India, who arrived in the country from around 1860.

English has always been a minority language in South Africa,



South Africa, and adjacent countries

and is currently spoken as a first language only by about 3.6 million in a 1996 population of nearly 42 million. Afrikaans, which was given official status in 1925, was the first language of the majority of whites, including most of those in power, and acted as an important symbol of identity for those of Afrikaner background. It was also the first language of most of the coloured population. English was used by the remaining whites (of British background) and by increasing numbers of the (70 per cent majority) black population. There is thus a linguistic side to the political divisions which have marked South African society in recent decades: Afrikaans came to be perceived by the black majority as the language of authority and repression; English was perceived by the white government as the language of protest and self-determination. Many blacks saw English as a means of achieving an international voice, and uniting themselves with other black communities.

On the other hand, the contemporary situation regarding the use of English is more complex than any simple opposition suggests. For the white authorities, too, English is important as a means of international communication, and 'upwardly mobile' Afrikaners have become increasingly bilingual, with fluent command of an English that often resembles the British-based variety. The public statements by South African politicians in recent years, seen on world television, illustrate this ability. As a result, a continuum of accents exists, ranging from those which are strongly influenced by Afrikaans to those which are very close to British Received Pronunciation. Such complexity is inevitable in a country where the overriding issue is social and political status, and where people have striven to maintain their deeply held feelings of national and ethnic identity in the face of opposition.

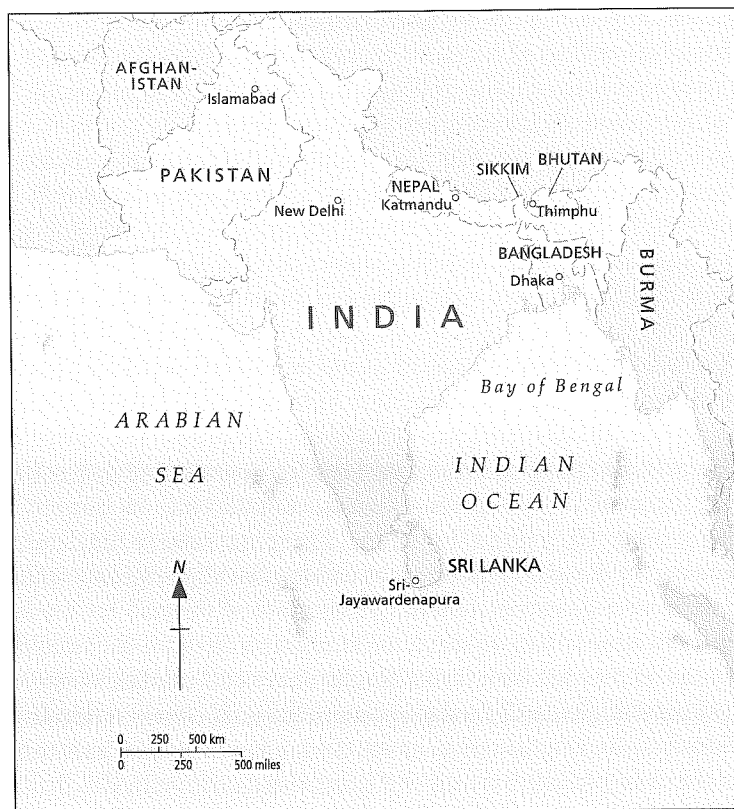
The 1993 Constitution names eleven languages as official, including English and Afrikaans, in an effort to enhance the status of the country's indigenous languages. The consequences of such an ambitious policy remain to be seen, but the difficulties of administering an eleven-language formula are immense (p. 81), and it is likely that English will continue to be an important lingua franca. Enthusiasm for the language continues

to grow among the black population: in 1993, for example, a series of government surveys among black parents demonstrated an overwhelming choice of English as the preferred language in which children should receive their education. And in the South African Parliament in 1994 the language continued to dominate the proceedings, with 87 per cent of all speeches being made in English.

### South Asia

In terms of numbers of English speakers, the Indian subcontinent ranks third in the world, after the USA and UK. This is largely due to the special position which the language has come to hold in India itself, where it has been estimated that some 4 or 5 per cent of the people now make regular use of English – approaching 40 million in 1996. There are also considerable numbers of English speakers elsewhere in the region, which comprises six countries (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan) that together hold about a fifth of the world's population. Several varieties of English have emerged throughout the subcontinent, and they are sometimes collectively referred to as South Asian English. These varieties are less than 200 years old, but they are already among the most distinctive varieties in the English-speaking world.

The origins of South Asian English lie in Britain. The first regular British contact with the subcontinent came in 1600 with the formation of the British East India Company – a group of London merchants who were granted a trading monopoly in the area by Queen Elizabeth I. The Company established its first trading station at Surat in 1612, and by the end of the century others were in existence at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. During the eighteenth century, it overcame competition from other European nations, especially France. As the power of the Mughal emperors declined, the Company's influence grew, and in 1765 it took over the revenue management of Bengal. Following a period of financial indiscipline among Company servants, the 1784 India Act established a Board of Control responsible to the British Parliament, and in 1858, after the



The countries where South Asian English is spoken

Indian Mutiny, the Company was abolished and its powers handed over to the Crown.

During the period of British sovereignty (the *Raj*), from 1765 until independence in 1947, English gradually became the medium of administration and education throughout the subcontinent. The language question attracted special attention during the early nineteenth century, when colonial administrators debated the kind of educational policy which should be introduced. A recognized turning-point was Lord William Bentinck's acceptance of a Minute written by Thomas Macaulay in 1835, which proposed the introduction of an English educational

system in India. When the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were established in 1857, English became the primary medium of instruction, thereby guaranteeing its status and steady growth during the next century.

In India, the bitter conflict between the supporters of English, Hindi, and regional languages led in the 1960s to a 'three language formula', in which English was introduced as the chief alternative to the local state language (typically Hindi in the north and a regional language in the south). It now has the status of an 'associate' official language, with Hindi the official language. It is also recognized as the official language of four states (Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura) and eight Union territories.

English has, as a consequence, retained its standing within Indian society, continuing to be used within the legal system, government administration, secondary and higher education, the armed forces, the media, business, and tourism. It is a strong unifying force. In the Dravidian-speaking areas of the south, it is widely preferred to Hindi as a lingua franca. In the north, its fortunes vary from state to state, in relation to Hindi, depending on the policies of those in power. In Pakistan, it is an associated official language. It has no official status in the other countries of South Asia, but throughout the region it is universally used as the medium of international communication.

### Former colonial Africa

Despite several centuries of European trade with African nations, by the end of the eighteenth century only the Dutch at the Cape had established a permanent settlement. However, by 1914 colonial ambitions on the part of Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy and Belgium had resulted in the whole continent (apart from Liberia and Ethiopia) being divided into colonial territories. After the two World Wars there was a repartitioning of the region, with the confiscation of German and Italian territories. Most of the countries created by this partition achieved independence in or after the 1960s, and the Organization of African Unity pledged itself to maintain existing boundaries.

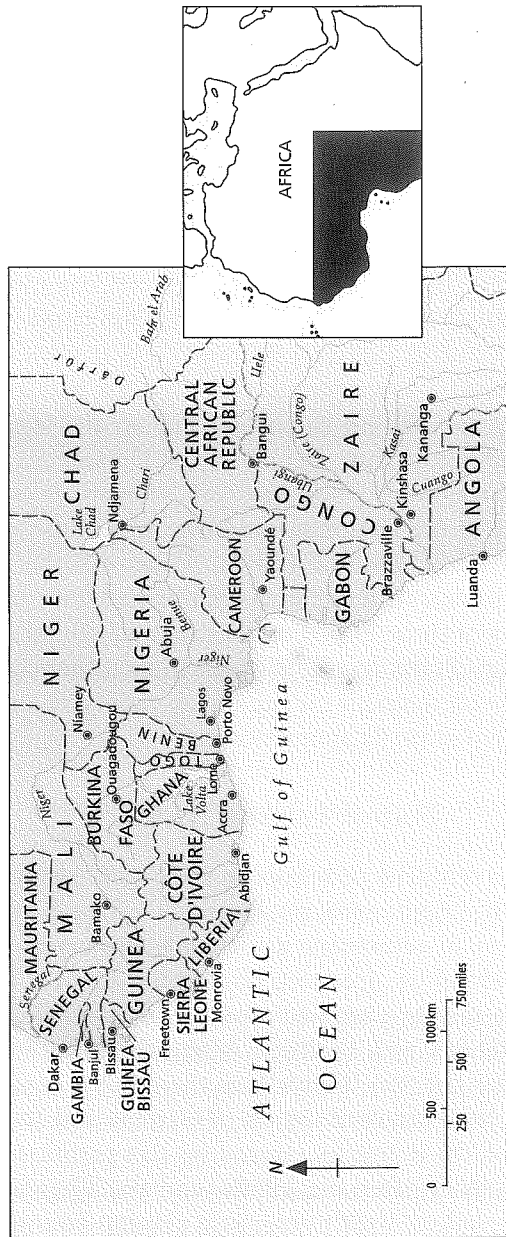
The English began to visit West Africa from the end of the



fifteenth century, and soon after we find sporadic references to the use of the language as a lingua franca in some coastal settlements. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the increase in commerce and anti-slave-trade activities had brought English to the whole West African coast. With hundreds of local languages to contend with, a particular feature of the region was the rise of several English-based pidgins and creoles, used alongside the standard varieties of colonial officials, missionaries, soldiers, and traders.

British varieties developed especially in five countries, each of which now gives English official status. There was also one American influence in the region.

- **Sierra Leone** In the 1780s, philanthropists in Britain bought land to establish a settlement for freed slaves, the first groups arriving from England, Nova Scotia and Jamaica. The settlement became a Crown Colony in 1808, and was then used as a base for anti-slave-trading squadrons, whose operations eventually brought some 60,000 'recaptives' to the country. The chief form of communication was an English-based creole, Krio, and this rapidly spread along the West African coast. The hinterland was declared a British protectorate in 1896; and the country received its independence in 1961. Its population had grown to over 4.6 million by 1996, most of whom can use Krio.
- **Ghana (formerly Gold Coast)** Following a successful British expedition against the Ashanti to protect trading interests, the southern Gold Coast was declared a Crown Colony in 1874. The modern state was created in 1957 by the union of this colony and the adjacent British Togoland trust territory, which had been mandated to Britain after World War I. Ghana was the first Commonwealth country to achieve independence, in 1960. Its population was over 16 million in 1996, about a million of whom use English as a second language.
- **Gambia** English trading along the Gambia River dates from the early seventeenth century. A period of conflict with France was followed in 1816 by the establishment of Bathurst



The countries of West Africa

(modern Banjul) as a British base for anti-slaver activities. The capital became a Crown Colony in 1843, the country an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1965 and a republic in 1970. It had a population of just over a million in 1996. Krio is widely used as a lingua franca.

- **Nigeria** After a period of early nineteenth-century British exploration of the interior, a British colony was founded at Lagos in 1861. This amalgamated with other southern and northern territories to form a single country in 1914, and it received independence in 1960. Its population in 1996 was over 94 million. About half use pidgin or creole English as a second language.
- **Cameroon** Explored by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and British, this region became a German protectorate in 1884, and was divided between France and Britain in 1919. After some uncertainty, the two areas merged as a single country in 1972, with both French and English remaining as official languages. It is a highly multilingual region, with a 1996 population of 13 million. It is thus a country in which contact languages have flourished, notably Cameroon Pidgin, spoken by about half the population.
- **Liberia** Africa's oldest republic was founded in 1822 through the activities of the American Colonization Society, which wished to establish a homeland for former slaves. Within fifty years it received some 13,000 black Americans, as well as some 6,000 slaves recaptured at sea. The settlement became a republic in 1847, and adopted a constitution based on that of the USA. It managed to retain its independence despite pressure from European countries during the nineteenth-century 'scramble for Africa'. Its population in 1996 was some 2.5 million, most of whom use pidgin English as a second language (but there are also a number of first-language speakers). Links with US African-American English are still very evident.

Although English ships had visited East Africa from the end of the sixteenth century, systematic interest began only in the 1850s, with the expeditions to the interior of such British explorers

as Richard Burton, David Livingstone and John Speke. The Imperial British East Africa Company was founded in 1888, and soon afterwards a system of colonial protectorates became established, while other European nations (Germany, France, and Italy) vied with Britain for territorial control.

Five modern states, each with a history of British rule, gave English official status when they gained independence in the 1960s, and Zimbabwe followed suit in 1980. British English has thus played a major role in the development of these states, being widely used in government, the courts, schools, the media, and other public domains. It has also been adopted elsewhere in the region as a medium of international communication, such as in Ethiopia and Somalia.

- **Kenya** A British colony from 1920, this country became independent in 1963, following a decade of unrest (the Mau Mau rebellion). English was then made the official language, but Swahili replaced it in 1974. English none the less retains an important role in the country, which had some 28 million people in 1996.
- **Tanzania** (formerly **Zanzibar** and **Tanganyika**) Zanzibar became a British protectorate in 1890, and Britain received a mandate for Tanganyika in 1919. The first East African country to gain independence (1961), its population was over 27 million in 1996. English was a joint official language with Swahili until 1967, then lost its status. But it remains an important medium of communication.
- **Uganda** The Uganda kingdoms were united as a British protectorate between 1893 and 1903, and the country received its independence in 1962. Its population was over 18 million in 1996. English is the sole official language, but Swahili is also widely used as a lingua franca.
- **Malawi** (formerly **Nyasaland**) The area became a British colony in 1907, and received its independence in 1964. Its population was nearly 10 million in 1996. English is an official language along with Chewa.
- **Zambia** (formerly **Northern Rhodesia**) At first administered by the British South Africa Company, the country became a



The countries of East Africa

British protectorate in 1924, and received its independence in 1964. Its population was over 9 million in 1996. English is the official language.

- **Zimbabwe** (formerly **Southern Rhodesia**) Also administered by the British South Africa Company, it became a British colony in 1923. Opposition to independence under African rule led to a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by

the white-dominated government in 1965. Power was eventually transferred to the African majority, and the country achieved its independence in 1980. Its population was around 11 million in 1996. English is the official language.

The kinds of English which developed in East Africa were very different from those found in West Africa. Large numbers of British emigrants settled in the area, producing a class of expatriates and African-born whites (farmers, doctors, university lecturers, etc.) which never emerged in the environmentally less hospitable West African territories. A British model was introduced early on into schools, reinforcing the exposure to British English brought by the many missionary groups around the turn of the century. The result was a variety of mother-tongue English which has more in common with what is heard in South Africa or Australia than in Nigeria or Ghana.

### South-east Asia and the South Pacific

The territories in and to the west of the South Pacific display an interesting mixture of American and British English. The main American presence emerged after the Spanish-American War of 1898, from which the USA received the island of Guam (and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean) and sovereignty over the Philippines. Hawaii was annexed at that time also, after a period of increasing US influence. In the 1940s, the US invasion of Japanese-held Pacific islands was followed after World War II by several areas being made the responsibility of the USA as United Nations Trust Territories. The Philippines became independent in 1946, but the influence of American English remains strong. And as this country has by far the largest population of the English-speaking states in the region (about 70 million in 1996), it makes a significant contribution to world totals.

British influence began through the voyages of English sailors at the end of the eighteenth century, notably the journeys of Captain Cook in the 1770s. The London Missionary Society sent its workers to the islands of the South Pacific fifty years later. In



South-east Asia, the development of a British colonial empire grew from the work of Stamford Raffles, an administrator in the British East India Company. Centres were established in several locations, notably Penang (1786), Singapore (1819) and Malacca (1824). Within a few months, the population of Singapore had grown to over 5,000, and by the time the Federated Malay States were brought together as a Crown Colony (1867), English had come to be established throughout the region as the medium of law and administration, and was being increasingly used in other contexts. A famous example is the English-language daily newspaper, *The Straits Times*, which began publication in 1845.

English inevitably and rapidly became the language of power in the British territories of South-east Asia. Hong Kong island was ceded to Britain in 1842 by the Treaty of Nanking, at the end of the first Opium War, and Kowloon was added to it in 1860; the New Territories, which form the largest part of the colony, were leased from China in 1898 for ninety-nine years. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, several territories in the region became British protectorates, the administration of some being later taken over by Australia and New Zealand.

The introduction of a British educational system exposed learners to a standard British English model very early on. English-medium schools began in Penang (now Malaysia's leading port) in 1816, with senior teaching staff routinely brought in from Britain. Although at the outset these schools were attended by only a tiny percentage of the population, numbers increased during the nineteenth century as waves of Chinese and Indian immigrants entered the area. English rapidly became the language of professional advancement and the chief literary language. Soon after the turn of the century, higher education through the medium of English was also introduced. The language thus became a prestige lingua franca among those who had received an English education and who had thereby entered professional society.

Despite the common colonial history of the region, a single variety of 'South-east Asian English' has not emerged. The political histories of Singapore and Malaysia, especially since

independence, have been too divergent for this to happen; and the sociolinguistic situations in Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea are unique.

- **Singapore** In the 1950s a bilingual educational system was introduced in Singapore, with English used as a unifying medium alongside Chinese, Malay, or Tamil. However, English remained the language of government and the legal system, and retained its importance in education and the media. Its use has also been steadily increasing among the general population. In a 1975 survey, only 27 per cent of people over age forty claimed to understand English, whereas among fifteen- to twenty-year-olds, the proportion was over 87 per cent. There is also evidence of quite widespread use in family settings. The country had a population of around 3 million in 1996.
- **Malaysia** The situation is very different in Malaysia where, following independence (1957), Bahasa Malaysia was adopted as the national language, and the role of English accordingly became more restricted. Malay-medium education was introduced, with English an obligatory subject but increasingly being seen as of value for international rather than intra-national purposes – more a foreign language than a second language. However, the traditional prestige attached to English still exists, for many speakers. The country had a population of over 20 million in 1996.
- **Hong Kong** English has always had a limited use in the territory, associated with government or military administration, law, business, and the media. Chinese (Cantonese) is the mother-tongue of over 98 per cent of the population (around 6 million in 1996). However, in recent years there has been a major increase in educational provision, with 1992 estimates suggesting that over a quarter of the population now have some competence in English. English and Chinese have joint official status, but Chinese predominates in most speech situations, often with a great deal of language mixing. There is considerable uncertainty surrounding the future role of English, after the 1997 transfer of power.

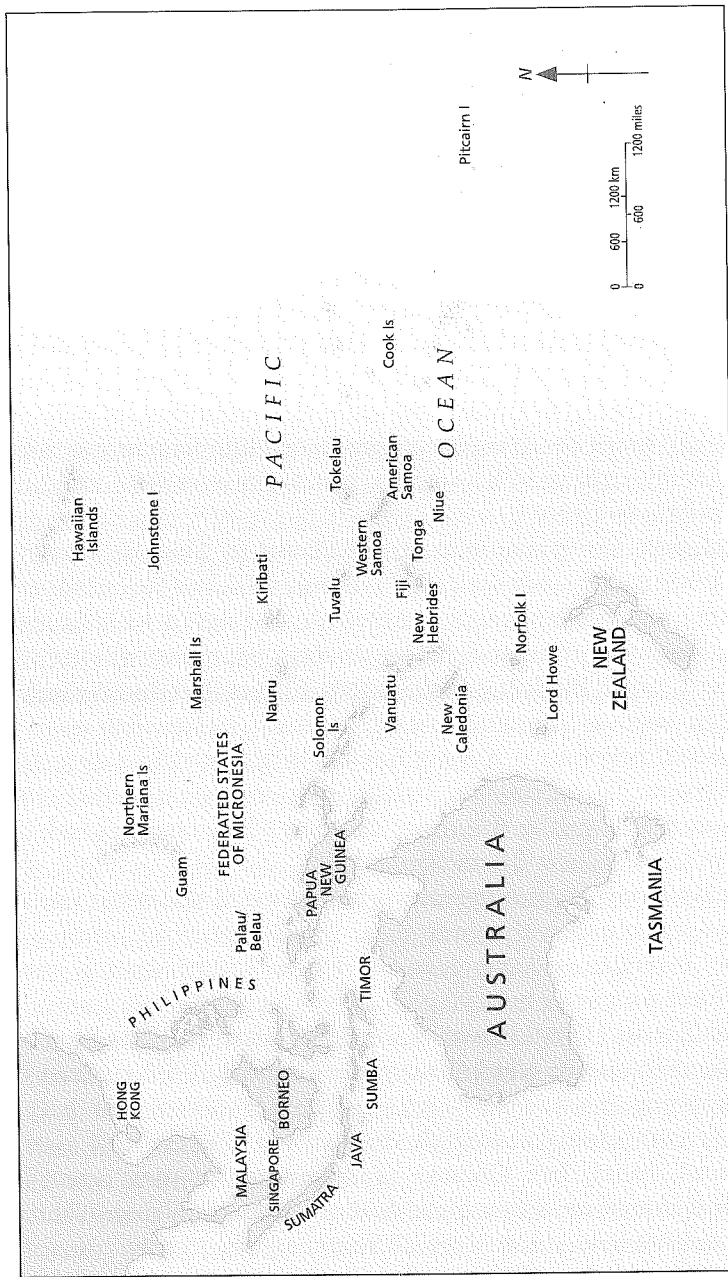
- **Papua New Guinea** British sailors visited the territory as early as 1793. It became a British protectorate in 1884, was mandated to Australia in 1920, and became independent in 1975. There was a population of nearly 4.5 million in 1996. About half the people speak Tok Pisin, an English-based pidgin, as a second language (and some have it as a mother tongue). It has a nation-wide presence, widely seen in advertisements and the press, and heard on radio and television. Many major works have been translated into Tok Pisin, including Shakespeare and the Bible.

### A world view

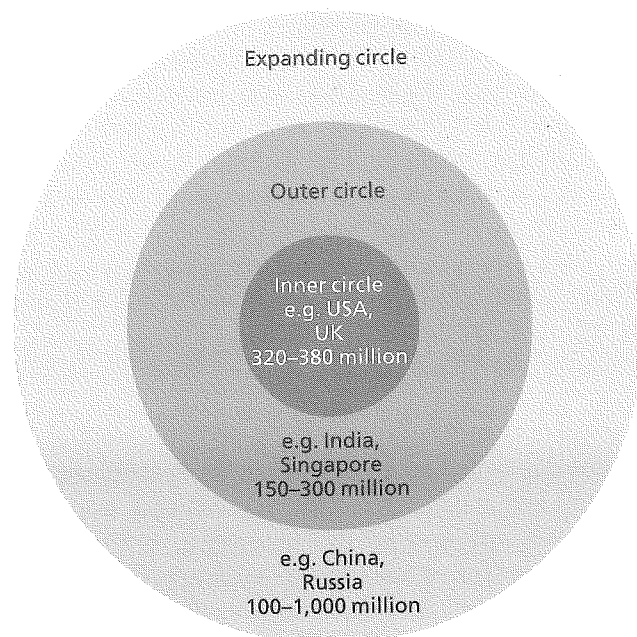
The present-day world status of English is primarily the result of two factors: the expansion of British colonial power, which peaked towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the twentieth century. It is the latter factor which continues to explain the world position of the English language today (much to the discomfiture of some in Britain who find the loss of historical linguistic pre-eminence unpalatable). The USA has nearly 70 per cent of all English mother-tongue speakers in the world (excluding creole varieties). Such dominance, with its political and economic underpinnings, currently gives the Americans a controlling interest in the way the language is likely to develop.

How then may we summarize this complex situation? The US linguist Braj Kachru has suggested that we think of the spread of English around the world as three concentric circles, representing different ways in which the language has been acquired and is currently used. Although not all countries fit neatly into this model, it has been widely regarded as a helpful approach to classification.

- The *inner circle* refers to the traditional bases of English, where it is the primary language: it includes the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- The *outer or extended circle* involves the earlier phases of the



The location of territories in South-east Asia and the South Pacific



The three 'circles' of English

spread of English in non-native settings, where the language has become part of a country's chief institutions, and plays an important 'second language' role in a multilingual setting: it includes Singapore, India, Malawi and over fifty other territories.

- The *expanding circle* involves those nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle, nor have they given English any special administrative status. It includes China, Japan, Greece, Poland and (as the name of this circle suggests) a steadily increasing number of other states. In these areas, English is taught as a foreign language.

There are some seventy-five territories in which English has held or continues to hold a special place, as a member of

either the inner or the outer circles. These are given in a single alphabetical list below, along with an estimate of the number of speakers. The national population figures are estimates for mid-1995. L1 stands for people who have a variety of English as a first language, or mother tongue. L2 stands for people who have learned a variety of English as a second language, in addition to their mother tongue. Where I have been unable to find any relevant data, the figure for L1 or L2 is missing. Lists of this kind contain all kinds of hidden assumptions, and they have to be carefully interpreted. In particular, we should note the following points:

- There is no single source of statistical information on language totals, so estimates have to be taken from a variety of sources. In the first instance, I used the *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook* (1995), the *Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook* (1996), the 12th edition of *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (1992), and whatever census data I could find. In a (regrettably) few cases, a sociolinguistic study of an area has provided an estimate.
- Where no linguistic estimate is available (the cases are marked with an asterisk), I have used an indirect method, based on the percentage of a country's population over the age of twenty-five who have completed their secondary or further education – the assumption being that, in a country where the language has official status, and is taught in schools, this figure would suggest a reasonable level of attainment.
- The notion of 'a variety of English' referred to above includes standard, pidgin, and creole varieties of English. That is why, in certain countries, the usage totals in the list are much higher than would be expected if only standard English were being considered. In Nigeria, for example, large numbers (thought to be well over 40 per cent of the population) use Nigerian Pidgin English as a second language. The linguistic justification for this approach is that these varieties are, indeed, varieties of **English** (as opposed to, say, French), and are usually related to standard English along a continuum. On the other hand, because the ends of this continuum may not be

mutually intelligible, it could be argued that we need to keep standard English totals separate from pidgin/creole English totals: if this view is adopted, then some 5–6 million L1 speakers and some 50–60 million L2 speakers should be subtracted from the grand totals below. Countries where this is an issue are identified by (c) in the list.

- It is also important to recall (from chapter 1) that to have a 'special place' can mean various things. Sometimes English is an official or joint official language of a state, its status being defined by law, as in the case of India, Ireland or Canada. Sometimes it may be the sole or dominant language for historical reasons, as in the case of the USA or the UK. In a few instances, such as Kenya and Tanzania, English has lost the formal status it once had, though it still plays an important role in the community. In many cases, its standing is less certain, coexisting with other local languages in a relationship which shifts with time and social function. But in all cases, it can be argued, the population is living in an environment in which the English language is routinely in evidence, publicly accessible in varying degrees, and part of the nation's recent or present identity.
- Finally, we should bear in mind that the notion of a 'special place', as reflected in this list, is one which relates entirely to historical and political factors. This has led some linguists to argue that such a list presents a picture of the present-day world which does not wholly reflect sociolinguistic reality. In particular, it is suggested, the distinction between 'second language' (L2) and 'foreign language' use has less contemporary relevance than it formerly had. There is much more use of English nowadays in some countries of the expanding circle, where it is 'only' a foreign language (as in Scandinavia and The Netherlands), than in some of the outer circle where it has traditionally held a special place. To make a language official may not mean very much, in real terms. For example, English is probably represented in Rwanda and Burundi in very comparable ways, but Rwanda is in the list (and Burundi is not) only because the former has (in 1996) made a political decision to give the language special status. What the consequences are

for the future use of English in that country remains to be seen. In the meantime, it should not be forgotten that there are several countries, not represented below, which are making a much more important contribution to the notion of English as a global language than is reflected by any geo-historical picture (see chapters 3 and 4).

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Population (1995)</i>	<i>Usage estimate</i>	
American Samoa	58,000	L1	2,000
		L2	56,000
Antigua & Barbuda (c)	64,000	L1	61,000
		L2	2,000
Australia	18,025,000	L1	15,316,000
		L2	2,084,000
Bahamas (c)	276,000	L1	250,000
		L2	25,000
Bangladesh	120,093,000	L2	3,100,000
Barbados (c)	265,000	L1	265,000
Belize (c)	216,000	L1	135,000
		L2	30,000
Bermuda	61,000	L1	60,000
Bhutan	1,200,000	L2	60,000
Botswana	1,549,000	L2	620,000
British Virgin Islands (c)	18,000	L1	17,000
Brunei	291,000	L1	10,000
		L2	104,000*
Cameroon (c)	13,233,000	L2	6,600,000
Canada	29,463,000	L1	19,700,000
		L2	6,000,000
Cayman Islands	29,000	L1	29,000
Cook Islands	19,000	L1	1,000
		L2	2,000
Dominica	72,000	L1	3,000
		L2	12,000*
Fiji	791,000	L1	5,000
		L2	160,000
Gambia (c)	1,115,000	L2	33,000*
Ghana (c)	16,472,000	L2	1,153,000*

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Population (1995)</i>	<i>Usage estimate</i>	
Gibraltar	28,000	L1	25,000
		L2	2,000
Grenada (c)	92,000	L1	91,000
Guam	149,000	L1	56,000
		L2	92,000
Guyana (c)	770,000	L1	700,000
		L2	30,000
Hong Kong	6,205,000	L1	125,000
		L2	1,860,000
India	935,744,000	L1	320,000
		L2	37,000,000
Ireland	3,590,000	L1	3,400,000
		L2	190,000
Jamaica (c)	2,520,000	L1	2,400,000
		L2	50,000
Kenya	28,626,000	L2	2,576,000*
Kiribati	80,000	L2	20,000*
Lesotho	2,050,000	L2	488,000*
Liberia (c)	2,380,000	L1	60,000
		L2	2,000,000
Malawi	9,939,000	L2	517,000*
Malaysia	19,948,000	L1	375,000
		L2	5,984,000
Malta	370,000	L1	8,000
		L2	86,000*
Marshall Islands	56,000	L2	28,000*
Mauritius	1,128,000	L1	2,000
		L2	167,000*
Micronesia	105,000	L1	4,000
		L2	15,000*
Montserrat (c)	11,000	L1	11,000
Namibia	1,651,000	L1	13,000
		L2	300,000*
Nauru	10,000	L1	800
		L2	9,400
Nepal	20,093,000	L2	5,927,000*
New Zealand	3,568,000	L1	3,396,000
		L2	150,000

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Population (1995)</i>	<i>Usage estimate</i>	
Nigeria (c)	95,434,000	L2	43,000,000
Northern Marianas (c)	58,000	L1	3,000
		L2	50,000
Pakistan	140,497,000	L2	16,000,000
Palau	17,000	L1	500
		L2	16,300
Papua New Guinea (c)	4,302,000	L1	120,000
		L2	2,800,000
Philippines	70,011,000	L1	15,000
		L2	36,400,000
Puerto Rico	3,725,000	L1	110,000
		L2	1,746,000
Rwanda	7,855,000	L2	24,000*
St Kitts & Nevis (c)	39,000	L1	39,000
St Lucia (c)	143,000	L1	29,000
		L2	22,000
St Vincent & Grenadines (c)	112,000	L1	111,000
Seychelles	75,000	L1	2,000
		L2	11,000*
Sierra Leone (c)	4,509,000	L1	450,000
		L2	3,830,000
Singapore	2,989,000	L1	300,000
		L2	1,046,000
Solomon Islands (c)	382,000	L1	2,000
		L2	135,000
South Africa	41,465,000	L1	3,600,000
		L2	10,000,000*
Sri Lanka	18,090,000	L1	10,000
		L2	1,850,000
Suriname (c)	430,000	L1	258,000
		L2	150,000
Swaziland	913,000	L2	40,000*
Tanzania	28,072,000	L2	3,000,000
Tonga	100,000	L2	30,000*
Trinidad & Tobago (c)	1,265,000	L1	1,200,000
Tuvalu	9,000	L2	600
Uganda	18,659,000	L2	2,000,000*

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Population (1995)</i>	<i>Usage estimate</i>	
United Kingdom	58,586,000	L1	56,990,000
		L2	1,100,000
UK Islands (Channel Is, Man)	218,000	L1	217,000
United States	263,057,000	L1	226,710,000
		L2	30,000,000
US Virgin Islands (c)	98,000	L1	79,000
		L2	10,000
Vanuatu (c)	168,000	L1	2,000
		L2	160,000
Western Samoa	166,000	L1	1,000
		L2	86,000
Zambia	9,456,000	L1	50,000
		L2	1,000,000*
Zimbabwe	11,261,000	L1	250,000
		L2	3,300,000*
Other dependencies	30,000	L1	18,000
		L2	12,000
Total	2,024,614,000	L1	337,407,300
		L2	235,351,300

The category 'Other dependencies' consists of territories administered by Australia (Norfolk I., Christmas I., Cocos Is), New Zealand (Niue, Tokelau) and the UK (Anguilla, Falkland Is, Pitcairn I., Turks & Caicos Is).

In reflecting on these totals, we should not underestimate the significance of the overall population figure, as it indicates the total number of people who are in theory routinely exposed to English in a country. The grand total of 2,025 million in 1995 is equivalent in 1997 (assuming a world population rate of increase of 1.6 per cent per annum) to 2,090 million, which is well over a third of the world's population. But of course, only a proportion of these people actually have some command of English.

The total of 337 million represents an estimate of those who have learned English as a first language (L1). The total would be increased if we knew the L1 figures for every country – especially in such areas as West Africa, where it is not known how many use

a variety of English as a first language – and some reference books (such as *World Almanac* and *Ethnologue*) do cite as many as 450 million as a grand total at present.

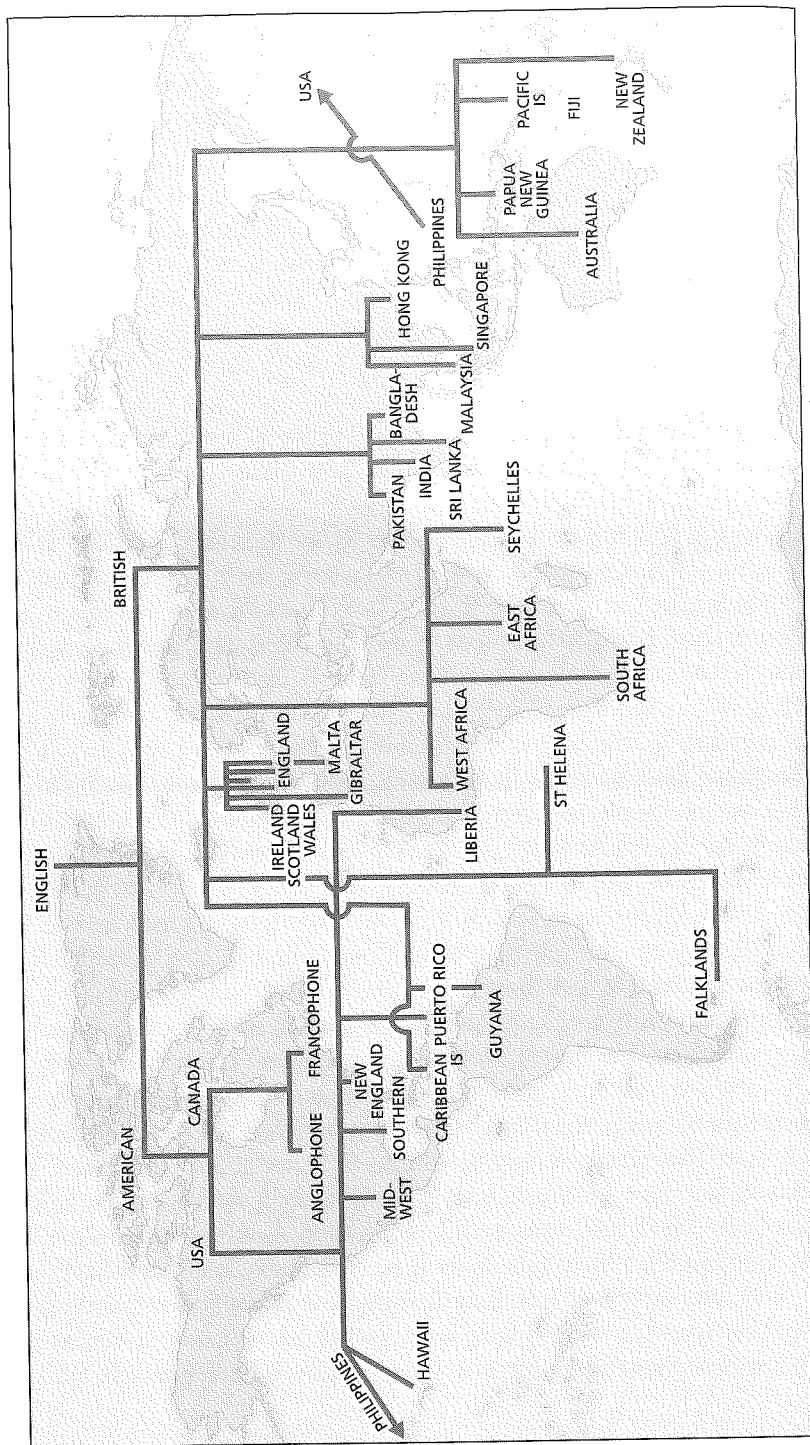
The total of 235 million represents an estimate of those who have learned English as a second language (L2); but it does not give the whole picture. For many countries, no estimates are available. And in others (notably India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia, Philippines and Tanzania, which had a combined total of over 1,300 million people in 1995), even a small percentage increase in the number of speakers thought to have a reasonable (rather than a fluent) command of English would considerably expand the L2 grand total. A figure of 350 million is in fact widely cited as a likely total for this category.

No account has been taken in this list of the third category of English language learners referred to above: the members of the expanding circle, who have learned English as a foreign language. Estimates for the total number of these speakers vary enormously: they have been as low as 100 million and as high as 1,000 million. Here too, everything depends on just how great a command of English is considered acceptable to count as a 'speaker of English'. One thing is plain: as we shall see in chapter 4, their role in any account of the global English picture is likely to increase dramatically in the twenty-first century, eventually exceeding the significance currently attached to the outer-circle countries. Numerically, much will depend on what happens in the countries with the largest populations, notably China, Japan, Russia, Indonesia and Brazil.

If we are cautious by temperament, we will add these statistics together by choosing the lowest estimates in each category: in this way we shall end up with a grand total of 670 million people with a native or native-like command of English. If we go to the opposite extreme, and use a criterion of 'reasonable competence' rather than 'native-like fluency', we shall end up with a grand total of 1,800 million. A 'middle-of-the-road' estimate would be 1,200–1,500 million, and this is now commonly encountered.

No other language has spread around the globe so extensively, but – as we have seen in chapter I – what is impressive is not so much the grand total but the speed with which expansion has





*Why English? The historical context*

taken place since the 1950s. In 1950, the case for English as a world language would have been no more than plausible. Fifty years on, and the case is virtually unassailable. What happened in this fifty years – a mere eye-blink in the history of a language – to cause such a massive change of stature? To answer this question, we must look at the way modern society has come to use, and depend on, the English language.

*(Opposite)* 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