THE FUTURE of english?

What is this book about?

This book is about the English language in the 21st century: about who will speak it and for what purposes. It is a practical briefing document, written for educationists, politicians, managers – indeed any decision maker or planning team with a professional interest in the development of English worldwide.

The Future of English? takes stock of the present, apparently unassailable, position of English in the world and asks whether we can expect its status to remain unchanged during the coming decades of unprecedented social and economic global change. The book explores the possible long-term impact on English of developments in communications technology, growing economic globalisation and major demographic shifts. *The Future of English?* examines the complex mix of material and cultural trends which will shape the global destiny of the English language and concludes that the future is more complex and less predictable than has usually been assumed.

The book has been commissioned by the British Council to complement the many texts already available about the teaching and learning of English, the history and development of English and the diversity of forms of English worldwide. It is intended to stimulate constructive debate about the future status of English which can inform policy developments both in the British Council and other organisations concerned with the promotion of English language teaching and learning.

The book is divided into five main sections, each followed by a summary of main points and references. The first section explains how English came to reach its present position in the world. Section two examines techniques of forecasting, identifies the patterns which underlie typical linguistic change and describes the way large corporations have used 'scenario planning' as a strategy for coping with unpredictable futures. Section three outlines significant global trends which will shape the social and economic world in the 21st century. Section four discusses the impacts these trends are already having on language and communication in everyday life.

The last section summarises implications for the English language and outlines ways in which we might reach a better understanding of the status which English will hold in the 21st century world. This concluding section also argues for a reassessment of the role played by British providers of ELT goods and services in promoting a global 'brand image' for Britain.

Overview

English is widely regarded as having become the global language – but will it retain its pre-eminence in the 21st century? The world in which it is used is in the early stages of major social, economic and demographic transition. Although English is unlikely to be displaced as the world's most important language, the future is more complex and less certain than some assume.

Figure 1 Will English remain the world's language? Composite responses to the British Council's English 2000 Global Consultation Questionnaire

Why worry now?

Why worry now about the global future of the English language? Is it not the first language of capitalism in a world in which socialism and communism have largely disappeared? Is it not the main language of international commerce and trade in a world where these sectors seem increasingly to drive the cultural and political? Has it not more cultural resources, in the sense of works of literature, films and television programmes, than any other language? Is it not, as *The Economist* has described it, 'impregnably established as the world standard language: an intrinsic part of the global communications revolution'? (*The Economist*, 21 December 1996, p. 39) Isn't it obvious, in other words, that the English language will continue to grow in popularity and influence, without the need for special study or strategic management?

The simple answer to all these questions is probably 'yes'. There is no imminent danger to the English language, nor to its global popularity – a fact which is recognised by the majority of people who are professionally concerned with the English language worldwide (Figure 1). The press release for the launch of the British Council's English 2000 project in 1995 summarised the position of English:

> World-wide, there are over 1,400 million people living in countries where English has official status. One out of five of the world's population speak English to some level of competence. Demand from the other four fifths is increasing. ... By the year 2000 it is estimated that over one billion people will be learning English. English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising.

Fin de siècle

The position of English as a world language may seem to be so entrenched and secure that agonising over 'where we are' and 'where we are going' might be regarded as no more than a fin de siècle indulgence. The end of the 19th century was characterised by much heart searching over the state of society – evident in social behaviour and experimentation, fiction, scientific writing and legislative reform – prompted by a concern at the social consequences of the industrial revolution. How much greater might be the mood of self-reflection at the end of a millennium, when the communications revolution and economic globalisation seem to be destroying the reassuring geographical and linguistic basis of sovereignty and national identity. How many titles of social and economics books include the word 'end' or the prefix 'post': 'The end of history', 'the post-industrial societies', 'post-modernism', 'post-capitalism', 'post-feminism'. There is a general awareness of change, but no clear vision of where it may all be leading. It seems we are not yet living in a new era, but have fallen off the edge of an old one.
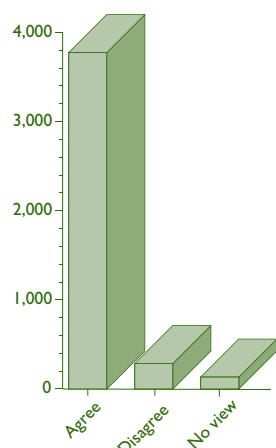
A world in transition

But there are reasons why we ought to take stock and reassess the place of English in the world. The future of the English language may not be straightforward: celebratory statistics should be treated with caution.

This book examines some facts, trends and ideas which may be uncomfortable to many native speakers. For example, the economic dominance of OECD countries – which has helped circulate English in the new market economies of the world – is being eroded as Asian economies grow and become the source, rather than the recipient, of cultural and economic flows. Population statistics suggest that the populations of the rich countries are ageing and that in the coming decades young adults with disposable income will be found in Asia and Latin America rather than in the US and Europe. Educational trends in many countries suggest that languages other than English are already providing significant competition in school curricula.

The Future of English? identifies such significant global trends – in economics, technology and culture – which may affect the learning and use of English internationally in the 21st century. We suggest that the close of the 20th century is a time of global transition and that a new world order is emerging. The period of most rapid change is likely to last about 20 years and can be expected to be an uncomfortable and at times traumatic experience for many of the world's citizens. During this period, the conditions will be established for more settled global relations which may stabilise about 2050. Hence the next 20 years or so will be a critical time for the English language and for those who depend upon it. The patterns of usage and public attitudes to English which develop during this period will have long-term implications for its future in the world.

In this book we argue that the global popularity of English is in no immediate danger, but that it would be foolhardy to imagine that its pre-eminent position as a world language will not be challenged in some world regions and domains of use as the economic, demographic and political shape of the world is transformed.

A language in transition

As the world is in transition, so the English language is itself taking new forms. This, of course, has always been true: English has changed substantially in the 1500 years or so of its use, reflecting patterns of contact with other languages and the changing communication needs of people. But in many parts of the world, as English is taken into the fabric of social life, it acquires a momentum and vitality of its own, developing in ways which reflect local culture and languages, while diverging increasingly from the kind of English spoken in Britain or North America.

English is also used for more purposes than ever before. Everywhere it is at the leading edge of technological and scientific development, new thinking in economics and management, new literatures and entertainment genres. These give rise to new vocabularies, grammatical forms and ways of speaking and writing. Nowhere is the effect of this expansion of English into new domains seen more clearly than in communication on the Internet and the development of 'net English'.

But the language is, in another way, at a critical moment in its global career: within a decade or so, the number of people who speak English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers. The

implications of this are likely to be far reaching: the centre of authority regarding the language will shift from native speakers as they become minority stakeholders in the global resource. Their literature and television may no longer provide the focal point of a global English language culture, their teachers no longer form the unchallenged authoritative models for learners.

Contradictory trends

Many of the trends that are documented here are not simply 'driving forces' whose impact and consequences can be easily predicted. And in so far as they are understood they appear to be leading in contradictory directions – tendencies to increasing use of English are counterposed by others which lead to a reducing enthusiasm for the language. On the one hand, the use of English as a global lingua franca requires intelligibility and the setting and maintenance of standards. On the other hand, the increasing adoption of English as a second language, where it takes on local forms, is leading to fragmentation and diversity. No longer is it the case, if it ever was, that English unifies all who speak it.

These competing trends will give rise to a less predictable context within which the English language will be learned and used. There is, therefore, no way of precisely predicting the future of English since its spread and continued vitality is driven by such contradictory forces. As David Crystal has commented:

> There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. There are therefore no precedents to help us see what happens to a language when it achieves genuine world status. (Crystal, 1997, p. 139)

The likelihood, as this book demonstrates, is that the future for English will be a complex and plural one. The language will grow in usage and variety, yet simultaneously diminish in relative global importance. We may find the hegemony of English replaced by an oligarchy of languages, including Spanish and Chinese. To put it in economic terms, the size of the global market for the English language may increase in absolute terms, but its market share will probably fall.

A new world era

According to many economists, cultural theorists and political scientists, the new 'world order' expected to appear in the 21st century will represent a significant discontinuity with previous centuries. The Internet and related information technologies, for example, may upset the traditional patterns of communication upon which institutional and national cultures have been built. We have entered a period in which language and communication will play a more central role than ever before in economic, political and cultural life – just at the moment in history that a global language has emerged.

There are signs already of an associated shift of social values which may have a significant impact on the future decision-making of organisations, governments and consumers. Some commentators predict that, just as environmental issues were once regarded as less important than the need for profit, so issues of social equity will form a third 'bottom line' in the global business environment. This suggests that those who promote the global use of English will be burdened with new social responsibilities and may have to engage with a more complex public agenda, including ethical issues relating to linguistic human rights.

Questioning the future

The Future of English? thus explores a range of topics with a common theme: the changing world which affects our use of language. Its primary purpose is to stimulate informed debate about the global future of English and the implications both for British providers of English language services and the institutions and enterprises with which they work overseas. For this reason, the book aims to provide thought-provoking ideas rather than firm predictions. It points to areas of uncertainty and doubt – where an understanding of local issues will be as valuable as that of global trends. Many of the issues the book addresses will be of interest to a wide range of people, both specialists and professionals, but also members of the general public. These issues raise such questions as:

- How many people will speak English in the year 2050?

- What role will English play in their lives? Will they enjoy the rich cultural resources the English language offers or will they simply use English as a vehicular language – like a tool of their trade?

- What effects will economic globalisation have on the demand for English?

- Will the emergence of 'world regions' encourage lingua francas which challenge the position of English?

- How does English help the economic modernisation of newly industrialised countries?

- Is the Internet the electronic 'flagship' of global English?

- Will the growth of global satellite TV, such as CNN and MTV, teach the world's youth US English?

- Will the spread of English lead to over half of the world's languages becoming extinct?

- Is it true that the English language will prove to be a vital resource and benefit to Britain in the coming century, giving it a key economic advantage over European competitors?

Commentators vary greatly in attitudes towards, and expectations of, global English. At one extreme, there is an unproblematic assumption that the world will eventually speak English and that this will facilitate the cultural and economic dominance of native-speaking countries (especially the US). Such a view is challenged, however, by the growing assertiveness of countries adopting English as a second language that English is now *their* language, through which they can express their own values and identities, create their own intellectual property and export goods and services to other countries.

The spread of English in recent years is, by any criterion, a remarkable phenomenon. But the closer one examines the historical causes and current trends, the more it becomes apparent that the future of English will be more complex, more demanding of understanding and more challenging for the position of native-speaking countries than has hitherto been supposed.

This book is neither triumphalist nor alarmist, but seeks to chart some of the territory, to stimulate a more informed debate which can, in turn, help all those concerned with the future of English prepare for the significant changes the 21st century will bring.

?

Book highlights

1 English and the international economy

The shifting patterns of trade and new working practices (such as the growing prevalence of screen-based labour) which follow globalisation are affecting the use of the English language in complex ways. At present there is a considerable increase in the numbers of people learning and using English, but a closer examination of driving forces suggests that the long-term growth of the learning of English is less secure than might at first appear.

2 English and global culture

As the number of people using English grows, so second-language speakers are drawn towards the 'inner circle' of first-language speakers and foreign-language speakers to the 'outer circle' of second-language speakers. During this status migration, attitudes and needs in respect of the language will change; the English language will diversify and other countries will emerge to compete with the older, native-speaking countries in both the English language-teaching industry and in the global market for cultural resources and intellectual property in English.

3 English as a leading-edge phenomenon

English is closely associated with the leading edge of global scientific, technological, economic and cultural developments, where it has been unrivalled in its influence in the late 20th century. But we cannot simply extrapolate from the last few decades and assume this trend will continue unchanged. In four key sectors, the present dominance of English can be expected to give way to a wider mix of languages: first, the global audio-visual market and especially satellite TV; second, the Internet and computer-based communication including language-related and document handling software; third, technology transfer and associated processes in economic globalisation; fourth, foreign-language learning especially in developing countries where growing regional trade may make other languages of increasing economic importance.

4 A bilingual future

There is a growing belief amongst language professionals that the future will be a bilingual one, in which an increasing proportion of the world's population will be fluent speakers of more than one language. For the last few hundred years English has been dominated by monolingual speakers' interests: there is little to help us understand what will happen to English when the majority of the people and institutions who use it do so as a second language.

5 Social value shifts

The spread of English has been made more rapid in recent years as a consequence of decisions and actions taken by governments, institutions and individuals. This process has been guided by a logic of 'economic rationalism'. However, significant social value shifts may occur in public opinion, making social equity as important a factor in public policy as economic issues, and quality of life as important as income in personal life choices. Such value shifts would foreground the complex ethical issues associated with the world dominance of a single language and cause a reassessment of the impact of English on other cultures, national identities and educational opportunities for the world's non-English speaking citizens. The economic argument for English may also be challenged as developing countries make more careful evaluations of the costs and benefits of mass educational programmes in the English language.

6 Need for scenario building

This book suggests that development work should be put in hand towards the building and testing of 'scenarios' which encompass a range of possible futures for English in key areas. A 'Delphi panel' of experts (p. 23) in different regions of the world could be invited to respond to the scenarios and help establish local understandings of the changing role of English. Such qualitative work should go hand-in-hand with the collection of key statistics and trend data.

References

Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Economist (1996) *Language and Electronics: the coming global tongue*. 21 December, pp. 37–9.

Further reading

There are many books now available which examine the social and linguistic contexts in which English developed historically. *The Future of English?* has been written to complement the following books in particular:

Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graddol, D., Leith, D. and Swann, J. (1996) (eds) *English: history, diversity and change*. London: Routledge/Open University.

Maybin, J. and Mercer, N. (1996) (eds) *Using English: from conversation to canon*. London: Routledge/Open University.

Mercer, N. and Swann, J. (1996) (eds) *Learning English: development and diversity*. London: Routledge/Open University.

Goodman, S. and Graddol, D. (1996) (eds) *Redesigning English: new texts, new identities*. London: Routledge/Open University.

Sources

A composite list of sources for the tables and figures in this book can be found on the inside back cover.

Note

All references to $ in this text are to US$. 1 billion = 1,000 million; 1 trillion = 1,000,000 million

English today

The legacy of history

Britain's colonial expansion established the pre-conditions for the global use of English, taking the language from its island birthplace to settlements around the world. The English language has grown up in contact with many others, making it a hybrid language which can rapidly evolve to meet new cultural and communicative needs.

English in the 20th century

The story of English in the 20th century has been closely linked to the rise of the US as a superpower that has spread the English language alongside its economic, technological and cultural influence. In the same period, the international importance of other European languages, especially French, has declined.

Who speaks English?

There are three kinds of English speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future.

Language hierarchies

Languages are not equal in political or social status, particularly in multilingual contexts. How does English relate to other languages in a multilingual speaker's repertoire? Why does someone use English rather than a local language? What characteristic patterns are there in the use of English by non-native speakers?

Looking at the past is an important step towards understanding the future. Any serious study of English in the 21st century must start by examining how English came to be in its current state and spoken by those who speak it. What factors have ensured the spread of English? What does this process tell us about the fate of languages in unique political and cultural contexts? In what domains of knowledge has English developed particular importance and how recently?

English is remarkable for its diversity, its propensity to change and be changed. This has resulted in both a variety of forms of English, but also a diversity of cultural contexts within which English is used in daily life. The main areas of development in the use and form of English will undoubtedly come from non-native speakers. How many are there and where are they located? And when and why do they use English instead of their first language? We need to be aware of the different place that English has in the lives of native speakers, second-language users and those who learn it as a foreign language.

This section examines the development of English, identifies those languages which have historically rivalled English as a world language and explains the special place that English has in multilingual countries and in the repertoires of multilingual speakers. By showing how our present arose from the past, we will be better equipped to speculate on what the future might hold in store.

The legacy of history

Britain's colonial expansion established the pre-conditions for the global use of English, taking the language from its island birthplace to settlements around the world. The English language has grown up in contact with many others, making it a hybrid language which can rapidly evolve to meet new cultural and communicative needs.

?

Is English the most widely spoken language in the world today?
p. 8

Will future language use be shaped by time zone rather than geography in the 21st century?
p. 53

The colonial period

The English language has been associated with migration since its first origins – the language came into being in the 5th century with patterns of people movement and resettlement. But as a world language its history began in the 17th century, most notably in the foundation of the American colonies. Many European powers were similarly expanding: French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish became established as colonial languages, the latter two still important outside Europe in Latin America. But in the 19th century the British empire, with its distinctive mix of trade and cultural politics, consolidated the world position of English, creating a 'language on which the sun never sets'.

The rise of the nation state

In Europe of the middle ages, power was distributed between Church, sovereign and local barons, creating multiple agencies of social control, government and land management. Even in the 1500s, a monarch such as Charles V ruled geographically dispersed parts of Europe. But by the 17th and 18th centuries, the nation state had emerged as a territorial basis for administration and cultural identity. Yet language diversity was extensive and many language boundaries crossed the borders of newly emerging states. Each nation state required therefore an internal lingua franca, subject like other instruments of state to central regulation, which could act as a vehicle of governance and as an emblem of national identity. 'National' languages, not existing in Europe prior to the creation of nation states, had to be constructed. Consequently, the English language was self-consciously expanded and reconstructed to serve the purposes of a national language.

Profound cultural as well as political changes affected the English language. Modern institutions of science were founded, such as the Royal Society in Britain; language was added to the scientific agenda and made an object of study alongside investigations of the natural world. New words and ways of writing in English were developed. For a time, scholars and clerics who regularly travelled across the boundaries of national languages continued to use Latin as their lingua franca. But as knowledge of Latin declined and the rise of merchant and professional classes produced travellers unschooled in Latin, people sought alternative means of international communication.

The idea of a national language being a requirement for a nation state has remained a powerful one. The 20th century process of decolonisation created a drive to establish new national languages which could provide an integrated identity for multi-ethnic states set up on the European model. Few countries were as bold as Singapore, in adopting a multi-language formula which reflected the ethnic languages of the new state. Even in India, Hindi is the sole national language and English technically an 'associate'. In some countries a new national language had to be created – such as Bahasa Malaysia which raised the status of Malay into a national language in a way similar to the 17th century extension of English in vocabulary and function.

Nation states are getting more plentiful – there are now over 180 states represented at the UN – and one consequence of the break-up of larger territories into separate states has been the emergence of new national languages. Simultaneously, the role of the nation state is being weakened as economic globalisation, regional trading blocs and new multilateral political affiliations limit national spheres of control. Nevertheless, the death of the nation state is much exaggerated. National education systems, for example, play a major role in determining which languages in the world are taught and learned. The role of nation states is changing but is by no means abolished.

The emergence of national varieties

The attempt to fix and 'ascertain' the English language, made in the 18th and 19th centuries, was never entirely successful: the language has continued to adapt itself swiftly to new circumstances and people. And it was not just Britain which desired a national language from English. Noah Webster's proposed reforms of the American spelling system, some of which give it a distinctive appearance in print, were intended explicitly to create a national linguistic identity for the newly independent country:

> The question now occurs; ought the Americans to retain these faults which produce innumerable inconveniences in the acquisition and use of the language, or ought they at once to reform these abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the orthography of the American tongue? ... a capital advantage of this reform ... would be, that it would make a difference between the English orthography and the American. ... a national language is a band of national union. ... Let us seize the present moment, and establish a national language as well as a national government. (Webster, 1789)

There are an increasing number of national standards, including those related to the 'New Englishes' which have appeared in former colonial countries such as Singapore. Each standard is supported (or soon may be) by national dictionaries, grammars and style sheets. Nevertheless, no central authority has ever existed, either nationally or globally, which can regulate the language.

A hybrid and flexible language

English has always been an evolving language and language contact has been an important driver of change. First from Celtic and Latin, later from Scandinavian and Norman French, more recently from the many other languages spoken in the British colonies, the English language has borrowed freely. Some analysts see this hybridity and permeability of English as defining features, allowing it to expand quickly into new domains and explaining in part its success as a world language.

One of the few certainties associated with the future of English is that it will continue to evolve, reflecting and constructing the changing roles and identities of its speakers. Yet we are now at a significant point of evolution: at the end of the 20th century, the close relationship that has previously existed between language, territory and cultural identity is being challenged by globalising forces. The impact of such trends will shape the contexts in which English is learned and used in the 21st century.

Seven ages of English

This page provides an overview of the history of English, from its birth in the 5th century to the present day

---

1 Pre-English period (– c. AD 450)

The origins of English are, for a language, surprisingly well documented. At the time of the Roman invasion c.55 BC, the indigenous languages of Britain were Celtic, of which there were two main branches (corresponding to modern Gaelic and Welsh). The Romans made Latin an 'official' language of culture and government, probably resulting in many communities in Britain becoming bilingual Celtic-Latin. Garrisons of troops then arrived from elsewhere in the Roman empire, particularly Gaul, another Celtic area. In some points, the English language has repeated this early history of Latin: it was brought into many countries in the 17th to 19th centuries as the language of a colonial power and made the language of administration, spoken by a social elite, but not used by the majority of the population. It served, moreover, as an international lingua franca amongst the elites of many countries. But the use of Latin rapidly declined in the 17th and 18th centuries. Will English share this fate?

2 Early Old English (c.450–c.850)

The English language developed after the Anglo-Saxon invasion c.449 AD, when the Romans left Britain and new settlers brought Germanic dialects from mainland Europe. Latin was still an important written language because of the Church and many Latin words were introduced into Old English during this early period, but the language developed a new form: the first English literary texts appeared.

> Gefeng þa be feaxe (nalas for fæhðe mearn)
> Guð-Geata leod Grendles modor;
> brægd þa beadwe heard, þa he gebolgen wæs,
> feorhgeniðlan, þæt heo on flet gebeah.
> **Beowulf seizes Grendel's mother by the hair: a fragment
> from the epic Old English poem composed c. 750**

3 Later Old English (c.850–1100)

This was a time of invasion and settlement from Scandinavia (the Vikings) and a time of language change. In the north of England dialects of English were extensively influenced by Scandinavian languages. In the south, King Alfred, concerned about falling educational standards, arranged for many Latin texts to be translated into English.

4 Middle English (c.1100–1450)

The Norman Conquest (1066) and rule brought about many linguistic changes. French, now the official language in England, affected English vocabulary and spelling. The grammar of English was also radically transformed. Whereas Old English expressed grammatical relations through inflections (word endings), Middle English lost many inflections and used word order to mark the grammatical function of nouns. Educated people probably needed to be trilingual in French, Latin and English. It was a flourishing period for English literature. Writers included Geoffrey Chaucer, whose language is beginning to look like modern English.

> And preie God save the king, that is lord of this langage,
> and alle that him feith berith and obeieth, everich in his
> degre, the more and the lasse. But considere wel that I
> ne usurpe not to have founden this werk of my labour
> or of myn engyn.
> **Prologue of A Treatise on the Astrolabe,
> Geoffrey Chaucer, 1391**

5 Early Modern English (c.1450–1750)

This period spans the Renaissance, the Elizabethan era and Shakespeare. It is the period when the nation states of Europe took their modern form. The role of the Church and Latin declined. In England, key institutions of science, such as the Royal Society, were established and, by the end of the 17th century, theoreticians like Isaac Newton were writing their discoveries in English rather than Latin.

Britain grew commercially and acquired overseas colonies. English was taken to the Americas (first colony at Jamestown, Virginia 1607) and India (first trading post at Surat 1614). With the rise of printing (first printed book in English 1473) English acquired a stable typographic identity. Teaching English as a foreign language began in the 16th century, first in Holland and France.

> A common writing: whereby two, although not
> understanding one the others language, yet by the helpe
> thereof, may communicate their minds one to another. ...
> The harshness of the stile, I hope, will be corrected by
> the readers ingenuity.
> **Preface to A Common Writing, Francis Lodwick, 1647**

6 Modern English (c.1750–1950)

English had become a 'national' language. Many attempts were made to 'standardise and fix' the language with dictionaries and grammars (Johnson's *Dictionary* 1755, the *Oxford English Dictionary* 1858–1928). The industrial revolution triggered off a global restructuring of work and leisure which made English the international language of advertising and consumerism. The telegraph was patented in 1837, linking English-speaking communities around the world and establishing English as the major language for wire services. As Britain consolidated imperial power, English-medium education was introduced in many parts of the world. The international use of French declined. The first international series of English language-teaching texts was published from Britain in 1938 and the world's first TV commercial was broadcast in the US in 1941. English emerged as the most popular working language for transnational institutions.

7 Late Modern English (c.1950–)

With Britain's retreat from the empire, local and partially standardised varieties of English have emerged in newly independent countries. ELT has become a major private-sector industry. In the aftermath of World War II, the US became a global economic and cultural presence, making American English the dominant world variety. The first geostationary communications satellites were launched (Early Bird 1965) and the Internet was invented (US 1970s). A world market in audio-visual products was created and soap operas such as *Dallas* circulated the globe. Worldwide English language TV channels began (CNN International launched 1989). Meanwhile, English has acquired new electronic forms, as the fragment of a textual interaction from a north European reflector for Internet Relay Chat shows:

> Moonhoo joined (total 22)
> <Moonhoo>   cam someone ping me please
> <NorthBoy> action   fires a harpoon at Moonhoo.
> <Wiz09> whispers: U all dont sound to awfullly excited :(:(
> <BigMix>   North the host is a geek though
> <NorthBoy>   Moonhoo: you're lagged bigtime.

English in the 20th century

The story of English in the 20th century has been closely linked to the rise of the US as a superpower that has spread the English language alongside its economic, technological and cultural influence. In the same period, the international importance of other European languages, especially French, has declined.

The rise of the US

By the end of the 19th century, Britain had established the pre-conditions for English as a global language. Communities of English speakers were settled around the world and, along with them, patterns of trade and communication. Yet the world position of English might have declined with the empire, like the languages of other European colonial powers, such as Portugal and the Netherlands, had it not been for the dramatic rise of the US in the 20th century as a world superpower. There were, indeed, two other European linguistic contenders which could have established themselves as the global lingua franca – French and German. Eco (1995) suggests:

> Had Hitler won World War II and had the USA been reduced to a confederation of banana republics, we would probably today use German as a universal vehicular language, and Japanese electronic firms would advertise their products in Hong Kong airport duty-free shops (*Zollfreie Waren*) in German. (Eco, 1995, p. 331)

This is probably a disingenuous idea: the US was destined to be the most powerful of the industrialised countries because of its own natural and human resources. The US is today the world's third most populous country with around 260 million inhabitants. Not surprising therefore that it now accounts for the greater proportion of the total number of native English speakers. According to Table 1, which uses data generated by the engco forecasting model (described more fully on p. 64), only Chinese has more first-language users. While such league tables beg as many questions as they answer, (and we will later discuss the serious problems attached to statistics relating to language use) they do make provocative reading – Hindi, Spanish and Arabic are close behind English, but how secure their place will be in the 21st century is a matter of speculation.

For the spread of English, the aftermath of World War II was decisive. American influence was extended around the world. As George Steiner has observed:

> English acted as the vulgate of American power and of Anglo-American technology and finance. ... In ways too intricate, too diverse for socio-linguistics to formulate precisely, English and American-English seem to embody for men and women throughout the world – and particularly for the young – the 'feel' of hope, of material advance, of scientific and empirical procedures. The entire world-image of mass consumption, of international exchange, of the popular arts, of generational conflict, of technocracy, is permeated by American-English and English citations and speech habits. (Steiner, 1975, p. 469)

Steiner captures the complex mix of the economic, technological, political and cultural which is evident in the international domains of English at the end of the 20th century. Those domains, listed in Table 2, are discussed more fully later in the book. Here, we briefly examine how this situation arose in the second half of the 20th century.

World institutions

After the war, several international agencies were established to help manage global reconstruction and future governance. The key one has proved to be the United Nations and its subsidiary organisations. Crystal (1997) estimates that 85% of international organisations now use English as one of their working languages, 49% use French and fewer than 10% use Arabic, Spanish or German. These figures probably underestimate the *de facto* use of English in such organisations. The International Association for Applied Linguistics, for example, lists French as a working language (and is known by a French acronym AILA), but English is used almost exclusively in its publications and meetings. In Europe, the hegemony of English – even on paper – is surprisingly high. Crystal (1997) estimates 99% of European organisations listed in a recent yearbook of international associations cite English as a working language, as opposed to 63% French and 40% German.

French is still the only real rival to English as a working language of world institutions, although the world position of French has been in undoubted rapid decline

	Language	engco model	Ethnologue
1	Chinese	1,113	1,123
2	English	372	322
3	Hindi/Urdu	316	236
4	Spanish	304	266
5	Arabic	201	202
6	Portuguese	165	170
7	Russian	155	288
8	Bengali	125	189
9	Japanese	123	125
10	German	102	98
11	French	70	72
12	Italian	57	63
13	Malay	47	47

Table 1 Major world languages in millions of first-language speakers according to the engco model and comparative figures from the *Ethnologue* (Grimes, 1996)

1	Working language of international organisations and conferences
2	Scientific publication
3	International banking, economic affairs and trade
4	Advertising for global brands
5	Audio-visual cultural products (e.g. film, TV, popular music)
6	International tourism
7	Tertiary education
8	International safety (e.g. 'airspeak', 'seaspeak')
9	International law
10	As a 'relay language' in interpretation and translation
11	Technology transfer
12	Internet communication

Table 2 Major international domains of English

since World War II. Its use in international forums is unlikely to disappear entirely, however, because it retains a somewhat negative convenience in being 'not English', particularly in Europe. It is the only alternative which can be used in many international forums as a political gesture of resistance to the hegemony of English. As a delegate from Ireland once addressed the League of Nations many years ago, explaining his use of French, 'I can't speak my own language, and I'll be damned if I'll speak English' (cited in Large, 1985, p. 195).

Financial institutions

English has been spread as a world language not only via political initiatives. Key financial institutions have been established in the 20th century, again after World War II and with major American involvement. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank were established after the 'Bretton Woods' conference in 1944. Through the Marshall plan, the US became closely involved in the post-war economic reconstruction of Europe, Japan and other parts of the Asia Pacific region. The Korean and later the Vietnamese war continued the process of spreading American influence. Cultural, economic and technological dependency on America were soon a concern for nations across the world. The Bretton Woods system has since played a significant role in regulating international economic relations and in introducing free-market regimes in countries where control has been traditionally centralised. As more countries have been rendered 'open' to global flows of finance, goods, knowledge and culture, so the influence of English has spread.

Scientific publishing

English is now the international currency of science and technology. Yet it has not always been so. The renaissance of British science in the 17th century put English-language science publications, such as the *Philosophical Transactions* instituted by the Royal Society 1665, at the forefront of the world scientific community. But the position was soon lost to German, which became the dominant international language of science until World War I. The growing role of the US then ensured that English became, once again, the global language of experiment and discovery.

Journals in many countries have shifted, since World War II, from publishing in their national language to publishing in English. Gibbs (1995) describes how the Mexican medical journal *Archivos de Investigación Médica* shifted to English: first publishing abstracts in English, then providing English translations of all articles, finally hiring an American editor, accepting articles only in English and changing its name to *Archives of Medical Research*. This language shift is common elsewhere. A study in the early 1980s showed nearly two-thirds of publications of French scientists were in English. Viereck (1996) describes how all contributions in 1950 to the *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie* were in German, but by 1984 95% were in English. The journal was renamed *Ethology* two years later.

As might be expected, some disciplines have been more affected by the English language than others. Physics is the most globalised and anglophone, followed a close second by other pure sciences. Table 3 shows the percentage of German scholars in each field reporting English as their '*de facto* working language' in a study by Skudlik (1992).
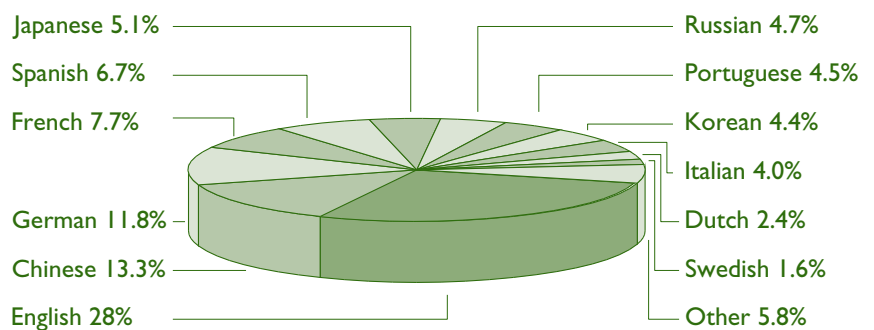

Figure 2 The proportion of the world's books annually published in each language. English is the most widely used foreign language for book publication: over 60 countries publish titles in English. Britain publishes more titles than any other country, thus generating more intellectual property in the language than the US. Some UK publishers, however, adopt US English house-styles and this, together with the fact that print runs in North America are typically much longer than in the UK, ensures that books published in US English receive a wider circulation than those in British English. In the 21st century there is likely to be considerable growth in English language publishing in countries where English is spoken as a second language

It is not just in scientific publishing, but in book publication as a whole that English rules supreme. Worldwide, English is the most popular language of publication. Figure 2 shows the estimated proportion of titles published in different languages in the early 1990s.

Unesco figures for book production show Britain outstripping any other country in the world for the number of titles published each year. In 1996, a remarkable 101,504 titles were published in Britain (*Independent*, 25 February 1997, p. 11). Although there are countries which publish more per head of the population and many countries which print more copies, none publishes as many titles. Many of these books are exported, or are themselves part of a globalised trade in which books may be typeset in one country, printed in another and sold in a third.

It is difficult to decide the relative cultural influence of huge numbers of copies of few titles available on the one hand, against many titles printed in short runs on the other. However, the statistics show the enormous amount of intellectual property being produced in the English language in an era where intellectual property is becoming increasingly valuable.

English in the 21st century

The position of English in the world today is thus the joint outcome of Britain's colonial expansion and the more recent activity of the US. Any substantial shift in the role of the US in the world is likely to have an impact on the use and attractiveness of the English language amongst those for whom it is not a first language. Later, we will see how the economic dominance of the US is expected to decline, as economies in Asia overtake it in size. The question remains whether English has become so entrenched in the world that a decline in the influence of the US would harm it. Are its cultural resources and intellectual property so extensive that no other language can catch up? Or will other languages come to rival English in their global importance, pushing English aside much in the same way as Latin was abandoned as an international lingua franca 300 years ago?

Physics	98%
Chemistry	83%
Biology	81%
Psychology	81%
Maths	78%
Earth Sciences	76%
Medical Science	72%
Sociology	72%
Philosophy	56%
Forestry	55%
Vet. Sciences	53%
Economics	48%
Sports Sciences	40%
Linguistics	35%
Education	27%
Literature	23%
History	20%
Classics	17%
Theology	12%
Law	8%

Table 3 Disciplines in which German academics claim English as their working language

Who speaks English?

There are three kinds of English speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future.

Three types of English speaker

There are three types of English speaker in the world today, each with a different relationship with the language. First-language (L1) speakers are those for whom English is a first – and often only – language. These native speakers live, for the most part, in countries in which the dominant culture is based around English. These countries, however, are experiencing increasing linguistic diversity as a result of immigration. Second-language (L2) speakers have English as a second or additional language, placing English in a repertoire of languages where each is used in different contexts. Speakers here might use a local form of English, but may also be fluent in international varieties. The third group of English speakers are the growing number of people learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

Leith (1996) argues that the first two kinds of English-speaking community result from different colonial processes. He identifies three kinds:

> In the first type, exemplified by America and Australia, substantial settlement by first-language speakers of English displaced the precolonial population. In the second, typified by Nigeria, sparser colonial settlements maintained the precolonial population in subjection and allowed a proportion of them access to learning English as a second, or additional, language. There is yet a third type, exemplified by the Caribbean islands of Barbados and Jamaica. Here a precolonial population was replaced by a new labour from elsewhere, principally West Africa. ... The long-term effect of the slave trade on the development of the English language is immense. It gave rise not only to black English in the United States and the Caribbean, which has been an important influence on the speech of young English speakers worldwide, but it also provided the extraordinary context of language contact which led to the formation of English pidgins and creoles. (Leith, 1996, pp. 181–2, 206)

Each colonial process had different linguistic consequences. The first type created a diaspora of native speakers of English (US, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand), with each settlement eventually establishing its own national variety of English. The second (India, West Africa, East Africa) made English an elite second language, frequently required for further education and government jobs.

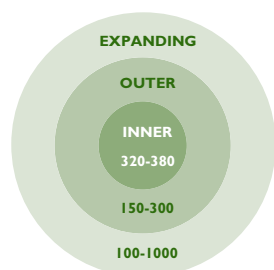The linguistic consequences of the third type were complex, including the creation of new hybrid varieties of English called creoles. Creoles have as their origin a pidgin – a reduced form of communication used between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages – which becomes extended in vocabulary and grammar as a result of being used as a mother tongue. Classification of creole speakers is problematic. From a linguistic view, there is merit in regarding creoles as distinct languages. From a sociolinguistic view, it may be better to regard creole speakers as belonging to the English-speaking community, because of the emergence in several countries of a 'post-creole continuum': a range of language varieties from standard English to fully fledged creole.

Dividing English speakers into three groups is a time-honoured approach to language use and, though not without its problems, is a useful starting point for understanding the pattern of English worldwide. These three groups have become widely known (after Kachru, 1985) as the 'inner circle', the 'outer circle' and the 'expanding circle' (Figure 3). One of the drawbacks of this terminology is the way it locates the 'native speakers' and native-speaking countries at the centre of the global use of English and, by implication, the source of models of correctness, the best teachers and English-language goods and services consumed by those in the periphery.

This model, however, will not be the most useful for describing English usage in the next century. Those who speak English alongside other languages will outnumber first-language speakers and, increasingly, will decide the global future of the language. For that reason we retain here the terminology of 'first-language speaker' (L1), 'second-language speaker' (L2) and 'speaker of English as a foreign language' (EFL). Figure 4 provides an alternative way of visualising these three communities.

Figure 3 The three circles of English according to Kachru (1985) with estimates of speaker numbers in millions according to Crystal (1997)

EXPANDING
OUTER
INNER
320-380
150-300
100-1000

Possible language shift
Possible language shift
375 million L2 speakers
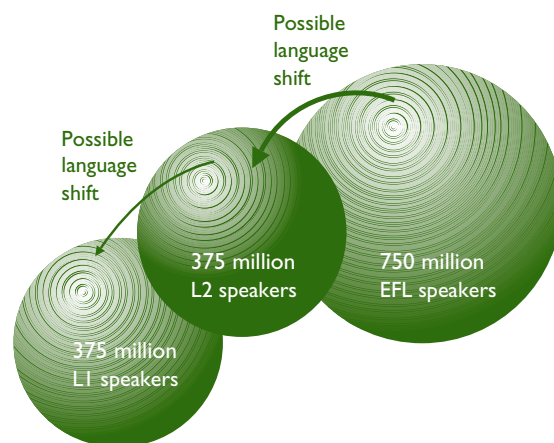750 million EFL speakers
375 million L1 speakers

Figure 4 Showing the three circles of English as overlapping makes it easier to see how the 'centre of gravity' will shift towards L2 speakers at the start of the 21st century

Table 4 Native speakers of English (in thousands) incorporating estimates by Crystal (1997)

(*indicates territories in which English is used as an L1, but where there is greater L2 use or significant use of another language)

Antigua and Barbuda	61	Guam*	56	Papua New Guinea*	120
Australia	15,316	Guyana	700	Philippines*	15
Bahamas	250	Hong Kong*	125	Puerto Rico*	110
Barbados	265	India*	320	Sierra Leone*	450
Belize*	135	Irish Republic	3,334	St Kitts and Nevis	39
Bermuda	60	Jamaica	2,400	St Lucia	29
Brunei*	10	Liberia*	60	St Vincent and Grenadines	111
Canada	19,700	Malaysia*	375	Singapore*	300
Cayman Is	29	Montserrat	11	South Africa*	3,600
Gibraltar*	25	Namibia*	13	Sri Lanka*	10
Grenada	101	New Zealand	3,396	Suriname	258

Trinidad and Tobago	1,200
UK (England, Scotland, N. Ireland, Wales*)	56,990
UK Islands (Channel*, Man)	217
US*	226,710
Virgin Is (British)	17
Virgin Is (US)	79
Zambia*	50
Zimbabwe*	250

● ●

The first-language countries

Using a tripartite division as a starting point for analysis, we can find English spoken as a first language in over 30 territories (Table 4). Crystal (1997) calculates that world-wide there are a little over 377 million speakers of English as a first language, including creole. It is a figure in line with other recent estimates and the figures generated by the engco model (Table 1, p. 8, see also p. 64).

The second-language areas

In the 19th century, it was common to refer to English as 'the language of administration' for one-third of the world's population. It is interesting to compare this figure with Crystal's present-day estimate (1997) that the aggregated population of all countries in which English has any special status (the total number of people 'exposed to English'), represents around one-third of the world's population. It is not surprising that the figures are similar, since the more populous of the 75 or so countries in which English has special status (Table 5) are former colonies of Britain.

Competence in English among second-language speakers, like that in EFL speakers, varies from native-like fluency to extremely poor, but whereas in EFL areas English is used primarily for communication with speakers from other countries, in an L2 area English is used for internal (intranational) communication.

Areas in which English is used extensively as a second language usually develop a distinct variety of English which reflects other languages used alongside English. Parts of the world where such varieties ('New Englishes') have emerged are the former colonial territories in South Asia, South-east Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Although these local forms of English have their own vitality and dynamic of change, there is often an underlying model of correctness to which formal usage orients, reflecting the variety of English used by the former colonial power. In the majority of countries this is British (Figure 5), with some exceptions such as the Philippines and Liberia, which orient to US English.

The foreign-language areas

The number of people learning English has in recent years risen rapidly. This, in part, reflects changes in public policy, such as lowering the age at which English is taught in schools. Like L2, the EFL category spans a wide range of competence, from barely functional in basic communication to near native fluency. The main distinction between a fluent EFL speaker and an L2 speaker depends on whether English is used within the speaker's community (country, family) and thus forms
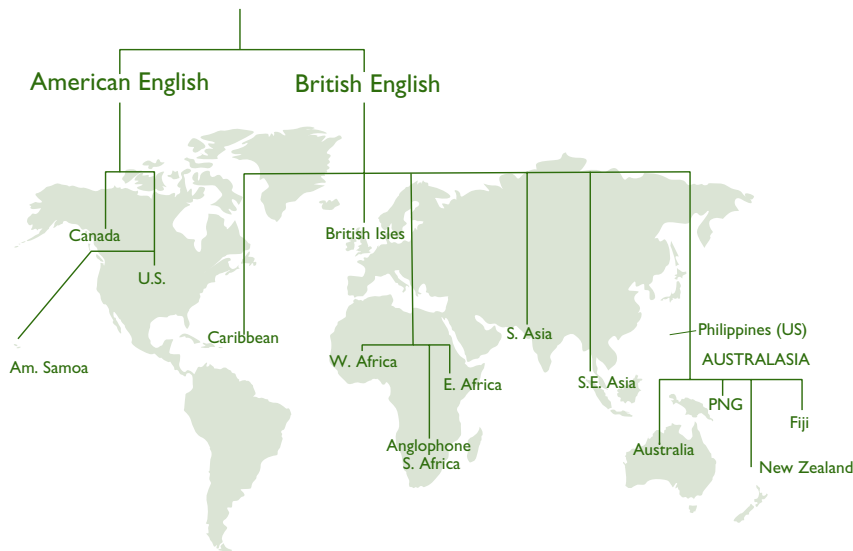

Figure 5 The branches of world English

part of the speaker's identity repertoire. In the EFL world there is, by definition, no local model of English, though speakers' English accents and patterns of error may reflect characteristics of their first language.

Language shift

In many parts of the world there are ongoing shifts in the status of English. These are largely undocumented and unquantified, but will represent a significant factor in the global future of the language. In those countries listed in Table 6, the use of English for intranational communication is greatly increasing (such as in professional discourse or higher education). These countries can be regarded as in the process of shifting towards L2 status. In existing L2 areas, a slight increase in the proportion of the population speaking English (for example, in India, Pakistan, Nigeria and the Philippines), would significantly increase the global total of secondlanguage speakers.

In many L2 areas, there is a trend for professional and middle classes who are bilingual in English (a rapidly growing social group in developing countries) to adopt English as the language of the home. English is thus acquiring new first-language speakers outside the traditional 'native-speaking' countries. Yet the number of new second-language speakers probably greatly offsets the children in L2 families who grow up as first-language speakers – a trend shown graphically in Figure 4.

Argentina
Belgium
Costa Rica
Denmark
Ethiopia
Honduras
Lebanon
Myanmar (Burma)
Nepal
Netherlands
Nicaragua
Norway
Panama
Somalia
Sudan
Surinam
Sweden
Switzerland
United Arab Emirates

Table 6 Countries in transition from EFL to L2 status

Table 5 (*below*)
Second-language speakers of English (in thousands) (*indicates a larger number of L1 English speakers)

Australia*	2,084	Hong Kong	1,860	Nepal	5,927	Solomon Is	135
Bahamas*	25	India	37,000	New Zealand*	150	South Africa	10,000
Bangladesh	3,100	Irish Republic*	190	Nigeria	43,000	Sri Lanka	1,850
Belize*	30	Jamaica*	50	Northern Marianas	50	Surinam	150
Bhutan	60	Kenya	2,576	Pakistan	16,000	Swaziland	40
Botswana	620	Kiribati	20	Palau	16,300	Tanzania	3,000
Brunei	104	Lesotho	488	Papua New Guinea	28,000	Tonga	30
Cameroon	6,600	Liberia	2,000	Philippines	36,400	Tuvulu	600
Canada*	6,000	Malawi	517	Puerto Rico	1,746	Uganda	2,000
Cook Is	2	Malaysia	5,984	Rwanda	24	UK*	1,100
Dominica	12	Malta	86	St Lucia*	22	US*	30,000
Fiji	160	Marshall Is	28	Samoa (American)	56	US Virgin Is*	10
Gambia	33	Mauritius	167	Samoa (Western)	86	Vanuatu	160
Ghana	1,153	Micronesia	15	Seychelles	11	Zambia	1,000
Guam	92	Namibia	300	Sierra Leone	3,830	Zimbabwe	3,300
Guyana*	30	Nauru	9,400	Singapore	1,046		

Language hierarchies

Languages are not equal in political or social status, particularly in multilingual contexts. How does English relate to other languages in a multilingual speaker's repertoire? Why does someone use English rather than a local language? What characteristic patterns are there in the use of English by non-native speakers?

English and other languages

A large number of native speakers is probably a prerequisite for a language of wider communication, for these speakers create a range of cultural resources (works of literature, films, news broadcasts) and pedagogic materials (grammars, dictionaries, classroom materials) and provide opportunities for engaging in interactions which require knowledge of the language.

But a full understanding of the role of English in a world where the majority of its speakers are not first-language speakers requires an understanding of how English relates to the other languages which are used alongside it. The European concept of bilingualism reflects an idea that each language has a natural geographical 'home' and that a bilingual speaker is therefore someone who can converse with monolingual speakers from more than one country. The ideal bilingual speaker is thus imagined to be someone who is like a monolingual in two languages at once. But many of the world's bilingual or multilingual speakers interact with other multilinguals and use each of their languages for different purposes: English is not used simply as a 'default' language because it is the only language shared with another speaker; it is often used because it is culturally regarded as the appropriate language for a particular communicative context.

Languages in multilingual areas are often hierarchically ordered in status. To the extent that such relationships are institutionalised, the hierarchy can be thought of as applying to countries as much as to the repertoire of individual speakers. Shown schematically in Figure 6 is a language hierarchy for India, a complex multilingual area where nearly 200 languages exist with differing status. At the pyramid base are languages used within the family and for interactions with close friends. Such languages tend to be geographically based (or used by migrant communities) and are the first languages learned by children. Higher up the pyramid are languages which are found in more formal and public domains and which
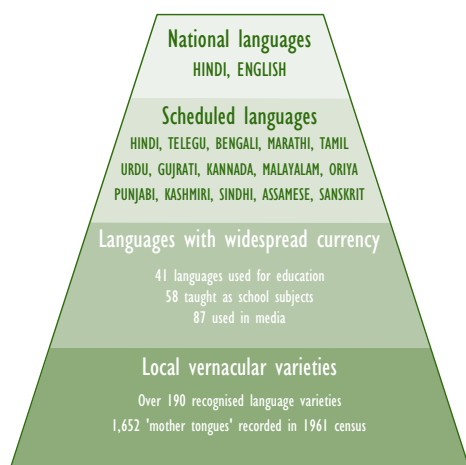
have greater territorial 'reach'. For example, in the second layer from the base will be languages which in India form the medium of primary education, newspapers, radio broadcasts and local commerce. Above these in the hierarchy will be languages used in official administration, secondary education and so on to the highest level, in which will be found the languages of wider and international communication. The taper of the pyramid reflects the fact that fewer language varieties occupy this position: greatest linguistic diversity is found at the base amongst vernacular languages. Indeed, very few of the world's languages are used for official administration and in other public forums.

Not all speakers will be fluent in language varieties at the higher levels. The normal pattern of acquisition will begin with those languages at the base. Many of the world's population never require the use of varieties at the uppermost layer because they never find themselves in the communicative position which requires such language. For example, an Indian from the state of Kerala whose mother tongue is a tribal language may also speak Tulu (2 million speakers) and the state language Malayalam (33 million), or the neighbouring state language of Kannada (44 million). If they know any Hindi or English, it is likely to be their fourth or fifth language. However, more and more people in the world will learn languages in the uppermost layer as a result of improved education and changing patterns of communication in the world.

Although a simple pyramid figure captures something of the hierarchical relationship between language varieties, it perhaps suggests too neat a pattern of language use. For the majority of the world's population, a particular language will exist at more than one level (for example, serve as a public language as well as a language in the family), though where a language serves different communicative functions in this way it usually also takes a variety of forms. For example, the classic sociolinguistic pyramid used to describe British English (Trudgill, 1974, p. 41) shows a similarly layered structure in which vernacular, informal varieties, often with strong geographical basis, exist at the lowest layer, whilst at the apex is a standard form of English, showing little regional variation and used for public and formal communication. All speakers can be expected to modify their language to suit the communicative situation; even a monolingual English speaker will adapt accent, vocabulary, grammar and rhetorical form to suit the context.

English and code-switching

Where English has a place alongside other languages in a local language hierarchy, speakers will normally use their first language in different contexts from those in which they use English. Whereas the first language may be a sign of solidarity or intimacy, English, in many bilingual situations, carries overtones of social distance, formality or officialdom. Where two speakers know both languages, they may switch between the two as part of a negotiation of their relationship. Indeed, they may switch between languages within a single sentence. In the following example a young job seeker comes into the manager's office in a Nairobi business. The young man begins in English, but the manager insists on using Swahili, 'thus denying the young man's negotiation of the higher status associated with English' (Myers-Scotton, 1989, p. 339). Bilingual speakers use code-switching as a communicative resource, varying the mix

National languages
HINDI, ENGLISH

Scheduled languages
HINDI, TELEGU, BENGALI, MARATHI, TAMIL
URDU, GUJRATI, KANNADA, MALAYALAM, ORIYA
PUNJABI, KASHMIRI, SINDHI, ASSAMESE, SANSKRIT

Languages with widespread currency
41 languages used for education
58 taught as school subjects
87 used in media

Local vernacular varieties
Over 190 recognised language varieties
1,652 'mother tongues' recorded in 1961 census

Figure 6 A language hierarchy for India

of the two languages, for example, Swahili and English, in a way which only a member of the same speech community can fully understand.

Young man: Mr Muchuki has sent me to you about the job you put in the paper.

Manager: *Ulituma barua ya* application? [DID YOU SEND A LETTER OF APPLICATION?]

Young man: Yes, I did. But he asked me to come to see you today.

Manager: *Ikiwa ulituma barua, nenda ungojee majibu. Tutakuita ufike kwa* interview *siku itakapofika.* [IF YOU'VE WRITTEN A LETTER, THEN GO AND WAIT FOR A RESPONSE. WE WILL CALL YOU FOR AN INTERVIEW WHEN THE LETTER ARRIVES]

Leo sina la suma kuliko hayo. [TODAY I HAVEN'T ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY]

Young man: *Asante. Nitangoja majibu.* [THANK YOU. I WILL WAIT FOR THE RESPONSE]

One of the global trends we identify later is the development of world regions composed of adjacent countries with strong cultural, economic and political ties. As such regions develop, so it is likely that new regional language hierarchies will appear. The European Union, for example, may be in the process of becoming a single geolinguistic region like India (Figure 7). A survey in 1995 by the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages reported that 42% of EU citizens could communicate in English, 31% in German and 29% in French (cited in Crystal, 1997). Surveys of European satellite TV audiences (p. 46) confirm the widespread understanding of English – over 70% of viewers claim they can follow the news in English and over 40% could do so in French or German. (Sysfret, 1997, p. 37).

It is possible to conceptualise a world hierarchy, like that outlined for Europe or India, (Figure 8), in which English and French are at the apex, with the position of French declining and English becoming more clearly the global lingua franca. Later, we argue that English is also steadily 'colonising' lower layers in this hierarchy for many of the world's speakers, whereas the majority of the world's languages – found at present only at the base – are likely to become extinct.
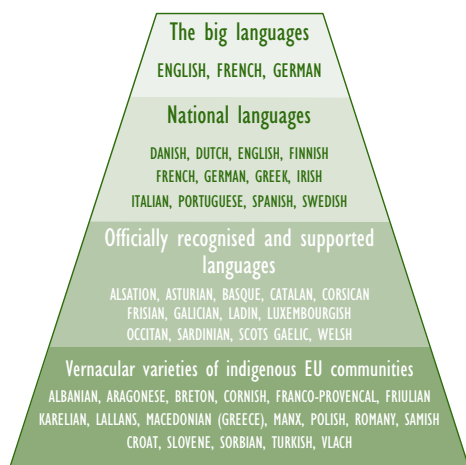
Non-native speaker interactions

English increasingly acts as a lingua franca between non-native speakers. For example, if a German sales manager conducts business in China, English is likely to be used. Little research has been carried out on such interactions, but they are likely to have characteristic features, reflecting complex patterns of politeness and strategies for negotiating meaning cross-culturally. Firth (1996), for example, analysed international telephone calls involving two Danish trading companies and identified several conversational strategies. The exchange below, between a Dane (H) and a Syrian (B), shows one strategy which he termed 'let it pass' – where one person does not understand what has been said, but delays asking for elucidation in the hope that the meaning will emerge as talk progresses or else become redundant.

B: So I told him not to send the cheese after the blowing in the customs. We don't want the order after the cheese is blowing.

H: I see, yes.

B: So I don't know what we can do with the order now. What do you think we should do with this all blowing, Mr Hansen?

H: I'm not uh (pause). *Blowing?* What is this, too big or what?

B: No, the cheese is bad Mr Hansen. It is like fermenting in the customs' cool rooms.

H: Ah, it's gone off!

B: Yes, it's gone off.

Experienced users of English as a foreign language may acquire communicative skills which are different from those of native speakers, reflecting the more hazardous contexts of communication in which they routinely find themselves. However, the strategies employed by non-native speakers remains an under-researched area of English usage, despite the fact that there may already be more people who speak English as a foreign language than the combined totals of those who speak it as a first and second language.
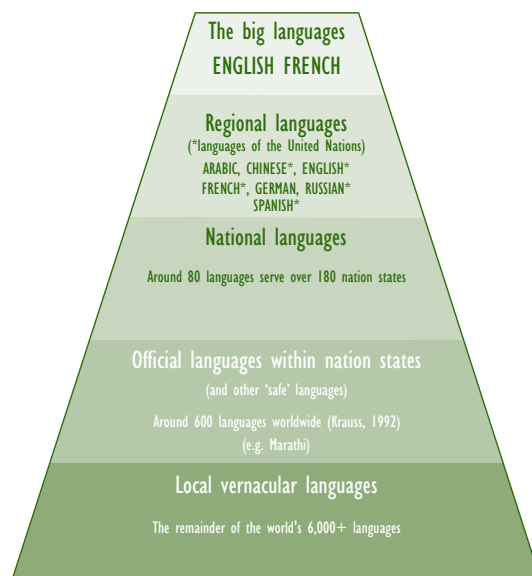
The big languages
ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN

National languages
DANISH, DUTCH, ENGLISH, FINNISH FRENCH, GERMAN, GREEK, IRISH ITALIAN, PORTUGUESE, SPANISH, SWEDISH

Officially recognised and supported languages
ALSATION, ASTURIAN, BASQUE, CATALAN, CORSICAN FRISIAN, GALICIAN, LADIN, LUXEMBOURGISH OCCITAN, SARDINIAN, SCOTS GAELIC, WELSH

Vernacular varieties of indigenous EU communities
ALBANIAN, ARAGONESE, BRETON, CORNISH, FRANCO-PROVENCAL, FRIULIAN KARELIAN, LALLANS, MACEDONIAN (GREECE), MANX, POLISH, ROMANY, SAMISH CROAT, SLOVENE, SORBIAN, TURKISH, VLACH

Figure 7 A language hierarchy for the European Union

The big languages
ENGLISH FRENCH

Regional languages
(*languages of the United Nations)
ARABIC, CHINESE*, ENGLISH* FRENCH*, GERMAN, RUSSIAN* SPANISH*

National languages
Around 80 languages serve over 180 nation states

Official languages within nation states
(and other 'safe' languages)
Around 600 languages worldwide (Krauss, 1992) (e.g. Marathi)

Local vernacular languages
The remainder of the world's 6,000+ languages

Figure 8 The world language hierarchy

Summary

● ●

1 The development of the language

The English language has changed substantially in vocabulary and grammatical form – often as a result of contact with other languages. This has created a hybrid language; vocabulary has been borrowed from many sources and grammatical structure has changed through contact with other languages. This may cause problems for learners, but it also means that speakers of many other languages can recognise features which are not too dissimilar to characteristics of their own language. Although the structural properties of English have not hindered the spread of English, the spread of the language globally cannot be attributed to intrinsic linguistic qualities.

2 The spread of English

There have been two main historical mechanisms for the spread of English. First was the colonial expansion of Britain which resulted in settlements of English speakers in many parts of the world. This has provided a diasporic base for the language – which is probably a key factor in the adoption of a language as a lingua franca. In the 20th century, the role of the US has been more important than that of Britain and has helped ensure that the language is not only at the forefront of scientific and technical knowledge, but also leads consumer culture.

3 English and other languages

The majority of speakers of English already speak more than one language. An important community for the future development of English in the world is the 'outer circle' of those who speak it as a second language. English often plays a special role in their lives and the fate of English in the world is likely to be closely connected to how this role develops in future. English, for example, is becoming used by many EFL and L2 speakers for a wider range of communicative functions. This process, by which English 'colonises' the lower layers of the language hierarchy in many countries, means that English may take over some of the functions currently served by other languages in the construction of social identity and the creation and maintenance of social relationships.

4 A single, European, linguistic area

Western Europe is beginning to form a single multilingual area, rather like India, where languages are hierarchically related in status. As in India, there may be many who are monolingual in a regional language, but those who speak one of the 'big' languages will have better access to material success. Other world regions may develop in a similar way. This book focuses particularly on emergent trends in Asia, but significant developments are likely to occur also in the Americas, in Russia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

References

Ammon, U. (1995) To what extent is German an international language? In P. Stevenson (ed) *The German Language and the Real World: sociolinguistic, cultural and pragmatic perspectives on contemporary German*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Crystal, D. (1995) *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eco, U. (1995) *The Search for the Perfect Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Firth, A. (1996) 'Lingua Franca' English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, April.

Gibbs, W.W. (1995) Lost science in the third world. *Scientific American*, August, pp. 76–83.

Grimes, B.F. (1996) (ed) *Ethnologue: languages of the world*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Hagen, S. (1993) (ed) *Languages in European Business: a regional survey of small and medium-sized companies*. London: CILT.

Hesselberg-Møller, N. (1988) *Eksport og uddannelse*. Copenhagen: Industrirådet.

Kachru, B.B. (1985) Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson (eds) *English in the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Krauss, M. (1992) The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 7–9

Large, A. (1985) *The Artificial Language Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Leith, D. (1996) English – colonial to postcolonial. In D. Graddol, D. Leith and J. Swann (eds) *English: history, diversity and change*. London: Routledge.

McArthur, T. (1992) (ed) *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McArthur, T. (1996) English in the world and in Europe. In R. Hartmann (ed) *The English Language in Europe*. Oxford: Intellect.

Myers-Scotton, C. (1989) Code-switching with English: types of switching, types of communities. *World Englishes*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 333–46.

Skudlik, S. (1992) The status of German as a language of science and the importance of the English language for German-speaking scientists. In U. Ammon and M. Hellinger (eds) *Status Change of Languages*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Swinburne, J.K. (1983) The use of English as an international language of science: a study of the publications and views of a group of French scientists. *The Incorporated Linguist*, vol. 22, pp. 129–32.

Steiner, G. (1975) *After Babel: aspects of language and translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strevens, P. (1992) English as an international language. In B.B. Kachru (ed) *The Other Tongue: English across cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Sysfret, T. (1997) Trend setters. *Cable and Satellite Europe*, January, pp. 34–7

Trudgill, P. (1974) *Sociolinguistics: an introduction*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Viereck, W. (1996) English in Europe: its nativisation and use as a lingua franca, with special reference to German-speaking countries. In R. Hartmann (ed) *The English Language in Europe*. Oxford: Intellect.

Webster, N. (1789) An essay on the necessity, advantages and practicability of reforming the mode of spelling, and of rendering the orthography of words correspondent to the pronunciation. Appendix to Dissertations on the English Language. Extracts reprinted in T. Crowley (ed) *Proper English: readings in language, history and cultural identity*. London: Routledge.

Forecasting

2

● **Futurology**

Futurology is one of the oldest of professions, judged with scepticism and awe in equal measure. Although facts and figures are an important ingredient in forecasting, they need to be interpreted with care. On these pages we outline some basic features of language change and describe common problems with using statistics.

● **Making sense of trends**

One of the key skills in forecasting is being able to recognise an underlying trend and to understand how it might develop in the future. Linguistic and social change rarely happen at a steady and predictable rate. Here we discuss various hazards associated with the interpretation of trend data using examples relevant to the English language.

● **Predictability or chaos?**

The use of English worldwide can be regarded as a 'complex system' in which many factors interact in ways that are not easily predictable. But recent advances in modelling the behaviour of complex systems – such as the weather – could help us understand what patterns may emerge in the global use of English.

● **Scenario planning**

How do forecasters in large companies cope with the uncertainty that the future holds? Can the methods they employ be applied to matters of culture and language as easily as to the price of oil? Scenario building is one methodology used by strategists to put together known facts with imaginative ideas about the future.

History is littered with failures of prediction and there is no reason to believe that attempts to predict precisely what will happen to the English language will fare any better.

It is, however, possible to understand something of the ways in which languages evolve and how individual speakers adapt their patterns of language use. This gives us some useful indicators as to the conditions under which change occurs, which kinds of change are likely and which unlikely, the reasons why linguistic change happen and the timescales that different kinds of change require.

But many factors affecting the use of languages cannot be predicted easily. Major upheavals – war, civil revolution and the breakup of nation states – can cause languages to take unexpected directions, as can the vagaries of fashion amongst the global elite. Most people have opinions, ambitions and anxieties about the future, but few people know how to plan strategically for such unpredictable events.

Strategic planning is not the same as prediction. This section provides a guide to some of the techniques used by strategists and planners to create 'future-proof' models and shows how they can be applied to aspects of language change and global trends in the use of the English language.

The section begins with the hazards of extrapolating from current data, examines what insights chaos theory – used for weather forecasting – has provided into the behaviour of complex systems and ends with a discussion of the scenario-building techniques used by transnational companies to ensure their strategic decisions on investment and management stay robust against a range of possible futures.

Futurology

Futurology is one of the oldest of professions, judged with scepticism and awe in equal measure. Although facts and figures are an important ingredient in forecasting, they need to be interpreted with care. On these pages we outline some basic features of language change and describe common problems with using statistics.

Trend spotting

Futurologists inhabit a frontierland between historical facts and guesses about the future. Most of the practical techniques of strategic planning used by large corporations employ some kind of mix of empirical evidence together with the insight and judgement borne of practical experience. But getting the mix right is an extremely difficult task. Identifying trends even in the present can be remarkably problematic. And although statistical information is a primary resource for the futurologist, anyone trying to forecast the future of English will encounter problems in locating and using statistics associated with relevant worldwide trend data (*opposite*).

English in the future, as in the past, will be subject to three types of change. First, although different speakers, communities or communicative domains may be affected differently, there will be changes to the *language* itself. Certainly in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, but also in the range of text types and genres which employ English. Second, there will be changes in *status*. English may acquire a different meaning and pattern of usage among non-native speakers, or be used for a wider range of social functions. Third, English will be affected by *quantitative* changes, such as numbers of speakers, the proportion of the world's scientific journals published in English, or the extent to which the English language is used for computer-based communication.

Listed here are some broad principles of language change. Identifying ways in which various changes are taken up and spread from one community to another may suggest areas where we need to seek further information. While the dynamics of language change are likely to be different within the three communities of English speaker we have already identified – first-language speaker (L1), second-language speaker (L2) and the speaker of English as a foreign language (EFL) – some general patterns can be observed.

How does language change?

- *Some kinds of change occur quickly, others slowly.* Fashions in slang usage among native speakers, or the borrowing of words into another language, can develop in months, not years. But the shift which occurs when a community or family abandons one language and begins to use another as a first language is usually intergenerational. Language shift often needs three generations to take full effect, which means that there may be initial signs now of long-term changes which might take the greater part of another 100 years to fully complete.

- *Individuals act as agents of change as do governments and institutions.* Successful learning of English is known to be closely associated with personal ambition and attributes such as personality type. But language change may also be imposed from outside or it may result from a rational response to a change in circum-

stances. A government policy decision, for example, might change the status of English as the first foreign language taught in schools, or may encourage English as a medium of university education. Or market liberalisation might result in the establishment of joint-venture companies, paying high salaries but requiring English-language skills in their workforce.

- *Innovation in language tends to diffuse through social networks.* It has often been observed that people who interact together on a regular basis, who have common loyalties and identity and who like each other, tend to use language in similar ways. Any change in the patterns of communication or in the structure of social relationships in such networks is likely to lead to a change in language use. The creation of new forms of social network or new patterns of social affiliation can also be expected to alter the way that speech communities are created and maintained. New communications technology, such as the Internet for example, may be encouraging the formation of new kinds of social affiliation and new 'discourse communities'.

- *Language change does not move across geographical territories in a linear fashion.* Linguistic innovations, such as new pronunciations, tend to jump from one urban area to another, across rural areas and across national borders. In this respect they are similar to other changes brought about by social contact through urban settings – such as fashions in clothing, or the adoption of some new kind of consumer hardware. The growth of large cities in Asia will lead to many kinds of social change, including new patterns of language use.

- *Young people are important leaders of change.* There has long been recognised a so-called 'critical period' in early life when children seem able to learn languages easily. But adolescence is perhaps an even more important stage, where young people make the transition to a social life which is largely directed by themselves, when they acquire new social networks and identities and feel the requirement for appropriate language styles. They may take aspects of these identities through to adulthood; others may be transitional teenage phenomena. An understanding of which languages the next generation of teenagers will be speaking and learning is an important step in identifying future trends.

- *Language change may follow change in material circumstances.* Language is often linked to particular social and cultural practices. Rehousing schemes, shifts in employment and increased wealth may all contribute to rapid linguistic change. This particularly contributes to 'language loss' – such as the disuse of Gaelic in north-eastern Scottish fishing communities, or of Aboriginal languages in Australia, in favour of English.

- *Social and geographical mobility cause language change.* People moving, whether as migrant labour to another country, or even within the same country (especially from rural areas to urban ones), take their language with them, but also learn the language used in the new home area. The more mobile a society, the more open it will be to change.

Problems with statistics

1 Statistics rarely provide equivalent data across the countries, sectors and years surveyed. Often, like is not compared with like, or key data is missing from tables.

2 Statistical data is collected primarily by national or international agencies. This means that particular information, for example about flows within transnational corporations (TNCs), either is not collected or is not publicly available.

3 Statistics take time to collect, collate and publish. There is typically a lead time of about three years for the publication of primary UN statistics. There is a further lead time for studies which analyse and interpret such figures. Thus books and scholarly papers published at the end of the 1990s draw on statistics from the beginning of the decade – by the time decision makers read them the figures are a decade out of date. Unfortunately, many key developments affecting the use of English have emerged in the last few years. Take, for example, the growth of the Internet, which seemed to reach a critical mass outside the US only during 1996. Somehow, futurology needs to be informed by an understanding of recent trends, as well as by data collected within a longer timeframe; it needs to be able to identify new trends in the early stages.

4 Statistics are costly and futurologists tend to be under-funded. Elsewhere in this book we document a global shift towards the information society: the world is information rich, but information has become a traded commodity. The World Wide Web, for example, provides a wonderful mechanism for disseminating the most recent data and all the key international agencies possess their own Web sites. But information is now too valuable to give out for free and, increasingly, such agencies are expected to be self-financing if not profit centres: hence the most useful and recent data is sold at market rates. A single report on the demographics of the Internet might sell for $1,500. Since futurology is an eclectic discipline, drawing together information from scattered sources across many sectors, the cost of access to a range of databases can exceed the value of the information gained. Furthermore, those institutions which employ futurology typically do so in order to help develop policy before major funding is committed.

5 Very little comparative data exists for the immediate sphere of our enquiry, the international use of English. Who truly knows how many people are learning English around the world? How could we reach agreement on a method of estimating the proficiency of the millions of casual learners? How can we gather sensible figures of English as a second language in countries where the gathering of statistical information is difficult? How can we apply systematic criteria when patterns of English use are so divergent in a huge variety of contexts? The lack of comparative data means that futurologists have to make their own facts: to put together what is known in an innovative manner and make informed estimates.

6 Interpretation of statistics needs qualitative work. There is a tendency to count that which can be easily counted, but as Peter Schwartz commented in a classic book on strategic planning, 'we know the numbers, we just don't know their meaning' (Schwartz, 1996, p. 118). Establishing and understanding the links between those things which can and have been measured and the use of the English language worldwide, is therefore a matter of qualitative work, theory building and testing. It may be necessary to carry out small-scale studies, such as ethnographic studies of employee behaviour, language audits or focus-group studies of young people. In this way we might better understand the link, for example, between the start-up of joint-venture companies in developing economies and the demand for English, or the relationship between numbers of Internet users in a country and the use of local languages in electronic communities. A great deal of data then becomes usable because we can understand the potential implications of the statistics for the everyday use of English.

● *Languages in contact with each other cause change.* Language contact has long been recognised as a major engine of change; a historical example is that of Danish and English which led to a major shift in the vocabulary and grammar of English. The increasing use of English in many parts of the world affects both local languages and English and is giving rise to new, hybrid language varieties.

● *Changes often occur first in informal and casual language.* Since the majority of such language is spoken, change is rarely documented in the early stages. For similar reasons, language change occurs quickest among first- and second-language users, rather than among speakers of English as a foreign language.

● *New technology gives rise to language change.* Technological innovation may give rise to new modes of communication. The style of written text widely used in electronic mail, for example, seems to share characteristics of spoken language. Technology may also create new patterns of communication, perhaps by providing cheap international telephone links, or it may create new words needed to describe new objects and social practices which arise around their use.

● *The dynamics of L1, L2 and EFL change are very different.* Change in the number of people speaking English as a first language cannot happen rapidly: change in speaker numbers will depend mainly on demographic shifts, but populations in the English-speaking countries are fairly stable. The number of people using English as a second language could change more substantially over a generation or two. The EFL community is potentially the most volatile: major shifts in the number of people learning English around the world could occur quickly – within a decade – as a result of changing public policy in developing countries or a change in public interest.

It will be clear that the key 'drivers' of linguistic change are both social and material in nature. Economic developments, technological innovations, new social networks or demographic shifts are all likely to give rise to language change. We can also see that some kinds of change extend over longer periods of time than others: language shift may take 50–100 years, while a significant change in the number of people learning English as a foreign language can occur within a few years. Certain age groups also play a more important role in instigating and advancing change than others. The complex interaction between these factors means that it is perfectly possible that there will be widespread shifts in the way languages are used in the future.

Making sense of trends

One of the key skills in forecasting is being able to recognise an underlying trend and to understand how it might develop in the future. Linguistic and social change rarely happen at a steady and predictable rate. Here we discuss various hazards associated with the interpretation of trend data using examples relevant to the English language.

Simple projections

The rise of global English was foreseen in the 19th century by many commentators in America and Europe. Indeed, wild speculations began to circulate about the growth of the number of English speakers in the coming century, based on projections of current trends. Bailey (1992) reviews some of these accounts:

> The most extravagant projections were the most satisfying to the anglophone community and, therefore, the most popular. The Swiss botanist Alphonse de Candolle (1806–93) turned his attention to the question in the early 1870s. ...
>
> 'Now, judging by the increase which has taken place in the present century, we may estimate the probable growth of population as follows:
>
> > 'In England it doubles in fifty years; therefore in a century (in 1970) it will be 124,000,000. In the United States, in Canada, in Australia, it doubles in twenty-five; therefore it will be 736,000,000. Probable total of the English speaking race in 1970, 860,000,000.'

(Bailey, 1992, p. 111)

As each speculation quickly became 'fact', ever larger figures appeared, until projections of English speakers for the year 2000 exceeded a billion. The reality (Table 4, p. 10) is that there are only about 375 million native speakers of English. Clearly, the 19th century futurologists were not only misguided in their projections of native speakers, they also failed to foresee that the growth in second- and foreign-language speakers would be a much more important phenomenon.

When assessing what will happen next, we often assume that what is happening now will simply continue. Thus the 19th century commentators imagined that growth in the number of native speakers would follow a straight-line progre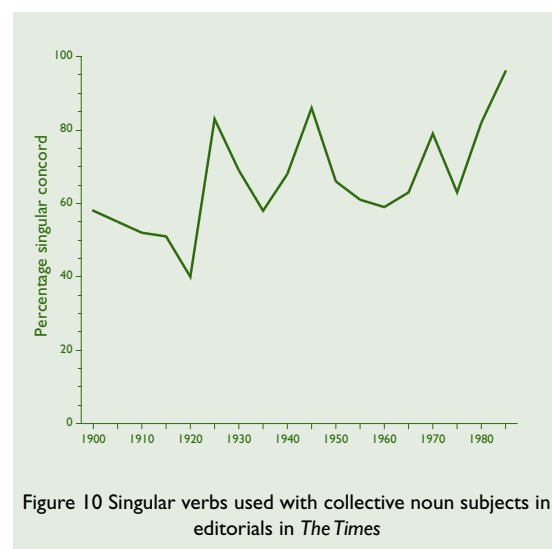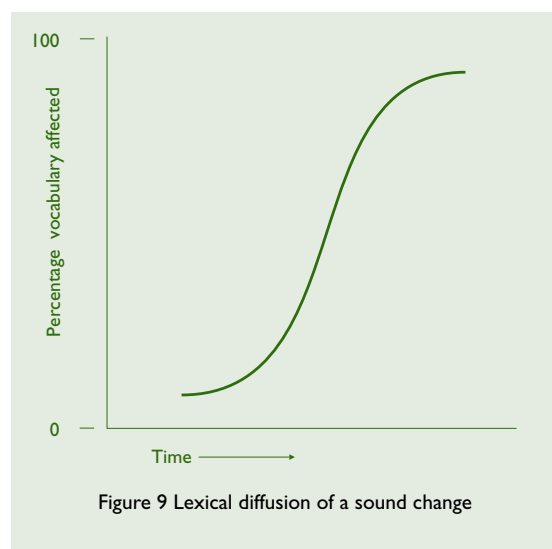ssion. But most social changes do not have a linear pattern. Rather, a change begins slowly, gathers speed and then slows down. If you graphed such a change against time, you would get an S-shaped curve. Such a curve can represent changes within a language, say of pronunciation, as well as larger scale changes such as language shift.

As an example of change within a language, Chambers and Trudgill (1980) show how in the north of England many speakers still pronounce words like 'must' and 'butter' with a [ʊ] sound, not dissimilar to the general pronunciation in Shakespeare's day. Gradually, such speakers are adopting the RP pronunciation [ʌ]. Not all words are immediately affected, however. The change diffuses through the vocabulary, following an S-curve pattern. Figure 9 shows the way a new pronunciation moves through the English vocabulary, picking up speed as the majority of words become pronounced in the new way and then slowing down when only a few, apparently more resistant words remain.

The S-curve applies as much to grammatical change as to change in pronunciation. For example, English progressive verb forms – such as *I am coming* as opposed to *I come* – began to develop slowly in Old English, gathered speed in Shakespeare's time and are now the norm. Although this change in usage is levelling off, the trend is still gradually extending to other kinds of verb. Aitchison notes that mental-process verbs such as 'know' and 'want' are also beginning to be used in the progressive form, as in utterances such as 'we're certainly *hoping* they'll be *wanting* to do it again' (Aitchison, 1991, p. 100). This example demonstrates how difficult it is sometimes to recognise that a trend is still in progress when it is in the slow sections of the curve.

Recognising trends

By the time we notice a change is in progress, it is usually in its middle segment – the period of most rapid change. Then it is easy to assume that the trend will continue indefinitely at the same rate. But the S-curve model suggests the assumption may be mistaken, for a rapid change may shortly slow up. Some changes have a natural end point – when everyone who can change has done so, when market penetration approaches 100% and so on. But the end point in many cases is less certain and dependent on a complex interaction of factors. For example, an increase in numbers of children learning

Figure 9 Lexical diffusion of a sound change

Figure 10 Singular verbs used with collective noun subjects in editorials in *The Times*

English at school is limited ultimately by the size of the global school population. But in practice the limits are lower; many countries lack qualified teachers or other resources to make the teaching of English in primary schools effective. However, if new methods of language teaching were developed, or if there were a shift in public-sector resources, then the end point would move and a new S-shaped trajectory become established.

A futurologist ideally wishes to identify changes at the beginning, but because so many changes start slowly, it is difficult to know whether we are at the beginning of an S-curve or just experiencing an insignificant, temporary 'blip'. It also means that if one is looking for evidence of a particular change (such as 'the economy is picking up', or 'house prices are rising again') then there will be a tendency to 'recognise' the start of the trend prematurely, whenever a temporary movement occurs in the expected direction. But the start of unexpected changes are likely to go unnoticed.

Long-term trends are rarely as consistent as Figure 9 suggests: a smooth progression uninterrupted by the interfering variables of real life. Figure 10 shows a 20th century change in the use of singular verbs where the subject is a collective noun. Many writers in standard English are in doubt as to whether they should write sentences such as 'The team *was* in good form' or 'The team *were* in good form'. A study reported by Bauer (1994, p. 63) shows that writers of editorials in *The Times* have been inconsistent. If you had started collecting data in 1945, you would probably have assumed that the ongoing trend would continue – in this case towards plural verbs with subjects such as 'government', or 'team'. If you collected data over a longer period you would have found an underlying increase in the use of singular verbs with collective noun subjects. The many fluctuations which move in the opposite direction were caused, no doubt, by the fact that different writers were responsible for the texts studied. Such 'noisy' data is common: it means that trend data needs to be collected over a longer period of time and then averaged. This should alert the cautious futurologist to the fact that local perturbations may disguise a general trend.

When several trends interact

As we can see, there are two common reasons for mistaken forecasting: first, extrapolating in a linear fashion from trend data gathered during the period of most rapid change; second, failing to recognise an underlying trend because of local or temporary variation. A third common error arises when it is assumed that the trend which is currently most visible will remain the dominant factor in the future.

Figure 11 shows schematically the growth in Internet usage in the US and elsewhere in the world. What starts as the uppermost curve shows users in the US, where the Internet started and where growth during the 1990s was quickest. But the second, underlying curve shows the likely growth elsewhere in the world, particularly in Europe and Asia. If we examine the data in 1997, at first sight it appears that Internet usage is much higher in the US and that growth here is quickest. By implication, English would appear to be the most dominant language of the Internet. But the first trend will not continue to be the main determinant. Internet usage began later in Europe and elsewhere in the world and is now rapidly gathering pace. By the year 2000, it is likely that users in the US will be outnumbered by users elsewhere. In Europe, Germany is expected to be the largest Internet user. In other words, the proportion of the global Internet population based in the US is expected to increase during 1997, but then begin to fall.

Cyclical patterns

Sometimes, trends change direction in a cyclical but predictable way. For example, many thousands of young people visit Britain each year to enrol on English language courses – a demand that rises over summer. Seasonal cycles like this must be taken into account when assessing underlying trends (Figure 12). It may be that other factors with cyclical patterns also vary trend data – the regular upturns and downturns in the economy of any country known as the 'business cycle'. During a recession, there will be fewer jobs in the tourist industry or less opportunity for the kind of casual job that language students often require to support themselves whilst taking courses.

Identifying trends is therefore of great help to planners and strategists, but generally they need to be interpreted with awareness and caution. The use of historical trend data may be most helpful when combined with other approaches, which we examine next.
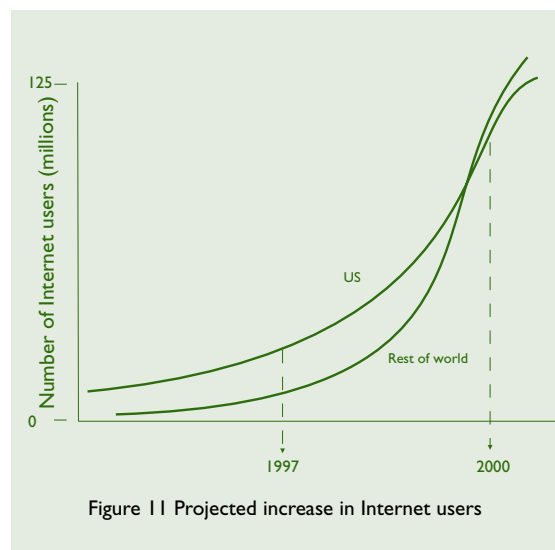
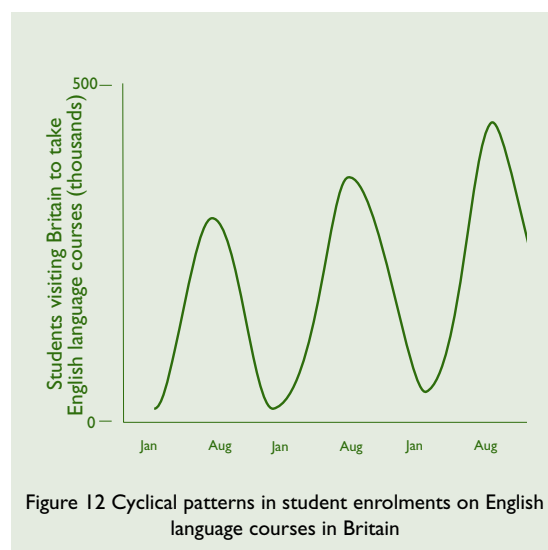Figure 11 Projected increase in Internet users

Figure 12 Cyclical patterns in student enrolments on English language courses in Britain

Predictability or chaos?

The use of English worldwide can be regarded as a 'complex system' in which many factors interact in ways that are not easily predictable. But recent advances in modelling the behaviour of complex systems – such as the weather – could help us understand what patterns may emerge in the global use of English.

Using forecasting models

How do we assess such complex trends as are involved in the study, use and evolution of English worldwide? The traditional approach to forecasting requires all significant factors to be identified. A mathematical model is then constructed which shows how these influence each other and produce the behaviour which is of interest. Future demand for electric power, for example, is usually forecast in this way (*below*).

Such methods might be applied to forecasting the demand for English which is, after all, a little like electricity consumption in the way that demand is related to a variety of economic and cultural factors. Each 'driver' of English would be identified, the reasons why it led to demand for English understood and its own future behaviour modelled. Indeed, such forecasting techniques – based on demographic models which predict how many children will be living where – are used by governments to anticipate the future need for teachers.

We draw on two forecasting models in this book to analyse the future of English. The first, which we refer to as the 'Hooke model', was devised by the Australian economist Gus Hooke. The model provides long-term forecasts of the global economy, including the education and training sector. It also provides projections of the demand for different languages in education through to the year 2050.

The second forecasting model, the 'engco model' (see p. 64) has been constructed by The English Company (UK) Ltd to provide predictions of the global 'influence' of key languages, such as English, Spanish and Mandarin. Just as the electricity example requires data from a weather forecasting model, so the Hooke and engco models require input data from demographic and economic forecasts in order to predict demand for languages. The Hooke model takes account of environmental development, technical progress and technology transfer. The engco model draws on UN demographic projections and a model for regional language shift.

Forecasting L1 and L2 speakers

Of three linguistic communities which we identified earlier (first language, second language and EFL, p. 10), it is the first-language community which is most easily forecast. Two main factors need to be considered: future patterns of language shift and demographic trends – including birth rate, migration and so on. Figure 14 shows the projections made by the engco model for young speakers of Malay in order to assess the likely role of the language in South-east Asia in the 21st century. The 'low' line shows projections based on UN population forecasts. The 'high' line includes potential language shift during this period (both from the many smaller languages spoken in the region, but also from Javanese). The uppermost line shows, for comparison, the demographic projections for young English speakers globally. This line does not include any allowance for language shift which is much more difficult to estimate for English than for Malay because of the number of countries involved. It does, however, show how the demographic curve for English is surprisingly 'bumpy', as baby boomers themselves have children.

Forecasting the use of a second language is a similar, but more complex process, more dependent on accurate forecasting of language shift.

Forecasting EFL speakers

It is, however, the EFL community which will be of most interest to many readers of this book. More complex forecasting models, along the lines of the electricity model, might be constructed to predict ELT demand in certain sectors. For example, demand for the 'Business English Certificate' increased in Central China in the mid 1990s. A forecasting model which took into account the long-term plans to make the city of Wuhan a focus of industrial development, based around joint-venture companies, might have been able to predict demand for different kinds of vocationally oriented English courses. The development of such complex forecasting models does help identify the key variables and bring together relevant baseline statistics, but there is reason to believe that a forecasting model is not the best approach to understanding future EFL demand around the world.

The limits of deterministic models

There is a strong argument against attempting forecasts in a sphere of life in which cultural and political factors

Forecasting electricity demand

Electricity generating companies need to forecast demand for power, both in the short and long term. The pattern of power consumption is an uneven one, but it contains many cyclical patterns such as a daily cycle (night/day), a weekly cycle (weekend/weekday) and an annual
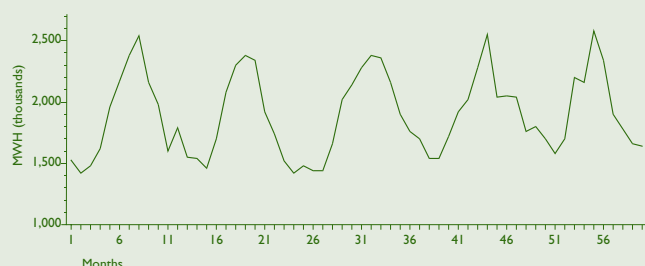
cycle (winter/summer) (*below left*). Superimposed on these may be a long-term trend for increased consumption, reflecting new housing or industrial development, or short-term fluctuations – for example, when in Britain there is a rush to switch on an electric kettle during an advertising break in a popular TV programme. A forecasting model would thus need to take into account a huge number of variables related to the physical environment, the economic cycle, cultural and demographic factors. Separate forecasting models are then required to provide the data in each area known to affect demand for power: weather forecasts would indicate temperature trends, TV schedules would indicate when the advertising breaks were due and so on. The complexity of the operation – not to say the hazards in using data which are already the output from another, possibly inaccurate, model – can be appreciated. And, having built the model, it might apply only to conditions in one region. In Britain, for example, high temperatures decrease consumption of electricity: there is no need for heating. In Saudi Arabia high temperatures lead to an increase: people switch on the air conditioning.

Figure 13 Monthly electricity consumption in Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia 1986–90 (after Al-Zayer and Al-Ibrahim, 1996)

● ●

are so salient. A forecasting model suggests that patterns of English language usage will be determined by economic and technological developments which can be measured and reduced to numbers. But of course, English is used by people and institutions and is partly regulated by governments. Real-life decisions are taken for a variety of reasons. They are driven not simply by instrumental motives such as economic improvement, but also by less tangible, cultural and political processes, such as those connected with the construction of personal and national identities.

Predictability would rely, at the very least, on individuals and institutions behaving in 'rational' ways to changed material circumstances and continuing to experience the same needs and motives and seeking the same goals. This cannot be relied upon in the 21st century.

The 'rationality' of the rush to English for economic reasons is also far from uncontested: a variety of cultural and political movements exist around the world promoting views which are directly or indirectly 'anti-English'; other regional languages may gain in political importance to national governments as patterns of trade and political alliances change; there is widely believed to be a changing attitude in the world's public towards decisions based on concerns with quality of life rather than simple financial benefit. It may be that, in the longer term, an alternative logic will guide people's responses to economic and technological change. We explore this idea at the end of the book.

A world in chaos

Forecasting is thus best suited to mechanistic systems where certain 'driving forces', such as economic modernisation, are taken to have a predictable effect on a 'dependent variable', such as the demand for English. But the 'system' – which interrelates language use with cultural, political, economic and technological factors – is not, as we have seen, a mechanistic one: it may display some of the characteristics of what has become known as a 'complex system'.

The mathematical approach used to model such complex systems is known as 'chaos theory'. Chaos theory can help in forecasting the future of English in several ways. First, it provides a conceptual metaphor for the 'behaviour' of English as a complex system – as the outcome of many different effects, each of which could be modelled, but whose complex interactions make prediction unreliable. One of the first applications of chaos theory was in weather forecasting and this provides a useful analogy for English. As Roger Bowers, addressing an English 2000 conference in Beijing (as Assistant Director-General of the British Council), suggested:

> It is like one of those weather maps that we see on our televisions of the globe as viewed from above the earth's atmosphere – with great swathes of cloud sweeping and swirling around continents and across oceans. And here we are at the epicentre of two such systems – English spreading across the world on a tide of functionality, Chinese on a tide of common culture and ethnicity. (Bowers, 1996, p. 1)

Chaos theory tells us that, as in weather forecasting, it may be possible to make short-term general predictions with some success, but predictions of precise local conditions or long-term forecasts are likely to go badly wrong.

But the system that spreads English usage around the world is not entirely a 'chaotic' one – the situation is in

Chaos theory

One of the central insights of chaos theory is that complex behaviour can result from the interaction of simple forces. For example, the forces which act on a table-tennis ball and which determine the direction of movement are relatively simple and can be modelled. But when a number of balls are put together, so that they bounce off each other, the result is sufficiently unpredictable as to form the basis for choosing the numbers in the British national lottery.

Chaos theory also explains why very small influences can sometimes give rise to large effects. The classic but somewhat fanciful metaphor is that of a butterfly which flaps its wings in the Amazon and triggers a hurricane in the Pacific. In both cases, the behaviour of the system is counter-intuitive: most people imagine that if we understand basic mechanisms we should be able to predict the overall behaviour of the system. We also feel a small force should have a smaller effect than a large one. Chaos theory suggests that both intuitions can be wrong.

some ways worse. Just as it would be foolish to regard it as being a well-governed, mechanistic system, amenable to traditional forecasting techniques, so it would be equally foolish to imagine it is a wholly random affair. As a recent futurological analysis of social behaviour in Europe suggests:

> The complex systems and worlds which are coming under the spotlight share the unpredictability of chaotic systems, but also demonstrate self-organisation, evolutionary innovation, creativity, and, as a result, far-from-equilibrium behaviour. Such characteristics mean that complex systems – or worlds – are intrinsically uncertain and unplannable. (Elkington and Trisoglio, 1996, p. 764)

As it is difficult to predict exactly what will happen when a prevailing wind enters a local landscape, meets a variety of obstructions and is channelled down valleys and around buildings, so there is a similar global-local dynamic with the spread of English. There may appear to be a prevailing trend, but a country's cultural, economic, political and linguistic conditions provide a local human-built landscape across which winds of change must flow. Thus there is a need for an understanding of the dynamics of the overall system, but also a knowledge and understanding of local conditions.

Perhaps the most important lesson provided by the study of complex systems is the finding that apparently stable states or trends can, without much warning, become unstable. An apparently unstoppable trend towards global English usage could change direction in the future as the consequence of some surprisingly minor event.
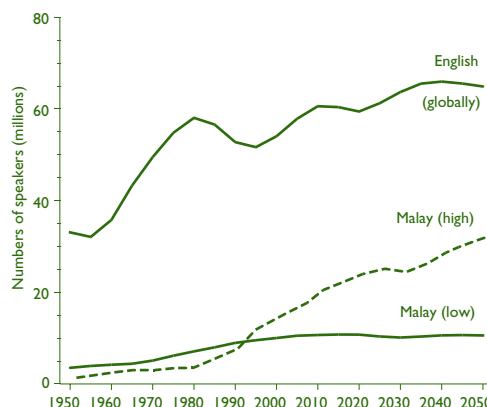
Figure 14 Young native speakers (aged 15–24) of English and Malay, 1950–2050, from the engco model

The 'Malay low' line is the low estimate for Malay, based simply on population change. The 'high' line is the higher estimate obtained by taking likely language shift into account. The line for English does not incorporate language shift

Scenario planning

●

How do forecasters in large companies cope with the uncertainty that the future holds? Can the methods they employ be applied to matters of culture and language as easily as to the price of oil? Scenario building is one methodology used by strategists to put together known facts with imaginative ideas about the future.

?

What value shifts among young people might affect the future of English?
p. 48

Dealing with uncertainty

If all cultural and linguistic trends could be linked to factors of relatively little uncertainty, such as economic growth, population trends and technological innovation – areas where futures research has been conducted and forecasting models developed – then there would be little problem in modelling the future of English in different parts of the world. But where there is extensive uncertainty, a different approach is needed – preferably, a methodology which bridges the gap between the predictable and the unknown in a structured way, which marries empirical data such as market intelligence with intuition, experience and imagination.

The importance of process

Futurology is an ancient discipline whose practitioners – star gazers, palmists, tarot-card readers, geomancers and diviners – traditionally use some form of empirical data. It is tempting to see corporate consultants as the modern parallel, to whom large sums of money are paid to advise companies how to manage the future. But fortune tellers provide a valuable lesson. Their predictions are based on two important mechanisms: first, predictions typically arise from interactions with the client who may give a great deal of information – often unwittingly – to the fortune teller. Second, through the same process, clients are likely to offer their own interpretations and betray their own fears and desires, providing the fortune teller with the required information.

Fortune telling offers a mechanism for clients to reflect on what they already know; to see new significance in details and to confront fears and desires about the future. After all, the client is the 'expert' in local knowledge and experience. The fortune teller acts as a facilitator who provides a structure within which knowledge can be married with hopes and anxieties and thus lead to a clearer understanding of what might happen, what is desired and what must be avoided.

This aspect of the technique has its analogy in corporate planning in the 'processual approach' – the idea that a planning and learning process ensures a company maintains an active and intelligent watch on its business environment – which is more important than a finished plan. Van der Heijden (1996) retells an anecdote about a group of Hungarian soldiers lost in the Alps and presumed dead, but who returned safely after some days. 'We considered ourselves lost and waited for the end, but then one of us found a map in his pocket ... and with the map we found our bearings' (p. 36). When their lieutenant examined the map he found it was of the Pyrenees not the Alps. Van der Heijden comments:

> the map had given them a reason to act. Accuracy did not come into it. By taking some action the soldiers started to obtain new feedback about their environment, and they entered a new 'learning loop' which gradually built up their understanding and mental map. (Van der Heijden, 1996, p. 37)

WWW

DEMOS SERIOUS FUTURES
http://www.demos.co.uk

The importance of a good story

Perhaps the most popular form of futurology is science fiction, which gathers together complex ideas about science and society and communicates them in an engaging and persuasive narrative. Indeed, science fiction has perhaps had more influence than any other genre in forming public awareness of the effects of technology on society. H.G. Wells, for example, author of science fiction such as *The Time Machine* and idealist social commentaries such as *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, published a Utopian fictional history of the world as written in the 22nd century, *The Shape of Things to Come*, where he foresaw a triumphant future for global English.

> One of the unanticipated achievements of the twenty first century was the rapid diffusion of Basic English as the lingua franca of the world and the even more rapid modification, expansion and spread of English in its wake. ... This convenience spread like wildfire after the first Conference of Basra. It was made the official medium of communication throughout the world by the Air and Sea Control, and by 2020 there was hardly anyone in the world who could not talk and understand it. (Wells, 1933, pp. 418, 419)

Language is a common preoccupation in science fiction: the genre has probably explored the linguistic future more extensively than any other mode of futures research. Much science fiction provides a narrative structure through which we can conceptualise the future, exploring possible social outcomes of technological developments and asking 'what if?' Arthur C. Clarke, for example, famously speculated on satellite communications long before the first satellite was launched.

Social and political forecasting

In the late 1960s and 70s several companies attempted social forecasting. Among them, the General Electric Company (GEC) instituted an in-house forecasting service to guide strategic corporate planning. Its Business Environment Studies unit was aware that economic and technological forecasting would be insufficient to predict the contexts in which the company would employ labour, produce goods and market its products. The unit therefore devised methods of 'sociopolitical' forecasting. One tool used was a chart (Figure 15) showing likely attitude shift over a 15 year period amongst the 'trend setting' segment of the population – young, well educated, relatively affluent, committed. The commercial rationale for the exploration of social trends was that:

> Without a proper business response, societal expectations of today become the political issues of tomorrow, legislated requirements the next day, and litigated penalties the day after that. (Wilson, 1982, p. 218)

This illustrates several features of social forecasting. First, how long-term events can be predicted by hypothesising a chain of events and looking for precursors. Second, how some sectors of the population are of particular interest to the futurologist. Third, that if trends can be identified earlier, the more options are available for action. Indeed, it may be possible to alter a chain of events by intervening in the early stages. For this reason, the best forecasts are often inaccurate – their very existence may change the course of history.

Scenario planning

Techniques of social forecasting were, by and large, superseded by alternative techniques that are better able to deal with social and political uncertainties. The method now known as 'scenario planning' brings together ideas of social forecasting, the processual approach and the envisioning of futures in narrative.

A scenario is a possible future. Scenario builders take known facts and trends and build imaginatively on them, providing a narrative account which links events and explores possible chains of consequences. Scenarios were first developed as a strategic military-planning technique after World War II and later adopted by large corporations such as Royal Dutch/Shell. The company's use of scenarios was one of the first significant demonstrations of the technique's utility when, in the 1970s, Shell proved to be the only large oil corporation prepared for the oil crisis.

In building a scenario for the future of English, the language itself would be a central character; hero or villain. Other characters might be institutions and governments, or the driving forces identified in forecast models. A scenario would allow motives, probable actions, possible decisions, relationships between 'characters' to be explored and 'what if' questions to be asked. Peter Schwartz, who helped Shell's scenario planning exercises, explains:

> Scenarios are *not* predictions. It is simply not possible to predict the future with certainty. ... Rather, scenarios are vehicles for helping people learn. Unlike traditional business forecasting or market research, they present alternative images; they do not merely extrapolate the trends of the present. ... The point of scenario-planning is to help us suspend our disbelief in all the futures: to allow us to think that any one of them might take place. Then we can prepare for what we *don't* think is going to happen. (Schwartz, 1996, pp. 6, 195)

Kees van der Heijden, another former member of the Shell team, suggests that scenario planning is the best methodology for dealing with mid-term futures – when there is much information to hand, but where key factors may be unknown. In the long term, when too much is unpredictable, there is little left but hope. In terms of corporate strategy, 'hope' might be said to be invested in mission statements or corporate visions (Figure 16).

There is a clear management advantage in scenario building. Scenarios provide a windtunnel where personal or corporate strategies can be tested, weaknesses in

Figure 16 Forecasting, scenario planning and hope

thinking highlighted, organisational obstacles accounted for in management design, or forward plans made robust against a range of possibilities. Scenarios also sensitise a planning team to recognise early-warning signs which otherwise might be missed. Shell did not predict the oil crisis, but had tested their management strategies against such an improbable context. When the crisis arrived, they were able to recognise the signs faster than competitors and already had an organisational understanding of the required course of action for a rapid response.

Scenario planning is a flexible methodology which can be adapted to organisations and circumstances. One recent project, using a scenario technique to explore possible futures for European transport and communications during the next 30 years, described the focus of the enquiry in ways which could apply to language:

> As a method of exploring the future scenarios are superior to more rigorous forecasting methods such as statistical extrapolation or mathematical models if the number of factors to be considered and the degree of uncertainty about the future is high. This clearly applies in the case of transport and communications. Transport and communications are closely interrelated with almost all aspects of human life. They are linked to social and economic developments, are influenced by technological innovations and are subject to numerous political and institutional constraints. (Masser et al., 1992, p. 4)

This project developed a variation of the classic scenario-planning technique by employing the so-called Delphi method: panels of experts from different countries were involved in both the construction of scenarios and their evaluation. This, the authors claim, facilitated:

> the process of converging initially different expert views towards one or possibly a few dominant opinions. In addition, scenario writing as a group exercise has the potential of generating awareness of factors and impacts which may not have been identified through formal forecasting methods. (Masser et al., 1992, p. 4)

There are many possible variants of scenario planning but most share an emphasis on alternatives and possibilities. The technique is capable of bringing together a variety of stakeholders: those in the field with local knowledge, at the centre in senior management roles, people who have researched the issues, or those who are most affected should the scenarios turn out to be true. But scenario planning only really makes sense when particular questions have been identified as requiring answers. There is little point in building a windtunnel if there is no vehicle to test.

	1970	1985	2000	
War (military might)				Peace (economic development)
Nationalism				Internationalism
Federal government				State/ local government
Public enterprise				Private enterprise
Organisation				Individual
Uniformity/ conformity				Pluralism
Independence				Inter-dependence
Sociability				Privacy
Materialism				Quality of life
Status quo/ permanence/ routine				Change/ flexibility/ innovation
Future planning				Immediacy
Work				Leisure
Authority				Participation
Centralisation				Decentralisation
Ideology/ dogma				Pragmatism/ nationality
Moral absolutes				Situation ethics
Economic efficiency				'Social justice'
Means (esp. technology)				Ends (goals)

Figure 15 A profile of social values held by 'trend setters' created by GEC in 1970, together with GEC's forecast of likely value shifts during the following 15 years. This study was one of the earliest to forecast a trend away from values based on 'economic efficiency' towards those based on 'social justice' – a trend which other researchers suggest has since gathered momentum. The dashed line for the year 2000 represents a speculative assessment of how social values have shifted since the GEC study

Summary

1 Scarcity of relevant facts

There is a surprising scarcity of data which directly relates to the development of global English, since there is no central international authority which collects such information.

2 Variety of change

A wide range of change is occurring in the status and form of English around the world. Some changes are relatively swift and ephemeral (such as fashions in vocabulary), others are more profound and long term (such as language shift in families).

3 The complex interplay of causes

We may be able to identify some of the apparent 'drivers' of change – the circumstances which appear to encourage people to learn English or to give up their parents' language in favour of English – but the way such causes of change interact with each other makes prediction of the direction and extent of change extremely hazardous.

4 Some predictions are safe, others dangerous

An understanding of the nature of change helps identify what kind of prediction is relatively safe and what is dangerous. The growth and decline of native speakers of a language is a relatively long-term change which can be monitored and to some extent forecast. Changes in the number of people learning English as a foreign language, however, may be surprisingly volatile.

5 Scenario building

Scenario building is one approach to strategic management which allows an understanding of the causes and patterns of change to inform forward planning, even where there is considerable uncertainty about what the future might hold. 'Forecasting', in a narrow sense of building models which predict future patterns of behaviour, is not the only form of 'futurology'.

References

Aitchison, J. (1991) *Language Change: progress or decay?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Al-Zayer, J. and Al-Ibrahim, A.A. (1996) Modelling the impact of temperature on electricity consumption in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Forecasting*, vol. 15, pp. 97–106.

Bailey, R.W. (1992) *Images of English: a cultural history of the language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bauer, L. (1994) *Watching English Change*. London: Longman.

Bowers, R. (1996) English in the world. In J. Hilton (ed) *English in China: the English 2000 Conference*. Peking: British Council.

Chambers, J. and Trudgill, P. (1980) *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elkington, J. and Trisoglio, A. (1996) Developing realistic scenarios for the environment: lessons from Brent Spar. *Long Range Planning*, vol. 29, no. 6, pp. 762–9.

English 2000 (1995) *Benchmarks Report: a study to establish systems to measure Britain's share of the global ELT market*. Manchester: British Council.

Hooke, A. (1996) *An Export-Oriented Approach to Regional Development*. Unpublished paper, Sydney.

Masser, I., Sviden, O. and Wegener, M. (1992) *The Geography of Europe's Futures*. London: Belhaven Press.

Schwartz, P. (1996) *The Art of the Long View*. New York: Doubleday.

Van der Heijden, K. (1996) *Scenarios: the art of strategic conversation*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Wilson, I. (1982) Socio-political forecasting: the General Electric experience. In B. Twiss (ed) *Social Forecasting for Company Planning*. London: Macmillan.

Wells, H.G. (1933) *The Shape of Things to Come: the ultimate revolution*. London: Hutchinson.

Global trends

Demography

How many people will there be in 2050? Where will they live? What age will they be? Population projections exist for all the world's countries and answers to such demographic questions can help us make broad predictions about a question at the heart of this study: who will speak what languages in the 21st century?

The world economy

The economic shape of the world is rapidly changing. The world as a whole is getting richer, but the proportion of wealth created and spent by the west will decrease markedly in the next few decades. This will alter the relationship between the west and the rest of the world – especially Asia – and will change the economic attractiveness of other major languages.

The role of technology

Advances in technology in the 19th century helped 'kick start' the long wave of economic growth which is yet to reach some parts of the world. Technological change transforms the spaces in which we work and live, but it is difficult to predict precisely how technology will shape our future global patterns of language use.

Globalisation

World economies and cultures are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, politically, socially and technologically: 'complexification', 'cross-border activity' and 'process re-engineering' have been the buzz words of the 1990s. Here we examine the impact of economic globalisation on patterns of communication.

The immaterial economy

The world's output is getting lighter. Within a few decades, many more people will be employed in the service industries which characterise economic globalisation. New forms of global teleworking are emerging and an increased proportion of the value of goods is produced through language-related activity.

Cultural flows

Language has been regarded since the Renaissance in terms of territory. Statistics about language, culture and economy, collected by international bodies, have been based on nation states, populations of speakers and relative sizes of economies. But chaos theory suggests the concept of flow may be better suited to understanding language in a borderless world.

Global inequalities

As developing economies mature and per capita income rises, so social and economic inequalities also seem to grow: proficiency in English may be one of the mechanisms for dividing those who have access to wealth and information from those who don't. The global spread of English may also be associated with decreased use of endangered languages.

There is much evidence – economic, technological and demographic – that the world has now entered a period of unprecedented and far-reaching change of a kind which will transform societies and reshape the traditional relations of economic, cultural and political power between the west and 'the rest' which have led world events for several hundred years.

It is coincidental that a new millennium should be associated with the construction of a new world order: the roots of the present period lie at least in the industrial revolution which began in Europe and in particular in Britain. It can be argued that its starting point was even earlier – in Renaissance Europe which gave rise to the nation state and national languages, to modern science and institutional structures.

The fact that the world has reached a transformative moment in a long historical process is remarkable enough, but even more remarkable is the idea that rapid change will not now be a permanent feature of global life; rather it is a consequence of the transition towards a new and more settled world order, with quite different cultural, economic and linguistic landscapes.

This section deals with key global trends, each of which are now helping transform the need for communication between the world's peoples – from population shifts to economic globalisation; from the invention of the Internet to the restructuring of social inequality. It is these trends which will shape the demand for English in the future, but they interact in complex ways and may produce unexpected cultural and political outcomes.

Demography
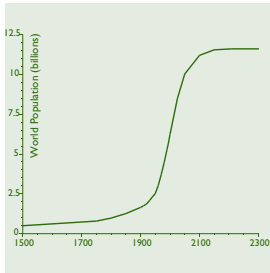
How many people will there be in 2050? Where will they live? What age will they be? Population projections exist for all the world's countries and answers to such demographic questions can help us make broad predictions about a question at the heart of this study: who will speak what languages in the 21st century?

Population growth

When looking to the future, few things are more predictable than population growth. Provided that current trends of increased lifespan and fertility rates in developing countries continue, we can estimate from infants born this year the numbers of their offspring in 2020 and so on: the UN estimates the global population in 2150 will be 11.54 billion. Figure 17 shows the predicted population growth worldwide to 2300. Charted, it shows an S-curve rise (such as those described in section 2), with rapid growth beginning about the time of the industrial revolution. As is the problem with S-curves, it is difficult to determine the point at which rapid population increase will slow and stabilise, but the demographic models used by the UN do expect stabilisation to take place in the first half of the next century.

Population trends differ greatly from country to country, however. This in turn means that as the demographic shape of the world changes, so will the relative status of different languages. Which languages then will this growing number of people speak?

The languages people speak show two main influences: first, the speech community they are born into, which for an increasing number of the world's population is a multilingual one; and second, the languages people learn through life as a consequence of education, employment, migration or increased social mobility. The languages that people use in their everyday interactions do not change rapidly, unless a speaker's social circumstances quickly change. Multilingual speakers may add languages during their lifetime and they may find that another becomes less used. But major language shift, from one first language to another, is usually slow, taking place across generations. Hence, if we take into account current patterns of language use amongst the young, including infants and teenagers, we can make a fair prediction about patterns of language use in 50 years time, with the proviso that rapid social change may complicate the pattern. The

engco model uses this approach as the basis of its projections: Figure 18 shows estimates based on UN demographic data for first-language speakers of major world languages from 1950 to 2050. Table 7 shows the possible number of native speakers of a wider range of languages in 2050.

However, population growth is slowing in European countries: roughly equal percentages of the population are under the age of 15 and over the age of 65 (*The Economist*, 1996). Yet in non-OECD countries, the population is increasingly becoming younger. This global shift in the location of young people will have significant linguistic consequences. Since young people are key agents for language change and development, while older people tend to be more stable in speech habits, we can expect patterns of language change to be marked in those countries of increasing youth: Africa, Asia and South America. Of these, the last two regions are experiencing considerable social and economic change. This combination of factors will make Asia and Latin America potentially significant regions of language change in the next century.

Language and migration

The English language arose as a fringe consequence of large-scale people movement in northern and western Europe, which not only changed the European linguistic map but also led to the downfall of the Roman empire. Migration has since shaped the development of English across the world. During the 16th to 19th centuries, both the slave trade and colonisation moved people and languages: from Europe to the Americas, India, Africa and Australia; from Africa to the Americas; and from Oceania to Australia and New Zealand.

In the 20th century, patterns of immigration partially reversed. As a consequence of decolonisation, many families came to Britain from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean, while immigration policies of Australia encouraged migration from Asia rather than from Britain and Europe. As a consequence, highly multilingual cities have arisen in countries which imagined themselves to be predominantly monolingual English speaking. Censuses of London schoolchildren, for example, show that by the 1980s around 200 languages were spoken in the city's primary schools.

Yet the mass migrations of the 1990s between parts of Africa have had little impact upon world varieties:

Figure 17 World population growth is expected to stabilise at the end of the 21st century

?
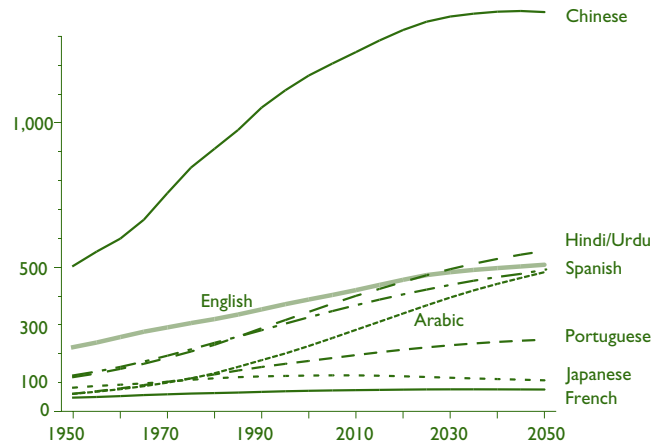
Figure 18 Demographic estimates of first-language speakers (in millions) for some major languages according to the engco model
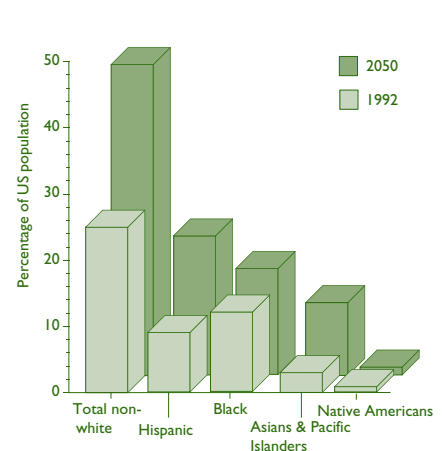
Figure 19 How the ethnic composition of the US population is expected to change

Africa is one of the least-developed world regions economically and is least connected to global cultural systems. This, of course, may change in the longer term. But it appears that mass, long-distance migration is no longer a substantial source of language shift, as the richer countries effectively close their doors.

There remain three kinds of migration which are likely to have linguistic consequences in the 21st century. First, migration from poorer countries on the fringes of richer ones – either permanently or as 'guest workers'. Second, migration across language boundaries within economic blocs, such as the EU. Third, migration within countries, mainly towards areas of economic growth.

The flow of economic migrants across borders into richer countries seems to be ever increasing. It is estimated that 4% of the population of Mexico shifted to the US between 1970 and 1990. In Europe in 1990, following the breach of the Berlin wall, roughly 1 million people moved from Poland, East Germany and elsewhere to settle in West Germany. Layard et al. (1994) suggest that this is the beginning of continued movement from eastern Europe to the richer west, mirroring the relationship between Mexico and the US.

> If we focus on the next 15 years and think in terms of 3 per cent, this would imply that at least 4 million non-Soviet Eastern Europeans would wish to move to Western Europe or the United States. (Layard et al., 1994, p. 12)

Such movements have unpredictable effects on language use and often give rise to political tension. In the US for example, immigration from other countries may leave the 'white' population barely in the majority by 2050, according to estimates from the US Commerce Department's Census Bureau (cited in McRae, 1994). The population of Hispanic, Asian, Native American and black Americans would grow as indicated in Figure 19. Some political groups in the US now suggest this will threaten the hegemony of English. Certainly, demographic change is likely to alter the percentage of US citizens who are first-language English speakers and estimates of global native English speakers in 2050 may be, as a result, too high.

Increasingly, migration is taking place within countries. In developing countries, the most important trend is likely to be migration to the cities from rural areas. The Special Economic Zones of China, for example, will experience greater pressure as these trading areas develop. Migration to these zones is likely to lead to wider usage of regional lingua francas, such as Cantonese or Wu Chinese.

The growing middle classes

One of the most significant social consequences of the industrial revolution in Europe was the creation of an educated middle class with social aspirations and sufficient disposable income to help build a consumer culture. Likewise, one of the significant trends in Asia and Latin America is a parallel expansion of the middle classes: Schwartz and Leyden (1997, p. 126) suggest that over 2 billion Asians will have made the transition into the middle class by 2018. This demographic shift may prove to be the most significant factor of all in determining the fate of global English in the next century – it is amongst professional groups that the use of English is most prevalent and professional middle-class families are most likely to adopt English as the language of the home.

The language of cities

The future for an increasing number of the world's population will be an urban one: the UNDP suggests the proportion of people living in towns and cities will be over 50% by 2005 (UNDP, 1996). A far cry from the start of the 16th century when only 5 European cities had populations over 100,000 – Constantinople, Naples, Venice, Milan and Paris. By 1600 the number had trebled. Between World War I and World War II, New York became the first city to grow beyond 10 million inhabitants. The cities expected to be the largest by the year 2000 are listed in Table 8.

The most rapid urbanisation, like population growth, is taking place in the developing world. Between 1950 and 2000 some 1.4 billion more people will have become city dwellers in the developing world. UN estimates for 1994 to 2025 show Asia achieving one of the largest increases in urban growth – some 20.7%. And in South Asia alone, over the period 1960 to 2000, urban population is expected to have doubled.

Urbanisation is likely to have wide-reaching effects on the world's languages. Rural areas have been known as linguistically conservative since 19th century European dialect surveys hunted out elderly, rustic peasants as 'informants' about 'pure unadulterated' speech, untainted by the culture of the industrial revolution. There was considerable romanticism in these projects, but also a recognition of the role that urban areas play in cultural and linguistic change. As cosmopolitan centres they provide a focal point for in-migration from different parts of a country and become important zones of language contact and diversity; they give rise to dense but interlinked social networks; they encourage the growth of a middle class with disposable income who become consumers of global material culture; they are centres of social innovation and fashion. This is precisely the kind of environment where social and cultural practices are transformed and where new language varieties and speech habits emerge. Furthermore, new language varieties emerging from large, densely populated cities are usually economically and culturally significant. In the coming decades, the rapid urbanisation in the Shanghai area of northern China, for example, may create a new variety of Wu Chinese with not only a large number of speakers but also powerful economic and cultural support.

A good deal of sociolinguistic research has been carried out in urban centres but studies of new city developments are scarce. One recent British research project examined the linguistic consequences of new-city development in the British town of Milton Keynes (situated 90 km north-west of London). Kerswill (1996) reports that the accents of children had a great deal in common, but did not follow those of their parents, nor that which already existed in the area. A new dialect seemed to be emerging amongst new-town adolescents. 'What we see is possibly a sign of future changes in English: new towns are perhaps in the vanguard of the dialect levelling found in England as a whole' (Kerswill, 1996, p. 299).

Urbanisation thus has important effects on language demography. New languages emerge, others change, some are lost. In the world's cities – the nexus for flows of people, goods and ideas – the spread of English will be felt first and most keenly; new patterns of English use will arise amongst second-language speakers. But such cities will also form the foundation for other, potentially rival, lingua francas.

1	Chinese	1,384
2	Hindi/Urdu	556
3	English	508
4	Spanish	486
5	Arabic	482
6	Portuguese	248
7	Bengali	229
8	Russian	132
9	Japanese	108
10	German	91
11	Malay	80
12	French	76

Table 7 Estimates provided by the engco model of native-speaker numbers for major world languages in 2050 (millions)

1	Mexico City	25.6
2	Tokyo-Yokohama	24.2
3	Sao Paulo	22.1
4	Shanghai	17.0
5	New York	16.8
6	Calcutta	15.7
7	Bombay	15.4
8	Beijing	14.0
9	Los Angeles	13.9
10	Jakarta	13.7

Table 8 The 10 largest cities in the ye ar 2000 (population millions)

The world economy

The economic shape of the world is rapidly changing. The world as a whole is getting richer, but the proportion of wealth created and spent by the west will decrease markedly in the next few decades. This will alter the relationship between the west and the rest of the world – especially Asia – and will change the economic attractiveness of other major languages.

A richer, smaller world

Since the industrial revolution, the world's wealth has been steadily increasing. A calculation of the total value of goods and services created and supplied throughout the world shows that in 1750 (converted to 1990 prices), the Gross World Product (GWP) was around $50 billion. By 1990, however, this was the size of the Malaysian economy alone – GWP had risen to $25 trillion. The Hooke forecasting model suggests that by 2050 the global economy will have grown a further tenfold to $250 trillion. The relatively rapid growth in wealth has led to the popular idea that economic growth is a permanent condition – but in fact the growth of GWP seems to be taking the form of an S-curve, beginning with the industrial revolution and flattening out in the next century. This period of rapid growth – the steep portion of the curve we are now living in – began in Britain and Europe and may span eventually a period of 250 to 300 years.

GWP is now rising at an average annual 2.5%. Most of the industrialised countries have experienced growth rates around the global average, but elsewhere growth is uneven. Some countries have experienced, like China, an average annual growth of over 9% since 1985; the economies of other countries, particularly those affected by war or political upheaval, have shrunk. These uneven growth rates reflect the fact that economies of developing countries are gradually coming 'up to speed' – that is, achieving productivity levels typical of developed countries. This process is facilitated by technology and skills transfer from richer countries, which have greatly reduced the time required for a country to double its per capita income. Whereas Britain took 58 years – its growth was generated by invention and innovation – countries benefiting from flows of knowledge, expertise and technology transferred from the west have been able to double their income in reducing timescales, as Figure 20 illustrates.

Turning the tables

As countries grow richer, the OECD countries will become proportionally less important in the world economy. Figure 21 shows world distribution of wealth for 1990 and Figure 22 that projected for 2050 – the time when world growth is expected to stabilise. These figures
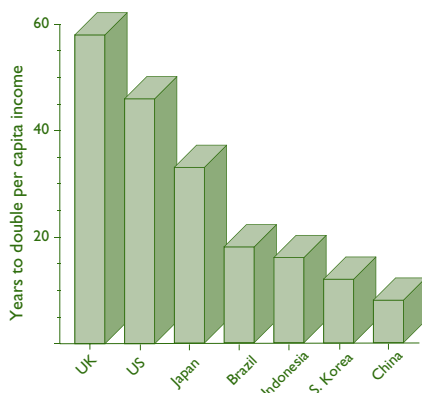
Figure 20 Length of time taken to double per capita income

group together those OECD countries which comprise the world's 'Big Three' trading blocs – North America, the European Union and Japan. At the present time, the vast proportion of the world's wealth is produced by these regions and circulates within them. As yet, the Big Three blocs also possess most of the world's management and technological expertise, scientific knowledge and advanced industrial skills.

But the present period is a transitional time: we are witnessing radically changing economic relationships between countries and world regions. Transition over the next 50 years will be uncomfortable in many ways, particularly for the Big Three trading regions. As Gus Hooke (1996) remarked, 'For those who don't like change, best either to be born before 1800 or hang on to about 2050. For those who love change, the ideal time to be alive is 1995 to 2010.'

Economic strength of languages

The shift in economic relations will have a profound, but as yet poorly understood, effect on the popularity and use of different languages. It is clear that a language which is spoken by rich countries is more attractive to learners than one which provides no access to personal betterment or lucrative markets. Ammon (1995) puts forward this argument in exploring the status of German as an international language:

> The language of an economically strong community is attractive to learn because of its business potential. Knowledge of the language potentially opens up the market for producers to penetrate a market if they know the language of the potential customer. (Ammon, 1995, p. 30)

One corroboration of the attractiveness of the language of an economically strong country comes from Coulmas (1992), who was able to show that the rise in the number of students enrolling on courses worldwide in Japanese as a foreign language closely mirrored a rise in the value of the Japanese yen against the US dollar during the period 1982 to 1989 (Coulmas, 1992, p. 78). A relatively straightforward way of estimating the economic strength of a language is simply to rank the economies of the countries where native speakers live (Table 9). According to this we find an international order for the late 1980s (Ammon, 1995).

A slightly more sophisticated approach is to take into account all countries in which a language is spoken and allocate the GDP of each country proportionally to the languages spoken there. The engco forecasting model calculates a 'GLP' (Gross Language Product) in this way and produces figures for the major languages (Table 10). The estimates differ from Ammon's both because of the different method of calculation and because the engco model draws on GDP figures for 1994 – the latest available in 1997.

Traded languages

Establishing a link between macro-economic factors and language popularity is an attractive idea: there are more statistics on the economy available, country by country, than for any other sphere of human activity. But it is insufficient to note that strong economies attract interest in languages: we need to understand better *how* economic power encourages the use of particular languages. Only then can we predict whether the relative shrinking of English-speaking economies will lead to a reduction in demand for English.

This is a large question which cannot be answered simply, but one approach is to analyse business transaction. It is notable that the volume of international trade has been growing rapidly: between 1950 and 1994 world trade multiplied 14 times while output rose only 5.5 times (World Trade Organisation, 1995). In other words, an increasing proportion of wealth is created by trade – part of a general process of globalisation now bringing world economies and cultures in ever-closer union.

There is a general rule of thumb, probably existing since the earliest days of international trading, that selling must be carried out in the customer's language unless the commodity is in short supply or there is a monopoly provider. The linguistic consequence of this is that language popularity will follow markets: 'the merchant speaks the customer's language'. In import-export terms, the language of the customer will tend to dictate the process. Since most countries aim to balance the value of imports and exports, at least roughly, then the language effect should be reciprocal. Therefore it might be argued that the world status of a language depends less on GDP than on the extent to which its native speakers trade their goods and services internationally. The engco model calculates languages related to trade in an index of traded GLP (Table 11).

English in business

But international trade is often a complex, cross-border business: goods are taken from one country, refined or given added value by a second, sold to a third, repackaged, resold and so on. Such multilateral trade brings with it greater reliance on lingua francas.

In Europe there is growing evidence that English has become the major business lingua franca. A study conducted in 1988 for the Danish Council of Trade and Industry reported that English is used by Danish companies in over 80% of international business contacts and communications (cited in Firth, 1996). A more recent investigation in small and medium-sized businesses in peripheral areas of Europe (Hagen, 1993) found that although English is probably the most used language of business across Europe, German is used extensively in particular areas, especially for informal communication.

> German is, understandably, in more widespread use than English in European regions bordering on Germany, thereby underlining a common misperception of English as the sole lingua franca of international business. This is apparent in the Dutch and Danish samples, where German is ahead of English in the use of oral-aural skills, though this order is reversed for reading and writing. (Hagen, 1993, p. 14)

The use of German seems to be increasing in parts of central and eastern Europe: a trend that may be confirmed as more countries join the European Union. Hagen (1993) suggests knowledge of one language is not sufficient for a company to conduct business successfully in Europe: 'a minimum level of linguistic competence for a European company is the ability to perform in three: namely, English, German and French' (Hagen, 1993, p. 12). British companies seem least able to meet this criterion.

However, the use of German and French is almost exclusively confined to trade within Europe: German companies generally use English for trade outside the European Union. This is apparent from recommendat-

Big Three 55%
Asia 21%
Rest 24%
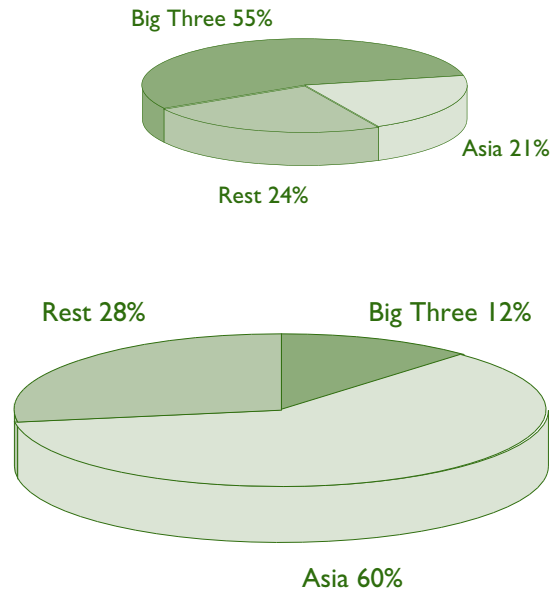
Figure 21 Proportions of world wealth in 1990 (total $25 trillion)

Rest 28%
Big Three 12%
Asia 60%

Figure 22 Estimated shares of world wealth in 2050 (total $250 trillion, average world growth at 4%)

ions made by German Chambers of Commerce to members on which languages should be used for trade with each country in the world (cited by Ammon, 1995). English is recommended as the sole language for 64 countries. German is recommended as the exclusive language of trade with only one other country – Austria – though German is suggested as a co-language for up to 25 countries, including Holland, Denmark and those in eastern Europe. French is recommended for 25 countries and Spanish for 17. English is thus the preferred, but not the sole, language of external trade for European countries. Japan and the US also use English widely for international trade.

The overall pattern seems to be that trade driven by the Big Three encourages the use of English globally. But as patterns of trade change, so patterns of language use may change. The key to understanding the future of business English will lie in the extent to which other languages become important trade lingua francas for internal trade within Asia and Latin America.

1	English	4,271	1	English	7,815	1	English	2,338
2	Japanese	1,277	2	Japanese	4,240	2	German	1,196
3	German	1,090	3	German	2,455	3	French	803
4	Russian	801	4	Spanish	1,789	4	Chinese	803
5	Spanish	738	5	French	1,557	5	Japanese	700
6	French	669	6	Chinese	985	6	Spanish	610
7	Chinese	448	7	Portuguese	611	7	Italian	488
8	Arabic	359	8	Arabic	408	8	Portuguese	138
9	Italian	302	9	Russian	363	9	Malay	118
10	Portuguese	234	10	Hindi/Urdu	114	10	Arabic	85
11	Dutch	203	11	Italian	111	11	Russian	73
12	Hindi/Urdu	102	12	Malay	79	12	Hindi/Urdu	25
13	Indonesian	65	13	Bengali	32	13	Bengali	9
14	Danish	60						
15	Greek	49						

Table 9 Estimated economic strength of languages in $billion (after Ammon, 1995)

Table 10 Estimates of Gross Language Product (GLP) of major languages in $billion (engco model)

Table 11 Major languages by traded GLP in $billion (engco model)

The role of technology

Advances in technology in the 19th century helped 'kick start' the long wave of economic growth which is yet to reach some parts of the world. Technological change transforms the spaces in which we work and live, but it is difficult to predict exactly how technology will shape our future global patterns of language use.

Technological past

English today has been shaped by the effects of the industrial revolution. As English became the world's language of discovery and as rapid advances were made in materials science, engineering, manufacturing and communications, new communicative functions were required of the language. Industrial and communications technology created legal, management and accounting structures, each with different forms of information giving. New, more complex communicative skills were required by employees – such as literacy skills – while the industrial economy gave rise to greater interaction between institutions and the general public, mediated through railway timetables, company accounts, instructions for household products and advertisements. Typographic design expanded accordingly, as did the range of written and spoken genres institutionalised in English. Thus the 'information age' began in the 19th century, establishing many of the styles and conventions we take for granted today.

Technology has indeed proved to be of profound significance to culture and language. Is there now a revolutionary technology 'just around the corner' which will transform our use and expectations of language in the way that the industrial revolution did?

Technological future

Forecasting key technologies of the future is an unreliable activity, as some heroic failures in the past demonstrate. An editorial in *The Times*, October 1903, predicted that heavier-than-air flying machines were theoretically impossible – two months before the Wright brothers launched their first plane. In 1876 the Western Union – a telegraph company – decided not to take up the patent on Bell's telephone because they considered the device to be 'inherently of no value to us'. Western Union were not Luddites: they were in business at the leading edge of telecommunications technology. But even 'experts' can get it wrong.

It is unlikely that the world will be transformed by some extraordinary invention in the next few decades. New technology takes time to develop, be implemented and then to have important transformative effects. Any technology which is to have significant social, economic and linguistic effects in the near future will be already known. David (1990) shows how the introduction of the dynamo – permitting commercial use of electricity – took, from the early 1880s, another 40 years to yield significant productivity gains. Likewise, the building of the first computers and development of high-level computer languages in the 1940s only now have a significant impact on people's work and leisure. The impact of technology on everyday life is determined by the speed of institutional and social change rather than by the speed of technological invention and scientific discovery.

Joseph Schumpeter suggested in the 1930s that technological innovation affected the economy in a series of 'long waves' about 50 years apart. If we update his ideas, to cover the period 1780 to 2080, this provides six 'long waves' each associated with a transformative technology (Table 12). Based on this, we can see that major changes in culture and language during the next few decades are those connected with computers and communications.

Computer languages

English and computers have seemed, for decades, to go together. Computers and the programs which make them useful were largely the invention of English-speaking countries. The hardware and software reflected the needs of the English language. The early systems for text-based communication were unfriendly to accented characters and almost impossible for languages using non-roman writing systems, while computer operators interacted with programs using instructions in English.

English will, no doubt, continue to be spread via software products and digitised intellectual property, but it seems the days of language restriction are over. There are, for example, Chinese versions of all major American programs, including the *Windows* operating system and *Microsoft Word* word processor. Interface design and on-screen help now make new software more easily and rapidly customised for lesser used languages. Schools in Wales, for example, are able to use software and operating systems in Welsh. This adaptability of recent software is a significant characteristic. It has allowed new technical vocabulary to develop in languages other than English, while desktop publishing systems have made possible short-run printing in minority writing systems. The close linkage that once existed between computers and English has been broken.

One of the most important computer-related technologies to emerge in recent decades with implications for language use is, undoubtedly, the Internet, which we discuss in detail later. The Internet illustrates the way technologies have been converging: television, telephone, music and document transfer all share the same distribution infrastructure. And new consumer technologies, such as multimedia computers and 'Web TV', bring them together in the home, school and workplace.

Language engineering

Besides consumer applications software, such as word processors and spreadsheets, there now exists a wide range of software products designed for natural language manipulation: parsing tools, abstracting and information retrieval, speech recognition and automatic translation. The majority of this research and development work is carried out in the US, Europe and Japan. At present the most advanced tools are based in English (Figure 23)
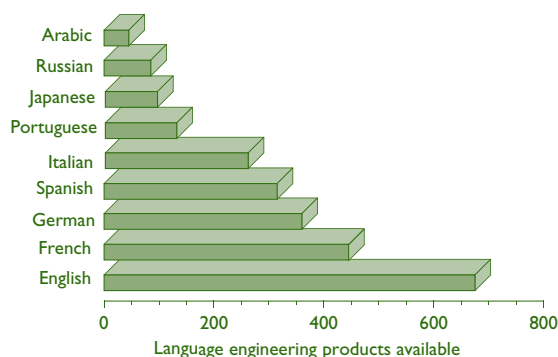
Figure 23 Language-engineering products available for major languages in the mid 1990s

Language engineering products available

although other major languages – such as Chinese – have recently become the focus of much research and development by the US software industry.

Language professionals, however, have long been sceptical of the ability of computer-based applications to deal adequately with natural language. In the 1970s most linguists were convinced of the impossibility of a 'typewriter you could talk into' – it raised problems at so many levels of linguistic processing that it was widely regarded as no more than a dream of science fiction. And yet, only 20 years later, practical voice-transcription software is used on desktop PCs. A similar scepticism is now directed at automatic translation, but this overlooks the fact that machine translation already plays a significant role in commercial and institutional life. And it is English, sometimes in special form, which has emerged as a lingua franca for machines.

Yet globalisation requires the closer integration of organisations which employ different working languages while the increase in world trade has multiplied the need for document translations of technical manuals, product specifications, patent applications, regulations governing trade and so on. Such documents tend to be more predictable in content and style than, say, informal conversation and hence more amenable to manipulation by machines. The current state-of-the-art is one in which machines routinely help human translators, allowing increased productivity, accuracy and standardisation. But this close working relationship between humans and machines is beginning to alter the language and the ways in which texts are organised.

New, simplified forms of English have been constructed by many global engineering companies, such as Caterpillar and Boeing, which are claimed to make maintenance manuals more comprehensible to overseas engineers. But the use of 'controlled English' is also intended to make automatic translation easier – opening up the possibility of humans writing in restricted forms of English so that machines can translate documents into restricted forms of target languages. The growing use of English as a 'relay language', to permit translation from any language to any other via English, will produce new forms of language contact which may encourage the convergence of other languages, at least in their controlled forms, with the semantic and syntactic structures of English.

The death of distance

The impact of computers on society and language has come about largely because of developments in the related field of telecommunications.

Telecommunications technology is surprisingly old. By the 1870s, the world was linked by the electric telegraph, along whose wires the English language flowed. The Victorian network was almost entirely owned and operated by British companies and London was the relay centre for most of the world's long-distance cables. The social and commercial implications of the technology were widely debated and by the end of the 19th century it had become a cliché to wonder at 'the annihilation of space and time'. Since then there have emerged three related trends in telecommunications – alongside improved technology – which have shaped global patterns of communication and which may continue to impact on language flow and use: liberalising regulatory regimes allowing competition and reducing national control, falling costs and the increasing one-to-one, or point-to-point, nature of telecommunications.

Cheaper communications

Cost has been, traditionally, a major barrier to long-distance calls. But the cost of communication has lowered dramatically (Figure 24). Falling prices have resulted from liberalisation of the market, huge increases in demand and technological development. The first transatlantic telephone cable, laid in 1956, allowed 36 simultaneous conversations; the latest undersea fibre-optic link is capable of carrying 600,000. Once the infrastructure is in place, the cost of establishing an international call is very close to zero; the cost of a call between the US and Britain could fall, according to some commentators, to the equivalent of present British local rates. And, if lines between London and Glasgow are congested, the call might be routed via the US, with no loss of profit to the operator.

In 1997 Britain became the first country to open up its entire international phone traffic; nearly 50 companies applied for licences. The result is expected to be enormous capacity and falling prices: London is expected to become 'the switching centre for the world's telephone services' (McRae,1996, p. 19).

One-to-one connection

Over the last few decades there has been a significant shift towards direct, point-to-point communications, either person to person, or machine to machine. Whereas in the early days of the telegraph, a communication needed to pass through the hands of many mediators and gatekeepers who were able to control the quantity, speed and content of messages, now it is possible for an individual to contact another directly, across oceans and continents. This development is seen in both the telephone and the Internet: a PC on the desk of one executive or academic can connect directly to another PC on some far-off desk to exchange data.

This shift towards a communication network rather than a hierarchy allows dispersed 'discourse communities' to emerge, based on shared interests such as hobbies, (gardening, exotic fish), criminality (terrorism, pornography) or support (ulcerative colitis sufferers, parents of children with Downs Syndrome). Diasporic cultural and linguistic groups can share concerns, ideas and decision making as never before.

Networks potentially change cultural and economic landscapes, condensing distance and overcoming barriers to communication. And the interconnectedness of cultural and decision-making systems, facilitated by one-to-one communication, has produced a 'complex system' capable of unpredictable cultural and economic shifts. But communication patterns on such networks is largely invisible to traditional statistical monitoring – new trends may take decision makers unawares.
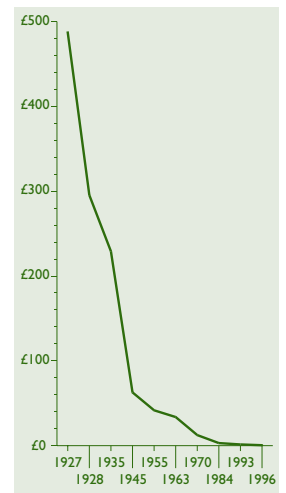
Figure 24 Falling cost of making a transatlantic telephone call. Costs shown are for a three minute call London–New York at 1996 equivalent prices (a fall from £486 to 30p)

Pre-1780s	Pre-industrial society
1780s–1840s	Steam power
1840s–1890s	Railways
1890s–1930s	Electric power
1930s–1980s	Cheap fuel/car/road haulage/air travel
1980s–2030s	Information technology (IT)
2030s–2080s	Biochemical engineering (including genetic engineering and nano-engineering)

Table 12 Seven ages of the technological economy

Globalisation
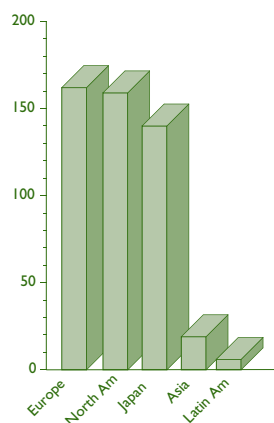
World economies and cultures are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, politically, socially and technologically: 'complexification', 'cross-border activity' and 'process re-engineering' have been the buzz words of the 1990s. Here we examine the impact of economic globalisation on patterns of communication.

Transnational ownership

Global trade is no longer a matter of bilateral arrangements between nation states, or between organisations economically rooted in nation states. Such is the complex structure of business ownership, through joint ventures and holding companies, that establishing any simple national pattern of ownership of the major enterprises is difficult. And many of the world's largest corporations can hardly even be called multinational; rather they have become *transnational*. It has been calculated that transnational corporations (TNCs) account for as much as two-thirds of international trade in goods, while 50 of the 100 largest economies are said to be not nation states but TNCs. The largest of the world's TNCs are involved in the energy and chemicals industries (oil, pharmaceuticals) and the communications industry (airlines, telecommunications, media). The majority are headquartered in the Big Three trading blocs (Figure 25). And, at the present stage of global economic development, the international activities of TNCs are tending to promote English.

Global distribution of labour

The rise of TNCs has supported a new, global distribution of labour: large corporations can shift production to countries with a cheaper, less regulated workforce. If production costs in one country become too great, production can be shifted to another part of the world, perhaps with tax incentives and subsidies to start up new enterprises. Although some commentators see this as a predatory, 'slash and burn' activity on a global scale, others regard it as an important and benign driver of economic development in third-world countries.

Figure 25 Distribution of the 500 largest global corporations by world region

Such shifts of production require in-flows of capital, skills and technology, and are one means by which a developing economy is helped to 'come up to speed' in a shorter timescale than the industrialised countries themselves required. This process promotes the English language, as the box (*below*) explains.

Growing complexification

In February 1996, an oil tanker ran aground whilst attempting to enter an oil terminal off the Welsh coast of Britain, leading to a major oil spillage and environmental disaster. As journalists tried to establish 'who was to blame', they uncovered an extraordinarily complex transnational activity.

> Built in Spain; owned by a Norwegian; registered in Cyprus; managed from Glasgow; chartered by the French; crewed by Russians; flying a Liberian flag; carrying an American cargo; and pouring oil on to the Welsh coast (Headline, *Independent*, 22 February 1996, p. 1)

One question raised by the tanker disaster was the extent to which key members of the crew could understand the English instructions of the local pilot. Later news reported the need to bring in a Chinese tug and the problems of interpretation which resulted. Yet English is supposedly the basis for 'Seaspeak' – the special English used by deck officers as an international maritime communication. Johnson (1994) has noted, however, how changing job requirements have led to an increase in the number of personnel who need English language skills:

> Scarret (1987) has chronicled the recent trend towards the demanning of ships and the de-skilling of those crew members who remain; Kitchen (1993) has related this trend to the incipient disappearance of the RO [radio officer] from deep-sea ships, and goes on to note the opposition of insurance underwriters to such a move. The current trend is towards broad training courses, such as those provided in the Netherlands which incorporate deck, engine room and radio office skills, leading to the status of 'polyvalent maritime officer'. It may well be that, as crews become less technically skilled in the maintenance of increasingly complex

---

Why economic development encourages English

1 Although an incoming company may not be headquartered in an English-speaking country, it will typically establish a joint venture with a local concern. Joint ventures (e.g. Sino-Swiss and German) tend to adopt English as their lingua franca, which promotes a local need for training in English.

2 Establishment of joint ventures requires legal documents and memoranda of understanding. International legal agreements are written in English because there exists international consensus about the meaning of terms, obligations and rights. This activity may create a demand for specialist English language training for lawyers – the case in China where new courses are being established.

3 A newly established company will be in most cases involved in international trade – importing raw materials and exporting finished goods. This will create a need for back-office workers, sales and marketing staff with skills in English.

4 Technology transfer is closely associated with English, largely because most transfer is sourced by a TNC who either is English speaking or who uses English for external trade. Technology transfer is not restricted to the enter-

prise itself, but may extend to associated infrastructure expansion such as airports, railways and telecommunications. In central China, engineers in local steel factories learn English so they can install and maintain plant bought from Germany and Italy. The predominance of English in technology transfer reflects the role of TNCs more than the fact that much leading-edge technology derives from the US. However, technology transfer to developing economies tends not to be at a leading edge: keeping new technology in Europe, North America and Japan helps the Big Three to maintain a competitive edge despite high costs of labour.

5 Establishing joint ventures creates incoming demands from international visitors who require supporting services, such as hotels and tourist facilities. The staff of secondary enterprises also require training in English for these visitors.

6 Jobs in the new enterprises may be better paid and more attractive than those in the public sector of a developing economy. English qualifications may become an entry necessity, or have perceived value in access to jobs – even if the job itself does not require English.

shipboard equipment, they will all need greatly increased skills in English, if only to be able to ask for help by radio, and understand the reply! (Johnson, 1994, p. 90)

This illustrates two features of economic globalisation: the transnational nature of ownership and management and the increasing demand for 'flexible labour'. Complexity of ownership is a necessary, but at first sight counter-intuitive, consequence of the concentration of ownership. As TNCs become larger and their enterprises global, new ventures involve considerable risk. No single corporation can accept the risk, for example, of establishing a global satellite network. Instead, a TNC attempts to spread the risk of large, single ventures through cooperation with other large enterprises: they tend to 'hunt in packs'. Thus globalisation is not, as might be expected, creating huge global monopolies. Rather, it is creating global oligopolies: a small number of large operators who display some of the features of a cartel. Later, we will argue that world languages may be developing on similar lines: rather than English acquiring a 'monopoly' position as a world lingua franca, there may emerge an 'oligopoly' consisting of a group of major languages, each with particular spheres of influence.

New working practices

Globalisation has a significant effect on labour practices. The new global distribution of labour has led to a reduction of unskilled jobs in richer countries. But there has also been greater pressure, as we have seen, for more flexible labour. This derives from the speed of corporate and technological change – workers must turn their hands quickly to a wider variety of activities and retrain regularly. This trend – arising in all economic sectors – has led to a decreasing reliance on key communicators and gatekeepers (in the case of maritime workers, the radio officer) who possess specialist language skills.

Trends suggest there is a growing need for people in various jobs to communicate with each other directly, yet in the transnational activities of world trade, there is less likelihood that they share the same language. As a result, more people in a wider variety of jobs require a greater competence in English. Figures 26 and 27 illustrate changes in patterns of communications now arising in many industries. Case studies in section 4 show how these changes may affect particular groups of workers.

The global-local tension

Globalisation is probably the most significant socio-economic process affecting the world in the late 20th century. Its effects are felt not only in the economy, but also in politics and culture. It would be wrong, however, to think of globalisation as primarily a 'neo-colonial' process – whereby the capital and social values of rich countries are imposed upon poorer ones. Discussions of globalisation usually emphasise the importance of local contexts, for globalisation creates patterns of interdependence and interconnection, where cultures and economies influence each other rapidly, but in complex and often unpredictable ways.

Rather than a process which leads to uniformity and homogeneity, globalisation seems to create new, hybrid forms of culture, language and political organisation: the results of global influences meeting local traditions, values and social contexts.
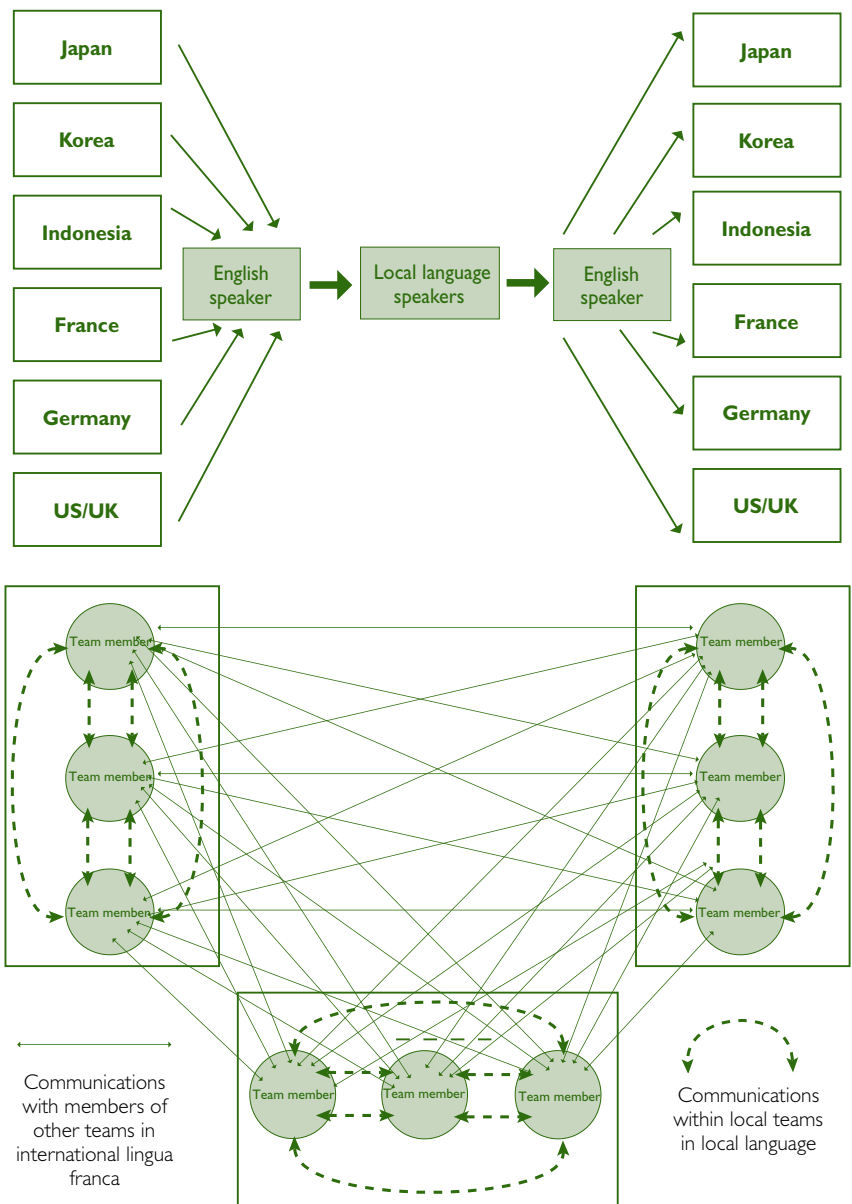
Figure 26 (*upper*) English as an international lingua franca: traditional import-export model

Figure 27 (*lower*) English as an international lingua franca: post-modern/globalised model

Traditional international trade is associated with:

- Physical movement of goods;
- Interactions with all foreign countries conducted in English;
- Key intermediaries (negotiators/ interpreters) with English language skills;
- Manufacture/business conducted in local language;
- Location of workers based on labour costs;
- Communications technology used to control and monitor remote operations.

In a globalised model, English is associated with:

- Services and 'knowledge-intensive industries';
- Working is dispersed – employees do not need to be in physical proximity;
- All (or most) team members need English language skills;
- Local interactions may not be in English;
- Location of workers sensitive to available skills/knowledge and communications infrastructure;
- Communications technology used to integrate work of dispersed teams.

The immaterial economy

The world's output is getting lighter. Within a few decades, many more people will be employed in the service industries which characterise economic globalisation. New forms of global teleworking are emerging and an increased proportion of the value of goods is produced through language-related activity.

The immaterial economy

As a national economy matures, there is usually a trend away from the 'primary' sector (resources, agriculture) and 'secondary' sector (manufacturing and industry) towards the 'tertiary' sector, made up of service industries. It is the tertiary sector which is most language intensive. Yet the developments in these activities are under-recorded: many services are internal to large enterprises and transnational corporations (TNCs), where they remain invisible to standard statistics.

Manufactured goods, however, are clearly becoming lighter and a higher proportion of the value of goods relates to style, branded image or 'added value'.

> The fashionable talk is about the 'weightless' or 'dematerialized' economy. As production has shifted from steel, heavy copper wire and vacuum tubes to microprocessors, fine fibre-optic cables and transistors, and as services have increased their share of the total, output has become lighter and less visible. ... The average weight of a real dollar's worth of American exports is now less than half that in 1970. (The World Economy Survey, *The Economist*, 28 September 1996, p. 43)

The immaterial economy is bolstered by a major growth in the service sector and this trend is nowhere clearer than in the US, where nearly 75% of the total labour force was employed in services by 1995. Until World War I the services and industrial sector grew together, but afterwards services continued to grow as industry declined (Figure 28).

According to the Hooke forecasting model, the services sector will, by 2050, account for 75% of Gross World Product, as opposed to 50% in 1990 (Figure 29). 'Services', however, includes many disparate activities, from McDonalds to banking, from health to education. Much of the economic activity associated with these trends is difficult to measure or survey. The most complete economic statistics tend to be those prepared at a national level and associated with the movement of tangible goods. Global movements of immaterial goods and services, particularly involving transfers within multinational corporations, tend not to be captured by existing statistics.
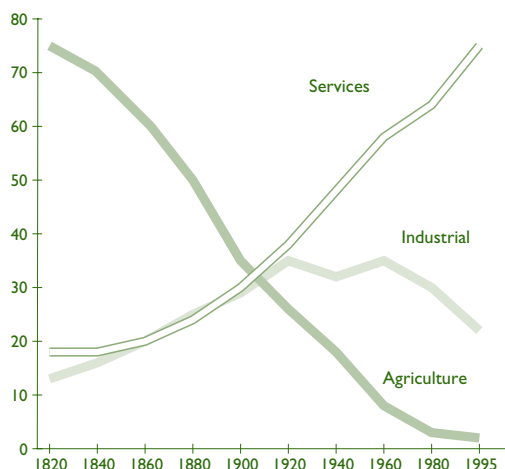
This shift from manufacturing towards services is visible in the English language itself. The word 'product' used to be associated almost exclusively with manufactured goods. Now it is used with rising frequency in connection with services. A search through the British National Corpus of English shows how the trend has developed. For example, the British trade journal *Caterer & Hotelkeeper* (5 September 1991) demonstrates the trend in usage in an article about a new, computerised booking service for hotels:

> 'Bravo will distribute "UK Ltd" worldwide, and give the travelling public access to the total UK **product**,' said Bravo spokesman John Roussel. ... 'Essentially it's an electronic brochure, but it could be used to promote a branded **product**, such as a hotel consortium or Agatha Christie weekends.' (British National Corpus)

The use of 'product' reflects the extent to which services have become commodified: services are designed, packaged and marketed in ways similar to standardised manufactured products. Much of this involves discursive activity. Advertising, marketing, promoting, receiving clients and guests, servicing – all these are activities reliant on language. The British linguist, Norman Fairclough, has noted the extent to which language itself – the way flight attendants, receptionists or waiters talk to clients – has become a key part of the 'product' offered to customers (Fairclough, 1994).

Teleworking

Teleworking – the ability to work away from a central office using telecommunications – has been hailed for decades as a major shift in working practices. The change seems not to have come about in the direct way predicted, although an increasing number of people work at least part of the week at home. Jack Nilles, the American who invented the term, anticipates the number will grow to 200 million by 2016. AT&T now has a telecommuting workforce of 35,000. However, Nilles does not consider technology as the major determinant, but rather management culture: many people could work from home with no more technology than a telephone, but some employers remain resistant (*Financial Times*, 8 January 1997, p. 6).

Yet new management trends and organisational structures are certainly increasing the need for both dispersed and remote workers. Major growth areas have been telesales and support services. British Telecom, for example, has a dispersed team of directory enquiry operators working from home, but their work can be monitored and coordinated by supervisors as easily as if they were in a central office. Callers, meanwhile, are unaware of an operator's physical location.

> The more business takes place over the international phone lines, the more the common language of business will dominate. Of course English is an open standard – anyone can use it – but this should be some advantage to Anglophone countries. (McRae, *Independent*, 16 November 1996, p. 19)

Figure 28 US employment by sector

Screen-based labour

A study of EU workers showed that 20% of working time was spent in handling documents. Since document handling now involves word processing, email communications, database queries and information retrieval, workers everywhere spend more time using computers. One feature of the weightless economy is the extent to which labour has become screen based. And such screen-based labour is easily globalised using telecommunications technology.

The trend towards globalised screen-based labour began with the sub-contracting of data-entry work from the US to the Caribbean. Pearson and Mitter (1993) describe a history of routine punching of computer cards taking place in Jamaica from the 1970s:

> One of the largest and earliest foreign owned companies operating in the Caribbean is Caribbean Data Services, a subsidiary of American Airlines, which operates data-entry shops in Barbados and the Dominican Republic. ... A major new facility, which came on stream in 1989 is the Jamaican Digiport at Montego Bay, which was established for the specific purpose of promoting off-shore teleworking – both data entry and other activities. (Pearson and Mitter, 1993)

Many other, large transnational companies whose employees are involved primarily in screen-based labour have distant and dispersed workers. The New York Life Insurance Company is credited with establishing the first 'intelligent office work' offshore, when it opened an office in County Derry, in Ireland. Some US 0800 telephone numbers, offering telesales and support services, are also routed to Ireland. Some London boroughs have the administration and issue of parking tickets handled in the north of Scotland. Swiss Air, Lufthansa and British Airways have back offices in India handling accounting and ticketing queries. British Airways also exploits timezone differences by switching European telephone enquiries to their New York office at the end of the British working day. Indian software engineers are employed to reprogram US supermarket computers to fix the '2000' bug. British railway companies use an Indian back office to process ticketing accounts of the kind which allow travel on different sectors to be attributed to different service providers. A number of international construction and car companies have design units based in Britain, from where architectural plans, design drawings and engineering models are daily transmitted to factories and construction sites on the other side of the world.

Work which once had to be located close to clients or other divisions of companies is now distributed across the world to an extent that is remarkable. The new, globally wired economy has become so significant that tax revenues, based on tangible transactions, are threatened, provoking serious discussion in recent years of introducing a European 'bit' tax on data flows to recover lost revenue (*Independent*, 20 January 1997, p. 5).

But the motive of TNCs in relocating back offices or sub-contracting work to other countries is not simply a search for cheaper and less-regulated labour. TNCs now roam the world in search of skilled labour, especially for work in the growing 'knowledge-intensive' industries, engaged in the production and manipulation of intellectual property. Employers require ever-higher levels of skills and education in workers. There seems to be developing a new, global English-speaking market in the knowledge-intensive industries. Intellectual property,

documents and 'speech' are light: they can be shifted around the world easily. English-speaking countries are able to join this global business since many of the jobs require a near native-speaker competence: foreign-language skills will rarely be sufficient. Those countries in which English is a first or second language have a clear economic advantage.

Branding

Branding is one way in which value can be added to material goods through immaterial means. The construction of a brand image is primarily a semiotic activity. Levi's make jeans, but the value of these garments is much greater than their intrinsic value as manufactured cotton goods: the cultural associations of buying and wearing Levi's permits them to be sold at premium prices.

The economic activities of clothing production allows relatively unskilled labour to be employed in third-world countries. A worker producing a T-shirt in the Philippines, for example, may be paid one-thousandth of the final retail value of the goods. Companies such as Nike, who have created a global market for their goods, are well known for their propensity to shift manufacture from country to country, in search of the cheapest labour. The added value obtained through marketing, however, is the result of activity in languages and places other than those in which primary manufacture took place. Even goods which have weight (like Coca-Cola), when locally produced and sold, possess a brand image and added value from a globalised activity.

Semiotic activity is more easily globalised than physical activities. Global branding requires centralised control of an image: technology allows the intellectual property which is intrinsic to marketing (such as images, slogans, video materials) to be moved more rapidly and cheaply than physical goods. The growth of international franchising in the fast-food industry recognises this fact: a branch of McDonalds may be established anywhere in the world using marketing images and reputations manufactured in the US.

Today, a greater number of goods and products have become the objects of style and consumer culture. Correspondingly, an increasing proportion of a product's worth is now semiotic. Whilst there is, as yet, no means of attributing different quotients of productive activity to different languages, it does seem that English has become a primary language of design, advertising and marketing. Software has become more important than the hardware in the computer industry; film and programme production more important than televisions and satellites in the entertainment industry. It is a shift not simply to services, but specifically towards knowledge-intensive industries.
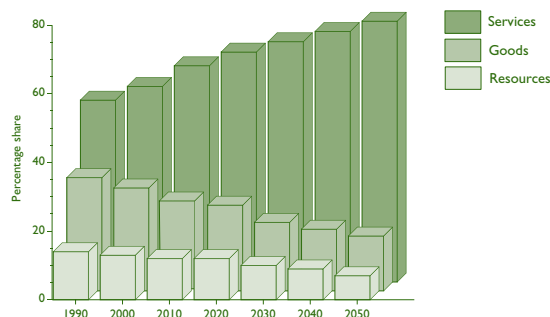
Figure 29 Composition of Gross World Product 1990–2050

Cultural flows

Language has been regarded since the Renaissance in terms of territory. Statistics about language, culture and economy, collected by international bodies, have been based on nation states, populations of speakers and relative sizes of economies. But chaos theory suggests the concept of flow may be better suited to understanding language in a borderless world.

A new direction?

We earlier suggested that it was possible to view global English as a complex system. Chaos theory, the mathematical method of modelling the behaviour of complex systems, is essentially a model of flow. Already used to understand the turbulent behaviour of fluid in pipes, or the aerodynamics of aircraft wings, the idea of flow can also be applied to language and culture.

The concept of globalisation includes the ideas both of flow and counter-flow, producing a tension between the global and local. The English language flows into other languages, which adopt English words and phrases. English also 'colonises' the space of other languages by taking over certain communicative domains. But local languages also influence English, giving rise to new hybrid language varieties in second-language-speaking areas. If we examine communication patterns as flow we might widen our focus to include the translation of books or the dubbing of films as they move from one language to another, or of tourists moving from one city to another, telephone calls and Internet data carrying information and intellectual property from one part of the world to another.

Although the modelling of culture in terms of flow is still a poorly developed discipline, social scientists have become more interested in viewing the world in such ways rather than relying on static entities such as 'cultures', 'nations' and 'national economies'. Appadurai (1990) identifies five global flows in terms of metaphorical landscapes. These he terms *ethnoscapes* (people movement), *technoscapes* (technology transfer, technology convergence), *financescapes* (flows of capital and currency), *mediascapes* (flows of audio-visual product but also the images and narratives they convey) and *ideoscapes* (flows of ideas and ideologies). Here we examine some of the more measurable kinds of flow, to see what broad shifts there might be as globalisation develops.

Flows of people

The ultimate drivers of language are the people who use it. People move extensively: for business or education, as tourists and pilgrims, as migrant workers and immigrants, as refugees and exiles, taking with them languages and cultural values. Desire for physical mobility has created further massive industries in transport and services. The increase in people flow relates to other significant changes – rise of world trade, shifts to services requiring face-to-face contact, wider dispersal of families, the emergence of new cultural diasporas, the operations of transnational companies and the growing international trade in higher education.

Tourism is one well-documented form of people flow which has had a significant impact on the use of English. Tourism is of increasing importance to the world economy: Figure 30 shows the development of world tourism over a 40 year period. Some estimates suggest that over 10% of the world's labour force is now employed in travel and tourism-related activities, accounting for nearly 10% of the world's economy. These figures are set to rise: projections are for 100 million new jobs in the industry by 2006 (*Sunday Business*, 6 October 1996, p. 20). Tourism has a ripple effect elsewhere in the economy: in manufacturing, retailing, services and construction. And more destinations are being sought – such as China, South Korea and Indonesia – causing governments to invest in the infrastructure which supports tourist traffic.

International travel has a globalising effect. People are brought together, businesses and institutions form relationships of interdependency and closer communication. And, more directly than many other kinds of flow, international travel brings people from different language backgrounds together, promoting the need to learn a language in common. But there is also a growing provision for a customer's own language, as service industries find they must compete on levels of service. Qantas airline of Australia, for example, requires proficiency levels in 'priority' languages from its staff. An indication of trends in Asia is provided by a study published by the Australian government which recently identified Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean and Thai as possessing commercial significance (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1994).

While there is little research that allows us to state confidently which languages will be encouraged through what kinds of contact, we can assume that international traffic within a single region will encourage the use of a regional language, whereas traffic between two or more world regions may encourage one of the 'world languages', of which English is the most important. However, while passengers moving between regions such as the US to Asia may promote English, passengers from Europe travelling to Latin America may expect to use Portuguese.

One means to forecast linguistic flow is to examine projected worldwide destinations and sources of passengers. Figures for international air travel in 2010 between key regions suggests that major changes will occur in Asia: a region that will by 2010 account for over half the world's total international air travel. Some 267 million passengers (67% of Asian international arrivals) will be moving *within* the Asia Pacific region; the majority of this internal traffic will be travelling in a conduit opening between the north-east and south-east. A major route is further likely to develop between the 'hotspots' of Taipei and Hong Kong. By 2010 this alone may have traffic equivalent to that of London and New York in 1993 (Air Transport Action Group, 1993). The effects on language are not easily predicted, but it seems likely that the preponderance of flow between North-east and South-east Asia – particularly as it relates to business activity – will promote Mandarin as a regional lingua franca.

?

Will the demand for English in the world continue to rise at its present rate?
p. 60

Figure 30 Development of world tourism 1950–1990
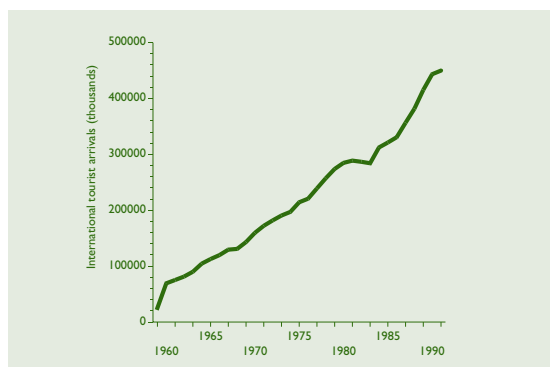
Communication flows

While sales of communications equipment – switches, fibre-optic interfaces, modems, or handsets – can be measured in millions of units, it is the flow of communication between countries, via Internet or telephone, which is of greater interest in terms of language. International telephone calls are counted in minutes and are recorded by the outgoing, billing service provider. Worldwide in 1994 there were 53 billion minutes of international telecommunications traffic (MiTTs) which is expected to rise to 106 billion minutes by the year 2000. Figure 31 analyses the 48 most heavily used intercontinental flows in 1994 (as calculated by Tele-Geography Inc.) according to the likely language of communication. It shows English is the dominant language of intercontinental communication, if only because of the massive traffic between English-speaking countries and other parts of the world.

The dominance of English in the telephone conversations of the world is unlikely to continue for long. In developing economies the communications infrastructure is generally insufficient to meet demand. One figure, often quoted, is 'teledensity': the proportion of households with telephones. While the US has the greatest density of telephone lines – nearly 95% of households have a telephone – in China, the penetration is only 3.4% (Wu, 1996). Even with a working telephone in China, making a call at present is likely to be difficult: 'Long distance circuits in south and central China are so congested that only 15% of the calls dialled get through. The completion rate is only about 60%' (Wu, 1996, p. 703). Yet remarkable targets exist for China's massive potential market: one telephone per urban household by the year 2000; by 2010 a digital network to be in place and telephone coverage of 25 per 100 people nationally (Walker, *Financial Times*, 3 October 1995, p. 27).

Indonesia, likewise, is fast installing satellite capacity alongside mobile-phone systems. Rising incomes, greater demand for internal communications and a government that in 1994 opened the industry to foreign investment all promise a new infrastructure over which language flows will be generated in the 21st century. Here, however, it is likely to be Bahasa Indonesia which benefits – a language currently spoken as a first language by less than 20% of the population but as a second language by around 70%. A high proportion of the increased communication flows within Indonesia and between Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia is likely to be made in the national language. Such contact may be one factor in encouraging language shift towards first-language Malay usage in the next generation.

Falling telecommunications costs (p. 31) are transforming the relative distances between countries. Figure 32 illustrates the new 'telegeography' by showing relative 'teledistance' of countries from Britain in 1997: North America is closer than France – which is about the same distance from Britain as Australia. This shows how the English-speaking countries have moved into close proximity. The changing shape of telegeography, brought about both by technological developments and falling costs will continue to reshape patterns of language flow around the world. As communications infrastructures improve and relative costs fall, more telephone conversations around the world will be held in languages other than English.
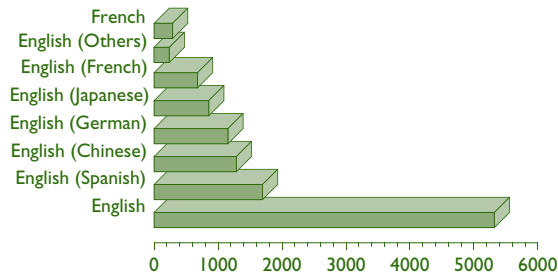
Figure 31 Languages used in intercontinental telephone traffic in 1994 in millions of MiTTs (minutes of international telecommunications traffic)

Flows of finance

Large volumes of money flow daily across the world as cash, foreign exchange, gold, investment and shares. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has tended to flow between members of the Big Three regions: the largest ever flow of FDI from one country to another was recorded in 1995 from Britain to the US. But TNCs have also contributed to a major flow from the Big Three towards Asia and Latin America, helping create companies which themselves export: companies from Brazil and India are now active worldwide in consumer electronics, aircraft and hotel management.

But perhaps the most significant flow in terms of language is the increasing vortex of FDI which is occurring in Asia between Chinese business interests. Overseas Chinese in South-east Asia account for a much larger proportion of business than their numbers suggest:

> In the Philippines, the overseas Chinese make up only 1% of the country's population but control over half of the stock market. In Indonesia the proportions are 4% and 75% respectively, in Malaysia 32% and 60%. In Thailand the overseas Chinese account for at least half of the wealth. Now they are pushing into Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma) and, yes, mainland China, where they account for about half the foreign direct investment. According to one estimate, the 51m overseas Chinese control an economy worth $700 billion – roughly the same size as the 1.2 billion mainlanders. Their liquid wealth (cash, gold, shares) may run to as much as $2.5 trillion. (*The Economist*, 9 March 1996, p. 4)

Growing intraregional trade and financial dealings amongst Chinese-speaking business interests will undoubtedly strengthen the role of Mandarin or another Chinese language such as Cantonese, shared by interlocutors as a first language, as a regional lingua franca.

World cities

Despite growing urbanisation worldwide, some cities will be more important nexus points than others for global cultural, political and economic flows. Indeed, few cities are likely to become 'world cities' in this sense. Knox (1995) suggests three cities are in the first rank of a global, urban hierarchy: London, New York and Tokyo. It is in these cities that key decisions which drive globalisation are taken and through which the global elites pass:

> Much of this change has been transacted and mediated through world cities, the nodal points of the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that sustain the contemporary world economy. (Knox, 1995, p. 234)

World cities provide headquarters for TNCs; they are centres of finance, focal points for social and technological innovation and key transport points. London and New York are likely to remain key world 'hubs' through which ideas, finance and people flow.
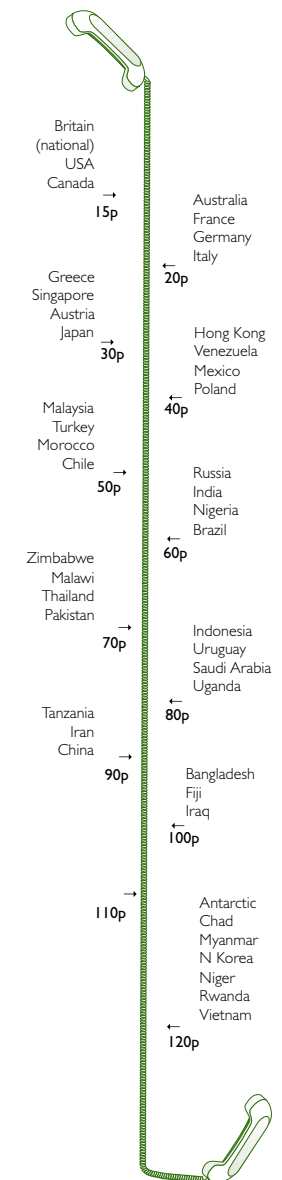
Figure 32 Teledistance of selected countries from Britain in 1997

Global inequalities

* *

As developing economies mature and per capita income rises, so social and economic inequalities also seem to grow: proficiency in English may be one of the mechanisms for dividing those who have access to wealth and information from those who don't. The global spread of English may also be associated with decreased use of endangered languages.

English and social inequality

In many parts of the world, English is regarded as a language of power, success and prestige:

> The global language can be seen to open doors, which fuels a 'demand' for English. This demand reflects contemporary power balances and the hope that mastery of English will lead to the prosperity and glamorous hedonism that the privileged in this world have access to and that is projected in Hollywood films, MTV videos, and ads for transnational corporations. (Phillipson, 1996, p. 2)

If English brings wealth, is it also the case that those who have no access to English are rendered poor? In many countries English has become implicated in social and economic mechanisms which structure inequality. Whereas in the past poverty has been largely a matter of geography, class, gender and ethnicity, now it may also depend on access to the lingua franca of a global elite.

Responses to the English 2000 global consultation questionnaire suggest that most English language teaching professionals believe English is essential for progress but do not think that learning the language leads to negative social consequences:

> 2.11 English is essential for progress as it will provide the main means of access to high-tech communication and information over the next twenty-five years (95% agreed).

> 1.2 Competence in English encourages elitism and increases socio-economic inequalities (59% disagreed). (English 2000, 1995, pp. 55, 43)

However, some linguists in the developing world do connect English with inequality:

> English is backed by international groups which treat English as an instrument of colonisation and as a commodity for trade ... It interprets skill migration as brightening life chances, and it accentuates the divide between (1) rural and urban, (2) the developing and the developed, and (3)

elites and masses. It permits better education for a minuscule minority. At the same time, it inhibits interaction between science and society and it inhibits the creation of appropriate technology. (Pattanayak, 1996, p. 50)

Proficiency in English is not merely an instrumental affair – it is too often used as a gatekeeping mechanism. The lack of an examination certificate, or signs, even trivial, that a writer or speaker is not a native or fluent speaker may be sufficient to bar access to certain jobs. It also seems to be used as a screening mechanism for scholars submitting papers to international journals, which are increasingly published in English. The editor of *Science* recently commented:

> If you see people making multiple mistakes in spelling, syntax and semantics, you have to wonder whether when they did their science they weren't also making similar errors of inattention. (Floyd E. Bloom, editor of *Science*, cited in Gibbs, 1995, p. 80)

The role of English-medium education

In post-colonial countries, such as India and Malaysia, English-medium education provides one of the mechanisms of distributing social and economic power. English-medium education in such countries is often seen by both parents and children as a means to economic success, but it has been argued that where teachers are not fully proficient in the English language and where there is little use of English in the community the aspirant language learner will be condemned to a second-rate education. English-medium education is thus accused of undermining attempts to improve educational provision and encouraging educational mediocrity amongst aspirant, non-elite groups.

Hong Kong provides an example of the dilemma facing many parents and, indeed, countries. Hong Kong's former status as a British colony established English as the language of the judicial and legislative executive. Yet the 1991 census results show that while 29.4% of the population spoke English, only 2.2% did so as their usual language; 88.7% spoke Cantonese and another 10.3% spoke other Chinese dialects. Despite this, English became the official medium of instruction in Hong Kong schools, meaning most of the population had to study from a young age through a second or foreign language. In practice, the language of the classroom became 'mixed code' – a mixture of Cantonese and English.

It is widely believed in Hong Kong that this situation helped the development of an elite group while giving a poorer educational experience to the majority. Mixed code meant many children failed to improve their proficiency in English yet compromised their learning of other subjects. Long before the handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China, there was growing support for the idea of using Chinese as a medium of instruction, at least at primary level. A government report explained the dilemma:

> It is easier for students to learn through their mother tongue and to continue their secondary education without a switch to a second language. However if the aim of the education system is to produce students with a high level of English language proficiency, then English medium instruction can achieve that aim. Chinese medium instruction will not. (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1995, p. 10)

Figure 33 About half the world's languages are found in the rapidly modernising Asia Pacific region (highlighted). The majority of these languages will be lost in the next century
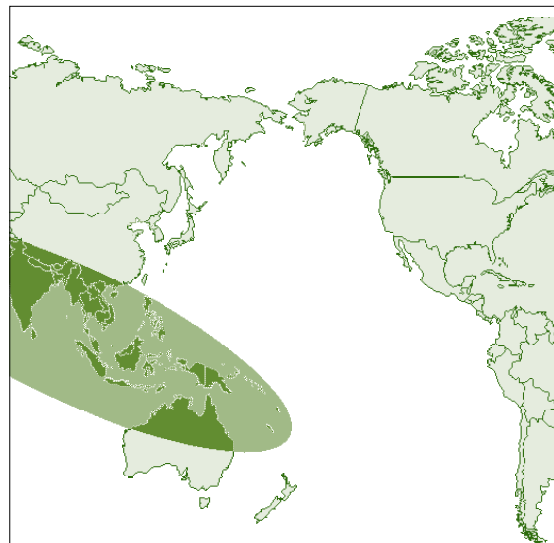
● ●

The local politics of English

The social consequences of English-medium education often reflects local political and cultural histories and differing colonial legacies. In India, for example, English has been accused of being associated with a social elite wishing to maintain its privileged position. Pattanayak suggests:

> there is a parallel between English as a colonial imposition supported by a segment of the elite and receiving a stiff nationalist opposition, and, on the other hand, the current elitist imposition acclaimed by a segment of the population aspiring entry into the elitist privileges and opposed by a larger segment of population. (Pattanayak, 1996, pp. 150–1)

One of the reasons why English education is such a sensitive matter in many countries is because the distribution of English proficiency may affect the 'balance of power' between ethnic groups and for that reason be subject to political management. Pennycook (1994) argues that in Malaysia the adoption of Malay as a national language was expected to benefit the dominant Malay community; when it was realised that continued multilingual competence amongst the Chinese was contributing to their economic success, attitudes to the use of English in tertiary education relaxed. Now public debate suggests a lack of access to English education may disadvantage young Malays compared to their ethnic Chinese counterparts. Such interaction of local cultural politics with global trends can result in unpredictable political enthusiasm for English.

The growing provision and encouragement of English-medium education can upset the traditional relations of social power in similar ways. A study of the gender balance at university in Brunei Darussalam (Jones, 1997) showed that more women than men are graduating with science degrees and obtaining higher grades. Men, on the other hand, form the majority for literature courses. This reversal of the general trend in gender relations is explained by the fact that science is taught through English – a subject in which, from early secondary school, more Brunei girls than boys have excelled – whilst literature is taught through the medium of Malay. This, as Jones points out, could have unpredictable long-term consequences, particularly in a Muslim country: 'increasingly, the male dominated government and professions in Brunei are having to make a choice between employing well qualified women or poorly qualified men' (Jones, 1997).

English and endangered languages

One of the main linguistic issues facing the world in the 21st century is the extinction of a substantial proportion of the world's languages. Krauss (1992, p. 7), for example, thought it plausible that 'the coming century will see either the death or doom of 90% of mankind's languages'. Many endangered languages are in a region of rapid economic growth, the Asia Pacific (Figure 33). Figure 34 charts geographical distribution of languages.

This trend towards reduced linguistic diversity is the outcome of global demographic and economic trends: the local cultures and lifestyles which supported small community languages are disappearing and their speakers are usually those with least political or cultural power. Table 13 lists some endangered languages in Indonesia, where there is likely to be a substantial shift towards Bahasa Indonesia – the national language – in the next few decades.
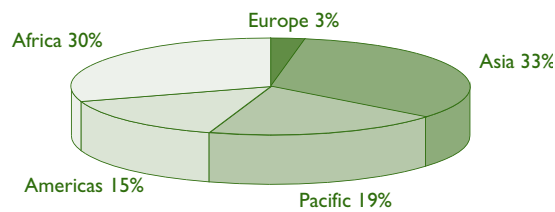
Figure 34 Geographic distribution of the 6,703 living languages recorded by Grimes (1996). Over 50% of the world's stock of languages are found in the Asia Pacific

But it is not only the very small languages which are likely to suffer from language shift. In Indonesia, the larger languages such as Javanese (with around 85 million speakers) are also likely to suffer. As Tickoo (1993) argued in connection with Kashmiri – one of the scheduled languages of India – such sub-national languages have 'to live in the shadow of larger languages or, more truly, at the bottom of a hierarchy of languages'. There will be, in the 21st century, a major shake-up of the global language hierarchy.

English is rarely the main, or direct cause of this language loss, but its global high profile and its close association with social and economic changes in developing countries are likely to make it a target for those campaigning against the destruction of cultural diversity which language extinction implies. It would not be surprising if anti-English movements worldwide begin to associate language loss with the rise of global English.

The new information poor

There is yet a further area in which English may be identified with inequality – that of communications technology. The Internet is not quite the global democratic resource it is so often claimed to be. For those in developing countries, access to knowledge is a costly, problematic business and there is growing concern that unequal access to information technologies will create new distinctions between the information poor and the information rich. For example, the trend for online scholarly journals, which circulate new research findings faster than traditional paper equivalents, may exacerbate the difficulty which researchers in poorer countries have in gaining access to knowledge:

> 'The huge danger is that the Internet might create a global impoverished class that doesn't have access to information systems', warns Martin Hall, an archeologist at the University of Cape Town who often collaborates with researchers in other parts of Africa. 'In five years we will be dealing with mostly paperless journals. Right now many African researchers depend on charity for their printed journals; paperless journals will be completely denied to these scientists.' (Gibbs, 1995, p. 83)

The pattern of unequal access is partly a colonial legacy: information is piped around the globe by fibre-optic and co-axial cables along the same routes as taken by the Victorian telegraph which linked the British empire. Although satellite technology is extending information access, the areas of the world closest to the information superhighway are those which the telegraph first reached. Africa is notably poorly serviced, as are all locations any distance inland from maritime cables. Many African universities have intermittent, fragile connections to electronic mail which their budgets scarcely allow them to maintain. It is one reason why, even as African economies develop, many students will have to study overseas.

Nusa Tenggara
ABUI
ADABE
ANAKALANGU
ATONI

Maluku
ALUNE
AMAHAI
AMBELAU
APUTAI
ASILULU

Sulawesi
ANDIO
ARALLE-TABULAHAN

Kalimantan
AHE
AMPANANG
AOHENG

Sumatra
ANDIO
ARALLE-TABULAHAN

Irian Jaya
ABUN
AGHU
AIRORAN
AMBAI
ANSUS
ANUS
ARANDAI
ARGUNI
AS
ASMAT, CASUARINA
    COAST
ASMAT, CENTRAL
ASMAT, NORTH
ASMAT, YAOSAKOR
ATOHWAIM
AUYE
AWERA
AWYI
AWYU, MIARO
AWYU, NOHON

Table 13 Some Indonesian languages beginning with the letter A which have small numbers of native speakers and are likely to be endangered (based on Grimes, 1996)

Summary

● ●

1 Demographic trends

Demographic trends provide a basis for forecasting the likely future populations of first-language speakers for all the world's major languages. With further research and a better understanding of the nature of language shift towards national languages, it would be possible to develop similar forecasts for second-language speakers.

2 A new order for the world economy

There is a marked shift in the balance of economic power in the world which will transform the relative attractiveness to learners of different languages. It is not just wealth, but the changing way it is created which will have a profound effect on the need for international languages. The transition to a 'weightless' economy increases the need for communication across national borders. More people will need to acquire a higher proficiency in English.

3 Technology

Technological developments, such as the Internet, are changing the way the world's citizens communicate and the way organisations operate. But the demography of the Internet is changing rapidly and the experience of the last 10 years provides no guide to the future. Languages other than English are accounting for an increasing proportion of the traffic and content of the Internet.

4 Global inequality

It is not just the pattern of wealth which is changing, but also poverty which is being restructured. English plays an indirect part in the restructuring of inequality around the world as well as in the loss of smaller languages. The social and political consequences of these processes are unpredictable: together they present one of the many 'wild cards' in long-term forecasting.

References

Ammon, U. (1995) To what extent is German an international language? In P. Stevenson (ed) *The German Language and the Real World: sociolinguistic, cultural and pragmatic perspectives on contemporary German*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Appadurai (1990) Disjuncture and difference in the global culture economy. *Theory Culture and Society*, vol. 7, pp. 295–310.

Australian Language and Literacy Council (1994) *Speaking of Business*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Coulmas, F. (1992) *Language and Economy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

David, P. (1990) The Dynamo and the computer: an historical perspective on the modern productivity paradox. *American Economic Review*, May. Cited in *The Economist World Economy Survey* (1996) 28 September to 4 October.

Dickson, P. and Cumming, A. (1996) (eds) *Profiles of Language Education in 25 Countries*. Slough: NFER.

The Economist (1996) *Pocket World in Figures 1997 edition*. London: The Economist/Profile Books.

English 2000 (1995) *English in the World: the English 2000 global consultation report*. British Council: Manchester.

Fairclough, N. (1994) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity.

Findahl, O. (1989) Language in the age of satellite television. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 4, pp. 133–59.

Firth, A. (1996) 'Lingua Franca' English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, April.

Gibbs, W. (1995) Lost science in the third world. S*cientific American*, August, pp. 76–83.

Girardet, H. (1996) *The Gaia Atlas of Cities*. London: Gaia Books.

Grimes, B.F. (1996) (ed) *Ethnologue: languages of the world*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Hagen, S. (1993) (ed) *Languages in European Business: a regional survey of small and medium sized companies*. London: CILT.

Hearn, P.M and Button, D.F. (1994) *Language Industries Atlas*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Hooke, G. From interviews made in 1996 by David Graddol.

Hong Kong Education Commission (1995) *Enhancing Language Proficiency: a comprehensive strategy*. ECR 6. Hong Kong: Government Information Services.

Johnson, B. (1994) English in maritime radiotelephony. *World Englishes*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 83–91.

Jones, G. (1997) *Girls are Made from Sugar and Spice – Boys are Just Stupid: gender, educational achievement and bilingualism*. Kuala Lumpur: Paper given to the Second Regional Conference on English in South-east Asia.

Kerswill, P. (1996) Milton Keynes and dialect levelling in south-eastern British English. In D. Graddol, D. Leith and J. Swann (eds) *English: history, diversity and change*. London: Routledge.

Knox, P.L. (1995) World cities and the organization of global space. In R.J. Johnston, P.J. Taylor and M.J. Watts (eds) *Geographies of Social Change: remapping the world in the late twentieth century*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Krauss, M. (1992) The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 7–9.

Layard, R. Blanchard, O. Dornbusch, R. and Krugman, P. (1994) *East–West Migration: the alternatives*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

McRae, H. (1994) *The World in 2020*. London: HarperCollins.

McRae, H. (1996) World's cheapest international calls. *Independent*, 15 November, p. 19.

Pattanayak, D.P. (1996) Change, language and the developing world. In H. Coleman and L. Cameron (eds) *Change and Language*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters/BAAL.

Pearson, R. and Mitter, S. (1993) Offshore data processing. Rep. in J. Allen and C. Hamnett (1995) (eds) *A Shrinking World? Global unevenness and inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press/Open University.

Pennycook, A. (1994) *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London: Longman.

Phillipson, R. (1996) *Globalizing English: are linguistic human rights an alternative to linguistic imperialism?* Paper given at the International Conference on Language Rights, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, June 22–24.

Schwartz, P. and Leyden, P. (1997) The long boom: a history of the future 1980–2020. *Wired*, July p. 115.

Tickoo, M. (1993) When is a language worth teaching? Native languages and English in India. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 225–39.

UNDP, (1996) *Human Development Report*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wongsothorn, A. (1996) Thailand. In P. Dickson and A. Cumming (eds) *Profiles of Language Education in 25 Countries*. Slough: NFER.

Wu, W. (1996) Great leap or long march: some policy issues of the development of the Internet in China. *Telecommunications Policy*, vol. 20, no. 9, pp. 699–711.

Impacts on English

The workplace

Earlier we described how trends in technology, the global economy and demography hold implications for our working lives. Here we examine the implications of these trends for English language skills required by the new globalised workforces.

Education and training

English already shares the languages curriculum in Europe with French, German and Spanish, alongside a variety of other languages from Russian to Urdu. Is the same true of schools worldwide? And what role will English play outside school? English-medium teaching is permitting rapid internationalisation of higher education and adult training.

The global media

Not so long ago, the media industry was bound by the territorial limits of the nation state. Today, the media is an international industry, competing to reach audiences with disposable incomes in every world region. Is English required to reach these massive global audiences?

Youth culture

The 'baby boom' in the west gave rise to a demographic hump which had profound consequences in public policy, the economy and culture. Now the baby boomers of the west are replaced by those in the non-western world who may have different cultural orientations and aspirations.

Internet communication

Computer technology has transformed the way people interact both locally and globally. Now we are at the edge of a new era of personal and group communications. Will the Internet remain the flagship of global English? And if so, will it be English as we know it today?

Time and place

Discussions of globalisation emphasise the 'annihilation of time and space' brought about by new communications technology, but there are some respects in which both will continue to be significant factors shaping economic, political and cultural formations in the 21st century.

Many of the general trends that are shaping our lives can be, as we have seen, identified, monitored and assessed using statistical surveys and forecasting models.

But what of the less direct ways in which economic, demographic and technological trends affect peoples' lives and, in particular, their everyday use of language? There is virtually no context in human life where language does not play an important part. Whether in employment, at home with the family, or enjoying oneself in leisure periods, language plays an intimate role in constructing relationships and identities as well as enabling people to get things done.

Establishing the practical consequences of general trends is an important part of social forecasting and also the most problematic. It is a great deal easier to play with numbers than to understand how they might change the world. When we look more closely at individual cases, we can see how global trends can have many different, and contradictory, local effects. Development by no means takes a straight line and the existence of counter-trends and the different ways in which global trends are accommodated and reshaped by local conditions and cultures, makes prediction hazardous.

The next section identifies selected contexts where patterns of language are changing and explores the impact of the general trends identified in section 3.

The workplace

· ·

Earlier we described how trends in technology, the global economy and demography hold implications for people's working lives. Here we examine the implications of these trends for English language skills required by the new globalised workforces.

English in a globalised workplace

One of the significant changes taking place in the organisation of the workplace today is a rethinking of the way in which activities are carried out and the way they are managed. The approach now experienced by many people has become known as 'process re-engineering'. It is a process that leads to organisational changes such as 'down-sizing', management 'delayering' and 'out-sourcing' of 'sub-processes' formerly carried out in-house. The final result is usually fewer people directly employed by the organisation, a management which is less hierarchical and operational units that are dispersed, each having greater autonomy to take decisions. Work is now frequently arranged around teams who, instead of passing a problem 'upstairs' to a line manager, must work out a solution themselves cooperatively.

> Michael Hammer, a current guru of management change is quoted as claiming 'Reengineering takes 40% of the labor out of most processes. For middle managers it is even worse; 80% of them either have their jobs eliminated or cannot adjust to a team-based organisation that requires them to be more of a coach than a task-master'. (Snyder, 1996, p. 10)

Process re-engineering is itself partly a result of the shift in economic activity towards services and screen-based labour (p. 35) and of the globalisation of both production and markets – with the coordinated activities of several companies and complex production implied in global operations. Yet process re-engineering is not experienced solely through transnational corporations. Small to medium-sized enterprises and even a two-person company are now affected. A small company, for example, engaged in the intellectual property business, can itself sub-contract work to other suppliers, use new technology to work cooperatively with distant clients and, with a World Wide Web page, develop a global marketing strategy.

These new forms of corporate organisation and part-

Case Study 1 World Print in Hong Kong

Many books published for English-speaking markets, particularly those printed in colour, are manufactured in Hong Kong, where skilled labour is sufficiently cheap to offset the higher cost and time delays incurred in shipping the stock back to the UK, Australia or North America. One such book was the first in a series on the English language (Graddol et al., 1996). Here we examine the process by which this book came to be printed in Hong Kong, through a print brokers called World Print. The very term 'print broker' hints at the complex mediating and negotiating role which is a necessary component of any international business. Printing, although part of the media industry, is in many ways like a classic import-export business. It involves the bringing together of raw materials and the manufacture of a finished product. Like other manufacturing enterprises it requires the physical movement of materials and all the bureacracy which goes with the international movement of goods. The chain of initial negotiation was as follows:

1 In the UK, all staff concerned with the book's production (at the Open University and at Routledge, the co-publisher) speak English. The development and writing of the book require advanced 'native-speaker' skills.

2 Routledge production staff discuss the print contract with the British representative of World Print (RB). RB is a native speaker who works from home in Reading, using fax and telephone to communicate with British publishers and the Hong Kong office. These detailed negotiations are conducted between native speakers.

3 RB discusses the contract with Peter Choy (PC) – the Hong Kong Director of World Print. PC is bilingual in English and Cantonese (the latter is his first language). This stage is conducted in English and largely by fax. The time-zone difference between Hong Kong and Britain is 8 hours – which means that there is little overlap in working time. But because RB is home based, he has greater flexibility in his hours of work. PC deals with contacts in other countries – France, Germany and Brazil also through the medium of English.

4 PC negotiates a contract with a local printer using Cantonese. The printer does not speak English fluently but is sufficiently proficient to accept the written contract in English. (This is necessary because contract law in Hong Kong is based on English.)

5 The printer instructs his shop-floor workers in Cantonese. Few of them speak English.

This procedure has, until recently, been typical of many international business deals. Key intermediaries like PC, or interpreters supporting key negotiators, have supplied the bilingual skills necessary to permit communication between organisations which operate in different languages. In the whole of this transaction, only one person required a full bilingual competence.

Increasingly, PC is placing contracts with printers and binders in mainland China, because of the rising cost of labour in Hong Kong. He acts as a key intermediary permitting British publishers, without knowledge of Cantonese or Mandarin, to buy print services from Chinese enterprises. Local enthusiasm for English may be (temporarily) waning, as Peter Choy explains:

> The contracts have to be written in English so we communicate everything in English, even with the Japanese. But I think things are changing. Years ago, it was very important – if you couldn't speak English you weren't able to get a job at all; if you didn't pass your English subject, you'd never get a job. But this is changing here because Hong Kong is going back to China, so more and more Hong Kong people are willing to spend time learning Mandarin rather than English.

nership working have led to changes in the structure of communication between workers within large enterprises. Work of all kinds require higher levels of direct communication – both within work teams and between members of different teams. The change in communication pattern was shown schematically in Figures 26 and 27 (p. 33); below are two case studies, both in the publishing industry, which show how these patterns actually affect the number of people who need English language skills.

While more workers are expected to become proficient in English, changes in communication patterns mean they also need a wider range of linguistic abilities. Mercer (1996) distinguishes, for example, between two types of 'working English'. The first kind is the communication between other professionals and workers within the same line of work. These people often have specialised language needs, including a particular vocabulary. This type of working English is not, as it is sometimes portrayed, a single, monolithic variety like a special dialect of English. Rather, such groups of workers form a community within which a variety of styles and levels of formality, all distinctive of the occupation, are used: exchanges between supervisor and factory hand may be different from those between middle and senior management, but all may be said to belong to the same discourse community.

The second type of working English relates to communication with people who are not members of the trade or profession themselves. This style of interaction is a consequence both of the growth in service industries and the numbers of employees now required to project a corporate image in their dealings with the public. Many employers indeed insist on particular ways of addressing and talking to clients and customers, since this language has become an integral part of the 'service' offered.

Employees today, as a result of new working practices, have to adopt a wide variety of language styles. Thus English must service a range of corporate roles and identities and must be usable for both team working and service interactions. Not surprisingly, demands on an employee's competence in English are rising. Education and training programmes are only just beginning to be tailored to employment trends.

?

Case Study 2 Singapore *Straits Times*

Australia is acquiring a great deal of English language business from the growing economies of the Asia Pacific, particularly in the 'knowledge-intensive industries'. The country has two immediate advantages; it is in an adjacent time-zone and has native-speaking English workers. The Singapore *Straits Times* newspaper has established a sub-editing office in Sydney, connected to Singapore by a leased fibre-optic line. From the base in Australia, editors take stories filed by journalists in Singapore for the next day's paper, sub-edit them and prepare page layouts. Despite the physical distance, the sub-editors' work is as closely integrated as if they were at an office in Singapore. Their work is online and every key stroke passes through the fibre-optic link to Singapore. And when the bromide is printed, from which the printing plate is made, it emerges from a machine in the Singapore office.

Teng Guan Khoo, the chef de bureau in Sydney, explains the process and the rationale behind the move:

In late 1994 the *Straits Times* set up this sub-editing office to provide subbing and layout services for the *Straits Times* in Singapore. Now the work we do here is purely for the Singapore *Straits Times* and our journalists edit the stories and design the pages and output them in Singapore.

The *Straits Times* was on an expansion move and they needed to hire subs for the plant and they looked at India, Australia and maybe a bit of the Philippines, but the company decided to come here, because the company felt that Australia provided the people with the language skills and journalistic experience. India also provided those skills, but I think the Indian infrastructure and technology wasn't that up to date – Australia's telecommunications facilities were much better. In considering the Philippines we realised that they spoke American English and because the *Straits Times* is a British English newspaper we felt that the language, spelling and turns of phrase were not suitable for the *Straits Times*.

Our computers are linked to Singapore directly in real time, we do not do processing offline, our computers are on an optical-fibre link to Singapore for every second and all the stories we get up on the system come from Singapore. In other words, nothing is kept in Sydney. Our computers here are behaving like computers in Singapore. It is like the Sydney office is just another section, about 100 metres away from the Singapore headquarters. It's like the guy next door – there is no differentiation to the computer.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the time-zone difference. Working in Sydney we are sometimes 2, sometimes 3 hours ahead of Singapore. That is a disadvantage if we were doing the late-night shift, which means we would have to finish at 3.00 a.m. when it is only midnight in Singapore. But if we do the early feature pages, it is an advantage because it means that when we start work at 10.00 a.m. it will be 7.00 a.m. in Singapore. At that time the computers are very quiet, the response from the system is very fast and we do not hold anybody up. So the main computer in Singapore is being used very efficiently.

The *Straits Times* has traditionally hired sub-editors from Australia to supplement its staff in Singapore, because Singapore has a shortage of skilled labour and Australia has a large pool of journalists who are native speakers of English. Journalism requires a good command of English because subs have to check not only for grammar but also check for libel and they are expected to write good headlines to attract readers.

Education and training

*English already shares the languages curriculum in Europe with French,
German and Spanish, alongside a variety of other languages from Russian to
Urdu. Is the same true of schools worldwide? And what role will English play
outside school? English-medium teaching is permitting rapid
internationalisation of higher education and adult training.*

English in European schools

English is currently the most widely studied foreign
language in the European Union (EU): Figure 35 shows
proportions of school students studying English against
other languages. It is a dominance unlikely to be challen-
ged in the immediate future. The foreign language most
taught at primary age is English and, as part of wider
reforms, teaching of a first foreign language is now
taking place earlier in a child's education. In Spain and
Italy, compulsory foreign-language teaching is being
phased in for students aged 8, while Greece and France
are experimentally phasing in such teaching at age 9
(Dickson and Cumming, 1996).

As yet there are no clear rivals to English. The posi-
tion of French may seem secure, but over one-third of
pupils studying it as a foreign language are from English-
speaking countries, where only a minority will ever use it
as an international language. Figure 35 is based on data
from the early 1990s. Since then the national curricula
in many EU countries have been restructured, resulting
in a rise in hours of modern-languages teaching and a
broader range of languages offered. The enlargement of
the EU itself, with association agreements with Poland,
the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Romania
and Bulgaria, has benefited not only English but perhaps
more particularly German, which is a popular second
foreign language in northern and eastern Europe.

English in schools worldwide

A recent study of foreign-language learning in 25 count-
ries (Dickson and Cumming, 1996) shows English to be
the most popular modern language studied worldwide.
In the Russian Federation for example, 60% of
secondary school students take English, 25% German
and 15% French. English may remain the primary
choice, but there are four factors which might upset the
seemingly universal trend towards English as the first
foreign language in the world's schools.

First there is growing competition from other langua-
ges outside Europe. The Hooke model forecasts, prima-
rily on economic grounds, that by 2010 the languages in
greatest demand by students will be: (1) English, (2)
Mandarin, (3) Spanish and (4) Indonesian. And, by
2050, Vietnam is projected to be the fourth largest Asian
economy – outstripping Japan – so it would not be
surprising if Vietnamese also emerged as an important
language for the region's schools.

Second, the education system in any multilingual
country must cater for several languages used within that
country. This may become a more sensitive factor as the
movement towards universal 'language rights' – inclu-
ding the right to a mother-tongue education – grows
around the world. Third, regionalisation may encourage
the use of a non-English lingua franca for trading purpo-
ses. Greater use of Spanish in South America, for
example, may affect the popularity of English in Brazil,
just as interest in learning English in Hong Kong has
recently been affected by the perceived priority of
Mandarin. And fourth, a new political spirit of
'neighbourliness' may encourage the study of languages
from adjacent countries, rather than those from a diffe-
rent cultural and economic region.

Problems of teacher supply

A key problem preventing the effective take-up of
English in the world's schools is that of teacher supply. If
a country like Thailand decides to introduce English
teaching at lower levels at primary age (as it has recently
done) a massive teacher-training programme is required:
there are simply too few primary teachers available with
the necessary language skills and those that do exist are
concentrated in urban areas. But even when teacher
education is effective, schools in developing economies
have difficulty in maintaining teaching staff. Teachers
acquiring proficiency in English may gravitate to better-
paid jobs at secondary level. And secondary teachers
with good English proficiency may seek jobs in the
tertiary sector. Tertiary teachers, whose salaries lag
behind their fellow graduates in private enterprise, will
tend to leave their public-sector employment. There is
thus a 'churning' effect which prevents the achievement
of adequate teaching of English at primary level.

Case Study 3 Internationalisation of education in Malaysia

Malaysia is traditionally thought of as a recipient of
English language and educational services from Britain
and other parts of the developed world. It sends many
students abroad for study and Malaysian universities
have extensive 'twinning' agreements with universities
in North America, Britain and Australia which provide
accreditation for degree programmes taught on
Malaysian campuses. Malaysia intends, however, to use
its recent expansion of English-medium education to
become a regional exporter of educational goods and
services. Here are three examples.

1 An early learning kit, designed to help pre-school
children learn to read in English, has been so
successful that the Malaysian developers have
decided to export it to countries like Thailand,
Taiwan, Hong Kong and Indonesia. (*New Sunday
Times*, 30 March 1997, p. 41)

2 In 1994, the Malaysian government established a
Bachelor of Business Management programme in
Uzbekistan. The Uzbek students, used to studying in
Uzbek or Russian, required an intensive business
English programme to help them follow lectures.
(*Malaysian Digest*, October 1996, p. 7)

3 In 1997 a new private university (Universiti
Telekom) accepted its first intake of 1000 students,
including students from South Africa, Malawi,
Guinea, Ghana, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and
Cambodia. Malaysia is encouraging the development
of such private universities, partly to 'reduce the
expenditure incurred by Malaysians studying
overseas', but also to help position Malaysia in the
future as an international source, rather than a reci-
pient, of high-level educational services. (*New Straits
Times*, 27 May 1997, p. 3)

English-medium higher education

One of the most significant educational trends world-wide is the teaching of a growing number of courses in universities through the medium of English. The need to teach some subjects in English, rather than the national language, is well understood: in the sciences, for example, up-to-date text books and research articles are obtainable much more easily in one of the world languages and most readily of all in English. The move towards English-medium higher education is having a number of long-term consequences. First, it accelerates and broadens the second-language use of English in both developed and developing countries, creating a constituency of college graduates, many of whom come to use English more extensively for social communication amongst themselves and some of whom raise their own children speaking English as a first language. English-medium higher education is thus one of the drivers of language shift, from L2 to L1 English-speaking status (p. 10). Second, English-medium education alters the pattern of social privilege (p. 38) which may trigger wide-ranging social change. Third, the growth of English-medium education has permitted a rapid internationalisation of education and allows developing countries to reposition themselves as exporters of educational services (Case Study 3).

The rise of the adult learner

In the 21st century the service sector of all economies is expected to grow rapidly. Demand is likely to grow in the tertiary sector and particularly in adult education, where the English language skills formerly taught to university students may no longer be sufficient to meet the needs of new enterprises: widespread reform of university curricula in English language can be expected in many countries. The 'non-formal' sector and businesses requiring in-service retraining are already proving to be a major growth area. McRae (1997) suggests this may be an transitional phenomenon: 'while the key to the very long-term future may lie in the nursery schools, the key to the next decade lies in patching gaps in people's education and "retrofitting" us with new skills'. But the shift of emphasis from low-skill employment to knowledge-intensive industries means that educated labour will be in greater demand everywhere, yet the required knowledge and skills will need regular updating, creating a more flexible labour force seeking frequent retraining.

The complexification of higher education

Gus Hooke has argued that when any developing economy achieves a per capita income of about $3000, the demand for higher education outstrips the capacity of the country to supply. One result is expected to be a continuing stream of students from developing countries to those in the first world. The Hooke model forecasts that the international demand for specialist courses of English as a second language (ESL) will multiply sixfold by 2025 and that most of this will be satisfied by UK, US and Australian providers. Since much of the demand will come from Asia, Australian providers are expected to benefit more than the US and UK.

However, the higher-education market will become increasingly complex, with growth in arrangements for credit transfer, accreditation, hybrid courses (such as 'engineering through English') and new forms of joint-venture enterprise between institutions in the developed

English (60.3%)

French (30.4%)

German (5.2%)

Spanish (3.5%)

Other (0.6%)
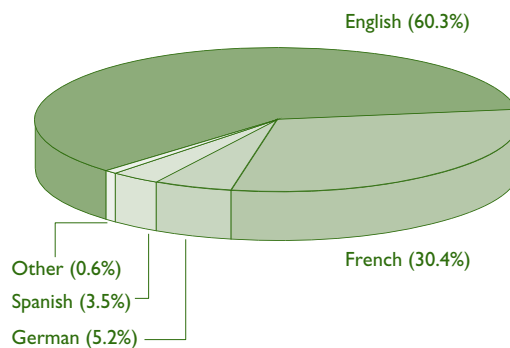
Figure 35 Proportions of all school students studying modern languages in Europe

and developing world, alongside the expansion of both the private tertiary sector and the entrepreneurial activities of public-sector institutions.

These developments will allow a much greater proportion of students to be educated within their home countries. Furthermore, some 'developing' countries (such as Malaysia) which have expanded their provision for English-medium higher education (Case Study 3) will emerge as competitors to developed countries for international students.

An electronic education?

The Hooke model forecasts a rapid rise in off-campus training in the coming decades by distance education and the growth of English-medium education in many parts of the world – effectively opening these markets to distance providers in native-speaking countries. However, it is likely to be the smaller educational enterprises which benefit most. It is surprisingly difficult to provide for large numbers of students entirely electronically and without local support. The 'mega-universities' such as the British Open University are more likely to proceed through joint ventures with local institutions than to attempt large-scale, long-distance programmes.

Some of this training may also be conducted through the 'virtual universities' which are now emerging, bringing together universities and corporate clients and ensuring that training is available to employees in the workplace. There is widespread expectation that forms of distance education exploiting new technology will play an important role in workforce retraining and reskilling programmes in the next few decades. Some industry analysts have tried to put figures to the trend:

> Analysts expect that within three years, some 15 per cent of corporate education and training worldwide will be conducted remotely via the more cost- and time-effective use of the Internet, intranet and other technologies. (Kline, 1997)

Such forms of training will allow institutions in Europe, the US and Australia to offer training provision to the desktops of executives in other parts of the world, without the associated costs of travel and subsistence or loss of productive time. There are, however, several factors which may make this route unattractive to trainees: the issue of inequality of access (p. 38), which for many countries means technology will be available only to workforces of larger transnational companies; the fact that overseas travel is often regarded as an incentive to accept training; and finally, the lack of a part-time training culture in many countries, where working practices are built around the expectation that staff will study full-time for an agreed period.

The global media

Not so long ago, the media industry was bound by the territorial limits of the nation state. Today, the media is an international industry, competing to reach audiences with disposable incomes in every world region. Is English required to reach these massive global audiences?

The global presence

Until the 1990s, the BBC World Service was one of the few broadcasting institutions with worldwide reach. Its coverage today spans Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the former USSR and South-west Asia. In 1996 to 1997 its weekly audience was 143 million listeners with the majority in Asia (Figure 36), a presence supported by BBC English, offering teaching programmes and materials to many local broadcasters.

The BBC World Service share is, however, a small part of a massive industry: many national media conglomerations, including British television interests, are now active on a global scale. It is a business that has been transformed in recent years by the merging of large media groups, one of the most notable being News Corp, whose media ownership has included Twentieth Century Fox, Fox TV network, and two satellite systems, BSkyB and Star TV. US companies, with large domestic markets which have allowed the amassing of vast programme libraries, have been particularly prominent. In 1994, for example, just under a quarter of Disney's $10.1 revenue billions came from outside the US. 1996 returns should reach 30%. By 2006, it aims for 50% of revenue to be made overseas *(Guardian,* 30 November 1996, p. 2). Recently the company merged with Capital Cities/ABC whose interests include 80% of the cable channel ESPN. Such global expansion has caused many people to fear the Disnification of world cultures.
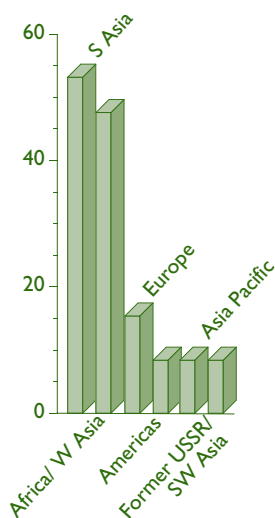
Localising the global

Fears that satellite TV will help bring about a globally uniform audio-visual culture based on US English may prove unfounded. Satellite television, a technology which has the capacity to envelop the world audience with a homogeneous product, will create greater linguistic and cultural diversity and be more supportive of local languages than previously supposed. When global satellite TV channels were first established, it was necessary for them to reach an audience spread over a large territory: economic logic required the use of 'big' languages. And, although the audience would speak many languages, it was the middle class with enough disposable income to make associated advertising ventures worthwhile whom the satellite operators targeted – an audience who could be reached through English.

Star TV, based in Hong Kong and owned by News Corp, was one of the first of the global operators. Launched in 1991 it used a satellite that covered 38 nations and capturing a potential audience of 2.7 billion in a wide range of countries including China, Japan, India, Malaysia and Israel. Initially it was aimed at the top 5% of the audience – well educated, wealthy, professional, and often English speaking (Frendenburg, 1991, cited in Chan, 1994).

When Star TV first launched, the majority of its programming was in either English or Mandarin – in order to reach the elite audiences from eastern Asia to India. But more recently, local programming has been introduced:

As more international channels become available on Indian television screens, foreign and Indian broadcasters have begun to target specific audiences. Star TV, the Hong Kong-based satellite network which kicked off the Indian cable revolution in 1991, was the first to realise that Indians do not like watching serials in Mandarin, and that the Chinese reacted equally negatively to South Indian Malayalam songs. ... Foreign broadcasters targeting India's potential viewership of 500m-plus have realised that there is no such thing as a pan-Asian market. (*Financial Times*, 17 November 1995)

As the market developed and new channel capacity became available, Star TV has promoted local languages. It has struggled with local regulations to offer Cantonese programming for music, sports and news, while plans exist to develop its Hindi/Indian programming. The company now aims to introduce a new Hindi serial at 'prime-time' evening viewing to follow Hindi news (*India Today*, 30 November 1996, pp. 96–9).

CNN International is also moving into languages other than English as it launches a 24-hour Spanish news service for Latin America alongside plans for a Hindi service (*Financial Times*, 9 December 1996, p. 19). Similarly, CBS is to develop a Portuguese language news service in Brazil (*Independent on Sunday*, 2 March 1997, p. 2). Perhaps the most remarkable story in this connection is that of MTV – often regarded as the vehicle for submerging the world's teenagers with US English music culture (Case Study 4).

The word 'localisation' is on the lips of nearly every marketing manager in global corporations and the drive towards greater diversity in provision comes from the need to increase market penetration. It is well known that advertising, for example, needs to adapt to local culture, language and social values. But the means of achieving localisation has come from technology: digital systems have expanded transmission capacity so greatly that now multiple streams can be carried at high speed and at low cost. Compression technology allows 10 satellite channels to be carried in place of one analogue channel. With such enormous capacity, most world regions will be provided with 500 channels or more. For the viewer watching their digital TV system, that will mean a greater choice of programming (though not necessarily higher quality), much of it tailored to niche audiences.

Linguistic diasporas

Europe may be different from other world regions in the way that satellite TV is encouraging the use of English. While it is virtually impossible to know how many homes worldwide are watching what programmes in what languages, the first market-research data is filtering into the public domain. Table 14 charts European viewing of international channels in a 30 day period in 1995. From a sample of viewers, it emerged that throughout Europe, 70.2% felt able to understand English well enough to follow TV news or read a newspaper in the language, followed by 43.8% in French and 40.2% in German (EMS Survey, *Cable and Satellite Europe*, January 1997). Such widespread take-up of English has given rise to an anxiety about the impact on other, smaller languages. One researcher investigating the extent to which Swedish children watched and understood English-language satellite programming speculated:

In one hundred years' time, will we still speak Swedish? ... Or will we, few as we are, have become engulfed by the

Figure 36 BBC World Service coverage in 1996–7 (millions of listeners)

Arte	27.1
BBC Prime	2.8
BBC World	3.4
CNN Int.	28.1
Deutsche Welle	3.4
Discovery	10.0
Euronews	21.3
EBN	2.8
Eurosport	43.9
MTV Europe	23.5
NBC Super Ch.	11.6
Travel Channel	4.1
TNT	9.7
TV5	10.8

Table 14 Percentage of European viewers watching satellite TV channels (30 day period)

*When there are 500 channels to choose from
... showing the same film but in different languages
– national viewers will no longer have a shared
experience.*

'English empire' and keep Swedish in the family chest, a quaint relic to be dusted off, polished up and displayed on festive occasions. (Findahl, 1989)

Yet the growth in satellite TV channels also permits diasporic linguistic groups to receive programming in their first languages. Table 15 shows a range of the languages available on satellite channels in Britain in 1996. Furthermore, it is not only English language providers who can play the global-alliance game. The Arabic language station MBC based in London has agreed to cooperate with Arab Network of the US in joint productions. TV Asia shows Indian and Pakistani films with daily news in 5 Asian languages on British satellite channels. And 'Bollywood', India's home film industry, is a ready and successful supplier, turning out 300 Hindi language films a year and exporting many videos and films to expatriates in West Asia and Africa.

Dubbing

One of the oldest forms of media localisation is the dubbing and sub-titling of films. In Britain, where the audio-visual culture and production values require 'lip synch', sub-titling is preferred to dubbing. But in many countries (notably India) it is normal for locally produced films to add studio-recorded sound tracks after shooting; audiences have become used to the lack of lip synchronisation that this produces and are more accepting of films dubbed from other languages. Dubbing, apart from allowing the import of (primarily American) visual and thematic materials, has a linguistic effect. Dubbing of American TV programmes, for example, is affecting the pragmatics of other languages. Ross (1995) has documented the way expressions like 'hello' are dubbed into Italian. The Italian equivalents, 'bon giorno' or 'ciao' do not easily match lip movements or length of the English expression. Hence 'Salve' has become popular and Italians have begun to use the expression spontaneously. There have been many such subtle effects on other languages which arise from the dubbing of English language films and television programmes.

Dubbing also allows the English language media industry to maximise profits by selling to new audiences. *Jurassic Park* dubbed into Hindi ran for 25 weeks in India, grossing $6 million in 1994 (*Financial Times*, 11 July 1996, p. 6). The airline industry too is a major consumer of dubbed films for in-flight movies. And English is emerging as a 'relay' language for the marketing of films: a Hong Kong action movie, for example, may be dubbed into English to show at an international festival. It will then be bought and translated into a third language.

Fragmentation of culture

The global media industry thus has complex effects on languages and cultural identities with its competing trends towards cultural convergence and diversification. Whereas national broadcasting services have played an important role in the creation of a national cultural identity – through the provision of a shared experience of representations of the world and significant cultural and political events – satellite TV may be encouraging a cultural fragmentation. The programming schedules of satellite TV are quite unlike those of terrestrial broadcasting: instead of a mixed output held together by continuity announcements, satellite channels offer mono-thematic, repetitive schedules which encourage channel hopping by the viewer. Programming thus now results from decisions by the viewer, not the broadcaster. When there are 500 channels to choose from – some showing the same film but at different starting times, others showing the same film but in different languages – national viewers will no longer have a shared experience.

One source of uncertainty about the effects of satellite TV and cultural identity lie in the extent of cable TV. In some countries, cable is the most popular way of receiving satellite transmissions. For example, cable TV reached a penetration of 88.6% in Belgium by the early 1990s (Paliwoda, 1993). It is not a technology limited to fully developed regions: in India, there are now over 16 million homes with cable and an estimated 40 million households to be equipped by 2000. Cable also provides a solution to a political as well as a technical problem. The transferring of satellite programming to terrestrial cable systems brings broadcasts under the regulatory control of the state. And cable can offer local services, such as advertisements for local shops or announcements of local events, blended into a global programming. This mix of the global and local will provide a somewhat unpredictable context in which English language programming will operate in the 21st century.

Euronews
English, French, German, Italian, Spanish

CNN International
English

CNBC
English

AsiaNet
English, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu

Worldnet
English

NBC Super Channel
English, Dutch, German

MTV
English

Table 15 Languages available on British satellite channels 1996

?

Case Study 4 MTV

MTV, the music channel which has done more than any other station to help create a global youth music culture, has in the past few years adopted a policy of localisation – a move which is significant because music is widely regarded as being one of three content areas, alongside sports and international news, which can operate globally in English. Music programming does 'not require advanced linguistic skills on the part of the audience' (Chan, 1994, p. 120).

MTV currently has 3 world divisions: in Asia, Europe and the Americas reaching 268 million households worldwide (*Financial Times Weekend*, 16–17 November 1996). The company began localising by establishing production centres in different world regions to draw on local talents and aim at local audiences: MTV Europe is based in London, MTV Asia in Singapore. Both are now localising production further. The former uses centres in Italy, Germany and London, aiming to provide 59% locally produced programming on 3 separate regional satellite 'beams'. MTV Asia, using regional production centres established in India, Taiwan and Singapore is guided by a policy of localisation, as David Flack, Senior Creative Director of MTV Asia, explains:

> Localisation is actually helping build national identity. I've made it a personal rule not to commission anything outside of a country for that country. If we're doing a show for Indonesia the title sequence and all the rest has to be generated by people from that country otherwise it's not going to be relevant to them. For youth programming we have to mean something to the kids we're broadcasting to. If we don't they simply won't watch us.

> We're not just a music video channel – we're a place to go to and we need to keep researching what our audience wants. Broadcasting Mandarin to the Philippines isn't going to be successful, just as broadcasting an international youth programme to Indonesia isn't going to be successful. English is a kind of hip factor but it's good to be talking in a local language.

Youth culture

● ●

The 'baby boom' in the west gave rise to a demographic hump which had profound consequences in public policy, the economy and culture. Now the baby boomers of the west are replaced by those in the non-western world who may have different cultural orientations and aspirations.

?

Can anything be done to influence the future of English?
p. 62

The global teenager

Peter Schwartz, in his classic account of scenario building, describes the emergence of the 'global teenager' as a 'new driving force'. As the west's previous baby boomers have passed through the generations they have required continual adjustment of public policies and resources relating to education, housing and health policies. In economic terms, they have influenced manufacturing of clothing, motor vehicles, leisure and employment. And, culturally, they have brought new waves of music, world outlooks, affiliation networks and political attitudes. Clearly, surges in the youth population must figure in any strategic thinking about public services, higher education or provision for foreign-language studies. Today we face a 'baby boom' of global proportions with children who will become tomorrow's teenage force:

> As the baby boom appeared (or should have appeared) as a factor in every scenario of U.S. behavior in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, so the wave of global teenagers will be a factor dwarfing other demographic factors in scenarios starting from 1990, through the next fifty years or so. (Schwartz, 1996, pp. 120–1)

In the non-western world – particularly India, China and Brazil – there is an influential generation emerging equivalent to those that have passed in the west; a boom that represents a major demographic shift in global youth. The populations of the 'Big Three' regions have aged, but those in developing countries are becoming younger.

Tables 16 and 17 show the expected shift between 1995 and 2025 in numbers of teenagers and young adults speaking major world languages. These projections, calculated by the engco model, must call into question the extent to which global youth culture will be focused on the style and cultural trends of the Big Three

regions, where, since World War II, English has been the dominant language of youth style.

It is well documented that the teenage years are sensitive ones for adult identity development and are an age where language shift occurs, establishing patterns of use for later years. The future of English as a global language therefore may depend, in large measure, on how the language is taken up and used by young adults in Asian countries. The numerical size of the group apart, there is a significant difference in the new generations of baby boomers from those that have gone before; identity in the future will be acquired and negotiated in a cultural context which has global dimensions.

Young people with sufficient income are today becoming the target of a globalised industry in media, consumer products and fashion: they belong to what might be called the 'Sony-Benetton' culture. Young people in India, in work rather than school, with income but no family responsibilities, may see themselves as having more in common with young people in Brazil than with cultures in their home country. In this way, the sense of belonging to a sub-cultural group may not change, but the sense of where the group 'is' may undergo a profound change. And, of course, the linking of dispersed sub-cultures can be quickly achieved. Will 'hanging out' on the Internet become as formative as hanging out on the street? 'Electronic media will become not just a means of communication, but a generator of global style' (Schwartz, 1996, p. 125).

Tim Berners-Lee, the British inventor of the World Wide Web, recently imagined the future effect of the Internet on a teenage son:

> The search engine has shown him a random selection of the 643,768 people around the world whose personal reading profile is identical to his own. ... For your son, the Web is the gateway not to diversity but to conformity. To be on the top of the normal curve, a kid his age has to surf the Web carefully, always sticking to the popular output of the big media companies. It takes a certain sensibility – a cyber-sense of hipness – to select only those places that he can guess the majority of his teen group will be choosing at the same time. He knows that though he may live in a small town in the Netherlands, he is right in the centre of the main trend; he feels the strength of being exactly in tune

---

Case Study 5 Sign of the times

In the 1960s Britain became associated with a strong and vibrant youth culture, revisited in the 1970s with the punk revolution. Now, perhaps once again, there is a new 90s wave of artistic creativity across a range of cultural contexts: art, music, fashion and design. 'Britpop' is one expression of an expanding and influential teenage population and both its stars and followers are able to enjoy a new global culture; one in which the semiotics of music and clothing style are crossing national and language boundaries more easily than ever before.

While British lyrics and British bands are highly successful overseas, so too are international stars from the US, Europe and Asia. In 1995, Polygram, the world's largest music company, reported top selling international acts of British and American stars in Japan: Bon Jovi, Def Leppard and Janet Jackson amongst them. Polygram

also promotes Jacky Cheung, Faye Wong, Samuel Tai and Mavis Fan in Asia.

There is emerging an extraordinary vitality in this hybridity. The music world is now full of 'cross-over' genres. Several groups have been influenced by Hindi and Krishna music and have created new sounds and followings. There is also a developing knowledge of music diversity in the global music industry: MTV channels (p. 47) have a policy of promoting regional bands that are not American or English. In the teenager's future world, an appreciation of Britpop or American heavy metal may sit easily alongside other tastes: 'To be truly hip in the world of the global teenager could mean knowing how to recognise indigenous music from Senegal, New Zealand, Uruguay and the Yukon' (Schwartz, p. 132).

with all his seen and unseen colleagues. And he knows he wears the same sort of clothes and eats exactly what they do. (Berners-Lee, 1996, p. 141)

A branded consumer

Just as terrestrial television once provided shared cultural experiences and helped to construct a sense of national identity for many countries, including Britain, now global marketing is helping to establish a recognisable youth culture worldwide. It is a culture based around ownership and use of consumer durables, clothing and cultural products. Such marketing provides both the comfort of a shared experience and, to some extent, a shared meaning to the products with the implied opportunity for building lifestyles and identities around them.

English plays a complex function in this global culture. Historically, English has played a key role in the branding of products. But branding is now commonly used to communicate not a single product but a set of values and attitudes. Those values and attitudes, engineered to have a global appeal, may transcend cultural, religious or linguistic divides. Virgin is one example of new-style branding; from record sales to air transport, cola sales to financial services, the brand identity acts as an umbrella for a lifestyle and set of corporate values.

Benetton is typical of the transnational companies now targeting youth with clothing and related consumer products: the company has expanded its global reach to over 7,000 retail outlets in 120 countries – with 50 new stores in China. Like other companies selling 'style' products, the World Wide Web and related magazine publishing form an important part of the company's strategy in reaching young adults around the world. Respondents to a questionnaire published on Benetton's Web pages suggest nearly 80% of their audience are in the 11–30 age group. Their magazine, *Colors*, runs already to 400,000 copies worldwide, but their communications policy is a multilingual one. The magazines are bilingual in English and another language: French, Italian, Spanish, German or Japanese. Future editions of the magazine will appear in Portuguese, Hindi, Korean and Mandarin. But significantly, Benetton's global advertising campaigns focus on visual images without text. *Colors* 'is a visual magazine'.

Transnational companies selling style have no particular loyalty to the English language: they will follow the market. The logic of globalisation is to sell more widely by localising products. New technology allows localisation to be accomplished more rapidly and more cheaply than ever before. With franchise agreements, licences and the general extension of large companies into niche markets, it may be quite possible that the currency of English is eroded.

Diversity and fragmentation

Wallace and Kovocheva (1996) in a study of youth cultures in western and eastern Europe, before and after the fall of communism, argue:

> Youth cultures and consumption have been at the forefront of spreading new styles across geographical and linguistic frontiers because they do not rely to any great extent on language: music and sub-cultural styles are transnational and travel easily across frontiers. Evidence of this can be drawn from the ubiquity of MTV, a satellite TV channel that broadcasts nonstop pop videos and to which television sets are tuned from Stockholm to Sofia, from Lisbon to Lviv.

> … Have youths been absorbed into a generalized consumer culture? Does the ubiquitous presence of plastic chairs, fuck off graffiti, and MTV indicate the general homogenization of culture? The answer is *no*. Although youths across Europe may share similar cultural symbols and styles, the significance of these things is very different in different places. (Wallace and Kovocheva, 1996, pp. 190, 211)

Wallace argues the cultural theorists' point that even a homogeneous product would give rise to different effects in different cultures: the uniformity of a cultural text does not guarantee a uniform reading. This to some extent explains why youth styles are notoriously difficult to predict. Youth culture can be seen as an accommodation to the contradictions of the lifestyles and values of the older generation rather than a simple adoption or rejection of them.

Nevertheless, companies like Benetton are trying to mobilise a youth 'agenda' intended to unite young people across the world. This agenda includes an awareness of the global environment, appreciation of diversity and human rights. 'If the Earth has become a Global Village, then Benetton is the Village clothing store. And like every good leading citizen, it feels an obligation to not only succeed in business, but also to improve the neighbourhood'. Environmental and social issues may provide a better focus for global youth identity than language. The wearers of the 'united colours of Benetton' may be encouraged to unite in a celebration of cultural and biological diversity.

There is, therefore, alongside the trend towards global homogeneity, a trend towards diversity. It may be that the ability to speak languages, even partly, becomes a distinct style advantage. There may be a greater readiness to learn new languages in the streets of cyberspace than in the classroom: Schwartz predicts, 'In the twelve to twenty-two age group worldwide, knowing several languages would be commonplace, and world travel would be a constant temptation' (1996, p. 123).

Style and varieties of English

English, of course, is not a single, unitary language and it is unlikely that young people accept or reject English on the basis of its standard form. Young people within native-speaking English countries experiment with particular varieties of English in order to present or experience particular social identities: in schools in both England and Australia, for example, children may adopt words and characteristics from black American speech. Black English for many children is associated with American culture but, perhaps more saliently, with music and sports cultures which form part of a globalised speech fashion which extends beyond native speakers. Or, as the Australian cultural theorist, John Hartley, has astutely observed, such usages may appear in advertising aimed at youth markets with greater frequency than their actual use among the young.

Non-native forms of English also may acquire identity functions for young people. In Europe, for example, MTV has promoted the use of foreign-language varieties of English as identity markers – a behaviour more usually associated with second-language usage – by employing young presenters with distinctive French, German and Italian English accents, alongside British presenters with regional accents. Such cultural exploitation may indicate that standard, native varieties will be the least influential for the global teenage culture.

1995		
1	Chinese	201.6
2	Hindi/Urdu	59.8
3	Spanish	58.0
4	English	51.7
5	Arabic	39.5
6	Portuguese	32.2
7	Bengali	25.2
8	Russian	22.5
9	Japanese	18.2
10	German	12.2
11	French	9.7
12	Malay	9.5

Table 16 Estimated millions of speakers aged 15–24 (engco model)

The engco model predicts a shift in the languages spoken by the world's young people between 1995 (*above*) and 2050 (*below*)

2050		
1	Chinese	166.0
2	Hindi/Urdu	73.7
3	Arabic	72.2
4	English	65.0
5	Spanish	62.8
6	Portuguese	32.5
7	Bengali	31.6
8	Russian	14.8
9	Japanese	11.3
10	Malay	10.5
11	German	9.1
12	French	8.9

Table 17 Estimated millions of speakers aged 15–24 (engco model)

Internet communication

Computer technology has transformed the way people interact both locally and globally. Now we are at the edge of a new era of personal and group communications. Will the Internet remain the flagship of global English? And if so, will it be English as we know it today?

The Internet

The Internet is regarded by many as the flagship of global English. A frequently quoted statistic is that English is the medium for 80% of the information stored in the world's computers, a figure quoted in McCrum et al. (1986). It is certainly true that growth of computer use – and of the Internet in particular – has been spectacular in the last few years. Computers have become extensively networked and the networks themselves linked into the global structure of the Internet. With live interaction taking place between users and the store-and-forward messaging systems of the Internet blurring distinctions between archived and ephemeral copies of texts, the whole notion of 'storage' has been given an anachronistic air. Indeed, a major reconsideration of intellectual property rights in connection with electronic texts has been provoked in part as a result of the way information and ideas now circle the world.

Using the same infrastructure as the telephone, the Internet carries English language services into nearly every country and, with growing private subscriptions, into people's homes. Data traffic, it is claimed, has now overtaken voice traffic in the developed world (*Independent on Sunday*, 17 November 1996, p. 3). The system has its origins in the academic and, in particular, scientific community, which is the longest connected community of all. English is deeply established among scientists as the international lingua franca and, from this beginning, English appears to have extended its domain of use to become the preferred lingua franca for the many new kinds of user who have come online in the 1990s:

> The electronic media that bind the world together are essentially carriers of language. To work efficiently, they need a common standard. ... The English language is now the operating standard for global communication.' (Geoffrey Nunberg of Stanford University, cited in *The Economist*, 21 December 1996, p. 37)

But is it true that the Internet will remain a major driver of English? At present, the language most widely used *is* English, but this reflects the fact that 90% of the world's computers connected to the Internet are based in English-speaking countries, as are the computers that host the publicly accessible World Wide Web sites. In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of both traffic and Web sites are rooted in English: at present, users in other countries, working in other languages, find that if they are to communicate through cyberspace, they must do so in English.

Internet growth

The overall shift in predicted Internet use is similar to that outlined for the economy: the number of computer hosts in Asia eventually will outstrip those in the Big Three countries. Furthermore, the Internet, from its origins as a tool for international communication between a global academic elite, will increasingly serve local, cultural and commercial purposes. And as the Internet becomes more widely used, it is natural to expect a wider range of languages will be employed.

One issue in monitoring Internet growth is knowing what a 'user' is. There are many who have access to the Internet for whom it forms only an infrequent or casual means of communication. For numbers of those who use the system, we might find a guide in the plethora of market surveys – a result of growing commercial exploitation of the Internet – which seem to suggest, overall, that around 50 million people used the Internet at the beginning of 1997, of whom around 20% are in Europe. Here, the largest Internet community is expected to be based in Germany, followed by the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden. Elsewhere, connections to the Internet are rising rapidly: there were an estimated 100,000 users in China in 1996, a figure that may have already increased markedly due to a growth in private subscriptions.

As access to the Internet expands in any country, so the profile of its users changes, as do the functions it serves and the range of languages conveyed across it. Typically, usage focuses initially around the workplace, with the academic community often the first wired, but eventually accounting for a small proportion of users. Surveys tend to suggest most users at present are male, young and middle class. Hence, in many parts of the world, the demography of the average Internet user

---

Case Study 6 Automatic translation

Automatic translation of texts was once a far-fetched dream but has become a practical reality remarkably quickly. New software is becoming available for the major languages which operates on desktop PCs and which can be embedded in email and computer conferencing applications. Thus it may not be necessary for an Internet user to be able to write in English in order to exchange messages with the English-speaking community. One such message (*right*) was submitted to a US-based discussion list concerned with adult education by an Italian correspondent. It shows the possibilities (and linguistic hazards) of routine machine translation. But what would this mean for the popularity of English? And what kinds of discourse community might emerge around such machine-mediated English?

Hi. First of all, I apologize for my (bad) English: I am Italian and, as it's known, nobody is perfect. ... (I'm writing this message with the help of a software of automatic translation and therefore not all the demerits are due to my person. ...)
My name is — . I'm a new affiliate to the list and I absolve the invitation gladly to send a short professional profile.
I am concerned with Education & Training from more than 10 years. During these years I have taught in classroom, I have developed and projected tens of self-trained courses on various topics.
Currently I conduct plans of formation for firms of big dimensions and I'm particularly taken an interest in the problematic tied up to the Education through the net.
You will have a particularly attentive reader in me (I don't know if it is a promise or a threat. ...).
Kindly, could anybody give me a judgment on the quality of the software of translation done? (in other terms, is it comprehensible what do I have written?). Thanks in advance.

differs from the population at large: only 25–30% are women (12% in Japan) and most users have access to the Internet through their work. It may be that as access becomes easier, the demography of the Internet will look more like that of the national population, with least access by the rural, poor and unemployed.

The growth of local communities

The growth of the Internet has not followed the geographical pattern of spread to which the world has been accustomed for centuries. It is moving from a widely dispersed, global network towards one with denser local 'hubs', rather than starting from a central point and becoming more dispersed. Hence, although the Internet is usually thought of primarily as a global communications network, the action on it is likely to be increasingly local: 'intranets' (Internet-like networks within organisations, often 'fire walled' against the outside world) are expected to grow more rapidly over the next few years than the Internet itself. These intranets will create employment-based communities which, in the case of transnational corporations, may extend over national boundaries. This may encourage English, but it may also permit, say, a Swiss-based company to maintain a German-speaking culture amongst its employees. Action will be local also in the sense that most communications and access will become local in nature. Electronic mail will be used to contact someone on the other side of town rather than the other side of the world. Databases and Web sites are also rapidly emerging which serve the local rather than the global community. And as the number and density of locally based communication groups rises, so will the use of local languages. Yet on the Internet, 'locality' will be always a virtual one, allowing members of the community, temporarily or permanently distanced, to maintain close links.

One of the dislocating features of the Internet is the way it provides access to the 'local' by people who are physically remote. Connecting to a local FM RealAudio radio site in Texas and hearing news of downtown traffic jams, reading the Shetland Times on a Web site and discovering the outcome of a neighbourhood dispute, viewing a street scene through a security camera placed on the other side of the world – these provide a means of temporarily viewing and listening to the world from a local perspective, as if joining another community. This capability may encourage informal language learning in future amongst young 'surfers' by providing access to a 'live' local community using the target language.

Internet communication

A great deal of communication on the net is not in the public domain and therefore difficult to monitor. Electronic mail, for example, is expected to be a dominant activity, even when the Web has matured, for it supports communities much in the way that newsgroups do. List servers, sending messages out automatically, also create considerable traffic between members of self-selected groups. The software needed to manage and distribute such messages once required an institution with a large machine permanently attached to the Internet. Now it is possible for an international mailing list to be managed via a home computer. This is one of the 'democratising' trends on the Internet: the breakdown of gatekeeping and the shift of control to ordinary users, in turn leading to informal, vernacular or in-group language in public places.

This ambiguity and fluidity about the status of Internet communication is reflected in ongoing tension as to whether it is conceived of as a form of 'publishing' or a 'conversation'. A consensus is needed, not least for legal purposes. As court cases in different parts of the world have shown, the Internet has thrown up problematic issues regarding intellectual property rights and libel. But it is clear from research by linguists that new genres and forms of English are arising on the Internet. The system is not simply encouraging the use of English, but transforming it.

Languages on the Web

As computer usage spreads, it is predicted that English content on the Internet may fall to 40% of the total material. The English Company (UK) Ltd has devised a corpus linguistic method for estimating the proportion of languages on the World Wide Web which suggests the English language content is now around 8 billion words. The technique will be refined and used to monitor the Web's changing linguistic composition. Meanwhile, the Internet Society has reported preliminary findings (Table 18) in a survey of the language of 'home pages' using a different methodology. The main conclusion is that languages other than English are now being used on the Internet and this trend is likely to be of growing importance. In 1996 the Internet Society published new protocols for Web browsers which will facilitate the use of Web pages in different languages. In future, browser software will transmit 'language preference' information when contacting a remote site. If a page is available in that language it will be automatically retrieved in preference to one in English. This means, for example, that the Web will appear to be in Spanish to a Spanish speaker and in French to a French speaker, provided the hosts contacted maintain pages in these languages.

Software support for automatic language translation is also improving. There is a widespread expectation that such aids will become common, according to a recent Delphi study of the social impact of technology.

> The Delphi form ... asked about machines for the translation of texts into different languages, voice recognition technology for translation of speech into different languages, and interactive software for English as a foreign language controlled by the learner. Between 50% and 60% of respondents believe that these will be practicable by 2004. (*Technology Foresight*, para 4.21)

Some of these technologies are, in fact, already available. In future, it may not be necessary for providers to create pages in different languages. The Internet, or the user's own computer, may provide an 'invisible' translation service. Operated by the Internet, this would work when a page is retrieved by a user's computer, automatically submitted to another Internet site (possibly in a different part of the world) and then translated by a powerful mainframe computer, before being passed in the required language to the user who requested the page. Translation software for major languages is already available on PCs and is now used in ordinary communication on the Internet, as the case study (*left*) shows. Such language technologies, widely available, may significantly reduce the need for learning English for the casual Internet user, although many linguists remain sceptical whether they provide a reliable means of communication between speakers of different languages.

?

What impact will the Internet have on the global use of English?

	Language	Estimated servers	%
1	English	332,778	84.3
2	German	17,971	4.5
3	Japanese	12,348	3.1
4	French	7,213	1.8
5	Spanish	4,646	1.2
6	Swedish	4,279	1.1
7	Italian	3,790	1.0
8	Portuguese	2,567	0.7
9	Dutch	2,445	0.6
10	Norwegian	2,323	0.6

Table 18 Languages of home pages on the Web

Time and place

· ·

Discussions of globalisation emphasise the 'annihilation of time and space' brought about by new communications technology, but there are some respects in which both will continue to be significant factors shaping economic, political and cultural formations in the 21st century.

?

Regionalisation

Although GATT and WTO promote international free trade, much of the growth in today's trade is emerging within regional blocs. Some 76 regional trade agreements are listed by WTO, over half of which have been established since 1990 (*The Economist*, 7 December 1996, p. 27). This rise in regional trade is not simply a consequence of the emergence of trading blocs, such as Nafta or the EU; the likely cause and effect is the other way around, with economic development brought about, in part, by the globalised activities of transnational corporations stimulating the formation of regional trade. Given this circumstance, as the economies of Asian countries mature, markets in adjacent countries will look more attractive than those far away. Such 'adjacency' may in future include 'cultural neighbourhoods' as much as geographical ones. The likely consequence of economic regionalisation, therefore, is the emergence of regional lingua francas other than English.

There are indications that this phase of globalisation is beginning. An international report on language education (Dickson and Cumming, 1996), shows the popularity of English in Thailand is increasing, as in many South-east Asian countries. But the author of the profile for Thailand reports:

> Thailand's role in Indochina has become increasingly more important with the democratisation of the political systems in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and possibly Mianmar, and Thai businessmen and academics have been participating in the affairs of these neighbouring countries by serving as business investors, partners, and advisers. At present, English is used as the medium of communication in most of these situations, but there is a growing perception that knowledge of these neighbours may be critical in enhancing better cross-cultural understanding, a perception that may have a future effect on policies for language education in Thailand. (Wongsothorn, 1996, pp. 122–3)

This suggests that economic modernisation may be particularly favourable to English only in its 'first wave'. As countries rise in economic status, they themselves may become the source of skills and technology for neighbouring countries. And as labour in such countries becomes more expensive and threatens a country's competitive edge in the global economy, they will find themselves well placed to relocate production in less-developed neighbouring countries. There is evidence that this is already happening in Hong Kong (relocating production to mainland China) and Singapore (involved in joint ventures in China, Philippines and India).

Another potentially significant example is Mercosur – a common market established in 1991 between Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. It seems that the trade agreement may be helping to establish Spanish as the regional lingua franca and may be giving rise to a political expectation, as in Thailand, that the languages of neighbouring countries should be more prominently studied:

> English became Brazil's second language in the 1970s. Now the challenge is from Spanish. ... Mercosur's boosters rightly claim that language is its secret weapon: where the European Union must haggle in a dozen tongues, Mercosur speaks in just two and they are enough alike to allow the group to dispense with interpreters. ... Mercosur has prompted a belated interest on both sides in learning the neighbour's language. The entire foreign-trade department of Brazil's National Industrial Council, the manufacturers' lobby, is taking Spanish lessons. Portuguese classes run by the cultural arm of the Brazilian embassy in Argentina are attracting record numbers. Diego Guelar, Argentina's ambassador to Brazil, is encouraging Argentine language schools to set up there. Within the next two years, the

Case Study 7 The UK Open University's Singapore programme

The British Open University has, since 1994, offered an undergraduate degree programme in Singapore which is jointly managed with local partner institutions. In recent years, 2 distance-taught courses in the English language have been collaboratively developed with authors, administrators and editors based in Singapore. The process of project management and exchange of draft materials within the UK institution has, in the last few years, become based on a mix of email and electronic document exchange, reducing the dependence on face-to-face meetings. This is a process which lends itself to globalisation: members of course teams who are currently distributed across the campus in Milton Keynes and who communicate electronically might just as easily be dispersed across the world. Messages and draft materials can be exchanged electronically over such distances as easily as on the campus network. Indeed, it sometimes happens that messages between Singapore and the UK arrive sooner than those sent across the campus, such are the vagaries of the 'store- and-forward' process which messaging networks employ.

But two factors make close integration of working practices problematic: one relates to time zone and the other is cultural. The British working day starts just as the one in South-east Asia closes. It is therefore impossible to take coordinated complex decisions quickly – a full working day elapses between each response and transporting hard copy and discs by courier remains a more reliable and almost as rapid a method of document exchange. These limitations are mitigated only by a corresponding trend towards more flexible working hours on both sides: the working hours of academic staff overlap and in both locations authors are able to send and receive electronic messages from home.

The second factor is cultural. It is well known that Asian, British and European business cultures differ in key areas, such as patterns of negotiation, approaches to project management, orientation to time and expectations of working-role relationships. Although some of these 'cultural' problems may be institutional rather than national, they form as effective a barrier to close integration as time-zone differences.

Brazilian state of Sao Paulo and the Argentine province of Buenos Aires – Mercosur's two largest population centres – plan to offer the other country's language as an optional subject in their school curricula. (*The Economist*, 9 November 1996, p. 88)

What this analysis suggests is that the present phase of globalisation has favoured the English language, primarily because flows and relationships have been between Big Three countries and developing economies. The next phase, however, may favour regional languages. National language curricula in schools may become more diversified as the need arises to teach a regional lingua franca together with the languages of neighbouring countries. English may be simply crowded out from its present prime position and demand for English may not rise as fast as might be predicted from the growth in local economies.

Time zones

The logic of globalisation has led to closer integration of working practices of dispersed teams (Case Study 7). The same logic has also increased the economic benefits of being located in the same time zone. Technology cannot overcome difference in time as easily as distance. A communication may be transmitted instantly to the other side of the world, but action may not be taken on it until the next working day. In the late 20th century, three major 'business' zones have emerged, based on the time zones within which the Big Three trading blocs operate: the United States, Europe and Japan. The zones are presently based on the main financial centres: New York, London and Tokyo.

The 'centre of gravity' of these business zones is expected to shift slightly in the coming decades, reflecting the changing centres of business. As China and India become more important in the global economy, the Asian zone may be expected to shift westwards, between time zones 5 and 8. The European zone may shift eastwards, reflecting increase in economic importance of eastern European countries. This will place Germany to a more central time location (Figure 37).

Each of these major zones may develop its own regional language hierarchy. The Americas, for example, might become more prominently Spanish-English bilingual. In which case, the Spanish-speaking population in the US will become an important economic resource. In Europe, the present hierarchy, which positions English, French and German as the 'big' languages, may continue, with French gradually being squeezed as the extension of the EU favours English and German. In Asia, complex patterns of regional difference may arise, with India projecting the use of English on the western side and the extensive 'bamboo network' of Chinese businesses promoting Chinese to the east. However, the fact that Mandarin is a second language for many engaged in international trade may complicate its position as a regional lingua franca.

Help or hindrance?

The division of the world into three major time zones will give rise to new patterns of advantage and disadvantage for countries, depending on their geographical location, time zone, language and culture. Some global corporations operating in the services sector, for example, are able to exploit their dispersion across time zones:
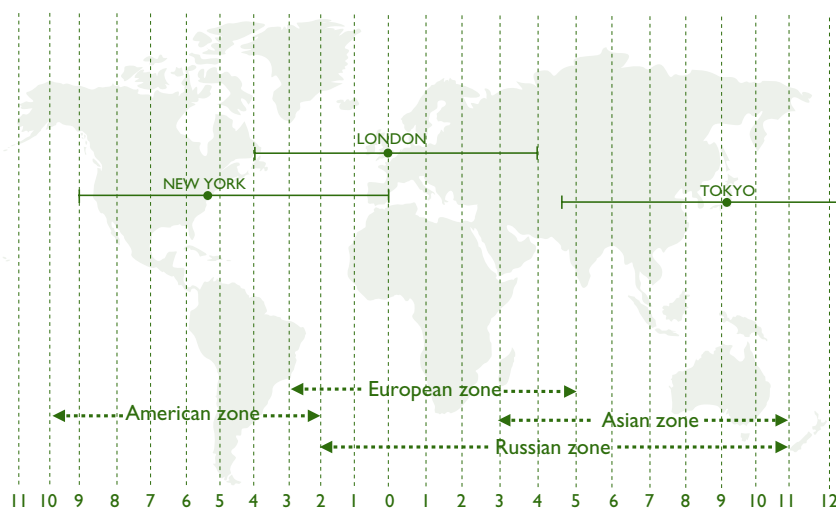
Figure 37 The trading days of the three global financial centres span the world. In the coming decades three major zones of economic activity may emerge. Russia will be in a unique position in spanning two of them

We seem to be moving to a three time-zone world, a world where economic activity is passed from one on to the next, maybe to the next, before being handed back to zone one. One zone performs the night-shift for the other. We talk of European countries having a time-zone advantage. London can trade with East Asia and North America. (McRae, *Independent*, 24 September 1996, p. 24)

Thus British Airways is able to switch its European enquiries desk from north-east England to New York at the close of business each day (customers are said to be 'flown over' to New York), avoiding the need for night-shift working. Indeed, the telecommunications link between the US and the UK carries more traffic than any other international channel. But the dominant effect of time zones in a period of globalisation will be to bring countries within similar zones into closer integration. In other words, the economic relationship between north and south will become restructured, with countries in the south increasingly providing cheaper labour and back-office services for those in the north. North America will develop a closer relation with Latin America, perhaps eventually forming a single trading bloc. Europe, however, may find Africa an increasingly important trading partner and service provider. Asia will, again, be the most complex region. Australia is well placed to pick up the English language benefits in the Asia Pacific region, but the role played by Russia is as yet unpredictable.

Russia [...] has a time-zone advantage, in that it runs two time-economies: if Europe provides only slow growth, it can benefit from the Asian boom. Only politics can hold it back. (McRae, *Independent*, 24 September 1996, p. 24)

Following the death of Deng Xiaoping, China has announced its intention to develop a closer economic relationship with the Russian Federation. The linguistic dynamics of any 'north Asia' zone which may emerge would be different from those in the south east. English is likely to serve functions in all these regions, but it will enter into a deeply complicated system of relationships with other languages.

Summary

● ●

1 New working patterns

Globalisation affects the ways that organisations are structured and the patterns of communication between members of the workforce. There is more communication required; more work is language related and the growth in screen-based labour allows working groups or teams to be internationally dispersed. Two consequences of such changes are that workers in many sectors require a deeper command of English than hitherto and a larger proportion of the workforce need to operate in an international language. These developments in working practice are likely to represent a major driver towards English-language training in the future.

2 Internationalisation of education

Globalisation is also affecting education – particularly higher education – and corporate training. Patterns of provision are becoming so complex that it is difficult to identify purely national interests. English will provide a means for second-language countries to internationalise their education systems and thus become major competitors to native-speaking countries in English-medium education. A second significant trend is towards distance education. This may benefit the institutions of Western countries who will be able to supply high-value training and accreditation services in-country at lower cost than traditional residential courses. However, an explosion in distance education is already visible in developing countries, driven by the need to educate more people, more cheaply, with fewer qualified teachers.

3 Localisation

One of the most significant trends in both satellite TV and the marketing departments of large TNCs is the tailoring of products and services to suit local markets. Language provides a key strategy in achieving localisation. The visual element of US TV programmes, for example, may not change but dubbing permits the programme to reach a local audience. Localisation increases the role of languages other than English in domains formerly associated with English.

4 Youth culture

The changing demography of the world, in which most Western countries are experiencing a decline in numbers of young people whilst those in Asia and Latin America are experiencing a 'baby boom', suggests that the focus of a global youth-culture might shift in the next decade or so from Europe and the US. Although the English language has been associated with a global youth-culture, the language does not seem to play as significant a role as sometimes appears. Clothing and music may be more important. English lends a 'hip' factor – it will be 'in the mix' – but other languages will be increasingly important to the world's young, who are encouraged to celebrate diversity by the advertising strategies of companies such as Coca-Cola and Benetton.

References

Berners-Lee, T. (1996) Europe and the info age. *Time*, Winter, pp. 140–1.

Chan, M.J. (1994) National responses and accessibility to Star TV in Asia. *Journal of Communication*, vol. 44. pp. 112–31.

Dickson, P. and Cumming, A. (1996) *Profiles of Language Education in 25 Countries*. Slough: NFER.

Findahl, O. (1989) Language in the age of satellite television. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 4, pp. 133-59.

Kline, D. (1997) *Net predictions for 1997*. http://www.upside.com/

McCrum, R., Cran, W. and MacNeil, R. (1986) *The Story of English*. London: Faber & Faber.

McRae, H. (1997) How will Labour deal with real life? *Independent*, 7 May, p. 17.

Mercer, N. (1996) English at work. In J. Maybin and N. Mercer (eds) *Using English: from conversation to canon*. London: Routledge/Open University.

Paliwoda, S. (1993) *International Marketing*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Ross, N.J. (1995) Dubbing American in Italy. *English Today*, vol. 11, pp. 45–8.

Schwartz, P. (1996) *The Art of the Long View*. New York: Doubleday.

Snyder, D. (1996) What's happening to our jobs? *The Futurist*, March–April, pp. 7–13.

Wallace, C. and Kovocheva, S. (1996) Youth cultures and consumption in Eastern and Western Europe. *Youth and Society*, vol. 28, pp. 189–214.

Wongsothorn, A. (1996) Thailand. In P. Dickson and A. Cumming (eds) *Profiles of Language Education in 25 Countries*. Slough: NFER.

English in the future

● World English

Will a single world standard for English develop?

Will English give Britain a special economic advantage?

Will the British 'brand' of English play an important role in the world in the 21st century?

● Rival languages

Which languages may rival English as a world lingua franca in the 21st century?

Which languages will benefit from language shift? Which languages will lose speakers?

What gives a language global influence and makes it a 'world language'?

● English as a transitional phenomenon

Will the demand for English in the world continue to rise at its present rate?

Will satellite TV channels bring English into every home, creating a global audio-visual culture?

Will English continue to be associated with leading-edge technology?

Will economic modernisation continue to require English for technology and skills transfer?

What impact will the Internet have on the global use of English?

● Managing the future

Can anything be done to influence the future of English?

A 'Brent Spar' scenario for English

The need for an ethical framework for ELT

Ways forward

This book has tried to establish a new agenda for debate, not simply on the future of the English language in the 21st century, but also on the role of its native speakers, their institutions and their global enterprises.

This final section brings together some of the arguments put forward in the book and shows how they might help address key questions about the future of English. The 'rush' to English around the world may, for example, prove to be a temporary phenomenon which cannot be sustained indefinitely. Languages other than English are likely to achieve regional importance whilst changed economic relations between native-speaking English countries and other parts of the world will alter the rationale for learning and speaking English.

The ELT industry may also find itself vulnerable to shifts in public opinion, like other global business enterprises now experiencing 'nasty surprises' in their world markets. An increasing concern for social equity rather than excessive benefit for the few is one expected social value shift which likely to inform both public policy decisions and personal life-choices and this will have unpredictable consequences for the popularity of learning English as a foreign language.

The English language nevertheless seems set to play an ever more important role in world communications, international business, and social and cultural affairs. But it may not be the native-speaking countries who most benefit.

World English

One question which arises in any discussion of global English is whether a single world standard English will develop, forming a supranational variety which must be learned by global citizens of the 21st century. Like most questions raised in this book, this demands a more complicated answer than those who ask probably desire.

There are, for example, at least two dimensions to the question: the first is whether English will fragment into many mutually unintelligible local forms; the second is whether the current 'national' standards of English (particularly US and British) will continue to compete as models of correctness for world usage, or whether some new world standard will arise which supersedes national models for the purposes of international communication and teaching.

The widespread use of English as a language of wider communication will continue to exert pressure towards global uniformity as well as give rise to anxieties about 'declining' standards, language change and the loss of geolinguistic diversity. But as English shifts from foreign-language to second-language status for an increasing number of people, we can also expect to see English develop a larger number of local varieties.

These contradictory tensions arise because English has two main functions in the world: it provides a vehicular language for international communication and it forms the basis for constructing cultural identities. The former function requires mutual intelligibility and common standards. The latter encourages the development of local forms and hybrid varieties. As English plays an evermore important role in the first of these functions, it simultaneously finds itself acting as a language of identity for larger numbers of people around the world. There is no need to fear, however, that trends towards fragmentation will necessarily threaten the role of English as a lingua franca. There have, since the first records of the language, been major differences between varieties of English.

The mechanisms which have helped maintain standard usage in the past may not, however, continue to serve this function in the future. Two major technologies have helped develop national, standard-language forms. The first was printing, the invention of which provided a 'fixity' in communication by means of printed books. According to scholars such as Anderson (1983), such fixity was a necessary requirement for the 'imagined communities' of modern nation states. But with increasing use of electronic communication much of the social and cultural effect of the stability of print has already been lost, along with central 'gatekeeping' agents such as editors and publishers who maintain consistent, standardised forms of language.

The second technology has been provided by broadcasting, which in many ways became more important than print in the socially mobile communities of the 20th century. But trends in global media suggest that broadcasting will not necessarily play an important role in establishing and maintaining a global standard. Indeed, the patterns of fragmentation and localisation, which are significant trends in satellite broadcasting, mean that television is no longer able to serve such a function. How can there be such a thing as 'network English' in a world in which centralised networks have all but disappeared?

Meanwhile, new forms of computer-mediated communication are closing the gap between spoken and written English which has been constructed laboriously over centuries. And cultural trends encourage the use of informal and more conversational language, a greater tolerance of diversity and individual style, and a lessening deference to authority. These trends, taken together, suggest that a weakening of the institutions and practices which maintained national standard languages is taking place: that the native-speaking countries are experiencing a 'destandardisation' of English.

The ELT industry, however, may play an important role in maintaining an international standard, as Strevens (1992) suggested:

> There exists an unspoken mechanism, operated through the global industry of ELT teaching, which has the effect of preserving the unity of English in spite of its great diversity. For throughout the world, regardless of whether the norm is native-speaker or non-native speaker variety, irrespective of whether English is a foreign or second language, two components of English are taught and learned without variation: these are its grammar and its core vocabulary. [...] the grammar and vocabulary of English are taught and learned virtually without variation throughout the world. (Strevens, 1992, p. 39)

However, second-language countries are likely to develop their own curricula, materials and teaching resources which they will seek to export to neighbouring countries. In some parts of the world, this may help bring new, non-native models of English – supported by dictionaries and pedagogic materials – into competition with the older standard varieties. There is no reason why, say, an Asian standard English may not gain currency.

Smith (1992) carried out an experiment using speakers of 9 'national varieties' of English – China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States – in order to discover whether 'the spread of English is creating greater problems of understanding across cultures' (Smith, 1992, p. 88). He concluded that there was no evidence of a breakdown in the functioning of English as an international lingua franca but that, interestingly, 'native speakers (from Britain and the US) were not found to be the most easily understood, nor were they, as subjects, found to be the best able to understand different varieties of English' (Smith, 1992, p. 88).

Since the ELT publishers from native-speaking countries are likely to follow markets – most of the large publishers already provide materials in several standards – it will be non-native speakers who decide whether a US model, a British one, or one based on a second-language variety will be taught, learned and used. At the very least, English textbooks in countries where English is spoken as a second language are likely to pay much more attention to local varieties of English and to localise their product by incorporating materials in local varieties of English.

The most likely scenario thus seems to be a continued 'polycentrism' for English – that is, a number of standards which compete. It will be worth monitoring the global ELT market for signs of shifting popularity between textbooks published in different standards.

The likelihood is that English may be so prevalent in the world that Britain obtains no special benefit in possessing native speakers: economic advantage may shift more clearly towards bilingual countries.

Will English give Britain a special economic advantage?

It has been suggested that the English language will provide the key to Britain's economic prosperity in the future. After all, if much of the world's business is conducted in English, this surely will be of advantage to native speakers. This book presents arguments which challenge this idea and suggests that in future Britain's monolingualism may become a liability which offsets any economic advantage gained from possessing extensive native-speaker resources in the global language.

There are several reasons why monolingualism may not be the most advantageous strategy in a world that increasingly is bilingual and multilingual, and trade is significant among them. A greater volume of trade will occur within Europe in a context where trilingual competence (in English, French and German), or at least bilingual competence, is widely regarded as necessary, especially for trade with peripheral countries. As the 'core' of Europe moves eastwards, there is a danger that Britain's peripheral position will be felt more acutely and its monolingual status may become an economic liability. In other regions of the world, regional languages may become important in business – such as Chinese in East and South-east Asia, and Spanish in the Americas. The inability to field staff competent in these languages in addition to English may prove a hindrance as markets become more competitive. The likelihood is that English may be so prevalent in the world that Britain obtains no special benefit in having so many native speakers: the advantage may shift more clearly towards bilingualism.

At present, the English language helps make Britain attractive to Asian companies wishing to invest in factories with direct access to European markets, since many Asian countries use English as their international lingua franca. But if a country such as the Netherlands can provide English, German and Dutch-speaking employees, why establish an enterprise within a mono-lingual English-speaking area which is peripheral geographically, politically and economically? Britain's linguistic advantage in attracting investment from Asia may decrease as English becomes more widely used in other European countries.

English will no doubt remain an important asset to Britain in terms of the production and marketing of intellectual property; English language materials will continue to be important economic resources for native speakers. But intellectual property in English will become more widely produced and marketed in other parts of the world.

The global ELT market, similarly, is likely to become more complex. As in other global industries, the strategic importance of alliances and cooperative ventures will grow. International networks of language schools may take an increasing market share. Competitors to Britain will arise in Europe, some of whom will employ British native speakers on a contract basis, while others will establish offices in Britain. These trends may make it less easy to identify distinctively British goods and services.

There is also a likelihood that new ELT providers based in European and Asian second-language areas may prove more attractive to some clients than native-speaker institutions. There is a rising demand for courses, materials and teachers which cater for the needs and experiences of second-language users. Non-native-speaking teachers are not necessarily regarded as 'second best' any more. More people are asking, 'How can monolingual British teachers best understand the needs of second-language users of English?'

Such developments make it difficult to argue that Britain will have an intrinsic economic advantage based on language. If Britain retains an edge with regard to the English language, it will be largely because of wider cultural associations and its international 'brand image'.

Will the British 'brand' of English play an important role in the world in the 21st century?

The conventional wisdom is that US English is the most influential variety worldwide. Recent American studies of the cultural consequences of globalisation suggest:

> The global culture speaks English – or, better, American. In McWorld's terms, the queen's English is little more today than a high-falutin dialect used by advertisers who want to reach affected upscale American consumers. American English has become the world's primary transnational language in culture and the arts as well as science, technology, commerce, transportation, and banking. ... The war against the hard hegemony of American colonialism, political sovereignty, and economic empire is fought in a way which advances the soft hegemony of American pop culture and the English language. (Barber, 1996, p. 84)

> By 2000, English was the unchallenged world lingua franca. ... This language monopoly bestowed upon the United States an incalculable but subtle power: the power to transform ideas, and therefore lives, and therefore societies, and therefore the world. (Celente, 1997, p. 298)

It will be clear from the discussion elsewhere in this book that these commentaries already have a slightly old-fashioned feel to them. The hegemony of English may not be so entrenched as writers such as Barber and Celente fear. But Barber may also be dismissing the position of British English too readily. Much of the negative reaction to English in the world is directed towards the US; most territories in which English is spoken as a second language still have an (ambiguous) orientation to British English (Figure 5, p. 11); British publishers have a major share of the global ELT market and there are signs that even US companies are using the British variety to gain greater acceptance in some world markets. Microsoft, for example, produces two English versions of intellectual property on CD-ROM, such as the *Encarta Encyclopedia*: a domestic (US English) edition and a 'World English edition' based on British English.

The future of British English in the world will depend in part on continued, careful management of its 'brand image'. Some useful groundwork has already been undertaken. The support of 'British Studies' courses in overseas universities, for example, has helped shift the focus from cultural heritage to a more balanced understanding of Britain's place in the modern world. There is also a growing appreciation of the importance of British audio-visual products in projecting an image of Britain as a leader of style and popular culture.

Rival languages

? Which languages may rival English as a world lingua franca in the 21st century?

There is no reason to believe that any other language will appear within the next 50 years to replace English as the global lingua franca. The position of English has arisen from a particular history which no other language can, in the changed world of the 21st century, repeat.

We have argued, however, that no single language will occupy the monopolistic position in the 21st century which English has – almost – achieved by the end of the 20th century. It is more likely that a small number of world languages will form an 'oligopoly', each with particular spheres of influence and regional bases.

As trade, people movement and communication between neighbouring countries in Asia and South America become more important than flows between such regions and Europe and North America, so we can expect languages which serve regional communication to rise in popularity. But it is actually very difficult to foresee more precisely what will occur.

For example, we have noted that economic activity, telecommunications traffic and air travel between Asian countries will greatly increase. But there are at least three possible linguistic scenarios which may develop from this. One is that English will remain the preferred language of international communication within Asia, since the investment in English may be regarded as too great to throw away, or the social elites who have benefited from English in the past may be reluctant to let their privileged position become threatened. Or it may simply be the most common shared language. A second scenario is that Mandarin becomes regionally more important, beginning as a lingua franca within Greater China (for communication between the regions of Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Taiwan) and building on increased business communication between the overseas Chinese in South-east Asia.

The third scenario is that no single language will emerge as a dominant lingua franca in Asia and a greater number of regional languages will be learned as foreign languages. If intraregional trade is greatest between adjacent countries, then there is likely to be an increased demand for neighbouring languages. In this case the pattern of demand for foreign languages will look different in each country.

The position of Russian in Central and North Asia is subject to similar problems of prediction. But it does seem clear that the global fortunes of Spanish are rising quite rapidly. Indeed, the trading areas of the south (Mercosur, Safta) are expected to merge with Nafta in the first decade of the new millennium. This, taken together with the expected increase in the Hispanic population in the US, may ensure that the Americas emerge as a bilingual English-Spanish zone.

? Which languages will benefit from language shift? Which languages will lose speakers?

This book has identified language shift – where individuals and whole families change their linguistic allegiances – as a significant factor in determining the relative positions of world languages in the 21st century. Although such shifts are relatively slow – often taking several generations to fully materialise – they are surprisingly difficult to predict. Most research in this area has focused on migrant and minority communities who gradually lose their ethnic language and adopt that of the majority community. Little research has been conducted on linguistic migration between 'big' languages, such as from Hindi or Mandarin to English. But in the next 50 years or so we can expect substantial language shift to occur as the effects of economic development and globalisation are felt in more countries. This takes us into new territory: there has been no comparable period in which can provide an indication of what is to come.

First, the loss of at least 50% and perhaps as much as 90% of the world's languages means that the remaining languages will acquire native speakers at a faster rate than population increase in their communities. English is not the direct cause of such language loss, nor is it the direct benefactor. As regional language hierarchies become more established, there will be a shift towards languages higher in the hierarchy. One of the concomitant trends will be increased diversity in the beneficiary languages: regional languages will become more diverse and 'richer' as they acquire more diverse speakers and extend the range of their functions.

Second, processes of internal migration and urbanisation may restructure residential and employment patterns in multilingual communities on lines of social class rather than ethnolinguistic community. Parasher (1980) showed, for example, how the rehousing of ethnic groups brought about by redevelopment created neighbourhoods in which English became the language of inter-ethnic friendship and communication.

Third, economic development is greatly enlarging the numbers of middle class, professional families in the world – those who are most likely to acquire and use English in both work and social forums.

Fourth, the growth of English-medium tertiary education worldwide has created a significant transition point in late adolescence for many second-language speakers at which English may take over from their first language as a primary means of social communication. The nature of English bilingualism in many L2 countries thus suggests that for some speakers English may become a first language during the course of their lives, which would upset the assumption that such language shift can only occur between generations. Migration towards L1 use of English by middle-class professionals may thus take place more rapidly than has hitherto been thought possible. India and Nigeria may experience substantial increase in numbers of first language speakers of English in this way and it is worth remembering that even a small percentage change in these countries would greatly increase the global number of native English speakers.

The languages which might benefit most, in terms of larger numbers of native speakers, are Hausa and Swahili in Africa, Malay, regional languages in India and Tok Pisin. Russian, Mandarin and Arabic may also profit. English, at the apex of the hierarchy, is certainly implicated in this 'upgrading' process and will probably continue to act as a global engine of change, encouraging users to shift upwards from small community languages to languages of wider communication.

What gives a language global influence and makes it a 'world language'?

No one has satisfactorily answered the question of what makes a language a 'world' language. It is clear from earlier discussions in this book that sheer numbers of native speakers do not in themselves explain the privileged position of some languages.

David Crystal suggests that 'a language becomes an international language for one chief reason: the political power of its people – especially their military power' (Crystal, 1997, p. 7). Historically that may have been true: in the future, it will be less clearly military power which provides the international backing for languages, because of changes in the nature of national power, in the way that cultural values are projected and in the way markets are opened for the circulation of goods and services.

What we need is some sense of what makes a language attractive to learners, so that we can identify languages which newly meet such criteria in the future. This would also allow us to chart and ideally anticipate, the decline of erstwhile popular languages.

In this book we have focused on economic and demographic factors. Some combination of these might usefully form a starting point for an understanding of what makes a language acquire importance. The engco model provides an illustration of the kind of approach that can be taken. The model calculates an index of 'global influence' taking into account various economic factors which have been discussed earlier, including Gross Language Product and openness to world trade (Traded Gross Language Product). The model also includes demographic factors, such as the numbers of young speakers and rates of urbanisation. Finally, it takes into account the human development index (HDI) for different countries. This is a composite figure produced by the UN, which combines measures of quality of life with those for literacy and educational provision. In this way, HDI provides an indicator of the proportion of native speakers who are literate and capable of generating intellectual resources in the language.

The engco model of global influence thus generates a new kind of league table among languages, which weights languages not only by the number and wealth of their speakers, but also by the likelihood that these speakers will enter social networks which extend beyond their locality: they are the people with the wherewithal and ambition to 'go about' in the world, influence it and to have others seek to influence them. The calculations for the mid 1990s for the 'basket' of languages we have surveyed in this book are as shown in Table 19.

No strong claims are made for the validity of this index, but it does seem to capture something of the relative relations between world languages which other indices, based crudely on economic factors or numbers of native speakers, do not convey. It shows that English is, on some criteria at least, a long way ahead of all other languages, including Chinese.

The advantage of the engco index is the way it can be used to generate projections. As the model is refined and the full demographic and economic projections for the countries concerned are taken into account, league tables will be published for the decades up to 2050. Preliminary results indicate that on this basis Spanish is one of the languages which will rise most quickly. The nearest rivals to English – German, French and Japanese, will grow much more slowly. The relative positions of the 'top six' are likely to change during the coming decades, but it is unlikely that any other language will overtake English.

1	English	100
2	German	42
3	French	33
4	Japanese	32
5	Spanish	31
6	Chinese	22
7	Arabic	8
8	Portuguese	5
9	Malay	4
10	Russian	3
11	Hindi/Urdu	0.4
12	Bengali	0.09

Table 19 'Global influence' of major languages according to the engco model. An index score of 100 represents the position of English in 1995

The changing status of languages will create a new language hierarchy for the world. Figure 38 shows how this might look in the middle of the 21st century, taking into account economic and demographic developments as well as potential language shift. In comparison with the present-day hierarchy there are more languages in the top layer. Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish and Arabic may join English. French and other OECD languages (German, Japanese) are likely to decline in status. But the biggest difference between the present-day language hierarchies and those of the future will result from the loss of several thousand of the world's languages. Hence there may be a group of languages at the apex, but there will be less linguistic variety at the base. The shift from linguistic monopoly to oligopoly brings pluralism in one sense, but huge loss of diversity in another. This will be offset only in part by an increasing number of new hybrid language varieties, many arising from contact with English.

The big languages
CHINESE, HINDI/URDU
ENGLISH, SPANISH, ARABIC

Regional languages
(The languages of major trade blocs)
ARABIC, ENGLISH, CHINESE, MALAY
RUSSIAN, SPANISH

National languages
Around 90 languages serve over 220 nation states

Local languages
The remainder of the world's 1000 or less languages
with varying degrees of official recognition
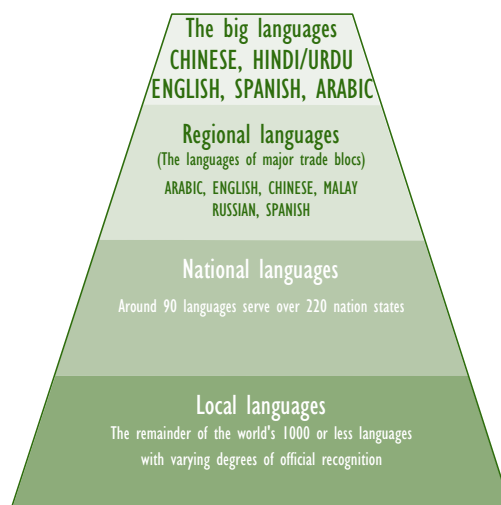
Figure 38 The world language hierarchy in 2050?

English as a transitional phenomenon

? **Will the demand for English in the world continue to rise at its present rate?**

Although the position of English seems entrenched, it is possible that the extraordinary interest in the language in recent years will prove to be a temporary phenomenon associated with the 'first-wave' effects in a period of global change: the transitional nature of a global economy, the current state of telecommunications networks, the immaturity of satellite television markets, and educational curricula which lag behind the needs of workers and employers. These pages examine why the current global wave of English may lose momentum.

Figure 39 shows the projections made by the engco model for speakers of English to 2050. The dotted lines represent speculative curves for second-language and foreign-language speakers. There is, as yet, no basis for estimating these groups safely – although it is these communities who will in practice determine the future of global English. Nevertheless, the curves are located approximately correctly for the present time (the vertical dashed line) and the speculative curves demonstrate some ideas developed in this book.

First, L1 speakers of English will soon form a minority group. Second, at some point the increase in people learning English as a foreign language will level out. This is a demographic necessity, but may be hastened by a 'leakage' of EFL speakers to L2 status. The key question is, at what point will the numbers of learners decline?

The dotted line, 'market share', indicates a speculative projection of the global ELT market open to the ELT industries of native-speaking countries, who currently dominate global ELT provision. The curve begins with a notional 50% share, which takes account of the present closed nature of many national textbook markets. The actual share of the market taken by publishers and educational providers from Britain, Ireland, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand is at present impossible to estimate – but it is the shape of the curve which is important. Here it shows a declining market share, as providers from L2 territories become more active. That British and other native-speaking ELT providers will find the global market much more competitive, will lose market share and may even experience a decline, is entirely compatible with the idea that more people in the world are learning and using English.

Figure 39 Estimates of first-language speakers of English from 1950 to 2050 as calculated by the engco model, together with speculations regarding L2 and EFL communities
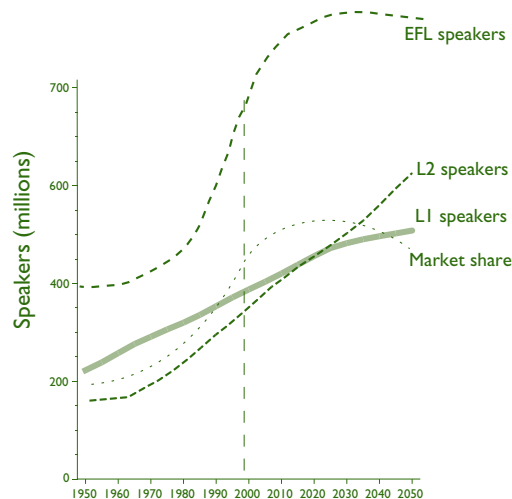
? **Will satellite TV channels bring English into every home, creating a global audio-visual culture?**

Satellite TV has been regarded as a major driver of global English. Star TV in Asia, for example, used English and Mandarin in their start-up phases, because these are the 'big' languages which reach the largest audiences. MTV is frequently credited with bringing US English to the world through music and popular culture. Thus English language programmes reach the middle classes in South and South-east Asia in whom the companies who pay for advertising are most interested. But the extensive use of English language material also reflects the easy availability of English language product on the world market. However, as satellite operators develop, they need to expand their audiences by increasing their reach in individual countries – this means going beyond English-speaking audiences. As their income streams develop and as technological innovation (such as digital transmission) make additional channels available, operators will be able to finance and operate channels more suited to local and niche audiences. Such economic and technological logic explains why English programming has been so prominent in the 1990s. Evident now is the same logic driving an increase in the number of languages and community interests serviced by satellite and cable TV. English language programmes will remain, particularly in certain content areas (such as sport and news), but they will become one of many offerings, rather than the dominant programming.

National networks in English-speaking countries will continue to establish operations in other parts of the world, but their programming policies will emphasise local languages. CBS, for example, intends to establish a news and entertainment channel in Brazil, broadcasting in Portuguese, not English; CNN International is launching Spanish and Hindi services; Star TV and MTV are rapidly localising – introducing programming in an increasing number of languages (p. 46).

National networks based in other languages will also establish a greater presence in the global audio-visual market. Ray and Jacka (1996), for example, note that Doordarshan, the Indian state-television company, will lease transponders on a new satellite with a footprint stretching from South-east Asia to Europe. They comment, 'this signals two major changes: the loosening grip of Murdoch on global satellite broadcasting and the entry of Doordarshan into global broadcasting to Indian diasporic audiences. [...] there can be no doubt that India will become an even stronger force in world television in the very near future' (Ray and Jacka, 1996, p. 99). Spanish television networks in Mexico are similarly establishing a global presence, producing programming for Europe as well as for Spanish speakers elsewhere in the Americas.

It is thus clear that two trends will dominate the second wave of satellite broadcasting: other major world languages will increase their global reach and the larger providers will localise their services. Both trends indicate a more crowded and linguistically plural audio-visual landscape in the 21st century.

Will English continue to be associated with leading-edge technology?

Leading-edge technology, particularly computers and information technology, has been largely English based in several respects. First, its research and development is focused in the US, though often in close collaboration with Japanese transnational companies (TNCs). Second, the literature and conferences in which research findings are reported and through which researchers keep up to date with developments elsewhere, are English based. Third, communications technology and document-handling software have developed around the English language. Indeed, the notorious history of the ascii coding set which has plagued the use of computer systems for non-English languages for many years, is one example. Fourth, the installed user base of new technology is primarily located in the US, resulting in support

manuals, help lines, on-screen menu systems and so on, appearing first in English.

The close association between English and information technology may prove a temporary phenomenon. As software and technology become more sophisticated, they support other languages much better. Desktop publishing and laser printing are now capable of handling hundreds of lesser used languages and a wide range of scripts and writing systems. Computer operating systems and software are now routinely versioned for many languages. In many cases the user can further customise the product, allowing even very small languages, unknown to the manufacturers, to be accommodated. So whereas English speakers used to enjoy the best and latest technology, this is no longer so true.

Will economic modernisation continue to require English for technology and skills transfer?

Currently, English is to be found at the leading edge of economic modernisation and industrial development (p. 32). The typical pattern of economic modernisation involves technology and skills transfer from the Big Three regions (North America, Europe and Japan) as a result of investment by TNCs, often via joint-venture companies: a process associated closely with English.

But as countries benefit from such transfer and 'come up to speed', there develop local networks of small companies supplying the large TNC enterprises. Since many such suppliers use local employment, this secondary economic activity does not stimulate English to the same degree as primary activity around TNCs.

There is yet a third wave to be expected in economic development. Just as the Big Three TNCs transfer technology, not simply to produce goods more cheaply but also to create new markets, so countries like Thailand

and Malaysia are looking towards their neighbours, including Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, as future trading partners. The development of such regional trade, in which no Big Three country is directly involved, may diminish the primacy of English as the language of technology transfer: the necessary level of expertise can be obtained closer to home and more cheaply. Sources of management and technology transfer in Asia now include Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. This third-wave technology transfer – often associated with less than leading-edge technology – may be less reliant on English. But it is equally possible that English provides the means for such countries to extend into regional markets.

There is no doubt that it would be extremely helpful to have a better understanding of how the next phases of globalisation will affect the use of English.

What impact will the Internet have on the global use of English?

The Internet epitomises the information society, allowing the transfer of services, expertise and intellectual capital across the world cheaply, rapidly and apparently without pollution or environmental damage. At present 90% of Internet hosts are based in English-speaking countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of traffic and the majority of Web sites are based in English and that those users based in other countries and who normally work in other languages, find they have to communicate with others in the cyberspace community through the medium of English.

Many studies, however, have shown how well the Internet supports minority and diasporic affinity groups. Although early studies of 'nationally oriented' Internet newsgroups (containing discussions of national or regional culture and language) seemed to indicate a preference for using English (for example, soc.culture.punjabi) others which have become more recently active (such as soc.culture.vietnamese) extensively use the national language. It is not yet clear why some groups use English less than others, but an overall trend away from the hegemony of English in such groups is visible and often surfaces as an explicit topic of discussion.

One reason may be that the Internet user base is

developing rapidly in Asia and non-English-speaking countries. And software technology, such as browser and HTML standards (which govern the HyperText Markup Language in which Web pages are written), now also supports multilingual browsing (p. 51).

The quantity of Internet materials in languages other than English is set to expand dramatically in the next decade. English will remain pre-eminent for some time, but it will eventually become one language amongst many. It is therefore misleading to suggest English is somehow the native language of the Internet. It will be used in cyberspace in the same way as it is deployed elsewhere: in international forums, for the dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge, in advertising, for the promotion of consumer goods and for after-sales services.

In the meantime, local communication on the Internet is expected to grow significantly. This, and the increasing use of email for social and family communication, will encourage the use of a wider variety of languages. English is said to have accounted for 80% of computer-based communication in the 1990s. That proportion is expected to fall to around 40% in the next decade.

Managing the future

Can anything be done by institutions and decision-makers to influence the future of English?

This is a difficult question to answer. There is an argument that global processes are too complex, too overwhelming in their momentum and too obscure in their outcomes to permit the activities of a few people and institutions, even with coherent policies, to make any difference. David Crystal suggests that the English language may have passed beyond the scope of any form of social control:

> It may well be the case ... that the English language has already grown to be independent of any form of social control. There may be a critical number or critical distribution of speakers (analogous to the notion of critical mass in nuclear physics) beyond which it proves impossible for any single group or alliance to stop its growth, or even influence its future. If there were to be a major social change in Britain which affected the use of English there, would this have any real effect on the world trend? It is unlikely. (Crystal, 1997, p. 139)

Even if the English language cannot, in any comprehensive sense, be managed, there is an argument that complex systems have an unpredictability in their behaviour which needs to be taken into account by strategic management. The institutions and organisations which will best survive the potentially traumatic period of global reconstruction which has only just begun, and even thrive during it, will be those which have the best understanding of the changing position of English in local markets, which can adapt the products and services they offer most quickly and effectively and which know how to establish appropriate alliances and partnerships.

But the function of strategic management can extend beyond ensuring either survival or the exploitation of changing conditions in the marketplace. In complex systems, small forces, strategically placed, can lead to large global effects. There is no way, at present, of knowing what nudges placed where will have what consequences. But careful strategic planning, far-sighted management, thoughtful preparation and focused action now could indeed help secure a position for British English language services in the 21st century.

Shell Oil is renowned for its use of scenario planning in the 1960s, which allowed it to weather the disruptions following the oil crisis more easily than rival companies (pp. 22–3). But its corporate scenario planning has had some signal failures in recent years – it failed, for example, to ensure policies were sufficiently robust against the real-life scenario provided by the Brent Spar oil platform. Shell wished to dispose of the redundant structure by sinking it in the North Sea. It was aware of the environmental issues – there is evidence that, in hindsight, the environmental case was on Shell's side. But this did not prevent a major public-relations disaster which, through boycotts of Shell products in the Netherlands and Germany, hit the corporation's profits and brought its reputation under public scrutiny.

Shell's experience is just one of many recent examples of how the international business environment can spring 'nasty surprises', often resulting from shifts in public opinion. There are two reasons why public attitudes now have a powerful impact on whole industries whose profitability and even viability can be destroyed remarkably quickly.

First is the increasing complexity of global business: if one sector or product line is hit, then it may have a much wider and unpredictable impact worldwide. Transnational corporations have discovered that there is 'no hiding place'. An incident in a small, jointly managed subsidiary in a remote part of the world can have major consequences for the parent company and other related businesses. Second, globalisation affects not just large business enterprises but also the way public opinions are formed and disseminated: public attitudes and changing social values now have a much greater effect on the business environment. In this respect, global media and Internet technologies are helping bring about a new form of 'people's democracy', of which policy makers of all kinds need to take more serious account.

There are several lessons here for English and those who supply English language goods and services. Public attitudes towards massive language loss in the next few decades, for example, is unpredictable. It would be easy for concerns about this issue to become incorporated into the wider environmental consciousness which seems to be spreading around the world. The spread of English might come to be regarded in a similar way as exploitative logging in rainforests: it may be seen as providing a short-term economic gain for a few, but involving the destruction of the ecologies which lesser-used languages inhabit, together with consequent loss of global linguistic diversity. The Shell experience suggests that a direct link between the spread of English and language loss would not have to be proven. Indeed, counter-evidence could be brought forward by linguists and yet have little impact on global public opinion.

There are other ideological movements which are travelling in a similar direction. There is, for example, a growing demand for linguistic rights, within a human-rights agenda, arguing that educational provision in a child's mother tongue should be regarded as a basic human right. Such arguments may be carried to the heart of the political process in countries experiencing demand for regional autonomy or repositioning themselves as regional hubs for trade and services.

These trends suggest a 'nightmare scenario' in which the world turns against the English language, associating it with industrialisation, the destruction of cultures, infringement of basic human rights, global cultural imperialism and widening social inequality.

Clinging to the idea that the presently dominant 'economic rationality' will continue to direct the future of English without hindrance during the next century might be similar to Shell's failure to anticipate public reaction to Brent Spar. But even if economic rationalism lingers, there may come a time when more realistic assessments are made by governments of the long-term effectiveness of mass English teaching.

The need for an ethical framework for ELT

There is a growing appreciation that the business environment of the next century will require global enterprises to meet three 'bottom lines': economic prosperity, environmental protection and social equity. Public trust in the institutions and organisations which provide goods and services may in the future represent a more important component of brand image than the quality of the product itself. Hence ethical, as well as environmental, values are likely to come under increasing public scrutiny and significantly influence customer loyalty.

However, one of the problems facing the proponents of an ethical approach to English teaching is that no one is sure where the moral high ground lies when it comes to the export of ELT goods and services. English has for long been seen as a 'clean' and safe export, one without some of the complex moral implications associated with the sale of products such as weapons or military vehicles. The ELT industry has been portrayed as one which benefits both producer and consumer and both exporting and importing countries. It has been a major component in overseas aid as well as a commercial enterprise.

How then, can the teaching of English be brought within a more ethical framework? What social responsibilities are associated with the promotion and teaching of English? There is a growing concern about endangered languages but very little debate about the management of large languages, of which English is the largest.

A more sensitive approach will be needed in the future, which recognises that English is not a universal panacea for social, economic and political ills and that teaching methods and materials, and educational policies, need to be adapted for local contexts. The world is becoming aware of the fate of endangered languages and more anxious over the long-term impact of English on world cultures, national institutions and local ways of life. Perhaps a combination of circumstances – such as shifting public values, changed economic priorities and regional political expediency – could bring about a serious reversal for British ELT providers at some point in the future. The development of a 'Brent Spar' scenario for English might help explore possible chains of events.

Whether such a discussion is held in terms of global 'brand management', the need to adapt to a changing business environment, or a moral requirement to work within an ethical framework, the ELT industry will have to respond to changing international social values. This would bring a major exporting activity into the same framework which is now expected to regulate trading relations with other countries and would help to ensure that the reputation of Britain, of the British people and their language, is enhanced rather than diminished in the coming century.

Ways forward

This book has aimed to establish a new agenda for debate, not simply on the future of the English language in the 21st century, but also on the role of its native speakers, their institutions and their global enterprises. For this reason the book identifies some of the key questions and has drawn attention to a number of areas which will repay further investigation and development.

- *Supporting a debate on the future of English.* Many of the topics raised briefly in this book would repay further discussion and consultation with experts in the various areas of concern (such as economists, technologists, cultural theorists, business managers). This can be taken forward in a variety of ways: seminars, further publications or Internet discussion groups.

- *Building better forecasting models.* The forecasting models upon which this book draws (such as the engco model) show the value of modelling for certain purposes. There is more that can be done in this direction to understand better the patterns of language shift and to model the future populations of second-language speakers.

- *Scenario building.* It is suggested that building scenarios for English in different parts of the world would help to explore further the impact on the English language of the complex interaction of global economic and technological trends. This is not a project to be undertaken lightly, but it is likely to repay the investment by providing a structure within which local knowledge and experience can be centrally coordinated. The 'Brent Spar' scenario is only one possibility. Others relate to the future language use and loyalties of the global teenager and the impact of the growing middle and professional classes in Asia.

- *Brand management.* One way of managing the complex attitudes and responses to English by the world public to the benefit of Britain is through more careful 'brand management'. A debate would be timely on how Britain's ELT providers can cooperatively prepare for the need to build and maintain the British brand and how the promotion of English language goods and services relates to the wider image of Britain as a leading-edge provider of cultural and knowledge-based products. The way English is promoted and marketed may play a key role in positioning Britain as one of the 21st century's forward-thinking nations.

The indications are that English will enjoy a special position in the multilingual society of the 21st century: it will be the only language to appear in the language mix in every part of the world. This, however, does not call for an unproblematic celebration by native speakers of English. Yesterday it was the world's poor who were multilingual; tomorrow it will also be the global elite. So we must not be hypnotised by the fact that this elite will speak English: the more significant fact may be that, unlike the majority of present-day native English speakers, they will also speak at least one other language – probably more fluently and with greater cultural loyalty.

Tables

Figures

Case studies

References (section 5)

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

Barber, B.R. (1996) *Jihad vs. McWorld*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Celente, G. (1997) *Trends 2000: how to prepare for and profit from the changes of the 21st century*. New York: Warner Books.

Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parasher, S.N. (1980) Mother-tongue English diglossia: a case study of educated English bilinguals' language use. *Anthropological Linguistics* vol. 22, pp. 151–68.

Ray, M. and Jacka, E. (1996) Indian television: an emerging regional force. In J. Sinclair, E. Jacka and S. Cunningham (eds) *New Patterns in Global Television: peripheral vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, L.E. (1992) Spread of English and matters of intelligibility. In B.B. Kachru (ed) *The Other Tongue: English across cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Strevens, P. (1992) English as an international language: directions in the 1990s. In B.B. Kachru (ed) *The Other Tongue: English across cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

The engco model

The engco forecasting model has been designed by The English Company (UK) Ltd as a means of examining the relative status of world languages and making forecasts of the numbers of speakers of different languages based on demographic, human development and economic data. The figures reported in this document are based on demographic projections from *World Population Prospects 1950–2050 (1996 Revision)* and *Sex and Age Quinquennial 1950–2050 (1996 Revision)* in machine-readable data sets made available by the United Nations in 1997, on economic data for 1994 from the World Bank, and from estimates of proportions of national populations speaking different languages taken from national census data and a variety of reference sources.

The main purpose of the model is to explore the potential impact of urbanisation and economic development on the global linguistic landscape of the 21st century. Further explanations of the assumptions made by the engco model, together with any other reports and revised projections, can be found from time to time on The English Company (UK) Ltd's Internet site (http://www.english.co.uk).

Sources

Overview

Figure 1 based on data from the British Council English 2000 *Global Consultation Report*. The report highlights the results of a questionnaire completed by 2000 English language teaching specialists in all parts of the world; the British Council press release was issued at the launch of the English 2000 project in March 1995.

Section 1

Figure 2 based on data in Unesco statistical yearbook (1995); Figure 3 based on Kachru (1985) with figures from Crystal (1997); Figure 5 after Strevens (1992); Table 1 data from the engco model of The English Company (UK) Ltd, compared with data from the online edition of Grimes (1996); Table 3 after Skudlik's work presented in Viereck (1996); Tables 4 and 5 based on figures given by Crystal (1997). Table 6 based on McArthur (1996); IRC data, collected for a paper given to the International Pragmatics Association, Mexico, July 1996 by Simeon Yates and David Graddol.

Section 2

Figure 9 based on Chambers and Trudgill (1980) p. 179; Figure 10 based on Bauer (1994) p. 63; Figure 11 loosely based on survey data reported by NUA Internet Surveys showing total world users in 1996 as 35 million and projections of 250 million in 2000, with most rapid growth in Asia Pacific; Figure 12 loosely based on quarterly International Passenger Survey data for 1984 and 1990 reported in English 2000 (1995), showing 615,000 English language course visitors in 1990; Figure 13 drawn from Al-Zayer and Al-Ibrahim (1996); Figure 14 from the engco model of The English Company (UK) Ltd; Figure 15 based on Wilson (1982); Figure 16 drawn from Van der Heijden (1996).

Descriptions of the Hooke model are based on notes of interviews made by David Graddol in January 1996 with Gus Hooke, then Director of Tertiary Studies at the Australian Academy, Sydney, during a visit supported in part by the British Council and a later unpublished manuscript (Hooke, 1996). Some of this material is available in an audio-cassette recording made by the BBC for an Open University course, U210 *The English Language: past, present and future*.

Section 3

Figure 17 data from the online Population Information Network (Popin) of the UN Population Division; Figure 18 from the engco model of The English Company (UK) Ltd; Figure 19 data from the US Commerce Department Census Bureau, cited in McRae (1994); Figures 20, 21 and 22 drawn from the Hooke forecasting model; Figure 23 data from Hearn and Button (1994); Figure 24 based on *Financial Times*, 23 December 1996; Figure 25 based on information from *Fortune*; Figures 26 and 27 based on information prepared for the British Council by David Graddol, June 1996; Figure 28 based on *The Economist*, 28 September 1996; Figure 29 from the Hooke forecasting model; Figure 30 data from the World Tourism Organisation (1992) *Compendium of Tourism Statistics*; Figure 31 based on data on traffic flows from TeleGeography Inc; Figure 32 based on an analysis of prevailing rates of independent UK carriers; Figure 33 drawn from Grimes (1996).

Table 7 from the engco model of The English Company (UK) Ltd; Table 8 information based on Girardet (1996); Table 9 based on Ammon (1995); Tables 10 and 11 from the engco model of The English Company (UK) Ltd; Table 13 based on information from Grimes (1996).

Section 4

Figure 35 based on data from Eurydice, the education information network in the European Community (1992); Figure 36 data from the BBC Annual Report (1996–97).

Table 14 data from *Cable and Satellite Europe*, January 1997, p. 36; Table 15 compiled from the *Blue Book of British Broadcasting*, 22nd edition, 1996; Tables 16 and 17 from the engco model of The English Company (UK) Ltd.

Section 5

Figure 39 from the engco model. Table 19 from the engco model.

The Future of English?

David Graddol

Contents