

# [Around around 94% of the 62 million](https://assignbuster.com/around-around-94-of-the-62-million/)

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Around the world, there are around 375 million nativespeakers of English.

As such, it is estimated to be thethird largest language, coming behind only MandarinChinese and Spanish. English is a (co)-official languagein 53 countries worldwide. Within Europe, English is the most commonly usedlanguage in the United Kingdom. It is not an officiallanguage in the UK, since there is no formal constitution. However, it can be considered the de facto language, given that it is the official language of the Britishgovernment, and is spoken by around 94% of the 62million inhabitants of the UK 7. It is also the mostwidely spoken language in the Republic of Ireland (populationapproximately 4.

5 million), where English is thesecond official language, a? er Irish. English is additionallythe official language of Gibraltar (a British OverseasTerritory) and a co-official language in Jersey, Guernseyand the Isle of Man (British Crown Dependencies), as well as in Malta. Outside of Europe, the countrieswith the greatest number of native English speakers arethe United States of America (215 million speakers), Canada (17. 5 million speakers) and Australia (15. 5 millionspeakers). In addition to English, the UK has further recognisedregional languages, according to the European Charterfor Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), i.

e., Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Cornish, Irish, Scots, and its regionalvariant Ulster Scots. Since February 2011, theWelsh language (which is spoken by approximately 20%of the population of Wales) has shared official statuswith English in Wales 8. ? e large number of BritishAsians (approximately 2. 3 million or 4% of the population, according to the 2001 census) give rise to otherlanguages being spoken in the UK, most notably Punjabiand Bengali. English is a (co)-official languagein 53 countries worldwide. Due to global spread of English, a large number of dialectshave developed.

Major dialects such as AmericanEnglish and Australian English can be split into a numberof sub-dialects. In recent times, differences in grammarbetween the dialects have become relatively minor, with major variations being mainly limited to pronunciationand, to some extent, vocabulary, e. g., bairn (child)in northern England and Scotland.

In addition to dialects, there are also a number of English-based pidginsand creole languages. Pidgins are simplified languagesthat develop as a means of communication between twoor more groups that do not have a language in common. An example is Nigerian pidgin, which is a used as a lingua? anca in Nigeria, where 521 languages have beenidentified. A creole language is a pidgin that has becomenativised (i. e.

, learnt as a native language), such as JamaicanPatois. For further general reading on the Englishlanguage, the reader is referred to 9, 10, 11, 12. 93. 2 PARTICULARITIES OF THEENGLISH LANGUAGECompared to most European languages, English hasminimal inflection, with a lack of grammatical genderor adjectival agreement. Grammatical case marking hasalso largely been abandoned, with personal pronounsbeing a notable exception, where nominative case (I, we, etc.), accusative/dative case (me, us, etc.) and genitivecase (my, our, etc.

) are still distinguished. A particularfeature of the English language is its spellingsystem, which is notoriously difficult to master for nonnativespeakers. Whilst in many languages, there is aconsistent set of rules that map spoken sounds to writtenforms, this is not the case in English. Nearly everysound can be spelt in more than one way, and conversely, most letters can be pronounced in multiple ways. Consequently, English has been described as “ the world’sworst spelled language” 13.

Consider the /u:/ sound, which in English can be spelt(among other ways) as “ oo” as in boot, “ u” as in truth,” ui” as in ? uit, “ o” as in to, “ oe” as in shoe, “ ou” as ingroup, “ ough” as in through and “ ew” as in flew. Havingmultiple written ways to represent a single sound isnot in itself an unusual feature of written languages. Forexample, the same sound can be written in French as” ou”, “ ous”, “ out” or “ oux”. However, what is more unusualabout English is the fact that most of the writtenforms have alternative pronunciations as well, e.

g., r