

Around around 94%
of the 62 million

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



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

other languages being spoken in the UK, most notably Punjabi and Bengali. English is a (co)-official language in 53 countries worldwide. Due to global spread of English, a large number of dialects have developed.

Major dialects such as American English and Australian English can be split into a number of sub-dialects. In recent times, differences in grammar between the dialects have become relatively minor, with major variations being mainly limited to pronunciation and, 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 pidgins and creole languages. Pidgins are simplified languages that develop as a means of communication between two or more groups that do not have a language in common. An example is Nigerian pidgin, which is used as a lingua franca in Nigeria, where 521 languages have been identified. A creole language is a pidgin that has become nativised (i. e.

, learnt as a native language), such as Jamaican Patois. For further general reading on the English language, the reader is referred to 9, 10, 11, 12. 93. 2

PARTICULARITIES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE Compared to most European languages, English has minimal inflection, with a lack of grammatical gender or adjectival agreement. Grammatical case marking has also largely been abandoned, with personal pronouns being a notable exception, where nominative case (*I, we, etc.*), accusative/dative case (*me, us, etc.*) and genitive case (*my, our, etc.*)

) are still distinguished. A particular feature of the English language is its spelling system, which is notoriously difficult to master for nonnative speakers. Whilst in many languages, there is a consistent set of rules that map spoken sounds to written forms, this is not the case in English. Nearly every sound 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’s worst 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 in group, “ ough” as in through and “ ew” as in flew.

Having multiple written ways to represent a single sound is not in itself an unusual feature of written languages. For example, the same sound can be written in French as “ ou”, “ ous”, “ out” or “ oux”. However, what is more unusual about English is the fact that most of the written forms have alternative pronunciations as well, e.

g., r