

Importance of spoken english language: overview

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



The importance of English as a spoken language began as a result of the colonial era, when European powers took to the seas in order to find new lands and natural resources. The effects of that time can still be felt in the number of English speakers in India, select parts of Asia and Africa, and North America.

The influence of English grew stronger in the 20th century, with the increased mobility of populations, the growth of the United States as an economic power, and the presence of international media in everyday life.

As of 2010 there are fewer native speakers of English than Chinese, though English is spoken in more places, and more people speak English as a second language. According to the 2004 World Factbook, 49 countries list English as their official language, not counting the United States and the United Kingdom, which do not list any official language but use predominantly English. In 2001, a poll of the 189 member countries in the United Nations showed that 120 of them preferred to use English to communicate with other embassies, while 40 chose French and 20 wanted Spanish.

Aside from the United Nations, many other international organizations operate in English. After World War II, key financial institutions were created in English, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The World Trade Organization and a variety of other UN affiliates such the WorldFoodProgram and the WorldHealthOrganization use English in spoken and writtencommunication. Media Influence Five of the largest broadcasting companies (CBS, NBC, ABC, BBC and CBC) transmit in English, reaching across the world through satellite television and local holdings.

Estimates for the number of people using the Internet in English lie only slightly ahead of users in Chinese, but well ahead of Spanish and other major languages. In the publishing industry, English is also well ahead: 28 percent of books published annually are in English, and the market for books in English for second language speakers is growing.

Factors The amount of influence a language has depends on the number of native and secondary speakers, as well as the population and economic power of the countries in which it is spoken.

Other factors include the number of major fields that use the language, such as branches of science and diplomacy, and its international literary prestige, to a lesser degree.

English currently dominates in science and technology, a position that it took over from German after World War I. Scientific journals publish in English, and many researchers, especially in physics, chemistry and biology, use English as their working language.