



BRITISH COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE
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ENCLOSURE

A British scientist coming to Vienna for a conference on human genetics or Polak, designer negotiating with prospective clients in Stockholm or Polish tourist chatting with local shopkeepers in Leeds: they all communicate successfully in "English", but which "English" is it, precisely, so that it is not the language you find in that street and shop or British television news, but rather a range of "Englishes", with enough of common features to make it viable as a means of communication.

In fact, "English" has acquired a plural form - "Englishes" - to refer to any of the varieties of English spoken around the world, such as Australian English, Canadian English, South African English, Cockney or Dublin, American English and, to put them all somewhat loosely, British English.

The international spread of English is now taken for granted, but what is acknowledged are the implications of this spread, especially in terms of the "Englishes" that have resulted from it. Indeed, only standard British and standard American English are regarded as the legitimate versions of the language.

Nevertheless, there are further attempts to smooth out the various forms of international English. The intention is to remove the distinction between British and American spelling, the adjustment of which at the moment takes up so much of our time conscientiously.

At the moment the dictionary has reached the stage of being as flat as a pancake: all complex other systems of spelling will die, "trape" or "trapez" will still be printed as correct, however, we haven't yet reached the point where we can expect that other systems will die, but we will be working with the intention.

The concept of international English is a relatively new because there is not a conventional speaker of the variety, just varieties of regional varieties happen to meet in an international town, so it will only be a slight modification to each particular regional variety, to create a common of English speakers (like they are) to have decided some by hand, by word, by legislation to international agreement: perhaps the sense of an international community will grow stronger and the need for a form of sharing of an internationalized English will become more apparent.

Multiple, pluralist (continued)