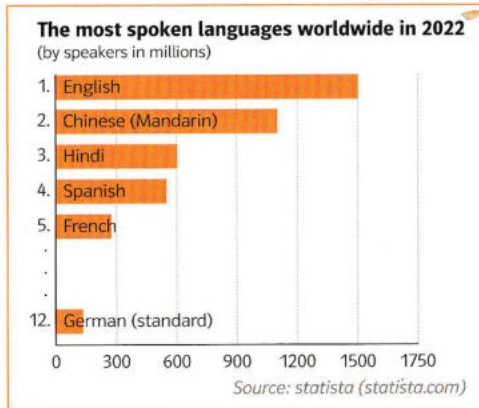# 3.4 The English-speaking world

English as a global language

In 2022 ca. 1.5 **billion** people around the world spoke English either as their first or second language. Today, English is the **lingua franca** in a wide variety of **settings**, including **academia**, **science**, politics, diplomacy and **business**. In fact, many companies now also use English as their official **corporate language**, to **facilitate** communication among employees working in different countries. **Proficiency** in English is now a **requirement** for many jobs and **potential** employees sometimes have to **demonstrate** their English language skills at interview. It is also **by far** the most widely learned foreign language in the world.

The most spoken languages worldwide in 2022
(by speakers in millions)

Rank	Language	
1.	English	
2.	Chinese (Mandarin)	
3.	Hindi	
4.	Spanish	
5.	French	
12.	German (standard)	

0   300   600   900   1200   1500   1750

Source: statista (statista.com)

INFO

The US does not have an official language, although English is the **de facto** language of government and business. It is also the most commonly spoken language, followed by Spanish. Yet a wide range of other languages is spoken, including many **indigenous** languages. However, according to the Indigenous Language Institute only 175 of the more than 300 original indigenous languages remain.

The **expansion** of the British Empire greatly **contributed to** the rise of English as a global language. Yet at the same time, it did so **at the expense of** many **native** languages as people were forced to speak the language of their colonial rulers. Today, many of these languages are **endangered**. However, people are **reclaiming** their native languages. The Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wrote a famous collection of essays called "**Decolonising** the mind" about language and its role in national culture, history and identity, **advocating** linguistic decolonisation. In a **lecture** in 2017, he said,

> "If you know all the languages of the world but not your **mother tongue**, that is **enslavement**. Knowing your mother tongue and all other languages too is **empowerment**."

billion [ˈbɪliən]
lingua franca [ˌlɪŋgwəˈfræŋkə] D — Milliarde / Verkehrssprache
setting D — hier: Bereich
academia [ˌækəˈdiːmiə] no pl, no article W,S — die akademische Welt
science D,W — (Natur-)Wissenschaft
business no pl — Handel
corporate [ˈkɔːpərət] **language** D — Unternehmenssprache (Sprachstil und Sprachgebrauch eines Unternehmens)

to facilitate [-ˈ---] **sth** D,W,S,A — etw. erleichtern
proficiency [-ˈ---] no pl D,W,S — hier: gute Kenntnisse
→ to be proficient in a language — → eine Sprache beherrschen
requirement [-ˈ---] D,W,S — Voraussetzung
potential [pə(ʊ)ˈten(t)ʃəl] — möglich, potenziell
to demonstrate sth — etw. zeigen, etw. beweisen
by far — bei weitem

de facto — faktisch, de facto
indigenous [ɪnˈdɪdʒɪnəs] D,W,S,A — einheimisch, indigen

expansion — Ausdehnung
→ to expand — → sich ausdehnen
to contribute [kənˈtrɪbjuːt] **to sth** — zu etw. beitragen
→ contribution — → Beitrag
at the expense of sth — auf Kosten einer Sache, zu Lasten von etw.

native D,S — einheimisch
endangered D,W,S,A — gefährdet
to reclaim sth [-ˈ-] — hier: zurückfordern
to decolonise [-ˈ----] D,W — dekolonisieren
to advocate [ˈædvəkeɪt] **sth** — hier: für etw. plädieren
lecture — Vortrag
→ to give a lecture on/about sth — → einen Vortrag über etw. halten

A lecture is a formal speech. It is also used to describe a talk at university (Vorlesung).

mother tongue D,S,A — Muttersprache
enslavement [-ˈ--] — Versklavung
empowerment [-ˈ----] — hier: Stärkung, Macht

The English language today

Like all languages, English is **constantly evolving**. For instance, if there is not a word to describe something in English, it might be **borrowed** from another language. Over time the word is then **assimilated into** English and the original pronunciation is generally adapted to make it easier for English speakers to say. English has so-called "**loanwords**" from many different languages, including Latin (*plant*), French (*Renaissance*), German (*kindergarten*), Japanese (*tsunami*), Hindi (*bungalow*), Arabic (*caravan*), Sanskrit (*avatar*) and Hebrew (*jubilee*). It is said that around 80% of the English language is **made up of** loanwords.

What do you think this sign says?

Most people who learn English as a second language will be taught **received pronunciation** even though it is only spoken by around 3% of the UK **population**! It is an accent not a **dialect** as it uses standard English. Although it does not **shed light on** where a person is from (unlike the numerous regional accents used in the UK), it used to **provide clues as to** a person's education and **social background**. In the past, people often **felt under pressure** to use it as it was **viewed** more favourably. Today, this is thankfully no longer the **case** and people are proud of their regional accents and dialects.

In England **alone**, you will **encounter** many different regional accents and dialects, including **Estuary** English (south), Brummie (Birmingham), Scouse (Liverpool), Geordie (Newcastle) and Cornish. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales also have different dialects. And of course, each country has its own versions of English.

Now that English is spoken as a second language by so many people, new **hybrid** forms are **emerging**, in which people combine elements of English with their own language, such as Denglish. In the US, many young Hispanic-Americans speak the informal hybrid Spanglish.

So, will English continue to be as important in the future? Improvements in machine translation and **voice-recognition** technology mean that people from different countries can speak their own languages and hear what the other person is saying **in real time**. Although the technology is still **far from perfect** – machines are not very **adept at** dealing with idioms, jokes, nuances or **innuendos** – this might **put an end to** the need for a global language **over time**.

What do you think?

English	German
to be constantly evolving D	sich ständig weiterentwickeln
→ to evolve	→ (sich) entwickeln
to borrow sth D,S	etw. leihen
to assimilate [-'---] **sth into sth** W	etw. in etw. integrieren/aufnehmen
loanword D	Lehnwort
to be made up of sth	aus etw. bestehen
received pronunciation D	*britische Standardaussprache*
population	Bevölkerung
dialect ['daɪəlekt] D,W	Dialekt
to shed (shed, shed) **light on sth** D	Licht auf etw. werfen, *hier:* über etw. Aufschluss geben
to provide a clue to sth	einen Anhaltspunkt für etw. liefern
→ clue	→ Hinweis
social background	soziale Herkunft
to feel (felt, felt) **under pressure**	sich unter Druck gesetzt fühlen
to view sth	etw. ansehen (als), etw. (als etw.) betrachten
case	Fall
alone	allein
Note the word order in English.	
to encounter sth	etw. begegnen, auf etw. stoßen
estuary ['estjʊəri]	(Fluss-)Mündung; *hier: englischer Akzent, der im Mündungsgebiet der Themse im Südosten gesprochen wird*
hybrid ['haɪbrɪd] D	hybrid
to emerge	entstehen
voice-recognition D	Spracherkennung
in real time	in Echtzeit
to be far from perfect S,A	alles andere als perfekt sein
to be adept [ə'dept] **at** (doing) **sth** D,S,A	in etw. geschickt sein
innuendo [ˌɪnjuˈendəʊ] S	Andeutung, Anspielung
to put (put, put) **an end to sth**	etw. beenden, etw. ein Ende setzen
over time	im Laufe der Zeit