

Contents

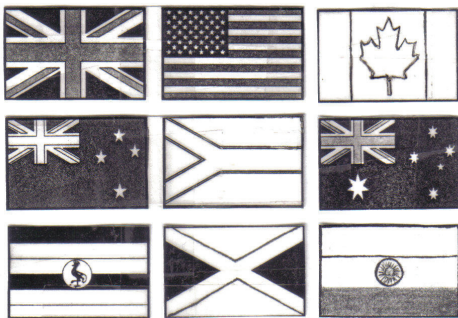
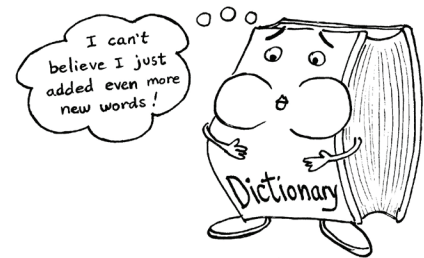
Chapter 1: “English never met a word it didn’t like”	1
Chapter 2: Language Change	11
Chapter 3: Phonetics: How We Talk	17
Chapter 4: Phonology: Engines of Sound Change	21
Chapter 5: The Language Family	27
Chapter 6: The Pre-History of the Indo-Europeans	35
Chapter 7: Our Oldest Words	39
Chapter 8: The Germanic Family Branch	47
Chapter 9: The Anglo-Saxons	57
Chapter 10: Danelaw	71
Chapter 11: The Normans Bring French to England	81
Chapter 12: Centuries of Silence, New Life	87
Chapter 13: The Renaissance	93
Chapter 14: The English Dictionary	105
Chapter 15: English Crosses the Ocean	111
Chapter 16: Immigrants in America	119
Chapter 17: International English	127
Answer Key	137
Extra Resources and Activities	151
Bibliography	167

1

“English never met a word it didn’t like.”

Can you guess what sort of person said the words of this title? A teacher, perhaps, or a writer? Most people would never guess that it was a computer engineer from India. Anu Garg, who now lives in the United States, began by writing a program that would randomly select an English word and its definition, and email it to any subscriber. As his service, called “A Word A Day,” grew to thousands of subscribers, Anu Garg grew more and more interested in the endless supply of English words. Short words, long words, ordinary words and unheard-of words. Words that are obviously borrowed from other languages, like “shiitake,” and words whose history was at first hard to guess. No other language has such a variety of words in its vocabulary!

English has a welcoming handshake for all. It accepts any word, no matter the history. It is happy to turn verbs into nouns, and nouns into verbs. It can absorb spelling changes and thousands of outrageously spelled brand names. It truly never met a word it didn’t like.



And, in turn, many people have taken its welcoming handshake. English is not only an international news and trade language, it has become the business and government language in many countries far from England. America, of course, is a prime example, along with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. These are all places where English people moved and settled. Some other places, merely conquered and dominated by England or America, have chosen to keep speaking English. In Uganda, for example, English is the first language of many black

Ugandans, even if their ancestors did not speak it. Jamaicans speak English, and so do many citizens of India and some parts of China, such as Hong Kong.

But nowhere has the English language sponged up as many different peoples as in Canada and the United States. Everyone calls the United States a “melting pot” where different people come together and blend to become Americans. What melts them together? The English language. Most people in America today, who speak English, had ancestors who did not. Only a small fraction of the 314 million Americans can trace their families back to England. Even the Scotch and Irish did not speak English until the last several hundred years!

Most immigrants say they can learn English fairly easily. The words are not hard to say, and most words can be said pretty badly and still be understood. Basic grammar is not terribly hard to pick up. However, new English speakers agree on one thing: English is hard to spell!

Even native English-speakers can agree with that. Why do we have to learn so many ways to spell the sound “ee”? Why does “tion” start with the sound “sh”? Why are some words spelled two different ways?

In fact, so many people have agreed with this, some have suggested changing our spelling. Just spell “suggestion” as it sounds: “sugjeschun.” What’s wrong with that?

One practical objection is that we would have to rewrite all the books. Imagine if you learned to read in this new spelling (what a breeze!) and then tried to go to a library and read a

book printed in 1945. It would be like reading German or French! Changing the spelling would cut us off from our past — even our recent past.

There is a deeper reason not to change the spelling. Our spelling connects us with an ancient past. English is, on the surface, a jumble of words. We see foreign words like “apparatchik” and “karaoke,” and we see new words like “modem” and “diss.” These words catch our attention, and we can think of English as a junk shop, full of stuff, shelved any old place. Nothing special, not much worth saving. But English is not really such a new or jumbled language. It is changing rapidly, but it is also very, very old. Some of its most common words are 4000 or 5000 years old! Many of its words are 2000 years old. By 500 years ago, the basic shape of English was set, and the changes we make now are no more than graffiti scribbled on a skyscraper, or teddy bears painted on a mailbox. The real stuff is there, has been there, and is not going away. And we are connected to it through spelling.

This book will show you how it all came to be. How old is English, and how do we know that? What parts are the oldest? How did we get the other parts? Why did it look different in the past, and how did it get to look and sound as it does now? On the way, you will meet some ancient peoples who used some of the same words you do. Their lives were very different from yours! The earliest peoples did not even live in England.

Much of the study will be focused on the actual island called Britain or England. You, the reader, may not have a strong connection to England. Perhaps your ancestors came from Lithuania, the Sahara, or the Malay Peninsula. Perhaps England was a friend to your ancestors, or perhaps it was an enemy. Remember as you read, this language belongs to all of us now, and we all leave our fingerprints all over it.



DID YOU KNOW?

- *When printers in the 1500's wanted to fill out a line so the edges were even, they changed the spelling. The word “the” might become “ye” to save a letter, or the word “only” might become “onlie” to add a letter!*
- *In 1961, Webster's Third International Dictionary shocked the public by including wrong spellings. If you wondered what “surprize” meant, you could find it in the dictionary, just inches from “surprise!” Were these spellings “wrong,” or just “variant,” as the dictionary called them?*
- *India's 1950 Constitution stated that by 1965, all official documents must be in Hindi, which would be the official language of India. About 40 percent of Indians spoke Hindi and the rest would have to learn it. By 1963, it was clear that English must be permitted as a second official language. More people in India speak English now than when the country was under British rule. In fact, there are 125 million people in India who speak English compared to only 59 million in England!*



French: A language that meets a lot of words it doesn't like

In 1539, the king of France, Francois I, ("Fran-swah"), proclaimed that all official legal documents must be written in French, not Latin. 100 years later, in 1635, Cardinal Richelieu created "The French Academy," a collection of 40 scholars, to "give firm rules to our language, and to make it pure, eloquent, and able to handle arts and sciences." This Academy has continued to the present day, electing members from among current poets, philosophers, playwrights, diplomats, politicians, doctors, and soldiers. Its goal remains the same as at its founding.

Each year, the French Academy considers questions about how French ought to be spoken and written. It accepts or rejects foreign words that are in use in France. The wave of new inventions in the field of computer science has kept the Academy busy. America, especially, has created many new words, such as "internet," "email," and "mouse." As much as possible, the French Academy rejects the foreign words and publishes a list of new French words to use instead. The current list specifies that "walkman," "software," and "tie-breaker" are not to be used in French.



Melvil Dewey: A man who wanted to simplify English spelling



If you have ever been to a library and looked up a book using the Dewey Decimal System (100's, 200's, etc.) then you have come into contact with the work of Melvil Dewey.

Dewey was born in 1851 in the state of New York. He attended Amherst College in New York, and while he was studying there he noticed how badly organized the books in the library were. Books were shelved together by size or by date or by how recently they were acquired, and sometimes by topic. It was hard to find what you were looking for! Dewey's organized mind came up with a much better way to organize the books, and by the year 1927 almost every public library in the country was using it.

Dewey went on to help establish the American Library Association, the Library Bureau, and the Library Journal. He founded the first-ever library school at what is now Columbia University. He was a pioneer when it came to hiring assistants: he actually hired women! (In Dewey's day, many colleges would not accept female students.)

The reason Dewey is in this book is because of his work in spelling reform. He had a logical mind and was almost obsessed with efficiency — finding ways of doing things that wasted the least amount of time. Learning English spelling seemed like a complete waste of time to Dewey. Why spend time memorizing all the exceptions to the already-difficult spelling rules? The subject of spelling could almost be made obsolete if everyone could spell words the way they sounded. That way, if you could speak, you could spell. Sounds great, eh?

The first thing he did was change the spelling of his name from Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey to Melvil Dui. (Although his name has come down through history spelled the original way.) He got rid of annoying letter groups such as "kn," "tion," and "ough." For example, he would spell knee, "ne," education, "edukashun," and cough, "cof." He worked hard to try to persuade people in the educational community to switch to his new simplified spelling, but it never caught on.

ACTIVITY 1.1 Your top ten most-hated spelling words

If you have trouble with spelling, you will find this activity very easy. Even if you are a person who does very well at spelling, you should still be able to come up with some difficult words to put on your list.

List ten words that you find difficult to spell. (They do not have to be listed in order of which are most difficult. They can be in random order.)

At the end of this book, you will be looking back at these words, so it is important to get all ten chosen now.

ACTIVITY 1.2 Read an amusing paragraph by Mark Twain



A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling:

In year 1, that useless letter 'c' would be dropped to be replased either by 'k' or 's', and likewise 'x' would no longer be a part of the alphabet. The only kase in which 'c' would retained would be the 'ch' formation, which will be dealt with later.

Year 2 might reform 'w' spelling, so that 'which' and 'one' would take the same konsonant, wil Year 3 might well abolish 'y' replasing it with 'i' and iear 4 might fiks the 'g/j' anomali wonse and for all.

Jenerally, then, the improvement would kontinue iear bai iear with iear 5 doing awai with useless double konsonants, and iears 6-12 or so modifaiing vowlz and the rimeining voist and unvoist konsonants.

Bai iear 15 or sou, it wud fainali bi posibl tu meik ius ov thi ridandant leterz 'c,' 'y,' and 'x' == bai now jast a memori in the maindz ov ould doderez-- tu riplais 'ch,' 'sh,' and 'th' rispektivli.

Fainali, xen, aafte sam 20 iears ov orxogrefkl riform, wi wud hev a lojinkl, kohirnt speling in ius xrewawt xe Ingliy-spiking world."

- Mark Twain

ACTIVITY 1.3 A puzzle about places where English is spoken

What percentage of the population in America speaks English? What about Canada or the United Kingdom? The answers might surprise you! See if you can guess which percentage numbers match up with which countries. (We will assume that some of these people are bilingual. If someone speaks both English and another language, they will be counted as English-speakers. The percentage number represents people that would be able to hold at least a simple conversation in English.)

Set 1:

Possible answers to choose from:
American Samoa, Australia, Canada
Liberia, Netherlands, Norway,
Singapore, Sweden, UK, US

100% _____
98% _____
96% _____
92% _____
90% _____
89% _____
86% _____
85% _____
82% _____
80% _____

Set 2:

Possible answers to choose from:
China, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia
France, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico
Pakistan, Switzerland

73% _____
61% _____
49% _____
39% _____
35% _____
20% _____
15% _____
5% _____
2% _____
1% _____

Check your answers with the answer key at the back of the book.

NOTE: These percentages came from census statistics as listed on various Wikipedia articles about English.

ACTIVITY 1.4 A puzzle about language academies

There are many groups devoted to regulating languages. Below is a partial list that gives you a sense of how much they can vary. Try to match each group to its description. You may use reference books or websites to help you figure them out. (The correct answers are given in the answer key at the back of the book.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) The Russian Academy _____ | 9) Foras na Gaeilge (Gaelic) _____ |
| 2) Euskaltzaindia (Basque) _____ | 10) Svenska Akademien _____ |
| 3) The Yoruba Academy _____ | 11) Academia Brasileira de Letras _____ |
| 4) Academy of Persian Language _____ | 12) Commission on the Filipino Language _____ |
| 5) Real Academia Española _____ | 13) Academy of the Arabic Language _____ |
| 6) L'Académie Française _____ | 14) Accademia della Crusca _____ |
| 7) Turkish Language Association _____ | 15) Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa _____ |
| 8) Academy of the Hebrew Language _____ | |

A) Founded in 1635, its members are “immortels” after a motto by Cardinal Richelieu; in 2008 it protested against legal recognition for regional languages.

B) Founded in 1786. Its motto is “Talent and Taste.” It awards the Nobel Prize for literature.

C) Founded in 1999, it sponsors a week of language learning events leading up to St. Patrick’s Day.

D) Founded in 1897, it owns a skyscraper whose rental income funds the Academy’s work. Its 40 members wear fancy gilded uniforms to meetings.

E) Founded in 1953, it took over from a committee that had overseen the revival of a language that had not been spoken for 2000 years.

- F) Founded in 1713 so that people would always be able to read books by Cervantes. Its hall has seats named for each letter of the alphabet.
- G) Founded in 1919, it had to create a new, unified dialect and teach literacy to keep this ancient spoken language alive.
- H) Competing Academies in ten different countries all try to regulate this language. The oldest was founded in Syria in 1919.
- I) Founded in 1583, its name means "School of Bran," referring to the process of winnowing grain from husks.
- J) Founded in 1932, it oversaw a change from Arabic to Latin letters. It tries to create native words to replace loan words from Greek, Persian, Arabic, French and English.
- K) Founded in 1991, it must help teach the national language that must be learned by half of the citizens. It permits loan words (often from English) for scientific use.
- L) Founded in 1935, it recently rejected the use of the language name "Farsi." The government forbids use of any "loan" words not approved by this academy.
- M) Founded in 1967, it shares with a similar academy, based in Kenya, the task of monitoring a language full of loan words from Persian, German, Portuguese, English and French.
- N) Founded in 2007, it has not yet completed its mission to create a written standard for a language with many spoken dialects.
- O) Founded in 1783 by an Empress, it merged in 1841 with a more general academy.

ACTIVITY 1.5 A game about English grammar

English is an unusual language because many of its words can be used as both nouns and verbs. In English, a word can start out as just a noun and, over time, eventually end up being used as a verb. This game challenges you to think about how you use English words.

A noun is commonly defined as "a person, place or thing." (Here is a more complicated definition: A word that can be combined with determiners to serve as the subject of a verb, can be replaced with a pronoun, and refers to an entity, quality, state, action, or concept.) A verb is commonly said to be "an action word." (Here is a dictionary definition of a verb: A word that is the grammatical center of a predicate and expresses an act, occurrence, or mode of being.)

Here are some examples of nouns: table, tree, phone, rabbit, George, St. Louis, Antarctica, happiness, liberty, love, intellectualism.

Here are some examples of verbs: laugh, hope, sit, act, divert, access, motivate, have, be.

Many English words can be a noun or a verb, depending on how they are used in the sentence.

LAUGH: He let out a laugh. (noun) Don't laugh at me! (verb)

ROCK: She dropped the rock into the water. (noun) The chair can rock. (verb)

CLAP: The clap of thunder scared me. (noun) The audience will clap. (verb)

Most languages are not like this. In most other languages, verbs are a certain kind of word, are spelled in a certain way, and could never be used as a noun. For example, French verbs all have endings such as “-er,” or “-ir.” People who speak French immediately recognize the words “manger,” “finir,” and “aller” as verbs because of their endings. To use the word “finir” (which means to finish) as a noun, you must change the spelling to “finis.” The word “aller” means “to go.” In English we can be creative and say: “The rocket is firing. It’s a go!” In French, it would come out as complete nonsense to say “C’est un aller!” No one would understand what you meant.

This flexibility with word usage is one of the things that makes English such an expressive and powerful language.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

This game can be played with any number of players.

You will need:

- Two teams (it is up to you to form the teams fairly)
- One member of each team who will act as secretary
- A judge (a teacher or parent)
- Paper and pencils (a chalkboard and chalk will do)
- Some kind of timing device (even a wristwatch is okay)

The object of the game is to try to think of words that can be used ONLY as nouns. Have the judge choose a category from the list at the end of these instructions. The judge will also be the timer and will begin timing the five-minute time period. After the judge says, “Begin,” each team begins brainstorming a list of words in that category that they think can be used ONLY as nouns. For example, in the first category, “At the Table,” the word “napkin” cannot be used as a verb. You cannot napkin something. So the word napkin would go on your list. The secretary on each team writes down the words on the list. At the end of five minutes, the judge says, “Stop” and the secretary must stop writing. Now have the teams switch lists.

Now you are ready for the second stage of the game. This stage consists of two two-minute periods. The judge chooses one team to go first. They have two minutes to review the other team’s list to see if they have overlooked any possible verbs. They may challenge any word on the list and if they can use it in a sentence as a verb, they may cross it off the list. The judge is the one who determines whether the use of the word as a verb is legitimate or not. For example, team one may have written down the word ‘cup’ on their list. Team two, in reviewing the list may challenge that the word ‘cup’ can be used as a verb. They may say a sentence like, “I can cup my hands to hold water.” The judge would then say that the word ‘cup’ can, indeed, be used as a verb. Team one may then cross out the word ‘cup.’ The judge’s decision is final. That’s what judges are for.

The winning team is the one with the most words left on their list.

Here are some categories:

- At the Table (place settings, food, etc.)
- The Great Outdoors
- Parts of the Body (only polite words)
- Clothing
- At the Zoo

ACTIVITY 1.5 A map activity

You will need:

- The blank world map, following
- Colored pencils
- A world map or atlas
- The list of countries on this page

You may be surprised at how many people around the world speak English. A few were mentioned in the text, but there are many others. In this activity, you will color code a map to show where English is spoken.

First, fill in the blank squares on the map key with the color code you want to use. You may want to consider a color code that goes from a dark color for places that speak nothing but English to lighter shades for places that speak less English. This way, a quick glance at the map will give the viewer a correct over-all impression of how much English is spoken around the world. For example, you might want to use purple for category 1, red for category 2, orange for category 3, and yellow for category 4. If you happen to have four different shades of the same color (for example, dark blue, two medium blues, and a light blue) this would be even more effective.

You will need to consult a world map or atlas to help you locate some of the places where English is spoken. Don't worry about getting every single island in exactly the right place or the country outlines perfect. The main point of this activity is just to find out generally where English is spoken.

Category 1: Places where English is spoken almost exclusively

United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, United States

Category 2: Places where English is the official language, even though other languages are often spoken

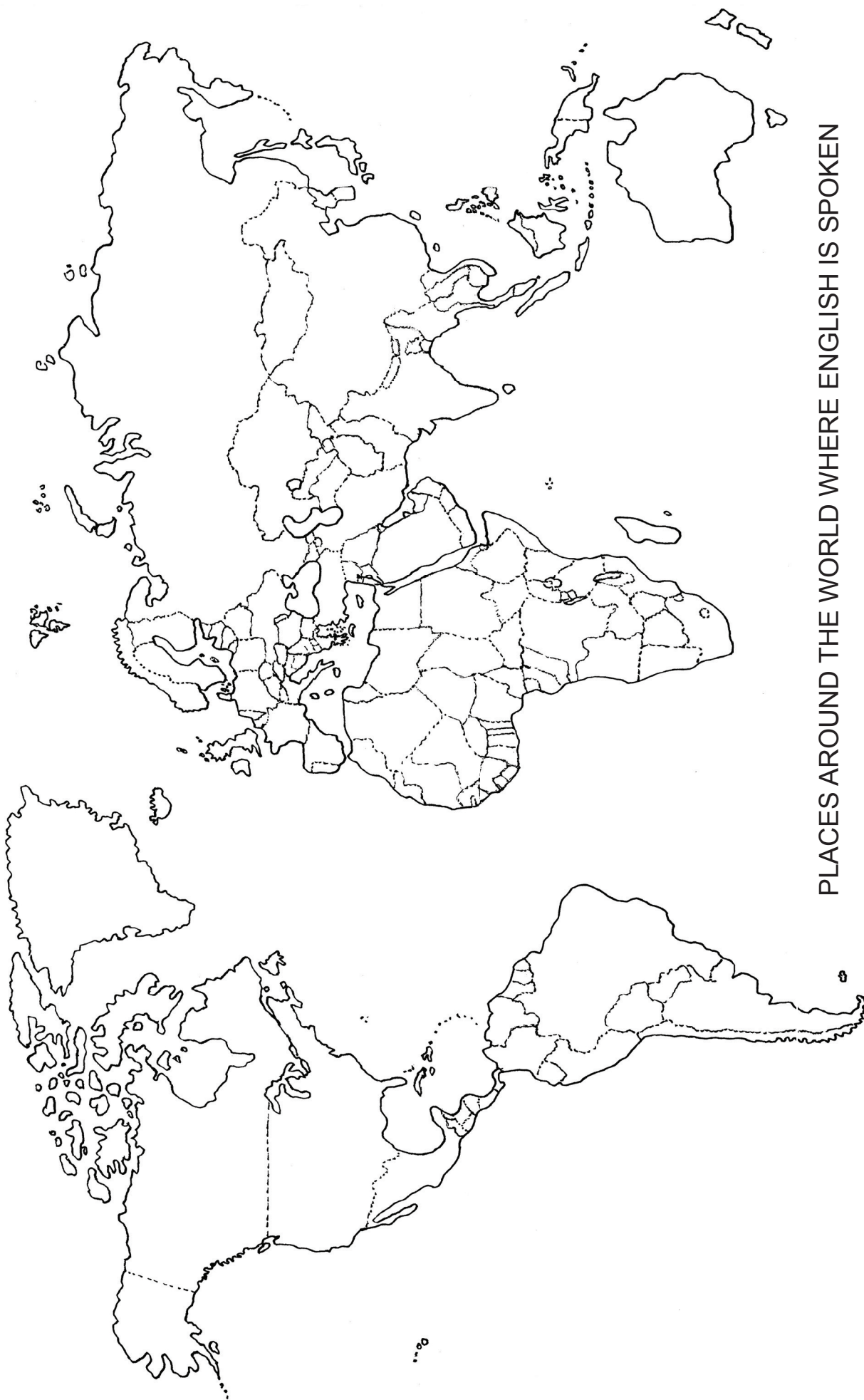
Bahamas, Belize, Barbados, Botswana, Ghana, Guyana, Fiji, The Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Micronesia, Nigeria, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, Tonga, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Category 3: Places where English is one of two or more official languages

Cameroon, India, Philippines, Singapore, Seychelles, Tanzania

Category 4: Places where English is not the official language but is widely spoken, especially in educational institutions such as colleges and universities.

Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Ireland, Kuwait, Israel, Malaysia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Surinam, Sri Lanka



PLACES AROUND THE WORLD WHERE ENGLISH IS SPOKEN

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Places where English is spoken almost exclusively | <input type="checkbox"/> | Places where English is one of two or more official languages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Places where English is the official language even though other languages are often spoken | <input type="checkbox"/> | Places where English is not the official language but is widely spoken in educational institutions such as universities |

2

Language Change

Languages do not stay the same over time. They are constantly changing, even though the people speaking them may be totally unaware of this change. Children learn language exactly as they hear it, so how do changes come about?

Language has three main parts: the sounds, the words, and the way the words are put together. You can hear this if you are around a baby who is learning to talk. First, they practice the sounds ("buh! buh!"), and then they start to say words ("bay-by! Da-da!"). A real milestone comes when they start to put words together ("my ball!"). But, of course, they do it all rather badly; cutely, but badly. Over several years, they learn to say the sounds just like the people around them, and they learn thousands of words. They learn to put them together correctly. This is what it means to "speak a language."



Each of these parts (sounds, words, sentences) have forces that push for change, and that are constantly at work. People have to work hard to keep language enough the same that different generations, families and regions can understand each other. In daily life, it does not look as though anyone is working hard at this, but that is because we take these forces against change for granted.

FORCES **AGAINST** CHANGE:



The printed word

We look at the same words that people saw one hundred, and even two, three and four hundred years ago. The unchanging shape of the words calls us back to the language as it has always been.



School

Children carefully study the "correct" verb forms, and the "correct" ways to write their thoughts. Without school, language would change more rapidly.

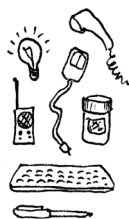


Television, radio and film

Sure, television can broadcast new words, but as everyone hears English spoken by other English speakers, the unity and sameness is emphasized, and we all slow down and stick together. We want everyone to understand us!

FORCES **FOR** CHANGE:

Inventions



When something new is invented, we need a new word to describe it or tell what it does ("laser," "fax," "download"). When a new brand comes out, it needs a name ("Jell-O," "Kleenex"). If we see something that needs to be kept distinct from some other thing, we need a new word. Sometimes, we re-use old words, but apply them to new meanings. In our two most recent centuries, inventions have kept the dictionaries growing very fast.



Borrowing

Other languages have words that seem fun or useful. A word may become popular with one group, and gradually drift out into general use. Perhaps a song or movie uses a foreign word, such as German “dumkopf,” and it catches on for a while. Some French words came into English in the last century because rich people traveled in France, and using French words in conversation seemed very elegant, or “chic.” Food words, too, are easily borrowed at restaurants or in cookbooks. World events and politics gave us words like “junta” to describe a group of generals ruling a country, or “apparatchik” to describe a political worker.



Creativity

We like to play with our words. Names get shortened. We put words together for jokes, and we create cute acronyms. We shorten words and toss them off carelessly. “Don’t diss me!” we say, shortening “disrespect.” We take words like “marathon” and “panorama” and playfully create “readathon” and “sale-o-rama.”

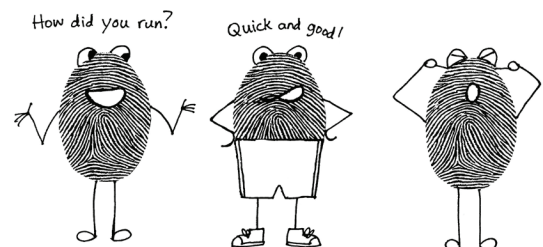
FORCES THAT CHANGE SENTENCES:

SENTENCES have other reasons for change. When linguists talk about the way sentences are put together, they often refer to this as “syntax.” Syntax means the way we put words together in phrases and sentences. We can also call this “grammar,” but there is a slight difference between these two terms. The word “syntax” is used when we talk about studying language, to examine how we actually speak, whether “correctly” or not. Grammar usually refers to rules. Syntax looks at what *is*, grammar says what *should be*. Teaching grammar is a force against change, but the study of syntax only describes the change.

One part of syntax is word order. Does this sentence make sense to you? “Why I do not know you to dance like.” In modern English, the order the words come in is pretty strictly set. There is some variation, but you have to stay inside the rules. We could say, “I do not know why you like to dance,” or “Why you like to dance, I do not know.” But the first way was sheer nonsense, simply because it mixed up the words. Word order is a major part of syntax, although not the only part.

Over time, a language’s syntax changes, like its words. This is harder to understand. We can see it best in the grammar mistakes that are common. Did you ever hear someone tell you not to split infinitives, or to say “whom,” not “who”? These are examples of slowly changing syntax: things that used to be considered really wrong but may sound just fine to you. Some of these “mistakes” will get corrected, but others may stick around and get passed along to your own children some day. Most people today do not understand the difference between “who” and “whom,” although this was easy and obvious to people a hundred years ago.

In our century, we are seeing the gradual disappearance of some adverbs. We use the words “well” and “good,” and also “fast” and “quick.” These pairs are similar in meaning. Originally, though, “well” and “fast” were used to describe HOW someone did something. (“How is he doing?” “Well.”) “Good” and “quick” were supposed to describe a noun, for example “a good meal” or “a quick meal.” For describing verbs, we were supposed to use either “fast” or “quickly.” But people started to like the sound of “good” in place of “well.” (“How is he doing?” “Good.”) And if we can say “he is doing good,” then why should we worry about whether we use “fast” or “quick”? If we can say, “you did that good,” then why not, “you did that quick”? And so we do. The use of “quickly,” in particular, has almost died out. The meaning of “quick” has not changed, but its use has. Other adverbs may disappear in the same way.



Most changes in syntax are hard to see. Syntax changes much more slowly than vocabulary. Some changes are most evident when we compare English as it is spoken in different places, since a change in one place will not be the same as a change in another. Different syntax will sound very strange to you, but perfectly normal to the speaker. Other changes are seen mainly by comparing older writing. For example, have you ever read and marveled at the very long sentences of writing from the 1700's? Our rules of speech and style do not permit such long, complex structures any more.

Finally, the main engine of change works on the SOUND of our words. The force is physical, and it's right in our mouths. If you listen to a baby learning to speak, you can hear many of the same forces. We call the study of human voice-sounds "phonetics," and the study of how the sounds work in words is "phonology."

The study of phonetic change is important enough to have its own chapter.

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Many new American words were formed as compounds. When the expedition of Lewis and Clark had to name newly seen plants and animals, they formed 129 new compound words, like "bullsnake, groundsquirrel, copperhead, cottonwood, catbird, and tumblebug."*
- *The Russian suffix "nik" means "someone who is or does something." After Russia launched the satellite "Sputnik" (companion-traveler) into space, the suffix became popular in American English. Young people who were addicted to the "beat" of music (and were in the "beaten" generation) were "beatniks." Those who protested the Vietnam War were "peaceniks." People who keep their rooms way too clean are "neatniks." Words formed with "nik" often have a negative meaning.*
- *Companies with popular brand names have to fight to hold onto their word "property." In print, you can't call facial tissue "Kleenex," without the permission of the Johnson & Johnson company!*



ACTIVITY 2.1 Baby words

Write down five real "baby words" that you, or someone you know well, actually said as a baby. You will need this list for an activity in the next chapter.

- 1) _____ (means _____)
- 2) _____ (means _____)
- 3) _____ (means _____)
- 4) _____ (means _____)
- 5) _____ (means _____)



ACTIVITY 2.2 Which came first?

Think carefully about each word pair below and guess which word was formed first. Circle the one you think is older. (Then check your answers.)

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1) book | dictionary | 7) beagle | dog |
| 2) Paris | New York | 8) biology | ecosystem |
| 3) neon | light | 9) dinosaur | fish |
| 4) cell | chromosome | 10) radioactive | algebra |
| 5) oak | cottonwood | 11) bronze | steel |
| 6) jeep | car | 12) stadium | bicycle |

ACTIVITY 2.3 Use some obsolete words

Obsolete means “no longer in use.” Just as *things* can become obsolete (the abacus and the slide rule, for example, because now we have calculators), *words* can also be used so infrequently that they eventually disappear. Below is a list of words that used to be in the English language. These words, and more, can be found in the book Poplollies and Bellibones, by Susan Kelz Sperling.

Write two sentences that each use at least three of these words, and a third sentence that uses as many as you possibly can. Sentences such as “Some obsolete words are...” don’t count! If you are part of a class, it would be fun to pass your sentences around and have others read them. You could even have a contest to see who can get the most obsolete words into one sentence in one minute.

agrum = a swelling of the cheeks and mouth
barlafumble = call a truce, or request a time-out
chantpleure = to sing and weep at the same time
crug = a slang word for food
eyndell = jealous
fary = a state of consternation, tumult
hoddypeak = a simpleton or blockhead
quetch = to moan or twitch with pain, to shake
suggill = to beat up, or defame
ug = fear
welkin = a sky with woolly clouds
zegedine = a drinking cup

condog = to agree (a pun on “concur”)
drossel = someone having bad morals
erendrake = messenger
gleed = squint-eyed, one-eyed, or crooked
pancart = a placard with public notices
rixle = to rule, to have dominion
thibble = a stick for stirring porridge
vasquine = petticoat
yarken = to prepare

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

ACTIVITY 2.4 Food words

English has food words from many different languages. See if you can guess the food word for each clue. Here are the possible answers: *chow mein, sushi, pita, corn, bagel, coffee, broccoli, kiwi, omelet, noodle, guacamole, hors d'oeuvre, coconut, squash, barbecue*

- 1) _____ This Arawak Indian word came into the Spanish language first, then into English during the 1600's. It probably meant a raised frame of sticks used to make a fire.
- 2) _____ This word is from Yiddish, which was the language of European Jews. It means "ring."
- 3) _____ This word is from a Portuguese word meaning "grimace" (a facial expression). (This food has three dots on the end that reminded the Portuguese of a grimacing face.)
- 4) _____ This word came into English in the 1600's from the Turkish word "kahve."
- 5) _____ This is a Chinese word for fried noodles.
- 6) _____ This is a word used by the Maori tribe of New Zealand.
- 7) _____ This word came from the Narragansett Indian tribe; it is a food native to North America.
- 8) _____ This is one of the oldest words in the English language. It means "seed."
- 9) _____ This word came into English from Greek during the 1950's and it means bread or cake.
- 10) _____ This is a German word for a strip of dried egg dough.
- 11) _____ This is a French word that is related to the Latin word "lamina" which means a thin plate.
- 12) _____ This is an Italian word that means "little sprouts."
- 13) _____ This is a Japanese word that came into English in the early 1900's and literally means "it is sour."
- 14) _____ This is a Spanish word that came into English recently, from Texas and California.
- 15) _____ This French word means fancy little snacks served before the main course. (It literally means "outside the main work.") This word looks and sounds very French, but it is now considered part of the English language.

ACTIVITY 2.5 New words from acronyms

An acronym is a word formed by taking the first letter of each word of a phrase. For example, NASA is an acronym for National Air and Space Administration. Do you know what these common acronyms stand for? (You may want to work in teams, or as a group. You can also use the Internet to help you find the answers.)

- 1) RADAR: RA _____ D _____ A _____ R _____
- 2) SCUBA: S _____ - C _____ U _____ B _____ A _____
- 3) DVD: D _____ V _____ D _____
- 4) LASER: L _____ A _____ S _____ E _____ R _____
- 5) ZIP code: Z _____ I _____ P _____
- 6) UFO: U _____ F _____ O _____
- 7) PIN number: P _____ I _____ N _____
- 8) SWAT team: S _____ W _____ A _____ T _____
- 9) SONAR: SO _____ N _____ A _____ R _____
- 10) ASAP: A _____ S _____ A _____ P _____
- 11) SUV: S _____ U _____ V _____
- 12) AIDS: A _____ I _____ D _____ S _____

ACTIVITY 2.6 Old words with new meanings

Sometimes our new words are not actually new; they are just old words that have been recycled and given a whole new meaning. There are many excellent examples of this in the area of computer technology. For each word below, write:

- 1) The original meaning of the word
- 2) The current usage of the word in the realm of computer technology
- 3) The reason why this word was chosen for its new role (What is the similarity in meaning between the old and new meanings?)

	original meaning	current use	reason
mouse			
monitor			
scroll			
surf			
web			
spider			
virus			
port			
link			
boot			
chip			
driver			

NOTE: If you don't know the technological meanings of these words, you can look them up on the Internet. Just go to Google and type in "words related to computer technology." You'll get a bunch of websites that will be happy to explain them to you!