

Universidade de Évora
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Nome: _____ ID: _____

The Growth and Expansion of English

The British Council says "English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising. Over two-thirds of the world's scientists read in English. Three quarters of the world's mail is written in English. Eighty per cent of the world's electronically stored information is in English. Of the estimated forty million users of the Internet, some eighty per cent communicate in English, but this is expected to decrease to forty per cent as speakers of other languages get online."

English is part of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. By year 1000, the English language consisted of approximately 40,000 words. Nowadays, the number has grown to more than 500,000. If we calculate the average of words created per century, this comes to 46,000. A great number of words found in the English vocabulary were borrowed from Latin, French, Low German, and the Scandinavian languages. We also know that some periods were more fertile than others: invasions, contact with other cultures, inventions, technological progress, music, fashion are some of the factors which have helped to enrich the language.

British colonialism in the 19th century and American capitalism and technological progress in the 20th century were undoubtedly the main causes for the spread of English throughout the world. From around 1750 to 1950 the British Empire covered about a quarter of the globe. It was one of the most powerful empires the world has ever known. The colonies gradually freed themselves but about fifty countries chose to keep a connection with Britain by belonging to the British Commonwealth. English is spoken all over the Commonwealth either as a native or an official language, and the British monarch is the symbolic head of the association.

The USA has played a leading role in most domains for the last hundred years. At the end of the 19th century and first quarter of the 20th, it welcomed millions of European immigrants who had fled their countries ravaged by war, poverty or famine. This labour force strengthened American industries and development. The Hollywood film industry also attracted many foreign artists in quest of fame and fortune and the number of American films produced every year soon flooded the market. Before the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which ended World War I between Germany and the Allies, diplomacy was conducted in French. However, President Wilson succeeded in having the treaty in English as well. Since then, English started being used in diplomacy and gradually in economic relations and the media. During World War II, America intervened both militarily and economically to save Europe from chaos. From then onwards, the United States have consolidated their cultural, economic and technological power: inventions, rock and roll, the first man on the moon, the revolution of the Internet, the country's growing prosperity and commercial aggressiveness have contributed to the further expansion and importance of English in the world today.

I

1. Say whether the following sentences are true (T) or false (F). (1,5 pts)

- a. The number of English words today exceeds half a million. ()
- b. In the future there will be an increase in the number of Internet users who communicate in English. ()
- c. All countries in the Commonwealth have English as a native language. ()

2. Complete the sentences according to the ideas contained in the text. (2,0 pts)

- a. Many foreign artists were _____ in Hollywood.
- b. After _____, the USA started to exert their cultural, economic and technological power.

3. Answer the following questions *in your own words*. (6,0 pts)

- a. What were the reasons that caused the immigration to the US at the turn of the 20th century?
- b. What historical, technological and cultural aspects have helped enlarge the English vocabulary?
- c. What was President Wilson responsible for?

II

1. Choose the most suitable word for each space. (4,0 pts)

So many people speak English. However, many of (1) _____ people do not speak English as (2) _____ first language. In fact, they often use English (3) _____ a *lingua franca* in order to communicate with other people (4) _____ also speak English as a foreign language. (5) _____ this point students often wonder (6) _____ kind of English they are learning. Are they learning English as it is spoken in Britain? Or, are they learning English as it is spoken in the United States, or Australia? (7) _____ of the most important questions is left out. Do all students (8) _____ need to learn English as it is spoken in (9) _____ one country? Would it not be (10) _____ to strive towards a global English?

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|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| (1) | a) the | b) these | c) this |
| (2) | a) their | b) theirs | c) there |
| (3) | a) like | b) as | c) how |
| (4) | a) which | b) who | c) whose |
| (5) | a) In | b) At | c) On |
| (6) | a) where | b) that | c) what |
| (7) | a) All | b) Every | c) One |
| (8) | a) really | b) daily | c) mostly |
| (9) | a) any | b) some | c) that |
| (10) | a) bad | b) better | c) well |

2. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence. (2,0 pts)

a) These books belong to Helen.

These are _____.

b) Living in the country is healthier than living in the town.

Living in the town _____.

c) If I were you I'd take more exercise.

I think you _____.

d) Where is the bus station?

Could you _____?

III

1. Write a composition of 120-140 words on the following topic: (4,5 pts)

How important is English when applying for a job in Portugal today?