

# International English and its Implications for Translation

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Although many language empires have come and gone across the span of human history, none have achieved the global reach and domain spread enjoyed by English in the present age. There are now estimated to be nearly a thousand million speakers worldwide, of whom nearly two thirds (612 million) are non-native speakers (Ethnologue 2017). This has made it the natural lingua franca in a vast range of different contexts, both formal (e.g. business, science, education, politics, diplomacy) and informal (popular culture, social networks etc).

At first sight, the presence of such a powerful global language would seem to negate the demand for translation, making it redundant. However, the reality is not quite as simple as this. Translation interacts with the lingua franca in a number of ways, offering fertile ground for Translation Studies research. This paper discusses some of the most recent contributions in the field, including sociological studies of global translation flows and their implications for translation practice and training; linguistic studies into the use of English as relay or pivot language in different translation situations; the development of controlled forms of English and their applications to translation technology; and of course the ideological implications for translation practice.

Particularly significant is the way the very ubiquity of English is now undermining how translation has traditionally been conceptualized. The traditional model assumes that text producers and receivers occupy separate linguistic universes with the translator functioning as exclusive mediator between them; however, when English is one of the languages in the process, this separation can no longer be taken for granted. As a result, there has been a blurring of the boundaries between source and target language, author and translator, producing a range of paratranslational activities that have recently come under the purview of Translation Studies.

The final part of the talk will address the many hybrid Englishes that have sprung up around the world and the long-term implications of their new respectability. Should translators be trained to translate into these varieties, rather than into the native speaker forms that dominated for so long? And how should they proceed when translating hybrid source texts, such as the many literary works emanating from postcolonial and diaspora contexts? And finally: what does this heterolingualism indicate about the future of the English language? Might it be about to fragment into an array of new languages, as Latin did before it, or are the centripetal forces at work in the world enough to hold it together for a good while yet?