



LUDWIG-
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David Crystal: “The Future of Englishes”

David Crystal explores the emergence of English as the world’s leading lingua franca, identifies current trends, and speculates about the future in the context of the present and the past. How many people today speak English worldwide? Several estimates have been made, and they raise interesting issues about the way the ‘centre of gravity’ of the language is moving from the native to the non-native speaker. Why has English become global? Many factors have been suggested, only some of which turn out to be plausible, and these are all to do with the power of the people who speak it. An account is given of the growth of ‘new Englishes’ in recent times, and illustrates the way these are evolving in vocabulary, grammar, and phonology. At the same time, Standard English remains relatively stable. The future of English thus seems to be an increasingly diglossic one. But will it continue to be a global language? The history of languages suggests otherwise, if history is still a guide in an electronic world.