
The third of a four-part gazetteer of the basic geopolitical vocabulary of the English language, dealing with the facts, fancies, fallacies, ambiguities and subtle implications of such words. For convenience of presentation, the material is not always in strict alphabetical order.

An ABC of World English

ENGLAND TO IRELAND

TOM McARTHUR

ENGLAND might have been differently named if the Angles had been less influential. Just as *America* could have been 'Columbia', so the land of the Angles might have been 'Saxony' (in which case this magazine would have been called *Saxon Today*). The Angles, however, were dominant among the 5th-century invaders of Britain; their *Engla-land* became England, and 'Saxon' survives only in 'Anglo-Saxon' and tenuously in such names as *Essex* ('The East Saxons') and *Sussex* ('The South Saxons').

For over a thousand years England has been the largest and the most powerful polity in the archipelago off Europe's west coast. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that for many people around the world England is the British Isles. In 1891, the *Oxford English Dictionary* reported as follows on established Victorian usage with regard to the word:

'**England**: the southern part of the island of Great Britain, usually with the exception of Wales. Sometimes loosely used for: Great Britain. Often: The English (or British) nation or state.'

Matters have changed little in the intervening 94 years. There is about the label 'England' a kind of chronic, low-level ambiguity that disturbs the Welsh, Irish and Scots but passes largely unnoticed elsewhere. As the following quotations demonstrate, the *OED*'s century-old definition still applies:

• 'There were complaints too that ABC's coverage was biased, that its commentators were too pro-American. That's nonsense. Some

announcers were generous to the home team, but anyone who listened to CBC in Canada or to BBC in England heard the same pride in their champions.' (*USA Today*, 14 Aug 84)

• 'Even the prospect of children, she said, would not necessarily lead to marriage. "I don't know what it's like in the United States these days, but in England a lot of children are born to unmarried people – just masses and masses. It's become normal." Although she keeps a room in London, home for ten years has been a stone farmhouse in Wales.' (Barbara Gamarekian, 'Julie Christie', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Jan 85)

• 'Judith de Paul is a stronger force of power than either the Prime Minister of India, the President of the United States, certainly the Prime Minister of England.' (Ian Richardson, quoted in 'Tryst with a Man of Destiny', *The Guardian*, 8 Dec 84)

• 'The old canard that British women waited for the man's approach, lay back, and thought of England, appears to be gone for good.' (Phillip Knightley, 'Sex, Love and Marriage', *The Sunday Times*, 20 April 84)

In an important sense, there is no ambiguity whatever about any of these excerpts: people are talking

about the state whose capital is London. In other equally important senses, however, everything is fuzzy: England competes in the World Cup, as does Scotland, but the whole of Britain competes in the Olympics as one team, while the BBC serves the one entity called Britain; Julie Christie talks of England, yet lives in Wales; there is no such dignitary as 'the Prime Minister of England'; and a stoical Northern Irish woman closing her eyes and thinking of England is an evocative but improbable image.

ENGLANDER is a rare word, but as the *OED* reports it has occasionally appeared on its own, as in Walter Scott's: 'I marvel what blood thou art – neither Englander nor Scot'. It still occasionally does duty in war stories and films, as a Germanism ('Achtung, ze Englander hass escaped!'), but otherwise only occurs in such compounds as *New Englander* in the U.S.A., and the 19th-century *Little Englander* (one who would dismantle the empire as a piece of extravagant folly).

ENGLISH belongs among the *-ish* and *-ch* words of the language: *Irish*, *Scottish*, *Danish*, *French*, *Scotch*, *Dutch*, etc. It is one of the great bifurcated terms of English: adjective for an ancient nation;

noun and adjective for a language. As such, I have divided it here into *English*¹ and *English*².

ENGLISH¹, the ethnic adjective (and collective plural, 'the English') referred at first only to the Angles, then spread to include the Saxons and Jutes and after 1066 the Norman-French incomers as well. It is often loosely used for 'British', in the sense of nationality, but in the eyes of all the world it particularly conjures up a paradoxical style of life: of reserved but kindly dog-lovers, insular yet cosmopolitan, at times endearingly humble, at times marvellously arrogant, and always inclined towards unworldly eccentricity. Some recent observations by the English upon themselves include:

- 'Were I to characterize the English, which Heaven forbid (it comes dangerously close to stereotyping!), I should feel compelled to say that, as a nation, we are notoriously unprepared, whether it be for snow on the roads in winter, drought in summer, the new technology or the equally entrenched reality of a multilingual school population.' (Jennie Ingham, 'Speaking in Tongues', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 19 Oct 84)
- 'English wine is a serious matter, and on Saturday and Sunday,

September 1 and 2, the tenth English Wine Festival will be held at the English Wine Centre, Alfriston, East Sussex.' (John Arlott, 'English – and Proud of It', *The Guardian*, 11 Aug 84)

- 'It has often struck me as ironic that Margaret Thatcher and Arthur Scargill are both thoroughly English, not Scots or Welsh or even Jewish or half American as so many of our national leaders have been. They are not your born-to-rule Norman-stock aristocrats either, but genuine up from the grassroots provincial English. Yet nothing could be further from the flinty character of either than that famous phlegmatic scepticism, that best-of-a-bad-job, live-and-let-live, better-luck-next-time, no-hard-feelings Englishness which is what we think we are like. We look in the mirror and do not recognize what we see.' (Anne Sofer, *The Times*, 15 Oct 84)

- 'It's the English way, after a long passage of time, to take old revolutionaries to our hearts. No doubt in Good King Charles's golden days there will be a party in the royal gallery at which the ancient and tottering Lord Scargill will be greeted with champagne, canapés and tumultuous applause.' (Lord Shinwell, in *The Sunday Times*, 14 Oct 84)

All too often the historical ten-

sions of the 'United' Kingdom focus on the loose use of English¹; if a book is entitled, say, *English Social History* and its blurb says that it describes 'the everyday lives of the people of England, Wales and Scotland', then there will be impassioned letters to editors from Aberystwyth to Aberdeen. However, the ethnic boot does sometimes pinch on the other foot:

'I totally agree with the correspondent from Telford, Shropshire, that there should be an English stamp with the flag of the cross of St George, if there are special stamps for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is just another case of bias in Britain against England and the English. In the British media, English people are nearly always described as British – but Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish are almost without exception described as such. If the English are an endangered species, no longer recognised as a separate race, it will be their own fault for not having pride in England and the English people alone.' (Damien Parker, 'Don't Stamp Out the English', letters, *The Daily Mail*, 7 Nov 84)

ENGLISH² began its variegated career as a group of dialects originally spoken in what is now Denmark and north-eastern Germany.

ENGLAND, THEIR ENGLAND

Always an emotive word, 'England' has served over the centuries to focus the ideas and ideals of poets and playwrights. Their comments, eulogies, apostrophes and satire make a potent broth of love, hate, humour, horror and humbug:

'England is the paradise of women, the purgatory of men, and the hell of horses.' (John Florio, *Second Frutes*, 1591)

Hamlet: Ay, marry; why was he sent into England?

1st Clown: Why, because he was mad; he shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, 'tis no great matter there.'

Hamlet: Why?

1st Clown: 'Twill not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he. (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, c. 1600)

'Let not England forget her precedence of teaching nations how to live.' (John Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, 1643)

'Slaves cannot breathe in England, if their lungs

Receive our air, that moment they are free;

They touch our country and their shackles fall.'

(William Cowper, 1731–1800, in *The Timepiece*)

'Seeing Scotland, Madam, is only seeing a worse England.'

(Samuel Johnson, 1778)

'The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand!

Amidst their tall ancestral trees,

O'er all the pleasant land.'

(Mrs Hemans, 1793–1835)

'I travelled among unknown men

In lands beyond the sea;

Nor, England! did I know till then

What love I bore to thee.'

(William Wordsworth, 1807)

'The harlot's cry from street to street
Shall weave old England's winding sheet.'

(William Blake, 1757–1827, in *The Book of Thel*)

'And what should they know of England who only England know?' (Rudyard Kipling, 1865–1936, in *The English Flag*)

'If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field

That is for ever England.'

(Rupert Brooke, 1887–1915, in *The Soldier*)

'The Stately Homes of England
How beautiful they stand.

To prove the upper classes

Have still the upper hand.'

(Noel Coward, 1938)

'I am American bred,
I have seen much to hate here – much to forgive,

But in a world where

England is finished and dead,

I do not wish to live.'

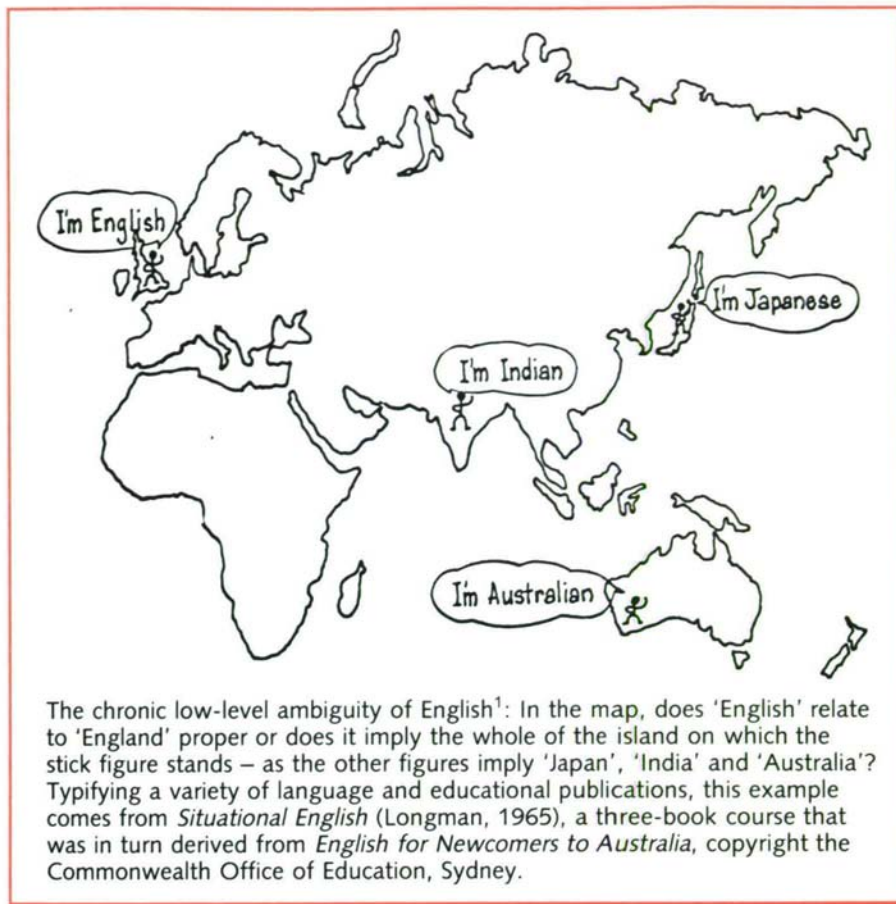
(Alice Duer Miller, *The White Cliffs*, 1940)

Transferred in the Anglo-Saxon invasions to Britain, *Englisc* became the general name for the tongue used from Kent to Edinburgh, in territories that duly became the entirety of the kingdom of England and the south-east of the kingdom of Scotland. Over the centuries a linguistic polarization took place, with the King's English in the south and the King's Inglis (or Scottis) in the north, the two forms so distinct as to be virtually different languages.

With its expansion into Wales and Ireland, English was used in four countries, three of which were bilingual between an ever-strengthening English and retreating Celtic languages. The English language was, however, monocentric at this time, in the sense that the prestigious standard that developed from the 15th century onward centred on one area: the Court in London, and the printing presses and seats of learning of south-eastern England. It was only with the spread of English beyond the home archipelago (from the 17th century onward) that the language has slowly become polycentric; that is, it now has a number of centres where standard or standardizing forms exist and have social and educational status.

The present-day established standards of England and of the United States are the most obvious and influential of these core forms, but others include increasingly robust Irish, Scottish, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African standards, while the Caribbean, South Asia (the Indian sub-continent), East Asia (especially Singapore and Hong Kong) and parts of black Africa are currently developing standard forms in their own right.

It is not always easy, however, to specify the boundaries of a variety of English or even of the local forms of what might be called 'World Standard English'. Thus, both of the common expressions 'British English' and 'American English' can be used ambiguously. 'British English', for instance, can be either the prestigious middle- and upper-class dialect and accent centring on S.E. England, or it can mean all of the Englishes in Britain: the preceding, plus Scouse in Liverpool, Cockney in London, Glaswegian, Mancunian, traditional Lowland Scots, etc., etc. 'Ameri-



can English' in its turn can mean standard professional 'General American' as it is often called, or it can be all the Englishes in at least the United States (black vernacular, Hawaiian Pidgin, Texian, Appalachian, etc., etc.) if not also the English used in Canada (depending on how one defines 'American'). Many Americans would unthinkingly assume that Canadians belong within the circle of their own English, but Canadians might disagree about that.

ENGLISHMAN, -WOMAN are ancient words, often straightforwardly used of men and women from England, and sometimes gratuitously extended to the Scots and the Welsh and even in the past to Americans and others as inheritors of one common language (and possibly culture). Equally often nowadays, however, they can be seen as cumbersome and, like all words ending in *-man/woman*, open to the charge of sexism:

- 'From the 1570s to 1800, African slaves in Britain were mostly household servants. The main point of having them was conspicuous consumption. The slaves themselves lived lives of privilege, sometimes

luxury. They were above, not below, the average Englishman, not least in knowing where their next meal was coming from.' (John Vincent, '2,000 years of immigration', *The Sunday Times*, 13 May 84)

- 'Europe To an Englishman still the Continent. Thus one of the great political debates of the last decade was whether or not we should go into *Europe*; the fact that we were for all other purposes already in it was ignored. To this day, *we* are in England; *they* are in Europe.' (Godfrey Smith, 'England our England', *The Sunday Times*, 19 Aug 84)

'English-person' is unlikely to catch on, while 'the English' may be a safer collective form – but in the meantime the more comprehensive and less emotive 'Briton' and 'Brit' seem to be moving in to fill the socio-semantic gap.

ENGLISHES as the plural of *English*² is making impressive headway (although we do not yet, as far as I know, talk about 'an English' when we intend 'a variety of English', although this may very well be happening somewhere). Two decades ago, the idea of plural

uses of English meaning language would have been suspect, and even now dictionaries lag in reporting the usage; but it is there, and rapidly becoming standard. Two recent books have it in their titles: *Modern Englishes* by Loreto Tod in the UK, and *New Englishes* edited by John B Pride in the US, while statements like the following are common in linguistic circles:

- 'By "New Englishes" they mean the post-colonial survivals: Indian, Kenyan and Singapore Englishes serving as a common tongue in multilingual societies.' (John Weightman, 'The Spectrum of Englishes', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 19 Oct 84)

- 'What is perhaps more likely to happen is the development of a greater heterogeneity of Englishes.' (Alan Maley, 'The Most Chameleon of Languages', *English Today*, Jan 85)

- 'The rest of this chapter will be devoted to the main changes that have affected the home variety of English – British English – since 1776. Some of them are shared by Englishes abroad: others are not.' (Robert Burchfield, *The English Language*, 1985)

-GLISH and **-LISH** have made marked progress in recent years, half in fun and half in earnest. Just as 'smoke' and 'fog' make *smog*, and 'français' and 'anglais' have made *franglais*, so there appears to be no end to the other tongues with which *English*² can combine to produce intriguing, lovable or detestable hybrids (depending on one's point of view). Some specimens:

- 'Laredo, Texas – A theatrical company called the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts tours the Southwest each year, presenting new plays in three languages: Spanish, English and Spanglish.' (Wayne King, 'Spanglish Spreads, It's Muy Star Wars', *International Herald Tribune*, 8 Aug 83)

- '... in the streets of Brum, where nothing much is being manufactured thanks to the recession, a new language is being minted by the day. It is a mixture of English and Punjabi – Punglish, if you like.' (John Cunningham, 'Oxford Punglish', *The Guardian*, 28 March 84)

- 'The practice of speaking "Arabish" is so widespread among educated Egyptians that there is little a purist can do but bemoan the situation over "cafe" at "al-restaurant"'. (*The Johannesburg Star*, Aug 84)

- 'He [the student] is going to learn, depending on his mother tongue Ger(manen)glish or Span(ishen)glish or Ja(panesee)nglish or Wh(atever)nglish.' (L. G. Alexander, 'Gerlish & Co', *Practical English Teaching*, Sep 84)

So the quotes could go on, for *Italglisch*, *Hindlish*, *Farlish*, etc. James Kirkup, a British poet who lives in Tokyo, is used to 'Japlish', but coined the even more powerful 'Janglish' to describe the way that Japanese entrepreneurs 'abuse' English for the purposes of selling soap, petrol, food and sex (*IHT*, 28 June 84). Comparably, Paul Jennings has adopted 'Minglish' as a catch-all for mixing in bits of any or all the other Common Market languages with English ('Minglish as she is Mangled', *The Observer*, 4 Nov 84). The result must inevitably, one supposes, be the birth of *Manglish*.

INDIA has a broader and a narrower use. The broad use is traditional and geographical, covering the 'subcontinent' from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin; it is by and large the old 'undivided India' of the British Raj (1765–1947). The narrower and more modern use dates from 1947, when the Republic and Union of India was created, a nation state that shares the subcontinent with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

The etymology of India is ancient and complex. In remote times, the rivers of the northwest (roughly the greater Punjab) were known to the Persians as the *hapta-hindu* and to their Sanskrit-using cousins the Indo-Aryans as the *sapta-sindhu* ('the Seven Rivers'). The Greeks removed the *h* from the second part of the Persian phrase, to give us in due course 'India', the poetic 'Ind' (cf. the French *Inde*), and the 'Indus' river. Keeping the Persian *h* we get 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism', while keeping the Sanskrit *s* we get the province of 'Sind', now in Pakistan. It was during the British conquest of this province in 1843 that Sir Charles Napier sent back

the triumphant Latin message *pec-cavi* ('I have sinned').

The present-day republic of India is also known as *Bharat*, after an ancient hero and his descendants, while in literature and Pakistani comment it is often also called *Hindustan* (sometimes *Hindusthan*), the land of the Hindus, although in fact it has large minorities of other ethnic and religious groups and is a secular state.

INDIAN is a truly schizophrenic word, due to linguistic mismanagement on the part of Western explorers. Even in its historically and geographically primary sense, however, of 'relating to India' and 'a native of India' there are pitfalls, as the following quotation from Nirad C Chaudhuri indicates:

'When I hear my foreign friends speak of "an Indian" or "Indians" I sometimes interrupt them breezily: "Please, please do not use that word. Say "Hindu" if you have in mind a human type common to the whole continent; otherwise, according as you want to refer to this or that group, say "Bengali, Punjabi, Hindustani, Marathi, Tamil, Sikh, Muslim", and so on. As to the word "Indian", it is only a geographical definition, and a very loose one at that.'

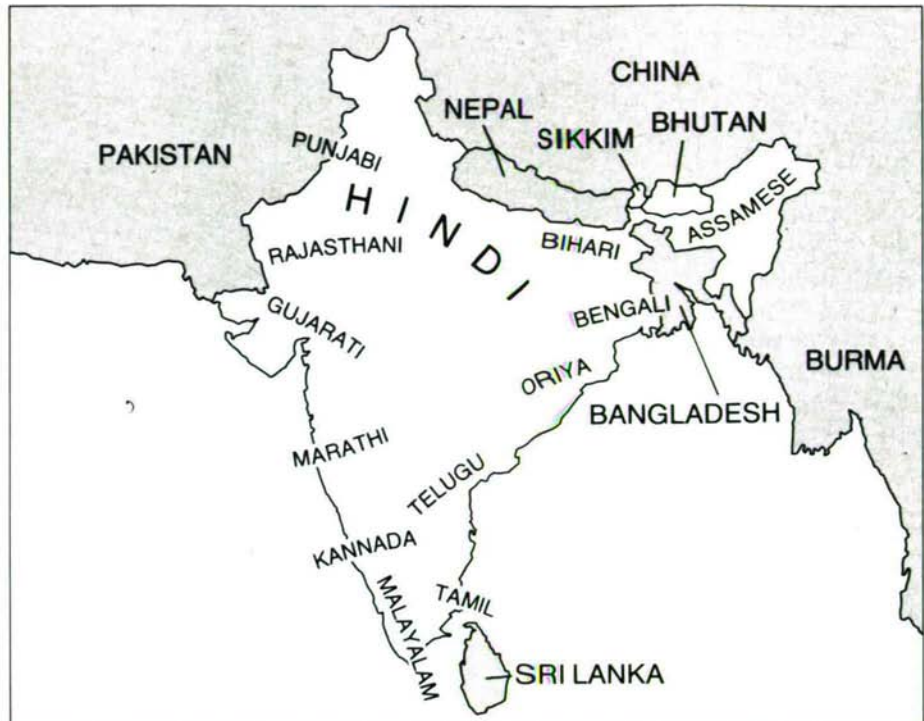
'Nevertheless, I neither expect nor desire to be taken too literally or seriously in my objection to the word "Indian". I myself employ it quite frequently, and I cannot claim that I always do so with discrimination . . . I try to exclude all cultural suggestion from my employment of the word "Indian", which is always implied in my use of the word "Hindu". But if in spite of this, in some contexts, such a suggestion seems to creep in, it will be seen that I am then using the word as a loose equivalent of "Hindu".' (*The Continent of Circe: An Essay on the Peoples of India*, 1965)

Columbus can be blamed for all the other problems. On reaching the Caribbean in 1492 he was convinced that he had reached India or at least 'the Indies', the spice islands near India – whence in due course emerged the usage 'West Indies' to contrast with the 'East Indies' that are now in large part the nation state called 'Indonesia' ('the Indian-island place', to

INDIA'S LANGUAGES

Upward of 3% of the people of the Republic of India use English regularly as a 'link language' across the country and a 'window upon the world', in business, education, science and social life. The pan-Indian role of the English language is an uneasy one, in relation to both the imperial past and the 'vernacular' languages of India's states and territories, many of which are organized on a linguistic basis. 1960s statistical breakdowns of the proportion of the population using the different major languages provide the following figures:

the Hindi group	45.4%
Hindi itself	30.4
Urdu	5.3
Bihari	3.8
Rajasthani	3.4
Punjabi	2.5
Telugu	8.6
Bengali	7.7
Marathi	7.6
Tamil	7.0
Gujarati	4.6
Kannada/Kannarese	4.0
Malayalam	3.9
Oriya	3.6
Assamese	1.5
Others	c. 6.1



The population of India is currently estimated at around 700 million. Consequently, many of the languages listed here are the mother tongues of enormous numbers of people. Additionally, arguments continue as

regards whether a particular tongue is a language in its own right or the dialect of another (as for example the status of Rajasthani, which some say is simply a variant of Hindi and others defend as an autonomous form).

contrast with *Melanesia*, *Micronesia* and *Polynesia*). People from the West Indies are 'West Indians' (unless, curiously enough, they hail from Spanish-using islands like Cuba, when they are simply Cubans, etc.). Nobody now comes from the East Indies as such, and in India itself an 'East Indian' is the member of a Eurasian group of mixed local and Portuguese stock. In North America, however, to contrast with West Indians from Jamaica, Trinidad, etc., nationals of India the nation-state if not also India the subcontinent are often labelled 'East Indians', whether that label makes sense to them or not.

The great contrast, however, in North America is between any other kind of Indian and the indigenous native 'Red' Indians (who are only Indians at all because of European explorers' geographical misnomer). American usage has provided the language with phrases like *Indian corn* and *Indian file*, as well as placenames like 'Indiana' and 'Indianapolis', and of course a range of special usages from 'Injun' and 'the Indian wars' to the academic 'Amerindian' and 'Amerind'. As a result of all such facts,

factors and fallacies, 'Indian' is a word for which one needs plenty of context before any assumptions whatever are made (See below).

Whose Indian English?

'My use of the term *South Asian English* is not to be understood as indicative of linguistic homogeneity in this variety nor of a uniform linguistic competence. It refers to several broad regional varieties such as Indian English, Lankan English, and Pakistani English.' (Braj Kachru, 'South Asian English', in Bailey & Görlach, *English as a World Language*, 1982)

'Where the education of Native American children is concerned, it may not be a Native American language that they bring to school, but their local variety of English. It can be of social importance to a Native American to be competent in the variety of Indian English spoken in his community; not to use it may imply that one is "putting on airs".' (Dell Hymes, foreword, Ferguson & Heath, *Language in the USA*, 1981)

IRELAND, unlike 'England' and 'India', is not an entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. There is, however, an entry in *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, which interprets the name as 'the land of the west'. Most etymologists agree that the island's various names – 'Eire', 'Eireann', 'Erin', 'Hibernia' and 'Ireland' itself – all derive from the same Celtic root **Iveriu*, but do not usually risk giving it a meaning. Separately, it has been the tradition of geographers to call Ireland 'an island of the British Isles' (*Longman Larousse*, 1968), a description that offends many Irish people, who do not wish their island to be a British *anything*.

Never incorporated into the Roman Empire, Ireland became during the so-called Dark Ages a beacon of Christian culture in Western Europe, until it fell subject to the depredations of such Germanic invaders as the Norse and the Anglo-Normans. With the English invasion in 1170 there began the long struggle to escape the embrace first of an 'English' then a 'British' state, intent on absorbing and keeping the island until the crises of the First World War shook much of it loose. In

1921, the Irish Free State came into existence, becoming in 1949 the Irish Republic. The British-Irish tragicomedy is old but ever new, as the following quotations demonstrate:

• 'The Irish are a fair people – they never speak well of one another.' (Samuel Johnson, 1755)

• 'The moment the very name of Ireland is mentioned, the English seem to bid adieu to common feeling, common prudence, and common sense, and to act with the barbarity of tyrants, and the fatuity of idiots.' (Sydney Smith, 1771–1845)

• 'Before Irish home rule is conceded by the Imperial Parliament, England as the predominant member of the three kingdoms will have to be convinced of its justice and equity.' (Lord Rosebery, the House of Lords, London, 1894)

• 'Was it for this the wild geese spread

The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all the blood was shed . . . ?

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.'

(W. B. Yeats, 1913)

Anciently, Ireland was made up of five rival kingdoms that owed a theoretical allegiance to one High King. These were Munster, Leinster, Connaught, Meath and Ulster. The first four now constitute an independent republic, while the fifth is part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



• 'Davin knocked the ashes from his pipe.

– Too deep for me, Stevie, he said.
But a man's country comes first.
Ireland first, Stevie. You can be a poet or mystic after.

– Do you know what Ireland is?
asked Stephen with cold violence.

Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow.'

(James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 1916)

• 'Bruce Arnold, an Englishman working in Ireland for many years as a political journalist, finally adapted "with a mixture of hope

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THE HIBERNIAN MODEL

All over the world there are newspapers that use Standard English studded with elements from at least one other language. The model or archetype for this kind of reporting may well have been Ireland's journalism, as exhibited in the following citations, all from *The Irish Times*, 2 Feb 85:

On a soft grey day last August, I visited Gougane Barra for the first time. I was shocked into speechlessness by the tranquil beauty there and by the liquid, enmantling silence around the lough.' (Kevin Myers, *An Irishman's Diary*)

When Mr Ned Hayes . . . went back into the witness box . . . he

was asked by Mr Martin Kennedy SC (for the three senior garda officers), to describe what was happening at Tralee Garda Station before he was asked to make a statement.' ('Gardai told me I would hang, Ned Hayes tells tribunal')

Professor Canny went on to define the Sean-Ghail and drew a distinction between them and the Gall-Ghaeil. The term Sean-Ghall or Old English first came into use about 1590 and was in general use in the first half of the 17th century. The people it described were the people in Ireland of Norman descent who were faithful to English law and English culture.' ('Old English never part of Gaelic order - historian')

Padraig Ua Maoileoin's new novel is also about the clash between the old and new and describes the efforts of an American entrepreneur to take over the Kerry Gaeltacht. The book is . . . an amusing attack on the cult of the Gael, on the tendency to elevate any sexagenarian with a store of seven proverbs and six prayers into a guru.' (Douglas Sealy, *The Gaelic Voice*)

KERRY - Slogadh Bhanc na h-Eireann Regional final for Cork/Kerry area, Town Hall, Killarney (Sat.)

[lough an Irish loch or lake
garda police

Gaeltacht area inhabited by Gaelic-speakers (Gael)]

and despair" to what he describes as Ireland's "essential foreignness over which the English language throws a misleading cloak of appearances". (Peter Lennon, *The Guardian*, 17 May 84)

- 'The abortion amendment has cast a shadow over relations between the two Irelands. The ballot undoubtedly convinced many in the Protestant North that a closer relationship with the Catholic South is neither desirable nor possible. Meanwhile, Irishwomen can continue to obtain perfectly legal abortions by traveling to England.' (*TIME Magazine*, 19 Sept 83)

IRISH is a word that ranges from the sublime to the mischievous, bedevilled by centuries of rancour and humour, patriotic fervour and ethnic sniping. At its most obvious and innocuous, it simply refers to Ireland, its people and their two languages, Gaelic and English - but that is hardly half the story. As most dictionaries point out, 'Irish' can in some contexts mean Gaelic ('In Connemara they speak Irish') and in others mean Irish or 'Hiberno' English ('That's more Irish than American').

As fewer dictionaries mention, however, the word has often in the past been used to describe Gaelic and its users in Scotland: 'We oft finde the Scots called Irishes, like as we yet term commonly our Highlandmen, in regard they speak the Irish language' (Spottiswood, 1655); 'The Irish tongue was . . .

lately universal even in many parts of the Lowlands' (Burt, 1730: both cited in the *OED*).

Numerous phrases relate to things Irish or thought to be Irish: *Irish* or *Gaelic coffee*, *Irish eyes* (that are always smiling), *the luck of the Irish*, *Irish moss*, *Irish stew* and a variety of such dogs as *Irish setters*, *terriers* and *wolfhounds*. The *Irish elk* did once exist, but the *Irish bull* has never existed except in banter; as Sir John Pentland Mahaffy (1839-1919) put it, you distinguish this bull from other freaks of nature by the fact that it's always pregnant. The *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* defines an Irish bull as 'an amusingly illogical expression', and offers us the same

example as appears in *Websters 9th Collegiate*: 'It was hereditary in his family to have no children'.

The Irish bull is an ancestor of the present-day *Irish joke* (usually cracked elsewhere, but often self-imposed). This is the prince of ethnic slurs, outshining even the Newfie joke in Canada and the Sirdarji joke in India. Typical of the genre:

- Did you know that Mike O'Rourke, the famous Irish explorer, was thwarted in his attempt to cross the Irish Sea on a plank because he couldn't find a plank long enough?

- Did you hear about the Irishman who thought that Hertz Van Rental was a Dutch footballer? (both taken from *The Irish Kama Sutra*, Peter O'Regan & Sean Dunbar, 1981)

An *Irish rise* is a reduction in pay, while an *Irish hurricane* is a flat calm with drizzling rain. Such expressions have cropped up and disappeared with the years, but the broad phenomenon is as strong as ever, and apparently arises out of the collision of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon mentalities, which march to different drumbeats. To say something odd can still evoke the comment in Britain at least: 'That sounds Irish' (and acquire the label *Irishism*). What the Irish are, say and do has perennially fascinated, baffled, bemused, irritated or enraged the less fractious and flighty Anglo-Saxon - and the Irish have often responded to this by being more 'Irish' still.



IRISH KAMA SUTRA CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

CLUES

Across.

1. The first letter of the English alphabet. (1) (Anagram)

Down.

1. The indefinite article. See

1. Across

KEY:

Across.

1. Beethoven

Down.

1. Isle of Wight

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