



# English as part of our multilingual reality

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## What we do

At the British Council, English language teaching, learning and assessment are at the heart of what we do. For nearly 90 years, we've championed the power of English to break down barriers and helped millions of learners grow their skills, build international connections, and access life-changing opportunities.

Now we're collaborating with partners, thought leaders, teachers and learners around the world to open up new conversations and share global perspectives about the future of English.

## We live in a multilingual world, where English often works alongside other languages to provide rich linguistic engagement and opportunities for communities and individuals.

Languages have no borders. Exploration, colonisation, globalisation and migration have all contributed to today's multilingual world, where any classroom, playground and working environment may host people who have different mother tongues. English is increasingly one of a repertoire of languages that people may use for social, educational and professional purposes, either as a first language or as an additional language tool for communication.

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*It is difficult to pinpoint a unifying aspect of Asia, as the region is relatively more dynamic and fluid than other parts of the world. However, English can play a unifying role through which opportunity and prosperity can be jointly achieved across borders.*

*Hikyung Lee – South Korea*

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## Opportunities for English as part of multilingualism

- In multilingual contexts English will be used for different purposes and need different levels of proficiency.
- Multilingual education programmes can improve language confidence, cultural awareness, and better prepare students for opportunities in multilingual communities.
- Multilingual language policies can help to minimise the marginalisation of non-dominant languages and the risk of language and culture loss.

- Significant regional Englishes are already used as the lingua franca for their communities, including Hinglish (a blend of Hindi and English), Singlish (incorporating Chinese and Malay) and Nigerian English.

## Challenges for English as part of multilingualism

- Auto-translation tools may reduce the need for language learning in the future, by enabling live translation.
- 60% of the internet’s content is in English today, but as multilingual technology grows, it may not remain the dominant language.

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### The British Council’s position

The benefits of multilingual education are abundant, as are the related considerations and risks. A child’s mother tongue needs to be sufficiently developed to cognitively support learning content in another language. Language policies do not have to support one primary language over all others. Languages can support each other to bolster overall educational progress.

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## The big questions

<p><b>Will English continue as a global lingua franca?</b></p>	<p>For the next decade, yes - other languages are unlikely to overtake this position. Although millions of people speak Mandarin and Hindi, these do not currently have the same global reach as English.</p>
<p><b>Are regional variants of English being embraced in educational policy?</b></p>	<p>Not yet, 85% of stakeholders surveyed said British or US English were still the preferred models for schools.</p>

## Further resources

- [Future of English: Global Perspectives](#) | Explore the full eight key trends shaping the future of the English language and its role in our world. Read the research summary or access the new landmark book for free.
- [English in cultural relations](#) | Learn how trust and reciprocal cultural relations can arise when using English. This paper provides an analysis of the factors that facilitate intercultural relations through the English language.
- [Multilingual education in practice](#) | Explore the evidence and practical approaches for using learners’ first languages in linguistically diverse and resource-poor classrooms.

- [Perceptions of translingual practices](#) | Read a report from an exploratory survey on attitudes towards translanguaging and using learners' first languages among teachers in India.
- [English and inclusion](#) | We may live in a multilingual world where English is used as the lingua franca for global communication, but how can we make sure it is also inclusive? Read our how to guide: *Supporting teachers in teaching English to learners with special educational needs and disabilities* for practical advice on how to support teachers in teaching English to learners with special educational needs and disabilities
- [Creating learning ecosystems for different communities and contexts](#) | Read how learning ecosystems (open and evolving communities of diverse providers that cater to the variety of learner needs in each context or area) can support learners in a variety of contexts and can provide emergency opportunities for refugees.