

India has about a billion people and a dozen major languages of its own. One language, and only one, is understood by an elite across the country: that of the foreigners who ruled it for less than 200 years. Many countries around the world, apart from India, were colonized by the British: Jamaica, Sierra Leone, the Bahamas, Australia, Hong Kong; Nigeria, Ireland, Singapore and South Africa. And the list continues. The British built a global empire but settled America, and in the last decades, the world has acquired its first truly global—and interactive—medium, the Internet.

On the estimates of David Crystal, a British expert, some 400 million people in the world speak English as their first language. Over 500 million can use it as a second language. That number is soaring as each year brings new pupils to school and now the Internet spreads. English has long dominated learned journals: German or French may be useful to their expert readers, but English is essential. So, if you want your own work published, then English is the language of choice.

The birth of the computer and its operating systems gave English a nudge ahead; that of the Internet has given it a huge push. The web may even save some mini-languages. But the big winner will be English.

Find the words corresponding to these synonyms or definitions. If they are verbs, use the infinitive form (to...). If they are nouns, use the singular form.

Important (1st paragraph)

Grow rapidly (2nd paragraph)

Expand (2nd paragraph)

Impulse (3rd paragraph)

Another word for 'Impulse' (3rd paragraph)

Read the text and choose the best answer according to the information you read.

1. Which is the principal reason why English is the first language in the world?
 - a. The British settled America
 - b. It is presently used in the internet
 - c. It is spoken in India
 - d. Every year new pupils go to school
2. Why is the number of English speakers increasing?
 - a. We do not know
 - b. There are more people studying it
 - c. Mini-languages are disappearing
 - d. There are more learned journals
3. What is the connection between the Internet and English?
 - a. It is an interactive medium
 - b. Operating systems are American
 - c. We do not know
 - d. The web may save English
4. How many people speak English all around the world?
 - a. about 400 million.
 - b. Not mentioned in the text
 - c. about 500 million.
 - d. about a billion.