

Africa, India and the Far East

In many parts of the world which were once part of the British Empire, English has an important social role. Even if most people living in these places only speak English as a second language, many still use it when speaking to people from other parts of their own countries. In India, in much of Africa, and in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, varieties of English have emerged which are just as distinctive as American English, Scots or Jamaican Creole. In Indian English there are not only loans from Hindi such as **dhoti** 'loincloth', but also entirely new words such as **co-brother** 'brother-in-law'. There are also differences in word order between Indian English and Standard British English, for example, *Who you have come to see?* 'Who have you come to see?'. In Nigerian English a **hot drink** is a spirit such as whisky or brandy, and *I am very worried to read from you* means 'I am very anxious to hear from you'.

Australia, New Zealand and South Africa

English-speakers began to settle in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are many similarities between the kinds of English spoken in all three places by those whose first language is English. In all three varieties, the distinction is made between 'broad' and 'cultivated' accents, and all three varieties have developed their own distinctive features of grammar and vocabulary. For instance, Australian English speakers have developed new words such as **outback**, **swagman** and **tuckerbox**. And South African English-speakers have borrowed words from other languages, such as **braai** 'barbecue' (from Afrikaans), **indaba** 'meeting' (from Zulu), **lekker** 'nice' (from Afrikaans). South African English-speakers have also developed special uses for words also found in British English, such as **robot** 'traffic light'.

➤ See also **Language Study** panels on **English in the West Indies** and **English in North America**.