How did English become a global language?

English started off as a small language spoken by the inhabitants of an island in the middle of Europe. It later developed to consume the world within its omnipresent grasp. This has brought its upsides and downsides. The most prominent and useful upside is that it has become the world’s greatest and most developed ‘lingua franca’. This means that English being the bridge over the great crevasse that is lingual conversation. An example, a Swede and a Spaniard are negotiating a big business deal where correct communication is crucial. Neither of them knows the other party’s language. They would not default to Japanese. No, they would most likely end up speaking English. But how did it get this way? How did a language originating from such an arbitrary location end up conquering the world? Well to answer that question we need to go back to the island.

English was not conceived in England. Instead Germanic tribes brought with them a primitive version of the language while they invaded the region now known as southern England. This would them be added upon by Nordic Vikings. Throughout their pillages they brought with somewhere in the region of 2000 new words. This would immensely speed up the already rapid growth and development of the English language. In later times words like for example ‘sky’ in English and ‘sky’ (cloud) in Norwegian will diverge but it is obvious that they come from the same root. This combined with a fresh French administration and jurisdiction system would come together and create the earliest form of the English language.

Great internal communication combined with good external relationships come together to kickstart the British empire. The empire would then start to spread across the world slowly but steadily leading to it becoming the greatest and most extensive empire in history. Equipped with its new infection vector English will expand to new hosts. Spreading out the empire would assimilate India, the soon to be United States, Australia and many more. Erecting new colonies faster than one can say antidisestablishmentarianism the spores of English would start to grow inside its victims. Each of these would consequently introduce new words to the English vocabulary that would then spread around the rest of the empire. Assisted by the invention of the printing press this would increase the influence of the English language by many orders of magnitude.

As English grew to encompass the world; it also had its own internal growth, William Shakespeare. Commonly referred to as the greatest writer and playwright in history of the English language; William would introduce new words as he pleased. He may have created them himself or someone may have introduced them to him. Most likely a combination of both. Many of his words are still used in English today. For example, control or addiction. With assistance from the printing press his works wore committed to history to be dissected for centuries to come.

Throughout all this the English language has started to flourish. Contrary of the British empire that was on a steep decline. Firstly, the US declared its independence. Quickly proceeded by India and others. While the British empire was on a slippery slope back to nonexistence the language was not. The language started to mutate in new and fascinating ways. One of the most intriguing ones being capitalism. By introducing a ‘pay per character’ model for advertisements the US had essentially started to minimize English down to its bare minimums. This means dropping unnecessary ‘u’s and replacing unintuitive spellings and instead writing them almost phonetically. These are just some of the countless changes the different nations did to make English their own.

After such an eventful history of creation and destruction there is no wonder why English is so widely spoken. It also empowers people to write that they want, even if English is not their mother tongue. This combined with being enforced by law in many parts of the world leads to its widespread nature and power in international relations.