Features English Has

Credits for images and fonts. Sources and notes for claims made.

Sources

General remarks

This animation is about features English *has* but most languages *lack*. It's a followup to my mostly-for-fun take on features that English *lacks* but most languages *have*. Most of the material comes from WALS, with my own extra digging behind them also mentioned in my paragraphs below. My general remarks and some specific claims from the part 1 sources doc hold here, too. Below I'll give sources unique to this video following the timeline.

Specific claims

Compared to most languages. I included this condensed thought parallel to one in my paragraph about "most languages" from my last sources doc. Read the considerations behind the WALS samples in their introductory chapter, section 3.1.

Spelling. This section is my own addition from personal experience. A quick video search for "english difficult" turns up videos about pronunciation and spelling, while "english weird" focuses even more on spelling. Coming from a different language, "inglés difícil" turns up many videos about saying difficult words, tending to compare pronunciation and spelling. Yes, English's features here are sorely underrepresented (though one thumbnail I see does tease with an interesting case of semantic ambiguity). The -ough examples are sourced below in my Images section. The ever-popular "ghoti" respelling is often attributed to George Bernard Shaw, but it has an earlier source and does not appear in Shaw's works.

Ordinals. In WALS chapter 53, Stoltz and Veselinova report that the most frequent strategy is a suppletive form like "first" as the ordinal for "one" and all other ordinals following a common pattern (such as English suffixing "-th"). When the group of languages having completely regular derivation (kind of "oneth") is added to those that do the same but have an optional "first"-like term, together they are about as common as the most frequent solution. "One-th", "two-th" and "three-th" are their terms found in section 2.4 of the chapter.

Plurals. Haspelmath's chapter 34 shows where nominal plurality occurs. While English does employ the single most common strategy by the chapter's groupings (obligatory plural on all nouns), the none, partial and optional strategies combine to

outnumber that one. I mention plurals not because English is particularly unusual but because it's an interesting comparison.

Articles. Compare chapters 37 and 38 in WALS. Definites, whether as an article, an affix or just a demonstrative, are much more commonly had than lacked. However, it's normal for languages to lack the indefinite. Even more striking is the pattern of languages lacking one or the other or both, which I used their map comparison tool (comparing 37A to 38A) and adjusted markers to show.

Possession with "have". Stassen's chapter 117 is titled "Predicative possession", where we learn that having a "have" verb is perhaps narrowly the single most common strategy, but is overwhelmed by four other strategies around the world. The one not narrated in my animation is the "topic possessive", where the possessor gets marked as a sentence's topic while "the possessed NP is construed as the grammatical subject of the existential predicate", similar to the locative "to" strategy I did take a moment to profile.

Perfects with "have". The English verb "have" sticks out as a possessive, but it screams as a part of the perfect construction, as Dahl and Vellupilai show in chapter 68. Not only is English among the rarest group in the sample by far, but no examples were found outside of Europe in that sample. (Are we back to my Euroversals video already?) Check out map 68.1 within that chapter for a breakdown of European have-perfects.

Passives. Siewierska's chapter 107 finds that languages without a passive outnumber those with, although the passive crowd, though it's not a longshot. I wanted a bit more theoretical discussion in the chapter (typically found near/at the bottom). Read Polinsky's chapter on "Antipassives" for a bit of contrast, including tackling the question of the relationship between antipassives and ergativity, which I'm about to mention next. Advice to avoid the passive still abounds, so I'm guessing I'm not alone and you have a chance of relating to my school days.

Alignment. More than any other part of this animation, I did some weaving here. The comments on English's noun-pronoun case asymmetry come from WALS chapter 50. It's more common for verbs to mark both subject and object (really "agentive argument" and "patient argument") or be unmarked for person than to perform the English-style agent-only marking according to chapter 102. English's noun phrases use the popular "neutral" marking according to chapter 98, and in 99 English the sub-popular "nominative-accusative" alignment, second only to not marking case on its pronouns at all.

Comparatives. Chapter 121 by Stassen explores the uniqueness of the "particle comparative" strategy, noting its "limited" distribution and that "instances of this

type outside Europe (such as the Uto-Aztecan languages in North and Central America) may well be cases of influence from English and/or Spanish" (section 4).

Interdental fricatives. I first read about this years ago in Maddieson's chapter 19 on the "Presence of uncommon consonants". I joked that "you've got to stop it" in other dialects/variants, turning these fricatives into stops. In fact, this is only one possibility. For example, other fricatives like /f/ and /s/ are substituted. If the casual "again" I uttered before talking about Nigerian English stuck out to you, be comforted to know you spotted an inconsistency, a holdover from when I planned to give examples of reduplication in Nigeria in part 1 before switching to a Ghanaian creole phrase instead. Stopping of dental fricatives is heard in Ghana, too – Huber's "Ghanaian English: phonology" 2.2 gives the example "thumb [tamb]".

Vowels. Vowel qualities are counted in chapter 2. Chaker's "Kabylie : la langue" gives us the following "basic vowel triangle: /a/, /i/, /u/" but also identifies a fourth "neutral vowel [ə] which, at the phonological level, should be considered a simple 'phonic lubricant' used to avoid three-consonant clusters" (my translation). The introduction to Gómez Navarrete's "Diccionario introductorio español-maya maya-español" gives the five simple vowel phonemes "a e i o u" (under the section "Sistema de fonación"). The thirteen RP vowels come from Cruttenden's "(relatively) pure vowels" in 8.9 of *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*.

Rhotics. This was entirely my own addition, as WALS has no data on this, though there is some discussion of rhotics together with laterals in chapter 8. The phoneme is represented as "R" in the USPID (see the guide for some context), where it is extremely infrequent. Ladefoged reportedly describes a prevalent labialized postalveolar approximant "r" for English in *Vowels and Consonants* (I can't verify without access), hence the transcription [ɻ̟ʷ]. Though often transcribed "ɹ" to capture the basic sound or "r" by convention, "ɻ̟ʷ" is the narrow transcription of the variant you hear me articulate. When it comes to the vowels, Ladefoged and Maddieson write in *Sounds of the World's Languages* that "there is yet another class of vowels in which the root of the tongue is often retracted, namely the rhotic (r-colored) vowels. These sounds are very unusual, and occur in less than one percent of the world's languages (Maddieson 1984a)" (page 313).

Genders, relative pronouns (remarks cut). English is absolutely normal in avoiding a complex class or gender system with agreement like Bantu languages have; what makes it unusual is its inclusion among languages with "pronominal gender systems" according to chapter 30. Relativization strategies explained in chapter 122 include English's relative pronoun strategy, the much more frequent "gap" and somewhat more frequent "non-reduction" strategies. Though these were all interesting points, they were cut for time for being less straightforwardly flashy and requiring more explanation.

Hand/finger/arm. I drew on chapters 129 and 130. My Tahitian example was checked against the Fare Vāna'a online dictionary, where the entry for "rima" also links to the Pollex entry. Note that I said "tō'u rima" ("my hand/arm/finger") but typed "te rima" ("the hand/arm/finger"). Discussion of the plurality of "finger" was omitted but can be found in the WALS chapter.

Adjective ones. Gil's chapter 61 takes a look at "Adjectives without nouns". Several languages in the sample use an obligatory word after a nounless adjective, while over twice that many may do so with a similar word before the adjective. Strategies like these are dwarfed by the dominant group that simply does not mark the adjective. The lone Australian language in the sample is Kayardild, "where the adjective must always occur in construction with the noun that it qualifies" (citing Evans' *Grammar of Kayardild*).

Conclusion. Years ago I would say "thank you for taking the time to learn with me". Now I close with "stick around and subscribe for language". Though I'm no teacher by trade and not trying to be one here, and though I'm not demanding loyalty. Other than that I still mean both of those statements. Even though no one asked for this two-video detour, I'm really glad to craft them out of pure enjoyment and share them. Oh, and thanks for reading – on top of all the research, it took me an extra 3 hours to type this up! Catch you in the next video.

Images

NASA Visible Earth images for globe textures:
https://visibleearth.nasa.gov/collection/1484
Shading and texturing based on:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYe2HtS8BJE

WALS maps from wals.info rely on STAMEN project:
https://wals.info
http://maps.stamen.com/

Lock, locked and unlocked:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Open_Iconic_lock_locked.svg
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Open_Iconic_lock_unlocked.svg

English -ough pronunciations are from this wiki page accessed back in summer 2016. Changes since then include more examples and one inserted row for /əf/ in the placename "Greenough".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ough_%28orthography%29

Galleon statue cut from:
http://mrg.bz/e3f24d

Ashoka Pillar (reshown from last time):
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashoka_pillar_at_Vaishali,_Bihar,_India.jpg

Hammer icon (reshown from last time):
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tools-hammer.svg

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http://software.sil.org/charis/

cwTeXQKai for Chinese characters, GNU GPL 2.
https://github.com/l10n-tw/cwtex-q-fonts-TTFs

FFF Tusj, custom license ("free for both personal and commercial use"):
https://www.fontsquirrel.com/fonts/fff-tusj

Music

I created the outro theme and the piano piece and softsynth piece that play back-to-back in the middle. Darren Curtis created the one that plays during the "adjective one" before the conclusion. The remaining credit goes to Kevin MacLeod.

Vadodora Chill Mix, Lotus, Too Cool, Our Story Begins, Silver Flame, The Path of the Goblin King v2, Marty Gots a Plan, Big Mojo
Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com)

Dragons and Fireworks
Darren Curtis (website and Patreon)

SFX

I recorded the shooshes/hushes used numerous times, the writing/chalk sound and the bee imitations. Other sound effects are from soundbible, pdsounds (currently only available online through a backup site) and soundeffect-lab.

(from www.soundbible.com or www.pdsounds.org)

Woosh, Mark DiAngelo

Swoosh 1, man

Swooshing, man

Blop, Mark DiAngelo

Mouth pop, Cori Samuel

Wind Storm, Mark DiAngelo

Dragon Wheeze, Gregory Weir

Dull thud, Gregory Weir

Light wood piece, Stephan, pdsounds.org

Turning a page, John Rose

Page turn, planish

Old book noises, Cori, pdsounds.org

Books and paper, Stephan, pdsounds.org

Reverse, Mike Koenig

Pin dropping, Brian Rocca

Sea Waves, Mike Koenig

Loading gun, Stephan, pdsoungs.org (used for unlocked lock)

Old door creaking, Stephan (pdsounds.org but this time through SoundBible)

(from http://en.soundeffect-lab.info)

head-stroke1

head-write1

page1, page2