
FAMILIAR ISSUES FROM A WORLD ENGLISHES PERSPECTIVE

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This paper does not introduce new “issues”, “positions” or “topics” but instead suggests a fresh perspective on some classic themes in English Language Teaching (ELT). The fresh perspective is that provided by the concept of world Englishes.

Key words: World Englishes, Kachru’s Three Circles, teaching, teacher training, materials, methods

Issue № 1: The Spread of English, the Hegemony of English, Neo-Colonialism and Linguistic Imperialism

The spread of English as a language of wider communication is without precedent in human history. The effects of this are worthy of study. The work of Alastair Pennycook, Robert Phillipson, and Yukio Tsuda is significant in this area. These scholars are concerned about the spread of English to the detriment of other languages. They remind us of the pervasiveness of American English all over the world and warn us about the globalizing culture of McDonalds, Coco Cola and Levi Jeans. They provide us with statistics about the ELT publishing empire and caution us, English language professionals, about being unintended agents of a hegemonic system. Their caution is well founded and of course we want to pay attention to them.

The new perspective here is not their caution or our attention to it. It is the emphasis we are placing on *world Englishes* rather than the term *English as an International Language*. English as an International Language, or EIL, can be easily misunderstood to mean that we promote the study and use of English; that we believe English should be THE international language and that there is an English which is the international language. By using *Englishes* we make the point clearly that there are many varieties of English and we support the use of each one in particular circumstances. EIL can also be easily misunderstood to mean that English has a particular register, a kind of English for Special Purposes, an ESP for international settings. With our stress on Englishes, we help people to realize we don’t support such a view and we are not promoting a new ESP. The perspective we want to encourage in this area is that as professionals we are concerned about the hegemony of any language over another and in our organizations and publications, in our teaching and teacher training, we will do what we can to inform and educate those around us to the need to be ever on guard to insure that we are not a part of linguistic imperialism.

Issue № 2: From ENL, ESL and EFL to Kachru’s Three Circles

English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) are common terms among ELT professionals. From a world Englishes perspective, Kachru’s *Three Circles* might be a better description of these variations. Braj B. Kachru introduced the concept of the *Three Circles* of English in a book chapter in 1985. The book, **English in the World: Teaching and learning the language**

and literatures, was edited by Randolph Quirk and Henry G. Widdowson and published by Cambridge University Press. The chapter, I believe, had initially been presented as a paper at an international conference entitled, “Progress in English Studies”, held in London, September 17-21, 1984, “to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the British Council and its contribution to the field of English studies over fifty years”.

As Kachru describes them, the three circles symbolize the functional and formal variations in English. The variations are so great, the term “Englishes” has developed over the past few decades to emphasize the cultural pluralism of English in international contexts. The **Inner Circle** represents the traditional historical and sociolinguistic bases of English in the regions where it is used as a mother tongue (e.g. Great Britain, the United States, and Australia). The **Outer Circle** represents the regions of the world formerly colonized by Britain and the US (e.g., East and West Africa, South Asia, and the Philippines) where English has been adopted as an additional language for **intranational** purposes of administration, education, law, etc. The **Expanding Circle** includes areas in which English is primarily used as a medium of international communication (e.g. China, Germany, Japan, and Thailand). All of the countries in the Outer Circle are multilingual and multicultural with English having some official status in their language policies. In the Expanding Circle English has no official status, but it is the preferred medium of international trade and commerce as well as the language of scientific, technological and academic discourse. The Outer and Expanding Circle varieties have several shared characteristics and the place of English in the language policies of Outer and Expanding Circle countries change from time to time. What is an Outer Circle variety at one time can become an Expanding Circle variety at another (e.g. Malaysia) and vice versa. Asia has countries in each of these Circles and great linguistic creativity is taking place in this vast region. So much so in fact that the new dimension I propose for your consideration is that English is an Asian language and should be taught as such. Of course it is also a language of North America, a language of Europe, and a language of Africa but for English language professionals, English should be seen as a language that has been transplanted in Asia and it has taken root and is producing fruit that is nourishing to the minds and spirits of Asians.

Issue № 3: Teaching and Teacher Training (Pre-Service and In-Service)

The perspective on teaching and teacher training from world Englishes suggests that teachers need to be aware of how often, with whom and for what purposes English is being learnt by their students. Teachers must be able to help their students use English successfully with those people. It is not correct to assume that if the students can communicate well with people from the United States and Britain, they will be able to do the same with all others. Teachers should not neglect helping their students learn to successfully interact with North Americans and Europeans but they will also assist them in understanding that conventions of communication and negotiation differ across cultures and that Asian conventions are as legitimate as anyone else’s. Teacher training (at the pre-service and in-service levels) needs to include learning about the rapid developments in formal English education that is taking place in countries all over the world. Singapore is not China, Japan is not Korea, the Philippines is not India but we can learn a great

deal from one another's experiences if we have knowledge about them. The Ministry of Education (or its equivalent) in every country is an excellent source of such information.

Issue № 4: Materials for Teaching

The area of materials for teaching English from a world Englishes perspective follows easily from what has just been stated about teaching and teacher training. Students must have access to authentic materials from different varieties of English in the world. They must have dialogs and other interactive experiential simulations in books and on tape which incorporate Asian and non-Asian speakers from the all three Circles. They need to have access to literatures in world Englishes. They should know the names and examples of works by Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*), Jin Ha (*The Bridegroom*), F. Sionil Jose (*Mass*), Kamala Markandaya (*The Golden Honeycomb*), as well as Raja Rao (*The Serpent and the Rope*), and Arundati Roy (*The God of Small Things*). International news in English from TV and radio using national broadcasters from different countries should be familiar to our students as teaching material. Other material from the internet or from a CD ROM which offers examples of written and spoken text from world Englishes should be commonplace.

Issue № 5: Methods to Use in the English Classroom

I know of no perspective from world Englishes that provides a “royal road to language learning”, however we must continue to align the method/technique of teaching with the student's purpose for studying with the textbook, the teacher's language competence, the school's objectives, and the amount of time given each week for instruction. When we do that the approaches, methods and techniques for the English classroom are more easily selected and more clearly focused. It is not necessary to study the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in any particular order. A specific skill may be emphasized over another if that is the goal of the student. One may or may not use the student's mother tongue while teaching. Every method I know about has had successful and unsuccessful learners but all successful learners, using any method, are motivated, have teachers interested in teaching them, and have access to useful materials over a sustained period of intensive study.

Issue № 6: Evaluation and Testing

The perspective that world Englishes provides in the area of evaluation and testing is the reminder that enumeration is not the same as evaluation. What difference does it make if one of our students scores an 85 vs. and 80 on one of our exams? We need to put the value back into evaluation. What is the value added when world Englishes are learned? How should we as world Englishes professionals use the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examinations? Let's be sure we are not using them for purposes for which they were not designed. How can we encourage these international test makers to include aspects of world Englishes in their tests? What modifications are needed in our own high school and college entrance exams to reflect the current roles our students are expected to play using English in the rest of the world?

Issue № 7: The Native Speaker of English

The perspective of world Englishes on the native speaker is a significant one. We need now to recognize that this is a much broader category than it was a few years ago. I am still an example of a native speaker of American English and I can be an informant about my particular variety of the language. Randolph Quirk is still a native speaker of British English and can be an informant of that particular variety. In the same way, Yamuna Kachru is a native speaker of Indian English and she can be an informant on her particular variety of the language. Anne Pakir is a native speaker of Singapore English and Ma. Lourdes Bautista is a native speaker of Filipino English. Each of them can be an informant of their own variety of the language. I am willing to argue that Zoya Proshina is a native speaker of Russian English and HU Wenzhong is a native speaker of Chinese English. Professor Proshina and Professor Hu may not be willing to accept my assessment today but Professor Kachru, Professor Pakir and Professor Bautista may be. Whatever the case, this is my understanding of the concept ‘native speaker’ from the perspective of world Englishes. No doubt it needs greater exploration and will receive more attention in the near future.

Issue № 8: Standards of Excellence Remain High

Although it is neither possible nor desirable to impose a rigid linguistic norm as a Standard for the entire world, standards do develop for any particular society and are based on the purposes for which English is used in that society. At the sentence (but not the discourse) level, the differences among national standards of educated varieties of English are few. The statement, “I miss too much my mother”, is not acceptable as educated speech in any variety of English that I know. It is not enough that we can easily understand the speaker’s meaning. The educated speaker must demonstrate ability beyond basic communication that involves grammatical competence, sociolinguistic sensitivity, and strategic discernment. Grammatical competence includes subject — verb agreement (“He is. They are.”), noun — pronoun agreement (My sister is visiting Bangkok. He* likes the temples.), and clear enough pronunciation and intonation so that the meaning is not obscured. Socio-linguistic competence means the ability to use appropriate language behavior for a particular speech situation (a court of law is different from a horse race track and demands different kinds of language), use of acceptable verbal acts of identity, ideology and power with different interactors (verbal interactions with an angry boss will be different from those with a loving aunt). Strategic competence means the ability to make plans to accomplish one’s goals in appropriate ways while being willing and able to change those plans and verbal behavior as necessary.)

These eight classic ELT issues can be viewed and discussed from many different perspective. From the perspective of world Englishes they have new dimensions that enrich our profession and challenge us as professionals.

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СТАРЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ В НОВОМ РАКУРСЕ: КОНЦЕПЦИЯ WORLD ENGLISHES

Ларри Смит (1941—2014)

Данная работа не вводит в круг обсуждения новых «вопросов», «позиций» или «тем», но предлагает вместо этого свежий взгляд на некоторые классические проблемы преподавания английского языка (ПАЯ). Новый ракурс видения обеспечен в данном случае концепцией World Englishes (мировых вариантов английского языка).

Ключевые слова: мировые варианты английского языка, теория трех концентрических кругов, обучение, подготовка преподавателей, материалы, методы