

WORLD ENGLISHES: CHALLENGES IN TEACHING EFL

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The global spread of English together with increased migration, advances in telecommunication, travelling across international borders has resulted in a growing linguistic diversity in English-speaking countries. The model of English that should be taught in the classroom has been a subject of debate for a long time. Analysis of English language teaching practices points out the fact that the English taught is based almost exclusively on American or British English, and textbooks include characters and cultural topics from the English-speaking countries of the inner world. Another issue in teaching English is related to dialects, that is standard versus non-standard English. Notions of 'the good' in English-language usage are informed by teachers' experience and by authoritative linguists. In particular, the choice of overall model of English that is presented to students and by which their English is evaluated ought to be considered in pragmatic terms.

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The movement of the English language around the world started with the pioneering voyages to America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand and continued with the colonial development in Africa and the South Pacific in the 19th century. It developed significantly when it was adopted as an official or semi-official language by many countries that had acquired independence. English is the dominant or official language in over 60 countries.

The world status of the English language is the result of two major factors: the expansion of the colonial power of Great Britain towards the end of the 19th century and the emergence of the United States of America as the leading economic power of the 20th century. It is due to the latter factor that English has preserved its international status at present.

The English language is spoken as a first language by a majority of the inhabitants of several states, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and a number of Caribbean nations. It is the third most common native language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. It is widely learned as a second language and is an official language of the European Union, many Commonwealth countries and the United Nations, as well as in many world organisations. English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89% of schoolchildren, ahead of French at 32%, while the perception of the usefulness of foreign languages among Europeans is 68% in favour of English ahead of 25% for French. Among some non-English-speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the adult population claims to be able to converse in English – in particular: 85% in Sweden, 83% in Denmark, 79% in the Netherlands, 66% in Luxembourg and over 50% in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, and Germany.

This increasing use of the English language globally has had a large impact on many other languages, leading to language shift and even language death, and to claims of linguistic imperialism.

The global spread of English together with increased migration, advances in telecommunication, travelling across international borders has resulted in a growing linguistic diversity in English-speaking countries. At present, the English language occupies rightly the status of a lingua franca. It has developed a diverse functional range being the language of communication in technology, science, business, tourism. The language is studied worldwide in the most remote regions due to the social prestige it confers to its speakers. English is taught and learned in many countries because it is indisputably the international language, it is seen by many as a means to open doors to parts of the world that are not accessible to everyone otherwise, and learners are delighted by the increased international opportunities they believe the knowledge of English will bring to them. Due to all these factors, it is imperative that both

teachers and learners should develop an understanding and be aware of the linguistic diversity and have positive attitudes towards World Englishes.

The term and philosophy “*World Englishes*” was coined by Professor Braj B. Kachru, the Director of the Centre for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois, Champaign, USA; it describes the dispersion of English around the globe. At the beginning, the term was controversial as there were purists who believed that there should be only one Standard English – British English, the rest being deviant. The concept of world Englishes allows for varieties in English usage; it allows for diverse Englishes. *Kachru postulated that there were many varieties of English moulded by the influences of the different native languages.* World Englishes follow different rules from the standard British English. The English language, unlike French, Spanish, and Italian, for example, has never had an official academy to determine what is acceptable in the language and what is not. Attempts to form one have never been successful.

Although a certain level of variability exists among World Englishes speakers from the same country, a general categorisation of World Englishes is possible. B.Kachru represents the stratification of World Englishes by three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. Inner Circle countries include Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. English in these countries has official status. In Outer Circle countries, English has an official or semi-official status. These are the former British and American colonies such as Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania etc. In these countries, the indigenous population speak a different mother tongue, but because of the status of English associated with prestige and career making, many of them are fluent speakers of English. However, in these regions a large number of pidgin Englishes have developed, which are mixtures of English and the mother tongue of these populations. Expanding Circle countries include China, Caribbean countries, Egypt, Israel, Japan Korea, Central and South American countries; here English does not have an official status, but is taught widely as a foreign language for specific purposes including scientific and technical purposes. Linguist David Crystal estimates that the total number of English speakers in the Expanding Circle is between 500 million and one billion. Users of English who have learned the language as a foreign language are expected to conform to Inner Circle norms, even if using English constitutes an important part of their experience and personal identity. The main effort remains to describe English as it is used among the British and American native speakers and then to 'distribute' the resulting descriptions to those who speak English in non-native contexts around the world.

Kachru says that one of the big fallacies in language thinking is believing that people learn English in order to talk to native speakers, or to somehow be part of a Western culture. Many English users, it appears, do not even think of English as a Western language anymore. "English is less and less regarded as a European language, and its development is less and less determined by the usage of its native speakers," wrote Stanford University's Charles A. Ferguson more than 15 years ago.

Although many students of English do work on improving their accents, a foreign accent is not the disadvantage it once was. Even in broadcasting - where "BBC English" or "standard American" traditionally were required - CNN International has shown that reporters with foreign accents can be an asset.

A very big part of the world's English-speaking activity takes place completely within the realm of non-native speakers. The late Peter Strevens, a professor at Cambridge University in the UK, who wrote about the rise of world Englishes, predicted this development: "English will be taught mostly by non-native speakers of the language to non-native speakers, in order to communicate mainly with non-native speakers."

The colonial history of English, of course, is to a great extent responsible for the language getting planted around the world, but authorities say its growth in more recent times stems from

its use in technology and science, advertising, pop music, international business in general and various cooperative efforts among countries such as air-traffic control and the work of the United Nations and its agencies.

Still, the use of English is often condemned by politicians in many countries. Kachru dismisses such attacks out of hand: "We shouldn't take it too seriously when an Indian politician says to throw English into the sea. It means nothing. He still puts his children in an English-language school." [2] One of the major arguments against English becoming the favoured global language is that its colonial past makes it a poor candidate for a neutral international tongue. Although this argument has a certain intellectual appeal, it does not correspond much to reality. For example, as Britain's former colonies gained independence, there were predictions that use of English would decline. Some linguists say that the opposite occurred: once it was not the language of the colonial power, English became more acceptable as a local vehicle for communication. "The sun now sets on the British Empire, but never on the English language," the linguists are fond of saying.

Kachru, although saying he is a student rather than a promoter of the unique phenomenon of English as a world language, clearly sees benefits of English taking root in different countries. It becomes a medium, he says, for expressing local culture in a way that others can understand. "English has become a repository of multiculturalism," he says. "It is an immense resource that has not been explored and taken advantage of." [2]

Each variety of English reflects the culture of people who speak it. Therefore, *Standard English* should be treated as an abstract term, designating that aspect of the English language that is considered as being the most representative of this language spoken in the British Isles. Originally, it was the speech of the educated people of London and of the southeast of England. Today this form of English is the language employed in schools, official institutions and broadcasts, and it is also the form of English that is described in grammars.

In the same way, we may speak of American English standard, New Zealand English standard, Malaysian English standard etc. What is important to keep in mind is the idea of unity that stands at the base of a language without denying the idea of diversity. All the varieties of English should be treated as dialects. The scientific truth consists in the fact that Standard English is only one variety among many, although a significant one. Scholars are convinced that all languages, and correspondingly all dialects, are equally appropriate and good as linguistic systems if they meet the needs of their speakers. According to P. Trudgill, "value judgements concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are social rather than linguistic. There is nothing at all inherent in non-standard varieties which makes them inferior. Any apparent inferiority is due only to their association with speakers from under-privileged, low-status groups" [5].

The status of English is such that it has been adopted as the world's lingua franca for communication in Olympic sport, international trade, and air-traffic control. Unlike any other language, past or present, English has spread to all five continents and has become a truly global language. The reason English is spreading around the world at the moment is because of its utility as a lingua franca.

Globish (a blend of global and English), is a simplified version of English that is used around the world. The term was coined by Jean-Paul Nerrière in 1995 to describe a version of the English language that relies on a simplified grammar and a vocabulary of 1,500 words. Not quite a pidgin, Globish appears to be English without idioms, making it easier for non-Anglophones to understand and to communicate with one another. Globish is a cultural and media phenomenon, one whose infrastructure is economic, based on trade, advertising and the global market. It is vastly easier to use and can work almost as well as a full command of the language in most business situations [4].

The need for a global language is a big part of the fact of globalization, and the dominance of English looks inevitable for a good long time to come. Those with a gift for learning languages are bound to have a big advantage. For everyone else, why not start with Globish? Nerriere insists that Globish is not "broken" English; it is correct English, but without English culture. He considers that this level of English is enough if people can understand a lot of English, but not all of it, they can do any kind of global business.

Will Globish last? None of the invented languages have become spread and widely used. Nevertheless, the beauty of Globish is that no one has to learn a new language. Globish speakers say it takes half a day for a native English speaker to become fluent in Globish, and there are plenty of free online tools available for those keen to learn.

The model of English that should be taught in the classroom has been a subject of debate for a long time. Analysis of English language teaching practices points out the fact that the English taught is based almost exclusively on American or British English, and textbooks include characters and cultural topics from the English-speaking countries of the inner world, that is from the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand. Another issue in teaching English is related to dialects, that is standard versus non-standard English. Notions of 'the good' in English-language usage are informed by teachers' experience and by authoritative linguists. In recent decades, new ways of evaluating language interpretation and use have been explored and tested; such recent conceptions of what it means to be intelligible may be seen as 'better' in that they accord more closely with the observable data and situations around us. In particular, the choice of overall model of English that is presented to students and by which their English is evaluated ought to be considered in pragmatic terms.

The study of regional linguistic variation has much to offer as the more we know about regional variation and change in the use of English, the more we will appreciate the striking individuality of each of the varieties that is called a dialect, and the less we are likely to adopt a despising attitude towards people from other parts of the world who speak English. An understanding of World Englishes can promote multiculturalism and enrich one's teaching of history and geography. Students come to understand the sociocultural, political, and moral issues related to linguistic diversity [3]. A first step, according to D. Crystal, is "to replace the notion that a regional variety is 'only a dialect', because it lacks prestige of the standard language, with the realization that every dialect is a source of great linguistic complexity and potential". Further, the linguist notes that it is difficult to persuade ourselves that a dialect which we find worth detesting is "a variety of the English language which deserves as much respect, as the variety we speak ourselves" [1].

When learning a language, the foreign student generally learns the standard variant of the English language, because this is the variant which is accepted everywhere in the English speaking world, constituting at the same time, an important instrument of international communication. However, in most cases, English is taught to non-native speakers by non-native speakers, neither teachers nor students being in much contact with native speakers. That is, people do not always speak the way they think they do, and linguistic insecurity is perhaps one of the main motivations for linguistic prescriptivism. Models need to be found which will accommodate the population trends and interactions. Teachers of English are expected to be exposed to multicultural ideas and examples, otherwise they "go out into the world in very much the same state of mind as a certain zealous sort of religious missionary who seeks to show 'the lost' the error of their ways – without knowing anything about their ways". Teaching English and learning English turn out to be complex and difficult tasks. In order to achieve positive results, it is of utmost importance in the process of training teachers to create awareness of the status and functions of World Englishes in the world today and in that of the future.

Therefore, teachers should lead students to discover language differences as a way of laying a foundation for examining the World Englishes. The teacher of English should teach the

common core that stands at the basis of all the English dialects and guide the learner to stick to one variant of the English language rather than select what seems more likeable and attractive from each variant. Moreover, this common core will enable people to pass any tests in English, as they will be made up based on the essential features of English, which are a component part of all the World Englishes.

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