

Do You Speak Global?: The Spread of English and the Implications for English Language Teaching

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Abstract

The spread of English as an international language has changed our conception of both the language and how it should be taught. With more nonnative than native speakers of English, the ownership of English has shifted and new world Englishes (WE) have emerged. Researchers studying this phenomenon have recommended changes to English language teaching (ELT) that require re-examining firmly entrenched assumptions still evidenced in teaching practice. Despite compelling evidence, English language teaching professionals have yet to embrace and enact researchers' recommendations. This article first examines the spread of English, then discusses its implications for ELT. The example of recommended changes for ELT enacted at Chukyo University in the Expanding Circle country of Japan illustrates changes that should be espoused by professionals worldwide.

Introduction

Now is an era marked by the significant spread of English worldwide, with speakers of English as a second, foreign, or other language outnumbering native speakers (Jenkins, 2006; McKay, 2003). Recent estimates cite the number of nonnative speakers of English as double (Kachru, 1996), triple (Pakir, 1999), or, generously, quadruple (Kachru, 1996) the number of native speakers worldwide. With this spread projected to continue (Graddol, 1997), English language teachers must consider the implications for teaching and learning (Jenkins, 2006; Yano, 2001). Although significant discourse has occurred in a variety of respected applied linguistics journals and books, the transfer to English language classrooms worldwide has been lagging or absent (Bhatt, 2001; Jenkins, 2006; Kachru, 1996; McKay, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2001). For appropriate classroom level action to occur, ELT professionals must first understand the impact of the spread of English on English language teaching and learning. Therefore, this article begins by examining the nature of the spread of English, including its phases and accompanying shifts in conceptions of the language. Subsequent discussion explores the challenges brought to bear by the presence of world Englishes (WE), English as a lingua franca (ELF), and English as an international language (EIL), specifically the need to re-examine pedagogical practices and assumptions attendant to these changes. Finally, an example of changes needed and enacted in

the Expanding Circle country of Japan is offered to further illuminate why and how the spread of English can be appropriately accommodated for on the frontlines of English language learning and teaching.

The Spread of English

Stating the obvious by his own admission, Widdowson (1997) declared the following: “English has spread to become an international language” (p. 135). In the same year, Graddol (1997) published a short book entitled *The Future of English?* wherein he proclaimed English the sole global lingua franca for at least the next fifty years. In fact, he maintained “that no single language will occupy the monopolistic position in the 21st century which English has – almost – achieved by the end of the 20th century” (Graddol, 1997, p. 58). Why is this? Did inherent linguistic attributes lead to its rise and spread as a global language, or were other elements at play? More importantly, with English seemingly permanently installed as the international language, what issues and concerns need be addressed by English language teaching (ELT) professionals? These and other questions will be explored in the following examination of the spread of English.

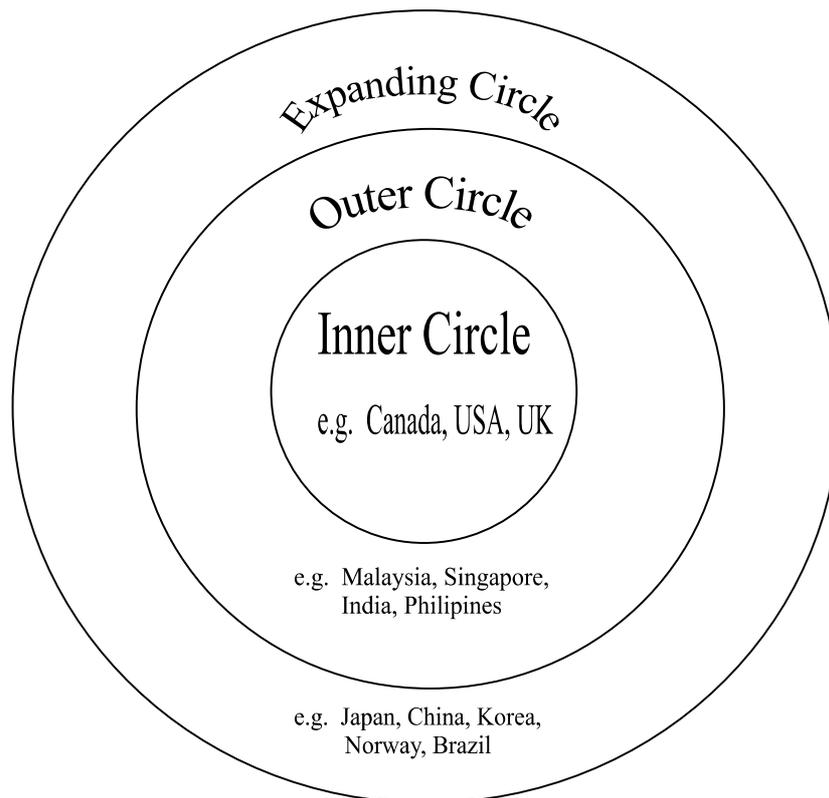
The Spread of English: The Concentric Circles of English

In discussing the spread of English, scholars invariably refer to Braj B. Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of English (Bhatt; 2001; Bolton; 2005; Davies, 1999; Graddol, 1997; Jenkins; 2006; Kachru, 1986, 1996; Pakir, 1999). Bhatt (2001) proclaimed Kachru’s model as encapsulating the many factors informing the spread of English, including historical, sociolinguistic, acquisitional, and literary elements. In light of the wide acceptance of this model, Kachru’s discussion of the diaspora of the English language features as the main informant to the treatment of this topic.

Kachru (1996) parceled the spread of English into several phases. The first phase saw English spread throughout the British Isles, including Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, during the 16th and 17th centuries. This was quickly followed by the second phase wherein English further expanded its realm to North America, Australia, and New Zealand by means of the migrations of English-speaking populations. Kachru cited the third phase, the Raj phase, as having the greatest effect on the sociolinguistic profile of English. It was during this phase that English spread to areas where no English-speaking communities had previously existed, including South Asia, Southeast Asia, South, West, and East Africa. According to Kachru, this contributed to the rise of major cross-linguistic and cross-cultural attributes, which together resulted in the changed profile of English as a pluricentric language. This pluricentricity, he asserted, “is not merely demographic, it entails cultural, linguistic, and literary reincarnations of the English language” (Kachru, 1996, pp. 136-137). Bhatt (2001) echoed this notion, citing the development of “regional-contact varieties of English” (p. 529) stemming from its contact with diverse languages in these disparate sociocultural contexts. He went further, describing this phase of diaspora as creating “a new ecology for the teaching of English...in terms of linguistic input, methodology, norms, and identity” (Bhatt, 2001, p. 529). These elements have had considerable influence on the paradigm shift within ELT resultant from the spread of English.

Kachru (1986, 1996) captured English's pluricentric profile in a useful diagram he refers to as the Three Concentric Circles of English (see Figure 1). The three circles, including the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle, "represent three distinct types of speech fellowship of English, phases of the spread of the language, and particular characteristics of the uses of the language and of its acquisition and linguistic innovations" (Kachru, 1986, p. 122). According to Bhatt (2001), in terms of language acquisition and use, the circles comprise the following: (a) the Inner Circle, represents those countries where English is spoken as a first or native language (L1) in countries including English-speaking Canada, USA, UK, Australia, and New Zealand; (b) the Outer Circle, represents countries wherein English is institutionalized as an additional language and learned as a second language (L2), such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, India, and Kenya; and (c) the Expanding Circle, represents countries such as Norway, Brazil, China, Korea, and Japan, where English is a foreign language (EFL). Although useful to envision the spread of English, Kachru's model does not explain why English has successfully spread and taken up the role of international language, nor does it illuminate concerns related to the hegemony of English such as perpetuating the status quo and preserving prevailing power structures.

Figure 1: Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of Englishⁱ



Spread of English: Underlying Reasons and Overarching Concerns

Graddol (1997) offered an in-depth discussion regarding the reasons underlying the spread of English. In summarizing, Graddol posits two prevailing historical forces as contributing to the spread of English:

First was the colonial expansion of Britain which resulted in settlements of English speakers in many parts of the world. This has provided a diasporic base for the language – which is probably a key factor in the adoption of a language as a lingua franca. In the 20th century, the role of the US has been more important than that of Britain and has helped ensure that the language is not only at the forefront of scientific and technical knowledge, but also leads consumer culture. (p. 14)

Bhatt (2001) also attributed the success of the spread of English to “the economic conditions that created the commercial supremacy of the United Kingdom and the United States” (p. 533) and went further, citing this “econocultural model” (p. 533) as guaranteeing the continued spread of the language. In fact, Brutt-Griffler (1998) pinpointed the world econocultural model as “the center of gravity around which the varieties of world Englishes revolve” (p. 386), with the evolution of English as a global language paralleling the development of this world econocultural system. English, then, has successfully established itself as the preferred means of communication in complex global relations with the attendant power accompanying this position.

Consequences of Power

The hegemony of English is accompanied by numerous concerns. Master (1998) suggested both a positive and a negative side to the dominance of English, with the former linked to its ability to promote universal access for all, and the latter tied to its ability to exclude those with fewer resources, thus perpetuating the status quo and prevailing power structures. So, while the global spread of English promises improved communication worldwide, it limits the exchange to those with the power to access opportunities to learn English. This connotes a kind of *linguistic imperialism* first introduced by Phillipson in his 1992 book of the same name. The book sparked heated debate (Kachru et al., 1993), inspired a call for critical ELT (Bolton, 2005; Erling, 2005), and helped establish the discipline of critical applied linguistics (Bolton, 2005). Therefore, in the last fifteen years, critical discourse regarding the mounting dominance of English and the implications of its spread has at least served to monitor this phenomenon, if not alleviate its ill-effects..

World Englishes and English Language Teaching

At present, English goes by many names. It has been dubbed an international language, a lingua franca, a global language, and a world language (Erling, 2005; Jenkins, 2006; McArthur, 2004). In addition, led by scholars such as Kachru, English has developed a plural sense, with its different varieties designated world Englishes and the ensuing acronym, WE; these uses denote the essential plurality and inclusivity that informs the conception of English (Bhatt, 2001;

Bolton, 2005; Jenkins, 2006; Kachru, 1996). Although at times confusing, Erling (2005) emphasized the important notion underlying these monikers: “These proposals place emphasis on functional uses of the language instead of geographical varieties and recognize that English can be used as a language of communication without necessarily being a language of identification” (p. 40). In transcending the latter, English has experienced a paradigm shift and so, too, should ELT. Erling underlined the need for changes to ELT practice:

More important than finding an appropriate name for English is ensuring that ELT professionals around the world move their practice away from an ideology that privileges L1 (‘inner circle’) varieties. The language must be taught as a means of intercultural communication, critical analysis and indeed, where necessary resistance. (p. 43)

Adapting ELT practices to this new paradigm where English is an international language requires both pedagogical and ideological changes. As such, ELT professionals on the front lines must lead the charge towards change while battling their own assumptions regarding English language teaching and learning.

Implications of the Spread for ELT

With a call to arms as strongly stated as in the preceding, what are the implications of the global spread of English ELT professionals might need to be aware of and attend to? Kachru (1996) called for the slaughter of the five sacred cows of English: the acquisitional cow, theoretical cow, pedagogical cow, sociolinguistic cow, and ideological cow. Sacrificing each of these sacred cows requires a significant paradigm shift. In order to sacrifice the acquisitional cow, professionals must question the relevance of firmly entrenched language acquisition concepts which situate the ownership of English language knowledge with native speakers. Examples of such language acquisition concepts include: (a) interference errors, characterized by the application of first language knowledge to learners’ target language (TL); (b) interlanguage errors, a linguistic system developed by learners that incorporates first language elements into the development of their TL; and (c) fossilization errors, errors established during interlanguage development which resist correction. In categorizing these as errors, ELT professionals continue to promote native speaker proficiency as the standard for English language learners. For the theoretical cow, professionals must reconsider the definition of native speaker, and question the divide between native and nonnative speakers. In sacrificing the pedagogical cow, professionals must alter their methods, materials, and models to better reflect a sensitivity toward local contexts, rather than only reflecting Inner Circle norms. Sacrificing the sociolinguistic cow means acknowledging the pluricentricity of WEs, therefore recognizing “new canons with their own linguistic, literary, and cultural identities” (Bhatt, 2001, p. 540). Finally, sacrificing the ideological cow implies rallying against the ideological and symbolic power of ‘killer English’ (Kachru, 1986, 1996) and instead encouraging positive applications of the power of English more beneficial to learners in Outer and Expanding Circle countries.

Whose English and Whose Standards?

With the successful slaughter of these sacred cows, ELT professionals are better-equipped to employ culturally sensitive second language teaching methodologies appropriate to the teaching

context as in the approach known as ethnography of communication (Bhatt, 2001). The central concept underlying this approach is communicative competence, one's ability to convey the intended message to the receiver of said message. What may function as communicative competence in one context may not be appropriate in another, and so "models of teaching and learning need therefore to reflect the sociocultural ethos of the context of teaching/learning" (Bhatt, 2001, p. 543). McKay (2003) reflected on this need: "[A]s an international language, English belongs to its users, and as such it is the users' cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy" (p. 13). It is clear that ELT professionals must eschew traditional pedagogical methods reliant on native speaker models from their repertoire, choosing instead to allow sociocultural context and specific learner needs to inform their practice.

The move beyond the native speaker model of English language proficiency is widely discussed and supported in the literature (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Cook, 1999; Davies, Hamp-Lyons, & Kemp, 2003; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Lowenberg, 2002; Kachru, 1994; Norton, 1997; Rhedding-Jones, 2002; Seidlhofer, 1999, 2001; Yano, 2001). Although strong support exists for redefining English proficiency in terms more suitable to Outer and Expanding Circle contexts, Jenkins (2006) contended that conviction in native speaker models and standards endures: "Despite the strength of counter arguments, the belief in native speaker ownership persists among both native and nonnative speakers – teachers, teacher educators and linguists alike, although it is often expressed with more subtlety than it was in the past" (p. 171). With this viewpoint so firmly entrenched, it is no wonder present day English teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and students maintain the fallacious notion that the ultimate goal of English language learning is native-like proficiency. Seidlhofer (2001) offered an astute metaphor, likening its hold to a "conceptual straightjacket" (p. 141). Continuing to uphold native speaker standards as the end goal of English language learning will only serve to reinforce the language learner's status as a language outsider destined for perpetual failure (Graddol, 2006).

To release English language teachers and learners from the oppressive hold of native speaker norms and models, many researchers have called for the eradication of the native/nonnative distinction by changing the labels themselves (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1999; Leung et al., 1997; Pakir, 1999). This is especially relevant in Outer and Expanding Circle countries where English language learner goals may vary considerably from those of Inner Circle learners living in an English speaking country (Matsuda, 2003a; McKay, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2001). Cook (1999) dispelled with the nonnative speaker label and instead separates second language (L2) speakers into L2 learners and L2 users, the former comprising those in the process of learning an L2 and the latter competently using an L2. For this distinction to be successful, Cook advocates creating a successful L2 learner profile as a standard rather than continuing to use native speaker standards. Leung et al. (1997) expanding on the work of Rampton (1990), offered another perspective, proposing the replacement of native speaker and mother tongue with language expertise, language inheritance, and language affiliation. They defined the terms as follows:

[T]he term *language expertise* refers to how proficient people are in a language; *language affiliation* refers to the attachment or identification they feel for a language whether or not they nominally belong to the social group customarily associated with it;

and *language inheritance* refers to the ways in which individuals can be born into a language tradition that is prominent within the family and community setting whether or not they claim expertise in or affiliation to that language. (p. 555)

In both cases, the notion of a binary native/nonnative distinction is removed, thus freeing language teachers and learners from a “static model of language acquisition” (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001) incompatible with the dynamic, international nature of English today.

English Language Teaching in an Expanding Circle Country

Transforming conceptions of language learning to accommodate changes in the many conceptions of English requires raising the awareness of teachers and students alike to the variety of WEs currently in use and developing (Cook, 1999; Jenkins, 2006). Nowhere is this more necessary, and more challenging, than in an Expanding Circle such as Japan where the legacy of the native speaker model is still readily observed (Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto, 1995; Hino, 1988; Kubota, 1998; Matsuda, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Sakai & D’Angelo, 2005; Yano, 2001; Yoshikawa, 2005). Matsuda (2003a) described current English language learning in Japan as heavily reliant on an idealized variety of Inner Circle English. This, she asserted, “neglects the real linguistic needs of the learners, eclipses their education about the history and politics of English, and fails to empower them with ownership of English” (p. 721).

Since Japanese are as likely, if not more likely, to encounter Outer or Expanding Circle Englishes as they are Inner Circle varieties, English education in Japan must reflect this diversity. To meet this end, Matsuda (2002, 2003a, 2003b) and others (Kubota, 1988; Sakai & D’Angelo, 2005; Yoshikawa, 2005) recommended infusing EIL instruction with exposure to the variety of WEs Japanese learners will necessarily encounter. To do otherwise “may lead to confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English users or uses outside of class” (Matsuda, 2003a, p. 721). To facilitate this increased awareness and international understanding in Japanese EIL classrooms, Matsuda (2003a) proposed the following: change English language teaching textbooks and materials to those that better reflect WEs both in terms of English language varieties and ethnic diversity of characters represented, expose students to various Englishes via guest speakers, e-mail exchanges, movies, sound clips, and Internet-based projects, evaluate students based on their communicative competence instead of American or British norms of grammatical correctness, ensure teachers (both native and nonnative speakers of English) are educated with a WE perspective and, take measures to educate the public regarding the enrichment offered by incorporating WEs into the English curriculum to allay fears that students will be learning lesser varieties.

Leading the Charge: Japan’s Chukyo University

A prime example of Matsuda’s recommendations in practice is found in the recently developed English program housed in the Department of World Englishes at Chukyo University. Established in 2002, this pilot program offers undergraduate English majors the opportunity to experience an ELT curriculum made more relevant to the Expanding Circle context by its implicit and explicit adherence to a WE philosophy (D’Angelo, 2005). The program’s goal is for

students to develop international intelligibility using an educated variety of Japanese English, not native-like proficiency in American or British English (D'Angelo, 2005; Yoshikawa, 2005). By means of a predominantly oral communication curriculum, the program helps students increase their confidence in their own variety of English while gaining exposure to other WEs (Morrison & White, 2005). Improved communicative competence is also addressed through extensive speaking, listening, reading, writing, and computer skills program components (Morrison & White, 2005).

Morrison & White (2005) provided a detailed overview of the methods employed by this university to increase students' exposure to WE varieties and develop a better acceptance of their own. Many of these methods realize Matsuda's recommendations; therefore, the methods outlined below are grouped according to areas proposed as targets for improvements.

1. Textbooks and Teaching Materials: Textbooks are specifically chosen for their legitimate representation of the diversity of WEs. Measures were taken to verify that the actors used for voice work on the accompanying CDs were in fact from the Outer and Expanding Circles that they claim. Text CDs have recordings of Japanese students conversing in English.
2. Increased Exposure to WEs: The teaching staff is comprised of instructors from Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle countries. Students partake in two overseas trips, one to an Outer Circle country and one to an Inner Circle country. A movie-viewing program provides systematic exposure to native and non-native English pronunciation. Subsequent discussion and assignments enhance students' understanding of film content and provide the opportunity for deeper reflection regarding the different Englishes encountered. The Internet is used to expose students to a variety of accents via multimedia such as MP3s and Internet radio broadcasts. The 'Extensive Speaking' program component requires that students engage in focused English conversation with another student outside of class time. In addition to the aforementioned program features, the English Learning Support Wing offers a physical space for students and teachers to converse in English in a safe and supportive environment.
3. Public Edification: In their third year, students give English presentations which are open to the greater school community and general public thereby raising public awareness of the program in particular and WEs in general.
4. Teacher Education: Teachers and administrators are encouraged to challenge their assumptions about English language teaching through professional reading, collegial discussions, and membership in professional associations.
5. Assessment: Pre- and post-tests focus on growth rather than native-like proficiency. Core competencies in grammar and vocabulary are developed with the goal of communicative competence, not error-free utterances.

The preceding demonstrates how changes to ELT necessitated by the global spread of English applicable worldwide have been enacted in the Expanding Circle country of Japan. As Matsuda (2003a) noted, these changes provide "a different way of looking at the language, which is more inclusive, pluralistic, and accepting than the traditional, monolithic view of English in which

there is one correct, standard way of using English that all speakers must strive for” (p. 727). In addition, they honour the local context of the English language learner while framing learning in the international context in which it is presently situated.

Conclusion

English is recognized as an international language, with nonnative speakers of English outnumbering native speakers. This global spread requires not only a shift in our conception of English, but also a shift in ELT practice. The implications for ELT are understood by first investigating the nature of the diaspora of English and the reasons underlying its subsequent dominance worldwide, and then re-examining traditional assumptions, held by teachers and students alike, including Kachru’s (1996) sacred acquisitional, theoretical, pedagogical, sociolinguistic, and ideological cows of English. The need to eradicate the native speaker model, thereby honouring the current pluricentricity of English, is illustrated with an example of recommended changes to EIL education implemented at Chukyo University in the Expanding Circle country of Japan. What is most evident is the need for ELT professionals worldwide to enact the changes recommended by researchers and scholars lest pedagogical practices incompatible with their sociocultural context persist in denying English language learners culturally appropriate English language education.

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Notes

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