

Current Perspectives on World Englishes and their Implications for Second Language Teaching and Learning

Ma. Melvyn P. Alamis
University of Santo Tomas
Manila, Philippines
E-mail: mel.alamis@gmail.com

This qualitative study aims to explore how teachers of English for Second Language Learning perceive the current perspectives on World Englishes. Through survey conducted with 23 teachers of English in the secondary level and 25 teachers of English in the tertiary level from four Mendiola consortium private schools in Manila, the findings found that there is yet no question of a Philippine variety of English since the spread of English on a national scale in the Philippines has just taken off. An analysis of the respondents' answers to the questionnaire showed that a majority of the teachers prefer American English as the pedagogical model in setting standards for second language teaching and learning. These results confirm that English is a language that continuously enjoys a privileged status in the Philippines and has resolutely remained a popular language, being extensively used now for a wider range of purposes. There also seems to be an implicit shared understanding that the standard variety of English is the norm.

Key words: World Englishes, Three Concentric Circles, institutionalized non-native varieties of English, English for intranational communication

1. Introduction

In the past three decades, the study of the formal and functional implications of the global spread of English has received considerable attention among scholars of English language, linguistics, and literature; creative writers; and literary critics. There is now a growing consensus among scholars that there is not one English language variety anymore; rather there are many (McArthur, 1998). The different English varieties, studied within the conceptual framework of World Englishes represent diverse linguistic, cultural, and ideological voices.

The global spread of English has a number of consequences both for the nature of English and its teaching. In many non-native contexts where English is used quite intensively and extensively in the daily lives

of people, English has taken various forms, reflecting the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the speakers. In the global context, on the other hand, English functions as an international language. At the present time, non-native speakers outnumber native speakers, and these non-native speakers use English for a variety of purposes, including, very often, intranational communication. One significant feature of such communication is that it mostly occurs among non-native speakers in international contexts. Such being the case, native speaker norms in such interactions may not only be unnecessary but also inappropriate. These and other related factors have recently led some researchers (e.g., McKay, 2002, 2003) to re-examine common English Language Teaching (ELT) assumptions and have given way to a new

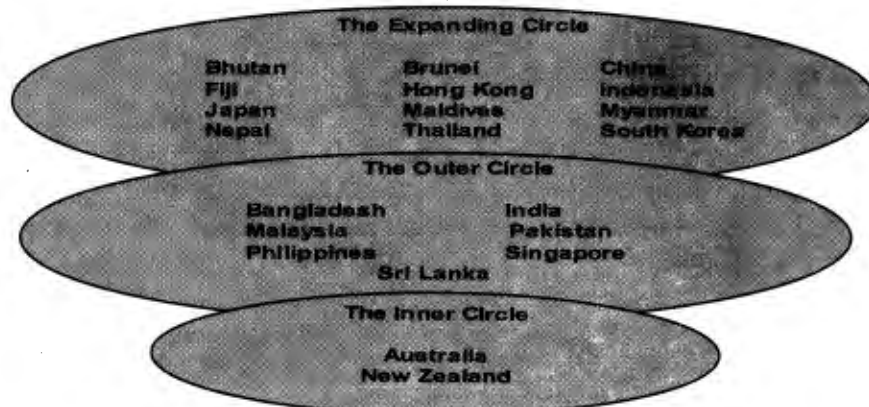
approach characterized English as an International Language Pedagogy. The consequences of the global spread of English, as investigated from local to international contexts, have raised the issues of models and norms in language pedagogy as key areas of discussion. This paper deals with these issues with respect to both local and international contexts and their implications for second language pedagogy.

1.1 World Englishes

Nelson (1992) argues that “when approaching a language transplanted to a new cultural and linguistic context – as, for example, English in India- one is brought to various realizations about the notion of language and the varieties that a language may develop” (p. 327).

Indeed, the global diffusion of English has resulted in varieties of English in different sociocultural contexts. Kachru (1985, 1992) presents this sociolinguistic profile of English in terms of three concentric circles: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle:

Figure 1. Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes (Kachru, 1985)



The Inner Circle is represented by Australia and New Zealand, where English is the primary language. The Outer Circle uses English as an institutionalized additional language in such countries as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. These countries have a colonial history with the users of the Inner Circle. English is used quite intensively and extensively in the domestic daily lives of the people and has established new norms shaped by new sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts. The Expanding Circle comprises countries where performance varieties are used, like Bhutan, Brunei, China, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and South Korea. English functions primarily as a foreign language.

The studies of institutionalized nonnative varieties of English (e.g., Kachru, 1985, 1992; Strevens, 1990; Nelson, 1992) have argued for the recognition and acceptance of these varieties in their own right, devoid of comparisons with the Inner Circle native speaker varieties and the term world Englishes is suggested to represent these varieties, such as Philippine English, Indian

English, and Singaporean English. Thus, the three concentric circle model brought to the English language in different sociocultural contexts a pluralistic perspective. English is no longer the sole property of native speakers but it is, as well, the language of non-native speakers who use and adopt it in their own sociocultural contexts.

1.2 Issues and perspectives

Among the discussions of the institutionalized non-native varieties of English several issues have been the focus of attention. These are: the status of the innovations occurring in these varieties; the codification of these innovations; the issue of non-native and native norms; and the resultant implications for the choice of a pedagogical model.

Traditionally, the use of English by non-native speakers has been judged by how it approximates native language use. Differences in non-native language use have often been viewed as deficiencies. Thus, variations in institutionalized nonnative varieties have been labeled as “mistakes” or “errors” which should be corrected to avoid fossilization. This led largely to the characterization of non-native knowledge of language as “interlanguage” on the path to native speaker competence.

The studies of institutionalized nonnative varieties, however, have suggested different typologies for these terms. The underlying motivation is that the sociocultural context of language use naturally affects the language, and the resultant changes in the language would by no means be considered as deficit characteristics. Thus, Kachru (1992) argues for a distinction between the terms “mistake” and “deviation,” thus:

A “mistake” may be unacceptable to a native speaker since it does not belong to the linguistic “norm” of the English language; it cannot be justified with reference to the sociocultural context of a non-native variety;

and it is not the result of the productive processes used in an institutionalized non-native variety of English. On the other hand, a “deviation” has the following characteristics: it is different from the norm in the sense that it is the result of the new “un-English” linguistic and cultural setting in which the English language is used; it is the result of a productive process which marks the typical variety-specific features; and it is systematic within a variety, and not idiosyncratic (p. 62).

As a result, such arguments led “deviations” to be characterized as “innovations”, which imply “difference” and not as “errors” or “mistakes,” which imply “deficiency”. It is this “difference” view which gives recognition to the non-native norms.

The other central issue in these discussions is when a deviation should be considered as “innovation.” Bamgbose (1998, p. 3) suggests five factors for deciding on the status of an innovation. These are demographic factor (the number of users); geographical factor (the spread of an innovation); authoritative factor (the actual use or approval of use of an innovation by writers, teachers, media practitioners, examination bodies, publishing houses, and influential opinion leaders); codification (in the restricted sense, putting the innovation into a written form in a grammar or pronouncing dictionary, course books or any other type of reference manual); and acceptability (the ultimate test of admission of an innovation). Among these factors, Bamgbose argues, codification and acceptability are the most important since without them innovations will still be viewed as errors.

To Kachru (1985), “codification implies determining the bounds of such innovations or creativity – in other words, ‘allowable’ deviation from the native norms” (p. 18).

Codification is also of great importance since it relates to the establishment of standards for innovations occurring in these institutionalized non-native varieties. In the case of the Inner Circle varieties, various channels of linguistic regulation like dictionaries, literary works, textbooks and media, have led to the establishment of well-known Inner Circle varieties like American English and British English. In the Outer Circle, however, while innovations are used quite intensively and extensively in the local context of non-native speakers, the codification of these innovations has not been well established yet. In terms of pedagogy, the codification and related problems makes it difficult to adopt these non-native varieties as pedagogical models. Codified Inner Circle varieties are mostly seen as ideal pedagogical models throughout the world, one reason being that pedagogical materials are available in these standard English varieties. In the Outer Circle, however, hardly any reference material is found to inform instruction.

Aside from the codification problem, proficiency tests for the Inner Circle varieties are well-established, which is not the case for the Outer Circle varieties. This naturally leads to testing non-native speakers according to the norms of Inner Circle users. These tests, however, hold strict association of English with the western culture and, hence, learning English means learning western cultural values and communicative norms. Kachru (1985) calls this western cultural spread along with language in pedagogy prescriptivism and argues that

With the spread of English we also expect the learners to acquire the norms of behavior appropriate to the users of the Inner Circle. The expected behavior pattern characterizes what one might call an educated Englishman (or

American). This hypothesis is based on the assumption that language spread entails spread of cultural and social norms, or what has been termed in pedagogical literature an 'integrative motivation' for language learning (p. 21).

Above all, in most cases, Inner Circle models are associated with power and prestige, which make them more preferable as pedagogical models. "Quite often, people know of features of non-native varieties and can even see the utility of such features in sociocultural situations, yet they are reluctant to accept the logical conclusion that such recognition implies the replacement of the native norms they have come to adore" (Bombose, 1998, p. 5). Thus, the native speaker accent is generally found fascinating by non-native speakers though they recognize the viability of their accent and wish to keep it. In short, the speakers of Outer Circle varieties have a less positive attitude toward their own varieties than to Inner Circle varieties.

While there is general consensus on the fact that language pedagogy in the Outer Circle should no longer be informed by native speaker models, such factors make it difficult to adopt Outer Circle models in language pedagogy in these contexts. In the Expanding Circle, where English functions as an international language, related issues need further examination.

1.3 Implications for the choice of a pedagogical model

The global status of English has brought with it varied implications both for its development and its teaching. On the one hand, the number of non-native speakers exceeds the number of native speakers and thus the center of authority in the development of English is shifting from

native speakers. Crystal (1997, p. 137) maintains that “a new form of English, World Standard Spoken English, will arise in international communication in that most people are ‘multi dialectical’ to a greater or lesser extent” (in Yano 2001, p. 125).

Though there is not yet a global variety of English, the global spread of English in the Expanding Circle still has important implications in pedagogy, the most important of which is that most communication in English now occurs among non-native speakers in non-native contexts and these non-native speakers need not adopt the communicative norms of the Inner Circle users when they use English as an international language. Rather, Smith (1983, 1987) argues that “native English speakers should study English as an international language if they plan to interact in English with non-native speakers who use a different national variety” (in Hassal, 1996, p. 422).

Traditionally, however, learning English as a foreign language meant learning it for interaction with native speakers, achieving native speaker competence in proficiency and learning English to understand cultural conventions of native speakers. This is inherent in the communicative language teaching tradition which adopts “communicative competence” as the ultimate goal for language learners and native speaker norms of use as the only appropriate use of language.

McKay (2003) successfully questions the legitimacy of such assumptions based on the current status of English as an international

language and argues for a new orientation in the teaching of English as an international language. The basic tenets of such an orientation is that as an international language English cannot be linked to a specific country or culture; in other words, English is denationalized. Since learners of English as an international language have specific goals in learning English, they do not need to achieve native speaker competence. The cultural content for ELT should not always be native speaker cultures. Western cultures of learning characterizing current communicative approaches are not the most productive way of teaching.

2. Research objectives

In light of the issues, reactions and implications surrounding World Englishes, this study aims to explore how teachers of English for Second Language Learning perceive these current perspectives. Thus, this study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

- In setting English standards for learners and teachers, which language variety should be the pedagogical model, and why?
- Which type of communication should non-native English varieties be mainly used for?
- Should the same benchmarks (English Proficiency) be used for first and second language learners?

3. Methodology

A total of 48 teachers of English, 23 in the secondary level and 25 in the tertiary level from four Mendiola consortium private schools in Manila were randomly selected for the study. Participants from the four educational institutions were surveyed on different occasions after securing permission from the school authorities. A majority of the respondents were female (88%) since there were more female teachers in their respective faculty rooms when the surveys were conducted.

A cover letter stating the purpose of the survey was attached to the questionnaire. The survey questionnaire items pertaining to the teachers' perception of the current

perspectives on World Englishes were used for data collection.

The questionnaire, composed of three questions, had been pilot tested at the Faculty of Engineering and the High School Department of the University of Santo Tomas. The survey forms were distributed to the teachers during their free time. The respondents were given uniform instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher, who personally conducted the surveys, answered questions and made clarifications whenever needed. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaire to enable the researcher to get the frequency of the respondents' responses.

4. Results

setting language standards for second language teaching and learning.

Question 1. In setting English standards for learners and teachers which language variety should be the pedagogical model, and why?

Table 1 shows that teachers favor the American English as pedagogical model in

Table 1. Teachers' perception as regards the pedagogical model for setting English standard

Pedagogical Model	f	%
A. Native variety		
1. American English		
High school	18	79
College	19	76
Reasons:		
<i>It's the standard/elite language in the country (17)</i>		
<i>It's a respected and universal language in the world (4)</i>		
<i>It's the medium of learning in our educational system (16)</i>		
2. British English		
High school	5	21
College	2	8
Reasons:		
<i>It's good to learn other varieties like British English (3)</i>		

It's nice to listen to British accent (1)

B. Non-native variety		
Philippine English		
High school	-	-
College	4	16
Reasons:		
<i>It gives us a sense of national identity. (3)</i>		
<i>It's an appreciation of our local culture (1)</i>		
TOTAL		
High school	23	100
College	25	100

The results shown in Table 1 uncover one main significant point - that teachers of English in secondary and tertiary levels both favor the American English as pedagogical model in setting standards for second language teaching and learning. This finding echoes previous studies that in the context of language teaching, English as an additional language (EAL) usually is based on the standards of either British English or American English. English as an international language (EIL) is EAL with emphasis on learning different major dialect forms; in particular, it aims to equip students with the linguistic tools to communicate internationally. Nun (1997) considers different types of competence in relation to the teaching of English as an International Language, arguing that linguistic competence

has yet to be adequately addressed in recent considerations of EIL.

However, the finding also reveals that Non-native English speakers, like Filipinos, do not fear using the language differently from the way native English speakers do. After all, English has a Philippine variety, which should be acceptable since there is more than one way to use the language which is always tied up to one's culture and, of course, his identity.

Question 2. Which type of communication should non-native English varieties be mainly used for?

Table 2 shows that non-native variety should be used mainly for intranational communication.

Table 2. Main use of non-native English varieties

Usefulness	f	%
International communication		
High school	9	39
College	5	20
Intranational communication		
High school	14	61
College	17	80
TOTAL		
High school	10	100
College	10	100

The results in Table 2 suggest that most teachers find non-native varieties mainly for intranational communication. This finding supports Quirk's (1998) study that it is only when a country's interest in English is merely for *intranational* communication that a local variety of English is feasible.

Question 3. Should the same benchmarks (English Proficiency) be used for first and second language learners?

Table 3 shows that the respondents believed that the same benchmarks should be used for first and second language learners.

Table 3. Benchmarks (English Proficiency) used for 1st and 2nd language learners

Same Benchmarks		f	%
Yes			
High school		21	91
College	22		88
No			
High school		2	9
College	3		12
TOTAL			
High school		10	100
College	10		100

5. Discussion

The fact that English has remained steadfastly as the official language in spite of the fact that the Philippines is no longer under American rule, has supported the finding that teachers of English in secondary and tertiary levels prefer the American model to other language varieties. In the study by Tupas (2003), it is pointed out that language stalwarts like Sibayan and Gonzalez, recognize the continuing status of English in the Philippines and detail its use as follows: (1) English as a social stratifier; (2) despite the bilingual education in Filipino and English, all rewards are accrued due to English; (3) the Filipino elite continue to hold on to their power partly through English; (4) it is from the English-competent economic and political elite that the leaders of the country are most likely to emerge.

Today, there is no denying the necessity of learning how to speak and write in the English language, especially because it has become the language of globalization. The Philippine government itself has made

pronouncements with regard to the importance of being good speakers of English in order for the Filipinos to be globally competitive. This is done by the continuous use of English as the medium of instruction in schools and by making it as the preferred language of communication.

At some point, English seems to be a "more" official language than Filipino as the latter is still in the process of establishing its status after having been established just recently to include some words from major regional dialects all over the country. What is clear though is that English is a language that continuously enjoys a more privileged status in the Philippines.

English in the Philippines shares patterns of development and constriction with English in Malaysia. From a situation similar to that of Singapore, where premium is placed on learning English and using it extensively, the Philippines has now moved on to a stage at which standard English is used only in such domains as academic discourse and international relations.

6. Implications

The unprecedented spread of the English language in the millennium has yielded significant understanding of the linguistic processes and products of language contact and language change. There is more awareness today about how language use interacts with global economic, demographic, and cultural trends.

The pedagogical concerns in world Englishes provide, as argued by Kachru & Nelson (1996), an insightful understanding of the relationships between linguistic and language-teaching theory, methodology, and applications.

Second language curriculum, testing procedures, and resource materials must be constructed after careful study of variation, and the pragmatics of variation, for effective second language pedagogy (McKay & Hornberger, 1996; Lowenberg, 1992; Davidson, 1993).

English may supplement or co-exist with languages by allowing strangers to communicate across linguistic boundaries. It may become one tool that opens windows to the world, unlocks doors to opportunities, and expands our minds to new ideas.

It would be valuable to have an international language with which all could be at ease, containing terms for the peculiar concepts of varying cultures and practices.

7. Conclusion

There is yet no question of a Philippine variety since the spread of English on a

national scale in the Philippines has only just taken off. English is more widely used now in the Philippines for a wider range of purposes and that there seems to be an implicit shared understanding that the standard variety of English is the norm.

Philippine English has developed a vigorous literature. It is in the process of standardization, with a variety no longer marked by regional accents associated with regional languages, but a converging variety that originates in Manila. This form is propagated largely through the school system, the mass media, and tourism. Because of code-switching, it seems unlikely that a colloquial variety of English alone will develop. The future is open, without clear trends. On the one hand, code-switching may end up in code-mixing, resulting in a local creole. On the other hand, the need for international relations, the dominance of the print media, and the continued use of English in education may exercise a standardizing role, making it possible for the Philippine variety to be mutually intelligible with other varieties of English. It is also possible that the present system of bilingual education will be converted into a purely monolingual Filipino scheme in which English is taught as a foreign language and becomes available only to the elite.

Teachers of English should work with the variety that best reflects their own language use, provided that this will be understood by most other English speakers in the world.

References

- Crystal, D. (1988). *The English language*. London: Penguin.
- The Economist*. (1996). London: Profile Books.
- Greenbaum, S. (1992). Whose English? In C. Ricks and L. Michaels (Eds.), *The state of the language* (pp. 15–23). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11–30). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of non-native Englishes* Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1992). World Englishes: approaches, issues and resources. *Language Teaching*, 25(1), 1–14
- Kachru, B. B. (1997). English as an Asian language. In M.L.S. Bautista (Ed.), *English is an Asian language: The Philippine context* (pp. 1–23). Sydney: Macquarie Library Pty.
- Malik, S. A. (1993). *Primary stage English*. Lahore: Tario Brothers.
- McKay, S. L. (2003). Toward an appropriate EIL pedagogy: Re-examining common ELT assumptions. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(2), 1–22.
- Nun, R. (2001). World English and World Englishes: Trends, tensions, varieties, and standards. *Language Teaching*, 34(1).
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Quirk, R. (1988). The question of standards in the international use of English. In P. Lowenberg (Ed.), *Language spread and language policy: Issues, implications and case studies (GURT 1987)* (pp. 229–241). Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Tupas, T. R. F. (2003). History, language planners and strategies of forgetting. *Language problems and language planning*, 27(1), 1–25.