World Englishes Orientation: Changing Landscapes of English Learning and Teaching

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Abstract

Background: *Current English landscapes in different parts of the world in both school and non-school contexts have clearly demonstrated diverse profiles and unique characteristics of English users. In terms of English education, it is apparent that the field has been moving from the direction of achieving correctness of language use to developing higher language awareness.*

Objective: *In the world where cultures and identities have become more plural and the roads are heading in more diversified directions, this paper essentially addresses a principle of a World Englishes or a variety of English theory with an aim to cast light on a theoretical ground of the concept that increasingly affects language ideology and teaching pedagogy in the world context.*

Result: *The paper begins with a description, showing how the World Englishes notion has gained its name and developed and then describes its essence and the way the concept is recognized. Basically, the paper addresses the notion of World Englishes by building on the following episodes of: 1) historical background; 2) the old paradigm: Western-centered views; 3) SLA fallacy and the spread of English; and 4) a new paradigm: leaving the fixity paradigm.*

Discussion and conclusion: *In the concluding section, the paper highlights major premises, the significance and the pedagogical ramification of the World Englishes concept to English education and classroom settings that suits learners' needs and the world current trend. It states that the World Englishes approach seeks to fruitfully pave a new philosophical direction, value, and attitude toward language use.*

Keywords: World Englishes, English learning and teaching, English education, Global English.

Introduction

Regarding today's phenomenon of English education, we are moving from the direction of achieving correctness of language use to developing higher language awareness (Canagarajah, 2006b). Likewise, English, the language "on which the sun never sets" (Crystal, 2004a, p. 10), has spread so perva-

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sively that it appears to be fragmenting and breaking up into regional varieties (Schneider, 2007). The language has been planted and transplanted several times (Pakir, 1997). Simply put, English diversifies into varieties of different kinds. Local English is gradually established and is appropriately used by the particular local communities. In the world where cultures and identities have become more plural and the roads are heading in more diversified directions, it thus makes much sense to promote a paradigm shift from mainstream English to World Englishes. Why do we need to deconstruct Standard English? Responding to this question, Rushdie (1982), who was concerned with the enforcement of the local visibilities, contended: "the (English) language needs to be decolonized, to be made in other images, if those of us who use it from positions outside Anglo-Saxon cultures are to be more than 'Uncle Toms'" (p. 8).

In short, the paper then will address the notion of World Englishes by building on the following episodes of 1) historical background; 2) the old paradigm: Western-centered views; 3) SLA fallacy and the spread of English; and 4) a new paradigm: leaving the fixity paradigm.

Historical Background

Multiple Englishes: Multiple Identities

The emergence of the theoretical concept of World Englishes and its application had not gained currency in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics until the mid 1980s (Bolton, 2006; Bolton & Kachru, 2006). The key scholars who were engaged in research and theory building in this concept are Braj Kachru, Larry Smith and Peter Strevens. In the following decades, World Englishes flourished. Historical reviews and research on the World Englishes paradigm were widely informed and reinforced. These include B.B Kachru (1996, 1997a, 1997b), B.B Kachru, Y. Kachru and Nelson (2006), Jenkins (2006), Melchers & Shaw (2003), Bhatt (2001b), Bolton (2004), and Bolton & Kachru (2006). The last two decades have witnessed publication of numerous articles in international academic journals, namely *English Today; English World-Wide,* and *World Englishes.*

The term World Englishes originated in the two conferences on English as a world language that took place in 1978 at the East-West Center in Hawaii and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Braj Kachru and Larry Smith took a leadership role in both conferences (Bolton, 2006). Kachru and Smith (1985) spelled out the meaning of the term:

> *"Englishes" symbolizes the functional and formal variation in the language, and its international acculturation, for example, in West Africa, in Southern Africa, in East Africa … The language now belongs to those who use it as their first language, and to those who use it as an additional language, whether in its standard form or in its localized forms. The recognition of this functional diversity is so important that we have indicated it in the subtitle of World Englishes. (p. 210)*

Embedded in the plural form, the term World Englishes communicates a deep meaning of its theoretical and functional concept and research areas. The earlier conceptualization of World Englishes refers to the recognition

of a unique linguistic phenomenon and particularly to the changing landscape of the post 1940s (B.B Kachru, 1997b). However, in its more contemporary situation, "a pluralist vision of Englishes" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 18) carries a postmodern discourse of localization, contextualization, and democratization of language use.

Historically, as the English language has been transformed, through both linguistic imperialism[2] (Phillipson, 1988, 1992) and linguistic pragmatism[3] (Brutt-Griffler, 1998), to non-English sociocultural settings, English has shown linguistic diversification (Bhatt, 2001a, 2001b). English, thus, has been transformed into pluricentric or Englishes. To put it into perspective, English is one medium but constitutes multifaceted cultures, reflects manifold voices, and represents a multiplicity of canons (Pakir, 2001). The "-es", according to Canagarajah (2002b), allows voices of English communities in periphery to be heard. Clearly, the term World Englishes, which reflects a hidden philosophical intent, welcomes multiple interpretations. On one hand, English is strictly used in one particular genre/context such as journalism and academic writing. On the other hand, its rule is more flexible in other genres for example in creative writing and language arts. The discourse of English in worldwide contexts represents linguistic, cultural, and ideological diversity (Bhatt, 2001b). This pluralist framework celebrates global variations in vocabulary, grammar, phonology and pragmatics of English around the world (Melchers & Shaw, 2003). It basically encourages global English users to opt for their own tongues, tastes, and styles. Under a World Englishes lens, language users are contextually allowed more space to play with the language.

Kachru (1988) defined the characteristics of the World Englishes paradigm into three key elements. First, the English language belongs to whoever uses it. Second, the localized innovations have pragmatic-based ownership. Third, there is a repertoire of models for English. In this sense, the 'Englishes' language has carried repertoires of sociocultural identities. According to Kachru's (2006a), these multicultural identities involve linguistic interactions of three types of participants: native speakers and native speakers; native speakers and nonnative speakers; and, nonnative speakers and nonnative speakers. Kachru further argued that English used in a global context reflects two faces. One represents Westernness; the other reflects local identities.

Now there are several labels used interchangeably with the term World Englishes. These include global English (es), international English (es), new English (es), varieties of English, English as an international language, English as a global language, and so on. These terms have been used almost interchangeably, with minimal varying connotations (Bolton, 2005; Schneider, 2003). In this paper, the term

[2] The dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47).

[3] The other term is the econocultural model proposed by Randolp Quirk. This model holds belief that English has been developed as the language of the world market or the commercial lingua franca (Bhatt, 2001a).

is associated with the Kachruvian studies which have been characterized by the importance of inclusivity and pluricentricity in approaches to language use worldwide (Bolton, 2004). This approach offers a balance between the pragmatic recognition of the proliferation of English and the critical examination of native speaker ideologies. The underpinning endorses a pluricentric approach to World Englishes by focusing on both the sociolinguistic realities and bilingual creativity of ESL and EFL contexts. Moreover, the approach emphasizes both the description of national and regional varieties and other related topics, for instance, language contact, creative writing, critical applied linguistics, and discourse analysis. In essence, the term recognizes the importance of hybridization (Pennycook, 2006). It highlights the freedom that users have in designing their own Englishes without being restricted by Standard English.

The Old Paradigm: Western-centered Views

The following dialogues portray how self-marginalized views and native-like English are constructed and developed.

Dialogue 1

Aya: What do you think about a Japanese accent?

Tamako: *I hate it. It's not cool. It's disappointing.*

Yuki: It's hard to get rid of, unless you have a foreign teacher.

Aya: But you'd rather not have it?

Yuki: Of course I'd rather not have it!

Aya: Then, how about English with a German accent?

Yuki: That's cool. *It's a lot better than Japanese* (accent). (Matsuda, 2003, p. 492 my emphasis)

Dialogue 2

Shinji: In the train, bad English…in English that is obviously spoken by a Japanese … they say something like "Next stop is …" (with Japanese accent)—I don't know, but it's like, "Is this really Ok?"

Aya: what do you think about that "English that is obviously spoken by a Japanese"?

Shinji: *I don't want to speak like that.* (Matsuda, 2003, p. 493 my emphasis)

Attempting to further understand the ownership of English and to argue for the importance of empowering English as an international language, Matsuda (2003) reported that although participant students perceived English as an international language in the sense that it is being used internationally, they nonetheless doubted whether it belonged internationally. In other words, students perceived the Japanese variety of English as either Japanese or incorrect or weak forms of English that deviated from the 'real' English of native speakers. From their perspective the Japanese accent in particular is positioned negatively as an incorrect form of English. Hence, this study points out that meta-instruction for English learners and teachers is necessary in order to endorse a pluralistic view of English and to encourage students' roles and responsibilities as World Englishes users. Other related literature (Matsuda, 2002) found striking results that the participating students strongly held Western-

centered views of the world. Both studies not only reflected the dominant role of Standard English but also captured the absence of a critical orientation in learning English in Japanese high school contexts.

SLA Fallacy and the Spread of English

Intellectual imperialism

For a decade, Pennycook and Phillipson have been influential in establishing this agenda by inviting a series of political discussions about World Englishes. Particularly, Phillipson's (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism* and Pennycook's (1994) *The Cultural politics of English as an International Language* have contributed to a milestone debate about the politics of English worldwide. Pennycook (2000a, 2000b) and Tollefson (2000) argue that the global proliferation of English not only has ideological effects on people, but it also has enormous and complex political implications. Specifically, it contributes to "significant social, political, and economic inequalities" (Tollefson, 2000, p. 8). Interestingly enough, these who have raised the inequality issue in the filed to the voiceless are white scholars or the natives of Anglophone nations.

One of those major milestone institutional structures is a second language acquisition (SLA) philosophical construct. For decades, the mainstream SLA perspective has had political consequences on building the intellectual imperialism model (Bhatt, 2001b). The past three decades reflect research which has critically examined theoretical and methodological frameworks based on monolingual ideology. This mainstream construct has exerted critical effects on linguistic unity, homogenization, and centralization of language use through careful and conscious exclusion of language variation. This construct co-exists with the presence of the myth of nativespeakership (Davies, 1991) that has exerted a powerful force to ELT by overshadowing a presence of non-native speakers. These ELT teachers, therefore, have unfortunately been located in a passive position where they cannot voice their expertise from their classroom in local contexts.

Recent critical applied linguistic studies have conceptualized how the dominant standard views of English language grammar and use are reproduced in both native and nonnative milieus. These studies reported that the monolithic lens has mystified existing power relations and socio-economic constructs (Canagarajah, 1999a, 1999b; Lippi-Green, 1997; Pennycook, 2001, 2006; Phillipson, 1992; Ricento, 2000; Tollefson, 1995). Having said that, the monolingual-based ideology has fundamentally portrayed non-native varieties of English as "fossil-ridden examples of interlanguages, as inferior examples of incorrect speech" (Brown, 1993, p. 60). Besides, the stereotypical images of L2 learners under the linguistic homogenization paradigm are those of transplanted learners (Sridhar, 1994), life-long apprentices (Bolton, 2005), handicaps (Davies, 1991), or failed native speakers (Cook, 1999; Kramsch, 1998). These portraits have been widely seated in the ELT community of practice. Non-native English teachers sometimes lack motivation to initiate creating their own teaching but apply materials designed based on Euro-centric production houses without making them fit their local context. This

might be due to the belief that the materials are warranted from the center.

However, in the past two decades, the supremacy of English, interlanguage theory, and myth about native speakers as absolute experts have been questioned and challenged (Tollefson, 2000). For example, Cook (1999, 2002b) and Firth & Wagner (1997) critiqued the native speaker goal of traditional SLA and TESOL. Grounded in four case studies, Brutt-Griffler & Samimy's (2001) study suggested that nativeness constituted a "non-elective socially constructed identity rather than a linguistic category" (p. 100). Particularly, Kachru (1997c) addressed two central issues in relation to native speaker fallacy. First, an assumption that non-native users of English learn English to communicate with Inner Circle or native users of the language is erroneous. In actual fact, many learners will be using the language primarily for intranational purposes and many will be communicating as frequently with individuals from Outer and Expanding circle countries as they will with Inner circle speakers. Second, it is another fallacy to believe that the Inner Circle provides leadership roles. Hence, Kachru pointed out that focusing on functional nativeness would be more useful than focusing on genetic nativeness.

In this wave of suspicion toward mainstream ideology, research has shifted focus to study positive sides of being nonnative speakers. Pennycook (2006), Kramsch (1997), Kramsch & Lam (1999), Cook (1992, 1999, 2002a, 2002b) and Llurda (2004) and have contributed tremendously to the field. Hitherto, even though underlying discourse supporting monolingualism was, as Canagarajah (2006c) described, "alive and kicking" (p. 12), those major literatures have not only generated a healthier approach, but also have posed questions about the earlier constructs of the status and the roles of native speakers in learning and teaching English as a second and foreign language.

New Paradigm: Leaving the Fixity Paradigm

Many Languages Are Absurd

The old paradigm historically allows people to believe that they "were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental" (Said, 1994, p.136). It is therefore not easy for them to break free from the homogeneous mental custody of Western communities. This is because people's belief that multilingualism or linguistic diversity is associated with a number of problems (Bamgbose, 1991; Graddol, 1999) is deeply rooted. To stand against the tide, these people need a certain audacity to talk back to native speakers. In doing so, it is necessary to plant the seed of the view that one language, not many, is absurd. This is mainly because "no one today is purely one thing" (Said, 1994, p. 136). In contrast, in this prescriptive-thinking paradigm, culture has become fixed instead of celebrating the notion of difference (Pennycook, 1998). This tendency to ascribe fixed and often negative characteristics is called by Pennycook as the colonial construction of the Other who happen to be excluded from any dominant category. In response to this phenomenon, Skutnabb-Kangas metaphorically described monolingualism as a curable disease that patients do not know they are suffering from

(Phillipson, 2000). This stereotypical dichotomy construct is the most paradoxical consequence of the old paradigm (Said, 1994). As such, in the context of the changing new world, those old constructs need to be critically examined.

Global landscapes have changed so rapidly that there comes a call for a radical paradigm and professional discourse revisions. Most specifically, in the course of a fundamental shift, it is a critical turn to seriously revisit the fixed-thinking ideology. In this period, metanarratives or grand theories bring doubt in providing "unifying and totalizing explanations for social and intellectual developments" (Canagarajah, 2006c, p. 9). Rather, they lead to new ideological direction which is plural, hybrid, fluid, uncertain, and contested (Benhabib, 2002). In essence, this multicultural philosophical construct devalues unity but values differences (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). It largely operates on the inclusive scale of a network relationship of two binaries: us and them, you and me (Pattanayak, 2000). The principle of We-ness rejects the dichotomy between us and them, between the native expert and non-native consumers (B.B Kachru, 2006a). Interestingly, these signs of sociopolitical changes have emerged amidst a fast-paced shifting reality.

The 21st century has departed from the rigid paradigm that witnesses the political agenda that "if you don't speak English, you're illiterate" (Friedman, 2000, p. 393). Rapidly, the new century has been heading to the looser position which celebrates the notion that "English is not enough" or "Accent is not everything". Despite the growing presence of English in a number of domains worldwide, the status and power of English has shifted and been shared by other world languages. For instance, Warschauer (2000) critically studied the relationship between technologies, especially the Internet, and the spread of English. His study concluded that in this capitalism era the demand of English worldwide is still growing tremendously along with new foreign languages such as Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese. Warchauer (2000) also asserted that the goal of the English language is to be used as a language of additional communication rather than as "a foreign language controlled by the others" (p. 515). Consequently, in approaching this new paradigm, language learners held hostage to a perception of native speakers and target culture (Kramsch, 1995) are set free to embrace their roots—local conventions, dialects, and language beliefs in their communities—into their own Englishes.

State of Mind: Linguistic Healthy

In essence, the World Englishes approach seeks to fruitfully pave a new philosophical direction, value, and attitude toward language use as follows. First, it calls attention to those who think that their English is superior but others are not. Kachru (1991) argued that a variety of Englishes should be considered independent Englishes in their own right rather than being given secondary or inferior status. Second, the World Englishes philosophy seeks understanding, cooperation, and spirit from those who believe in dominant English. Third, this orientation creates a tension between the rigid and loose cannons. It is a wake up call to English teachers to differentiate students' errors from linguistic creativity.

Last but not least, the World Englishes theoretical construct infuses confidences, rights, and voices, encouraging non-native speakers to take pride in their own unique Englishes. The liberal philosophy on English teaching and learning seeds a state of mind into learners by making them proud that their English has the same value as mainstream English. The question has to do with what attitude these learners have when they use English. Are they proud of it, or ashamed of it? How do they see themselves as being identified with English?

Closing Remarks

Regarding the pedagogical ramification of the World Englishes in classroom settings, teachers might find a chance to foster in students the belief that being unable to speak like a native-speaker accent will not be a sign of poor competence (Graddol, 2006). Along similar lines, learners should also view themselves not as speakers of "broken English" but as speakers of a recognized variety of English (Morrow, 2004). In this world of growing inequality, it is hard to deny that a crowd of people choose English to serve their needs as international communicators. Warschauer's (2000) stated that most people employ a local variety of English rather than following the colonial standardized norms to project their identity and values. For example, the Singaporean who was proud of his roots illustrated how much *Singlish* enriched his identity:

> *When one is abroad, in a bus or train or an aeroplane and when one overhears someone speaking, one can immediately say that this is someone from Malaysia or Singapore. And I should hope that when I'm speaking abroad my countrymen will have no problem recognizing that I am a Singaporean.* (Tongue, 1974, p. iv)

The voice from the Singapore writer might represent other voices of English learners in different contexts around the globe.

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