English in the Expanding Circle: the Differences Do Make a Difference

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Abstract Generalizations can be made about the role and status of English in sociocultural contexts, in which this language has long been considered the sole property of native speakers, has been taught English as a foreign language, has relied on external linguistic norms, and privileged the canons of American and British literature. In sociolinguistic literature these contexts are referred to as the expanding circle of world Englishes. However, a closer look at individual contexts — whether defined along national (e.g., English in Brazil) or regional lines (English in Europe) — shows that not only are these broad generalizations often inaccurate characterizations of the expanding circle as a whole, but also that each context — although indeed similar in some respects to one another — has characteristics that distinguish it from another. Differences can be seen, for example, with respect to the history of contact with English speakers, the status of English vis-à-vis local languages, or the role of English in various domains of use. In many respects, the differences are a consequence of changes introduced by processes of globalization. This paper following overviews differences between and among three expanding circle contexts (Brazil, China, and Germany) and outlines the significance of their distinctiveness for implications of the world Englishes paradigm for teaching not only the English language but for other areas of English studies as well.
Key words world Englishes; English as a foreign language; pedagogy

It is important at the outset of this exploration of key issues relating to the world contexts in which the use, learning, and development of new varieties of English are expanding to make clear what the "differences" and "difference" in my subtitle "The Differences Do Make a Difference" refer to. There are two. One is in the context of a comparison between countries a contact with and use of English. The other refers to differences between native speaker and non-native speaker Englishes. That is, how do countries differ with respect to various characteristics of the presence of English and what is salient about the Englishes of two groups of users?

The theoretical model informing this examination is known as "world Englishes" developed by Braj Kachru,[1] a key principle of which is according those varieties of English that have developed/are developing since the colonial period and in the course of globalization outside of North America, the United Kingdom, Australia,

Canada, and New Zealand a status equal to these native varieties. The relationship of the countries to this development is depicted by a set of three concentric circles (see figure 1). The long established Englishes of these locales are called "inner circle Englishes" due, in part, to the role their particular English plays as a national variety and as norm and model providers for learners and users. The developed and developing Englishes are of two types: "outer circle" Englishes are represented by, for example, the Englishes of South Asia and parts of Africa which acquired English through processes of colonization, and "expanding circle" Englishes represented by, for example, the varieties of English found in East Asia, Europe, and South America, regions which acquired the language less by processes of colonization and more so through other means, for example, globalization, military occupation, or international trade. It is in such countries that the number of those using the language and the number of purposes it serves are growing; thus, the choice of "expanding" as a label. This conceptualization of the world's Englishes in terms of concentric circles articulates salient differences between and among three broad contexts of English language learning and use. But it does more than that. It also differentiates the historical context of the spread of English to and within each circle, the functional distribution of English in various contexts, and the status of English for each. In this regard, the model is helpful in understanding how English has come to be as it is linguistically, culturally, and socially, and why we can no longer (if we ever could have in any meaningful way) speak of a unitary English language, of THE English language. Thus, from the world Englishes perspective, the Englishes of the world share equal standing (linguistically, if not attitudinally). That is, Indian English is no more an illegitimate offspring of British English (or more precisely, English English) than is American English.

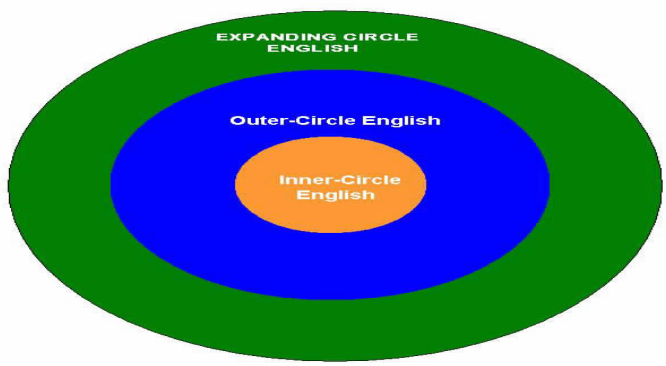

Figure 1. Kachru's Concentric Circles Model of World Englishes
Source: Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 54. 1997.

1. The Expanding Circle and Its Englishes

The Englishes of the expanding circle have only fairly recently been recognized as worthy of study in their own right.[2] Outer circle Englishes at one time were neglected

as well, but the past 30 years or so have seen a marked increase in both an examination of their stable linguistic properties and their sociolinguistic realities as well as in their recognition as stand-alone varieties.[3] Generally the distinctiveness of the outer circle varieties is identified by the same formula used to label inner circle varieties (e.g., Australian English), with the result that the English of Nigeria is referred to as Nigerian English, the English of India as Indian English, and so forth. Expanding circle Englishes follow the same formula. Thus German English or Chinese English generally is used to describe instances of phonological, morphological, syntactic, or lexical transference from a user's native language. The use of the labels recognizes that these Englishes represent a unique world view and set of values—a distinct identity—that are expressed in a unique form of English.

Table 1 Sociolinguistic features of English in Brazil, China, and Germany

Feature /*Country*	Brazil (South America)	China (East Asia)	Germany (Western Europe)
Means of spread	Globalization Neo-imperialism	Globalization	Globalization Military occupation
History of contact with English speakers	19th century Mid-20th century to present	18th century Mid to late 20th century to present	19th century Mid-20th century to present
Norms guiding use	Inner Circle dependent Norm developing	Inner Circle dependent Norm developing(?)	Inner Circle dependent Norm developing
Teaching tradition	English as a foreign language (EFL) English as an inter-national language (EIL)	English as a foreign language (EFL) English as an inter-national language (EIL)	English as a foreign language (EFL) English as an inter-national language (EIL)
Contexts of use	International	International Regional	International Regional
Acknowledged varieties	Educated variety	Educated variety Pidgin variety	Educated variety
Functional range	Interpersonal Innovative	Interpersonal Innovative (literary and linguistic)	Interpersonal Innovative
Presence in society	Moderate	Limited	Extensive

Table 1 provides a set of sociolinguistic features for three expanding circle countries. These features highlight differences in the context of English in each location, differences that contribute to the individual identities of the Englishes. This is not to suggest that expanding circle contexts have no shared characteristics; they do, and these include a tradition of teaching English for interaction with native speakers, choosing inner circle Englishes as classroom models, using English in a limited range of functions, and a history with the language that is other than colonial.

Elaboration upon each of these features is available in a growing body of literature, [4] and I cannot claim that this small table, which highlights selected features of particular relevance to the present discussion, does justice to the complex realities of English in these countries, whether past or present. Nevertheless, in spite of these shortcomings, the features described can illustrate key differences and suggest implications for pedagogy.

2. The Sociolinguistics of English in Brazil and Germany

In Brazil, English has spread primarily by means of interaction with other speakers of English, initially inner circle speakers for business and trade and with written texts in science and technology. It does not share a colonial past with English as it has with Portuguese. Although the political contexts for contact have not always been positive, an increasingly globalized world has increased not only contact with users of the language but also wide and open access to such English language medium cultural products as pop music, film, television, and the internet. Brazil, however, is surrounded by speakers of Spanish, and thus its opportunities for regional use are more limited. At earlier stages of contact English was taught to prepare learners for interaction with inner circle, primarily British and later American speakers and the cultural orientation was likewise British and American. The processes and practices of globalization have introduced Brazilians to other expanding as well as outer circle users of English and to other varieties. As a result of more users making more use of English in professional situations, a Brazilian English, that used by educated speakers, is gaining ground and thereby acceptance among its users. [5] This is not to say that all instances of English produced by Brazilians would be seen as conforming to an educated standard; such cases might be the innovations found in advertising and marketing, domains in which word play and linguistic creativity are highly valued, exploited and, often, ephemeral.

English functions as means of communication within the Asian region more for Chinese users than it does for Brazilians across South and Central America. Although learning of Chinese is growing among Japanese and Koreans, English plays a large role in regional interactions. China, as distinguished from Brazil and Germany, has its own literary figures who write in English. The Chinese writer Ha Jin, for example, has produced novels and short stories in English with settings and situations unique to the experience of a native Chinese for whom English is not a first language. China is further distinguished from Brazil in its caution toward acceptance of an English that deviates too far from an inner circle model. Great care is given to differentiating various Englishes associated with Chinese users along a cline, or continuum of Englishes.

Chinese Pidgin English, considered at the lower end of the cline, originated in the eighteenth century. The stigma associated with it carries over to the variety next up on the cline: Chinglish (a blend of Chinese and English). While Chinese English is regarded as a descriptively neutral term among most sociolinguists, the variation associated with this variety is no higher in acceptability among some prominent Chinese scholars than is what is called Chinglish. The highest point on the cline is accorded China English. This is the variety of English spoken by Chinese that is based in standard inner circle English, yet is able to express Chinese ways of being and thinking, and thus is acceptable for international communication. [6]

The sociolinguistic features of English in Germany provide yet another profile. As for Brazil and China, globalization plays a significant role in expanding Germans opportunities for contact with English and the need for its learning and use. Yet, Germany's twentieth-century history with English, especially the American variety, marks it from past experiences with English in the other two countries. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, English was part of an elite education. After 1940, contact with the language and speakers increased for other members of society due to the presence of the American military who participated in the local economy and interacted with the general populace. Consequently, American English became a competitor for British English. As globalization of entertainment and media products as well as business and technological innovations advances to a generally receptive German population, Germany's already extensive exposure to English increases. The use of English for official purposes among member state representatives of the European Union makes it of regional importance for expressing German-ness. Acceptance of German English as an acceptable and appropriate label for the English spoken by educated Germans is more common than it was in the mid-20th century[7], when anything but adherence to a native speaker standard was considered "Denglish." [8]

3. Pedagogy and the Englishes of the Expanding Circle

The foregoing profiles of English in three expanding circle countries illustrate features of variation in a particular context's experience with English as a foreign and international language. The only direct reference to pedagogical concerns in table 1 is to the teaching of the language, which traditionally has been as a foreign language, that is, with the goal of interacting with native speakers or appreciating a culture through the reading of original texts. More recently attention has turned to teaching for international communication, yet still to some extent with focus on inner circle Englishes norms for learning and use as the classroom models. But interest in a nationally-identifiable standard variety as a local model is increasing. The description and acceptance of the local varieties is a chief concern for classroom teachers and materials developers as the numbers of learners of all ages increase. The value placed on the learning of English is evident in its role in the schools. In most areas of China English is the only language option in the school curriculum. English is Mandatory from primary through the first two years of college or university. Even those engaging in PhD research find their English proficiency tested and their scores playing a role in their future. China is not alone in promoting early learning of English. Italy, Taiwan,

Mexico, Spain, Turkey, South Korea, Egypt, France, Vietnam, and Bulgaria for example, require it from third grade. [9] Entry into a good university can depend upon good scores on the English part of the entrance exam as in Japan and China, but not in Germany or Hungary.

Each country's pedagogical responses to English relate to the needs—perceived or real —that this language serves for society and of the domains in which it is used. International diplomacy and international relations, business and commerce have an impact on the use of English in the workplace and the media. Developments in research and technology are to a very large extent disseminated through English. Good paying jobs and prestigious careers are associated with knowledge of English. Economic and social advancement on the national as well as personal level are also linked with proficiency in the language; an example of the latter is Hungary in the 1990s, when English was a means of achieving the goal of "catching up with Europe" (Petzold and Berns 113). This push led to a proliferation of language schools and to lucrative side incomes for English teachers as private tutors.

China, as a result of the national fever for English, has teaching positions that cannot yet be filled by Chinese teachers of English. Inner circle imports—and their varieties of English—are in great demand. Nevertheless, there are many teachers in Chinese classrooms who have had no experience living in or travelling to an English speaking country. Their English is the product of the textbooks they learned from, of the media they access, and of the proficiency and communicative competence of their teachers, who like them, were non-native speakers. Compounding the effects of these influences, which may or may not have contributed to outcomes that measure up to the native speaker standard, is the availability of media and materials in English heard or read in various inner circle or outer circle Englishes. Important in discussions of local varieties in any context — China is not alone in this respect — the impact of different varieties, standards, and proficiency levels as well as degrees of competence on the English of teachers and learners cannot be ignored. Those varieties, as a mixture of all these influences, contribute to the distinctiveness of new varieties from inner circle models, which give a variety its Brazilian-ness or Hungarian-ness.

Are these problems serious? Is it the task of language teaching to prevent or eradicate them? An affirmative reply to both questions comes from those who fear that tolerance of local variation in English creates a barrier to intelligibility and thus to effective and successful international communication. This concern is not new. It has long given rise to the dream of a stable form of English for use as a lingua franca in international settings. In the 1930s, C. K. Ogden's Basic English was proposed as the realization of this dream. [10] A simplified form of English, it comprises a selection of 850 English words used in simple structural patterns and reduces spelling and pronunciation irregularities. A more recent attempt to simplify the learning of English for international communication is represented by the English as Lingua Franca Movement (e.g., Jenkins 2006; Seidlhofer, 2001), which seeks to identify core features of English as it is used in non-native speaker—non-native speaker interactions with an eye not only toward description but also to teaching these features to learners of

what they label "English as Lingua Franca", or ELF. [11]

Such attempts are futile of course and will have no long lasting effect on the teaching of English simply because the way English is used—how it sounds, how it makes meaning—are markers of identity and reflections of the dynamics of language contact and change. Such change and variation demands of all users (inner, outer, or expanding circles) that they negotiate their own common forms and norms for their purposes and needs. This constant renewal and creation of meanings and structures among users from diverse language and cultural backgrounds militate against development of a stable, universally used variety restricted to international communication. The failure of attempts to simplify language is also demonstrated by the ways in which literature enriches language through highlighting linguistic creativity and introducing new idioms. Similarly, the translation of literature into Basic also compromises the integrity of the original work. Reading*Gulliver's Travels* in Basic (which has been done) is not quite the same experience as reading Swift's prose; fiction is not simply the telling of a story, but the telling of it in an interesting way.

4. Goals for the Teaching of English

As already discussed, in places like Brazil and Germany the traditional classroom model for learners is shifting from an inner circle English to a local model. Part of this shift is due to the recognition that the use of English is no longer limited to interaction with native speakers. Without British English or American English as the common denominator and native-like control of one of these varieties as the goal, what is it that learners are to achievement?

Goals for the language classroom can be redirected in three closely related ways[12]. The first is toward intelligibility, which replaces native-like pronunciation in spoken English. That is, can the speaker be understood in spite of deviations from a native speaker norm? For instance, can (\kəm-′puw-tər\ be recognized as the device known in American English as a computer (phonologically \kəm-′pyü-tər\)? The second is toward comprehensibility, as opposed to flawless syntax. That is, are the meanings of the words and utterances recognizable? For example, is "How does he look like" recognizable as an alternate formulation of "What does he look like" And third, redirection toward interpretability rather than adoption of cultural norms foreign to the local context. That is, are the meanings behind the words and utterances recognizable? For instance, is the utterance "I see you've put on weight" recognized as a comment on one's well-being and apparent good health [13] and not an inappropriate statement better left unsaid? When the criteria of intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability are met for the context, for the situation, and for the setting, then the differences in Englishes do not have to make a difference. Learners do not have to ashamed of what they do not know, but instead confident of what they can do in English, with English, and to English, to make themselves understood through negotiation of meaning and adjustment to one another's variety. Furthermore, they can see the language they are learning as a new means of expressing themselves, their cultural values and ways of being. Learners can take pride in being a linguistic deviant and know that they are in good company with everyone else in the expanding circle.

Up to this point I have focused on pedagogy with reference to standards and norms and models for the classroom, to the teaching of what is needed to be a competent user of the language. Part of this task, as pointed out, is the choice of a variety of English to teach, but this is clearly not all that is required for communicative competence in the English language milieu of the twenty-first century. Learners also benefit from contact with an array of varieties, inner, outer and expanding circle, not only because it prepares them for interaction with English speakers beyond their immediate environment but also because it provides a means for appreciating their own varieties of English as natural products of social and linguistic processes. Classroom exposure to Englishes from around the world for these purposes (and not for the testing of learners' comprehension of each variety or their ability to produce these varieties), also encourages tolerance of variation as difference (not deficiency) and acceptance of the presence of English as a global phenomenon with local interpretations and not as the sole province of the inner circle speaker.

More broadly, the world Englishes paradigm has implications for the field of English studies beyond the teaching of English as a foreign language. For example, English linguistics can draw upon spoken as well as written texts in an examination of the history of the English language and sociolinguistics courses have in world Englishes material for the study of language attitudes, language change, and language policy. Descriptive linguistics can give attention to the documentation of the features of the various new varieties. Descriptions of the forms and functions of the particular varieties are interesting not only as grammatical reference points, but also as evidence for the recognition of these varieties as systematic and legitimate Englishes.

Insights from a world Englishes perspective are relevant to the exploitation of the innovative function of English in literary (poetry and fiction) as well as linguistic (vocabulary, pronunciation, and the like) terms. Among the three countries examined here, China has an advantage over Brazil and Germany with respect to literary creativity because it has established writers whose fiction provides effective expressions of an author's experience as a Chinese who uses English as the medium.[14] These writers provide learners not only with examples of effective writing, but also with illustrations of how Chinese-ness can be expressed through a language other than their own language or dialect. These new literatures have a place in English literature courses, as well, as examples of literary excellence on all levels.

The question posed at the outset of this study asked, first, how countries of the expanding circle differ with respect to various characteristics of the presence of English and, second, how these differences impact the Englishes associated with the countries of this circle. The foregoing discussion has highlighted salient differences on both aspects and how the distinctions affect a variety of issues. This include how to name the varieties that are developing, whether or not there is a literature available that captures the cultural as well as linguistic dimensions of the variety and its context of use, and the extent to which those inside and outside the particular expanding circle context are ready to accept a variety that expresses the sociolinguistic realities of speakers other than those of the so-called native speakers. The teaching of English and the teaching of world Englishes within the boundaries of these realities will de-

pend upon the resolution of these issues on a case by case basis.

Notes

1. This theory of world Englishes has been developed over 40 decades through the work of the linguist Braj B. Kachru and scholars working within the paradigm associated with his views. Acomprehensive documentation and discussion is available in Braj Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, and Cecil L. Nelson, eds. *Handbook of World Englishes* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).
2. This situation is changing, as documented in an increasing number of publications, including books and numerous articles papers in the journal *World Englishes* of which the following are just a few examples Berns, 2005; Berns and Friedrich, 2003; Hilgendorf, 2007; and Smith, 2005.
3. The primary focus of world Englishes study was the sociolinguistic contexts of English-speaking Africa and South Asia and earlier publications reflected this due to the goal of demonstrating that the standard varieties of outer circle Englishes were not deficient, but as legitimate as any inner circle variety.
4. See note 2 above.
5. Sávio Siqueira, personal communication, 20 November 2010.
6. See Yajun Jiang. "China English: Issues, Studies, and Features." *Asian Englishes*, 5, 1 (2002): 4 – 23.
7. On this point see, for example, Ammon, 2000.
8. Discussions of Denglish continue; see, for example, Zabel, 2001.
9. For insights into teaching in these countries, see McCloskey et al., 2006. ,
10. See C. K. Ogden. *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar*. London: Paul Treber & Co., 1930.
11. For accounts of the start and direction of this movement, see Jenkins, 2006, and Seidlhofer, 2001.
12. This three part model, introduced by Larry Smith, is elaborated upon in Smith and Nelson, 2006.
13. This is the meaning of the utterance as explained by a Zambian friend after greeting me with this statement.
14. Ha Jin is just one example. For a review of Jin's work and a response to its foreignness, see Updike, 2007, and Jin, 2010.

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