

Considerations on the Use of Global Englishes in the EFL Classroom

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昨今、グローバル英語、つまり、世界中で話されている数多くの英語変種に対する関心が高まっている。グローバル英語は、アメリカ合衆国やイギリスなどの国で話されている英語のみでなく、英語が主たる言語ではないものの、政治、ビジネス、学術分野で重要な役割を果たしている地域で話されている英語変種をも含む。こうした、いわゆる「新英語」とは、ナイジェリア、インド、シンガポールなどの国で話される英語変種である。近年では、さらに、リングフランカ(ELF)としての英語、つまり、異なる母語を持ち英語を第一言語としない人々の間で使われる、グローバルな英語変種に関する研究が増えている。本稿はまず、英語変種と ELF に対する高まりつつある関心についてまとめ、こうした英語変種を、伝統的なアングロアメリカモデルに代わるものとして、英語教育の教室で扱われるべきなのかどうかについて議論する。

Key words : Global Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

English Language Teaching (ELT)

The spread of English over the past four hundred years has placed it in the unique position of being the world's first truly global language. As Seidlhofer (2004) has put it, "for the first time in history, a language has reached truly global dimensions" (p. 211). A few years ago, the Indian linguist, Kachru, attempted to classify how English is used around the world according to the three concentric circles paradigm. His Three Circle Model (1992, cited in Heath and Galloway, 2015) has become one of the most common paradigms used to explain and categorize this spread of English. While this model has been criticized in some quarters for its oversimplification, it is nonetheless a useful and approximate guide to the various ways in which English is being used around the world. The model consists of three concentric circles, designated the 'Inner Circle', the 'Outer Circle', and the 'Expanding Circle'. Thus, Inner Circle countries include those where English is the first language and indisputably the dominant language within its borders. These include so-called English as a Native Language (ENL) countries such as the UK, USA, and Australia. The countries in the Outer Circle include those where English plays an important role, often in government, business or academia. Such countries tend to be former British colonies such as India, Ghana, and Nigeria. In many of these countries, English can also act as a useful 'glue', a common language among a population with different linguistic backgrounds. In India, for example, Hindi was first proposed as the sole official language of India after independence from Britain in 1947. Hindi still

plays a vital role in India as a lingua franca and is “the primary tongue of 41% of the population” (CIA, n.d.). However, these speakers are mainly concentrated in the northern and central areas of the country. As a result, the importance of English persists across the entire country as an important conduit in many areas of communications, government, business, and education. Finally, there are the Expanding Circle countries: These are countries where English has not played a particularly significant historical role, but where it is taught in schools and used as a common language with people from other countries. Japan, China, and Russia would be representative examples of such Expanding Circle countries. It is now believed by many linguists that the greatest growth area of English communication around the world is between people from such countries. In other words, it appears to be the case that a growing proportion of interactions in the English language does not involve native speakers of the language, and this phenomenon has prompted many scholars and teachers to wonder what effect this could have on the teaching and testing of English, particularly in those countries belonging to the so-called Expanding Circle.

Until now, the gold standard of English in EFL / ESL classrooms around the world has been either standard American English or standard British English. Curricula and examinations have predominantly used these two varieties for teaching and examining the proficiency of students in the English language. However, as English has moved further away from its traditional centers, what does this mean in regard to how we view the language? Is it still seen as predominantly the preserve of the traditional native-speaker (Inner Circle) countries, or should we be moving away from this mindset? As American economic dominance in the world retreats in relative terms over the coming decades, it may be the case that local varieties of English will take on greater importance, and we are already seeing this in the rising interest in global Englishes. The plural form of this word - ‘Englishes’ - has only come into common usage in recent decades, as people are increasingly coming to appreciate that there are other, legitimate varieties of English that may better reflect the reality on the ground. Seidlhofer (2004) states that “[English] is being shaped, in its international uses, at least as much by its non-native speakers as its native speakers” (p. 211). As a result, a blind conformity to traditional varieties of English is dwindling and we are now seeing a growing appreciation of lesser-known but more appropriate Englishes for the learner.

It is true to say that the English language is currently in a state of flux, and its future direction uncertain. It seems hardly likely that the global role of the English language in any of its forms will be usurped any time soon, but just what form of English people will be learning and speaking around the world in years to come is open to much conjecture. What seems certain though is that English will be used more and more by non-native speakers in situations that often do not include participants from Inner Circle countries. This could therefore call into question whether it is still necessary, or even desirable, to adhere too closely to Inner Circle varieties of English in the classroom. In recent years there has been growing academic interest in the use of English as a

Lingua Franca (ELF); that is, a form of English that is used by those who use English as a second, perhaps third, language. With regards to this, Seidlhofer (2009) states that English has become a “lingua franca that is the main means of wider communication for conducting transactions and interactions outside people’s primary social spaces and speech communities” (p. 238). There are certain calls for English language teaching to better reflect the current situation of English around the world and adopt a more practical pedagogical approach. In recent years there has been a growing body of literature calling for a greater role for ELF in both the teaching and use of English particularly both within and between Expanding Circle countries. This has generated no little controversy particularly in terms of what form such a role would take. Indeed, Seidlhofer (2009) talks about the difficulty for some in “accepting a language that is not anybody’s native tongue as a legitimate object of investigation and descriptive research” (p. 237). In the rest of this paper I will seek to look into these issues with a particular focus on the pedagogical implications of ELF on the teaching of English. It will give a brief definition of what we mean by English as a Lingua Franca and discuss the present arguments both for and against its promotion in the classroom. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion on what should be the best way forward to teaching English in Expanding Circle countries such as Japan. With the existence of alternative varieties of English now a reality around the world, should this be addressed in EFL classrooms?

First of all, it will be useful to give a short introduction to the modern concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Samarin (quoted in Murray) defines a lingua franca as “any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language” (2012). As Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey point out, although English has long acted as a lingua franca in certain areas of Asia and Africa, the modern use of the phrase can be traced to the 1980s (2011). However, it has only been since the turn of this century that the concept has attracted more and more attention and spawned a growing body of research and literature. What appears to differentiate modern ELF in much of the literature from the use of English as a lingua franca in the days of the British Empire, is that, in the words of Cogo, “English has developed into local indigenized varieties, which the WE [World Englishes] literature has described as Indian English, Nigerian English and so on (p. 97, 2011). These varieties are not considered ELF, but ‘New Englishes’ in their own right. In other words, two Indian businesspeople communicating with one another in English would probably not be using what linguists consider ELF, but Indian English, an indigenized variety with its own norms of phonology, grammar, lexis, and pragmatics. Examples of grammatical differences would be the use of the present tense instead of the present perfect (I am here since two o’clock) and the more frequent use of the progressive tense with stative verbs (Are you wanting anything?) (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). This is quite different to the concept of ELF which is linked more and more (but not exclusively) to Expanding Circle countries and thus seems to be interpreted as those interactions which take place between bona fide non-native speakers of English. It is admittedly a messy distinction as it can imply that people interacting in English in

Outer Circle countries are using it as a native language and this is not necessarily the case; many of those interlocutors would be using English as an L2 as well. Seidlhofer (2004) draws a distinction between the aforementioned form of ELF and that which actually exists in the real world. Hence, “ELF interaction often also includes interlocutors from the Inner and Outer Circles” (Seidlhofer, p. 211, 2004) and thus any definition of ELF cannot rest simply on geography alone. It is also difficult to envisage it as a ‘variety’ of English in the sense that Indian English or Nigerian English are indigenized varieties. Indeed, the idea of treating ELF as a variety has drawn skepticism from some quarters. Park and Wee point out that “some researchers question the existence of ELF as a variety on the grounds that there are too many different specific situations involved in ELF interaction” (2011, p. 363 - 364). In other words, the sheer range of cultural backgrounds and situations would render most interactions as unique and highly difficult to codify in any meaningful way. Maley (as quoted in Park and Lee) goes on to claim that the recognition of ELF “overlooks the fact that a new variety needs a base in a speech community” (2011, p.364). Clearly this is not the case with ELF whose practitioners originate from countries all over the globe with very different first languages. With the acknowledgement that the first language will almost definitely play a role in influencing certain aspects of the second language, it is difficult to see how there can be any talk of standardization.

However, Jenkins addresses this issue head-on by claiming that “accommodation (flexibility in the use of language between interlocutors) is so highly valued in ELF research” (p. 161, 2006), and acknowledges that use of ELF does not preclude the use of local varieties of English when it is appropriate. Thus, this can include English speakers from any of Kachru’s circles (Jenkins, 2011). Rather, she claims that ELF can be thought of as the usage of English without any clear geographical roots. Some linguists, such as Jenkins, have attempted to define certain ground rules that can inform English language teaching with regards to ELF. Her *Lingua Franca Core (LFC)*, for example, focuses on the core areas of phonology that “are necessary for intelligibility, and so need to be taught, and non-essential (non-core) items which do not” (MacKenzie, 2014, p. 124). In other words, there are certain phonological practices that do not seem to cause such problems with mutual intelligibility. Such areas include the labiodental fricative voiced and unvoiced sounds in ‘thanks’ and ‘this’ which can vary even among inner circle varieties of the language. The lesson being that as long as mutual intelligibility is maintained, then there does not need to be a slavish obedience to standard British / American phonology. Jenkins (2012) also adds that ELF is characterized by non-nativelike forms which are often dealt with in SLA and ELT literature as “‘interlanguage’ errors if classroom learning is still in progress, and ‘fossilized’ errors if it has ended” (2012, p. 488). Seidlhofer has further added empirical weight to the concept of ELF by the project known as *VOICE* (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English accessible from: www.univie.ac.at/voice). Through this corpus, Seidlhofer has identified certain similarities that run through ELF lexicogrammar. Such similarities include the non-use of the third-person present

tense inflection as in “She play tennis”; the omission of articles; the pluralization of uncountable nouns such as informations and staffs; reliance on certain verbs such as do, have, and make that carry a lot of semantic weight. Such variations in English are regarded in Japanese classrooms as deviations from the standard; in other words, mistakes. Lesson plans and tests are predicated on removing such aberrations in order to promote a more ‘correct’ Inner Circle standard of the language. As Kubota points out, in the case of Japan, an expanding circle country, the clear majority (93%) of Assistant Language Teachers employed in the government’s JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) program are from Inner Circle countries, 60% of them from the US alone. This fact is also reflected in the production of teaching materials which have a high percentage of content based on the culture and society of Inner Circle countries (2018). Thus, from the outset, students in Japan are exposed to almost unattainable native-speaker varieties of English and rigorously tested on their accuracy in producing them. However, if certain different forms are seen to be present in ELF settings, and intelligibility is not compromised, then perhaps the attention of teachers and test-makers should be focused elsewhere. Seidlhofer makes the point that “the ‘E’ in English as a Native Language is bound to be something very different from the ‘E’ in English as a Lingua Franca, and must be acknowledged as such” (2001, p. 138). Furthermore, Kaur adds, “regardless of how ELF is used or what forms it takes, of fundamental importance is that its speakers achieve mutual understanding” (p. 193, 2010). This is not to suggest that input should be fundamentally different, rather that output should be less rigorously held to the standards provided by native-speaker Englishes.

Indeed, there has been criticism of the current trend toward recognizing ELF as a codifiable, teachable variety of English. Criticisms tend to rest on the argument that proponents of ELF are indulging in essentialism. In the words of Sung, there exists “the tendency for ELF researchers to essentialize and exaggerate the differences between ELF and English as a native language (ENL), thereby creating a false dichotomy between them” (2013, p. 350). This essentialist argument that we are dealing with monolithic varieties as opposed to two highly variable camps would seem to oversimplify the case if we are regarding this as a basic division between varieties of language. As Sewell points out, “this has the effect of exaggerating such differences and ignores the great heterogeneity that exists within both ELF and native-speaker language use” (p. 4, 2012). The fact that most English curricula in the world are predicated on largely imaginary monolithic forms of British or American English at the expense of other local dialects, let alone native or indigenized English varieties, emphasizes just how simplistic and arbitrary such boundaries are. The argument that non-native English is more intelligible than its native varieties excludes the fact that, according to Sewell, many non-native speakers “use ‘native’ English pronunciation features, such as weak forms” (p. 4, 2012) that would seemingly cause a problem to mutual intelligibility anyway. So much for the argument that ELF offers a more palatable version of that spoken by the native speaking community.

There is no doubt that ownership of English can no longer be the preserve of those growing up in a traditional Inner Circle country. English has spread its wings and been tweaked by other cultures and languages for the past four centuries; this is a fact that cannot be ignored. However, to dismiss Inner Circle Englishes as *passé*, artefacts of Empire, is to ignore their political and economic clout. Sowden (2012) argues that offering an ELF curriculum would create schools with a *de facto* two-tiered program: those where more affluent students would opt for the native variety, and the less well-off or less well-connected who would settle for the non-native ELF variety (2012). Sowden argues that the promotion of an alternative to the current status quo would simply breed divisiveness that would not just end with a dichotomy of curricula. He predicts that such a separation wouldn't be limited to students, but teachers too, where realistically the more 'able' native-like teachers would teach the ENL classes, and the latter would teach the ELF variety (2012). Thus, he goes on to opine, the supposedly meritocratic motivations of teaching an ELF might well end up "exacerbating rather than diminishing existing inequalities by limiting the scope of the majority and confirming the privileges of the policymakers" (p. 94, 2012). Further to the criticism of ELF as a concept, let alone a workable variety to teach and learn, Swan espouses the notion that "many of the World's English learners merely seek an effective working knowledge of the language, without wanting or needing a high level of accuracy" (p. 513, 2017). To learners such as these, the availability of an ELF would appear to be superfluous. As long as certain grammatical or lexical differences from the standard Englishes were minimized, then the outcome would seem to be irrelevant. As Swan states, the English spoken out of the classroom has always deviated from that taught within it, and this has always been the case (2017). While Swan laments the fact that there has been too much of a focus around the world on grammatical accuracy, this is no argument for a 'reduced' form such as ELF (2012). Indeed, for all but the most competent learners, such superficial differences in spoken English would be largely unnoticeable and unteachable. They seem to arise organically either from a lack of awareness, or by influence from the speaker's L1. Either way, it would seem to be largely irrelevant to the overall purpose of mutual intelligibility.

According to Jenkins, one of the main causes of problems in communications that Seidlhofer's research identified was when "one speaker uses a native speaker expression such as an idiom, phrasal verb, or metaphor, that the interlocutor does not know (2006, p. 170). As it is, according to Pietikainen, breakdowns in ELF conversations are not common and this despite the range of first languages the interlocutors possess. In her research on couples using ELF, she found that misunderstandings were not such an issue and instead they "pre-empt misunderstandings by resorting to a myriad of explicit strategies" (2016, p. 21). These couples all resided in the European Union, but their first languages such as Mandarin and Norwegian, Finnish and Dutch, and Finnish and Nyanja were quite varied. Through recording and transcribing conversations between these couples she found that misunderstandings occurred at a mean rate of 1.9 per hour. Most of these, according to Pietikainen arose as a result of "the general vagueness of the speaker's utterances"

(p. 13, 2016). Kaur (2010) reports on the conversation analysis of 15 hours of dialogues between non-native speakers and also finds that miscommunications are extremely rare. Kaur used non-native English speakers with varied first languages “involving 22 participants of 13 different first language and cultural backgrounds” (Kaur, 2010, p. 195). Through communication strategies such as repetition, paraphrase, clarification, and confirmation of understanding, Kaur finds that while misunderstandings do occur, complete breakdowns in communication are a rare event. In fact, Varonis and Gass (in Kaur, 2010) state that although such techniques are also employed by native speakers to resolve similar problems, they are much more frequently used by non-native speakers in ELF situations. Pre-emptive strategies employed by the speakers, in addition to the aforementioned, included echoing, self-repair, code-switching, and extralinguistic means. According to Pietikainen, ‘by far the most common pre-emptive strategy the ELF couples deployed was direct clarification questions such as ‘what’, ‘who’, and ‘which one’ (2016). Pietikainen admits that the closeness of the couples used in this study may have had an impact on the positive outcome of the results as far as mutual intelligibility is concerned. After all, the stakes are not as high as they would be in more formal settings such as in business or academia where ‘face’ would be more of an issue. For this reason, we cannot deny the idea that attention to such strategies should be focused on as part of any English curriculum. Indeed, if such strategies are seen to work in empirical studies it is perhaps incumbent on English teachers and teaching materials to reflect these findings.

So where does this leave the ELT teacher in the 21st century? Are they to simply continue the status quo of teaching a standard American / British model of English, or perhaps introduce students to alternative varieties of English better suited to their needs in this globalized world? It is a difficult question and not helped in countries such as Japan where the demand for ‘authenticity’ (i.e. native speakers from the US, UK, Australia etc.) is deeply entrenched. In fact, it is almost a given that language schools, as well as universities, prefer to employ native English speakers over non-native speakers for most English language classes. However, it is becoming clearer that ‘ownership’ of English no longer resides with the native speaker population but has expanded to include those who use it as an L2 or even L3. This reality has to be brought home to the learner in order “to reflect his or her own sociolinguistic reality, rather than that of a usually distant native speaker” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 173). How far one can implement actual grammatical forms often arising in ELF is debatable; after all, on a practical basis, common standards have to be set, taught to, and maintained in the interests of fairness. It is also the case that while ELF may be a rich area of research at present, it is predominantly a spoken phenomenon, and no one is advocating reading and writing in such variant forms. Mackenzie feels the time has not arrived when we can present a model of English that is stripped of various forms such as the third person -s inflective, countable / uncountable distinction, irregular past tense forms and so on. Indeed, as he goes on to say, “[l]earners will encounter all these forms in both written and spoken material emanating from inner

circle countries” (MacKenzie, 2014, p. 167) Hence, it is still important for students to be able to read and write a variety of English that is internationally acceptable so as not to put them at a disadvantage. Whether students use their English in business, travel, or academia, the written word still conforms to native standardized English norms and it would be irresponsible to disregard this. Furthermore, Sowden argues that few learners ever reach a level of mastery in their second language learning, so an emphasis on an alternative model (such as ELF) is really neither here nor there for most people.

Alternatively, some advocates for ELF believe that such arguments are rather a red herring. As research into ELF has progressed over the past two decades, certain ideas regarding its pedagogical implications have altered. It seems that the teaching of a codified model of ELF is no longer a priority for many researchers in the field, and in crucial ways misses the point. Cogo argues that “there is...an assumption that ELT is all about grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation and that is the sum of communication” (2011, p. 104). She continues by expressing that other areas are of equal importance, including “communication strategies, pragmatic competence, and language and cultural awareness” (p. 104). Thus, in the globalized world of the 21st century, we need to move away from narrow definitions of ELT and its traditional emphases, and provide a broader and more inclusive curriculum that better prepares students for global communication. Many textbooks are stuck in a bygone era with the focus on native-speaker Inner Circle countries, their cultures, and modes of communication. It is becoming more important for the makers of teaching materials to incorporate activities and content that better reflect the reality of who uses English in the world today and how they use it. Such textbooks can also draw attention to strategies that will help people navigate the many different Englishes they will be exposed to in the outside world. In the words of Kuo, “to raise consciousness of intercultural understanding” and to draw attention to “the fact that people from different cultural backgrounds tend to express politeness, gratitude, and condolences in overtly different ways” (2006, p. 219). This approach could be tailored to suit the geographical location of students and include developing what Murray (2012) describes as the “pragmatic principles” or “social grammar” that exist in cultures that students are likely to encounter when they use English. While Murray admits that research into such an approach is still in its infancy, there is no doubt that students would benefit from being provided with “a pragmatic ‘toolkit’ of strategies” (2012, p. 324). This would then enable them to better adapt to situations by adopting such a “social grammar for each interaction according to the particular characteristics of their interlocutor and of the broader context in which that interaction takes place” (Murray, 2012, p. 325). Thus, it is the responsibility of the teacher to decide which communicative and pragmatic strategies best serve his or her students and introduce them alongside the traditional components of an ELT program. It is also vital that textbooks begin to make more of an effort to address the realities of how English is used around the world today. This is not just with regards to communicative and pragmatic strategies, but also in terms of providing students with

opportunities to encounter Outer Circle and Expanding Circle Englishes. Mackenzie argues that “[i]n an international language, understanding different accents and dialects is clearly crucial” (2014, p. 171). This is particularly the case in Japan, where encounters with foreign speakers of English are infrequent and where there is a large emphasis on American English from Junior High School. There needs to be exposure to a variety of English accents that better reflect the Englishes spoken in the Asian region.

Indeed, it may be a good idea to expose students to different Englishes as part of the curriculum, perhaps in a project format. Galloway and Rose (2018) provide an example of this in a Japanese university where students were asked to research and give presentations on a chosen variety of English and then comment on their usefulness. The feedback obtained was largely favorable and the students found it both interesting and useful to be aware that other varieties of English do actually exist. The author has replicated this project with a class of Japanese university students who were given the opportunity of researching the characteristics of English in an Outer Circle country (for example, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and so on). Each student chose one ‘New English’, researched it, and gave a short 10-minute presentation to the class. After the presentations, students were invited to reflect on the content of the presentations and whether their attitudes to English and its varieties had changed through this project. The students submitted a short report on their reflections and some of their comments are included below, with the permission of the authors:

“According to presentation of classmates, many variety of English have own words that are had an effect by local languages.”

“[I]t develops the sense that there is no standard and correct English in the world. I think this sense is really important for the global society because the attitude of sympathy with the others is one of the key factors to realize the multicultural society.”

“I think understanding a variety of English helps understanding their culture which is very essential to build peaceful community.”

“I think these Englishes are no longer the language of former colonial powers, but they have established their respective positions, because they have their own distinctive features.”

Indeed, new research is beginning to show that perhaps incorporating Global Englishes in the ELT curriculum can have a positive effect on students’ attitudes toward their own English. Fang and Ren (2018) studied Chinese university students taking a course that aimed to raise awareness of varieties of English other than the usual Inner Circle standards. Prior to the course some of the

students referred negatively to their English accents and how in one case this impeded initiating conversations with native speakers of English. However, after the course, “the students generally developed an awareness of the diversity of English and did not feel ashamed of their own English” (Fang & Ren, 2018, p. 388). It became clear that students regarded mutual intelligibility as the main aim of communicating in English rather than the accuracy they had hitherto striven for. Although such research is in its infancy, it is nevertheless a promising area that may well influence student attitudes to English in countries where strict adherence to native speaker standards are strictly held to. Student morale might well be improved by raising awareness of the multiplicity of Englishes as well as increasing the emphasis on more communicative competences. A singular focus on grammatical accuracy should perhaps be reconsidered in light of the fact that much of the world communicates in English quite different to the commonly taught standards.

To sum up, the approach to teaching English has to become broader if it is to adequately prepare learners for coping in the globalized environment. As has been discussed, it is perhaps unrealistic to implement a codified and teachable ELF, even if such a possibility existed. After all, teachers would be teaching a spoken form that differed from the written form and this may sow confusion. Apart from that is the expectation of most students is still to be taught traditional standard models of English. However, although ownership of English has moved away from its traditional homelands, the aspiration to use such native varieties persists stubbornly and will not go away soon. Thus, when we talk about ELF, we should move away from the traditional teaching of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, and expand our horizons to include strategies and knowledge that will be of help to learners. To equip students with not only the linguistic skills, but also a toolkit to adapt such skills to various cultural environments should be a necessary goal in future classrooms. Of course, it will be difficult to overcome entrenched teaching methodologies in many parts of the world where a slavish devotion to accuracy in order to pass examinations still persists. However, it is becoming obvious that such ideas are outdated and not fit for purpose. As Fang and Ren point out, “in today’s globalized and multilingual world, ELT practitioners need to be aware of the different needs and goals of students who will use English in different settings” (p. 392). Thus, it would appear to be the case that a greater awareness of Global Englishes and the ability to successfully navigate oneself in an increasingly globalized world should be the aim of ELT classrooms in the 21st century.

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