BRINGING ENGLISH IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

Flora Debora Floris

Petra Christian University, Surabaya - Indonesia

Abstract: English is now well-established as an international language of transnational and intercultural communication. The number of speakers is now estimated to be about two billions in varying degrees of competencies, and nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English outnumber native speakers (NSs) by a ratio of 3:1 (Crystal, 2003). One of the obvious effects of the global spread of English is that English, the living language, has inevitably changed in order to suit the diverse social contexts in which it is used (Crystal, 1997). As English has spread all over the world, there has been recognition of the new varieties of English that have emerged in outer and expanding countries. This current state has generated a series of questions surrounding language teaching pedagogy: Is there any standard English? Which language variety or varieties should be taught?, Who should be the 'model' English speaker?, Is it necessary to introduce Englishes in language classroom?. This presentation aims to discuss these issues by highlighting the diversity of English and the diversity of its users. Finally the presentation demonstrates how classroom teachers as agents of change should take on board awareness raising activities in the recognition of the varieties of English.

Introduction

English is the world's leading "global language" (Crystal, 2003, p. 1). Kachru (1986, 1996) captured this phenomenon in his Three Concentric Circles of English which includes the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle refers to countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, where English is primarily used as a mother tongue or native language (ENL). The Outer Circle refers to countries where people use English alongside their mother tongue as a means of official comunication. Countries lying in this circle include Singapore, the Philippine, and India. In general, the use of English in this circle has a long history from colonial periods (Kachru and Nelson, 2000). The expanding circle includes countries such as Indonesia, China, and Saudi Arabia where English may be employed for limited purposes. This circle, however, represents the largest expanding numbers of English speakers in today's world (Crystal, 2003).

It is estimated that the number of nonnative speakers of English is as double or quadruple the number of native speakers worldwide (Kachru, 1996). Graddol (2006) estimates that there are currently around 350 million Native English Speakers (NES), as opposed to over a billion Non Native English Speakers (NNES). He predicts that the number of NNES will double by 2020, whereas the number of NES will remain relatively stable.

The spread of English has brought some changes in the language especially in terms of the variety of English (or Englishes) and the role of its speakers. This changing trend of English should be considered by English language teachers (and curriculum / material developers) in their teaching (Jenkins, 2006). This paper will address two major issues related to the emerging Englishes, namely (1) which variety varieties (and speaker role model) that should be introduced to students in their second or foreign language classrooms and (2) how teachers should introduce these Englishes to their students.

Which English Variety? Which role model?

In light of the worldwide spread and use of English, we have seen that there is a huge diversity of English varieties in the world today spoken by English speakers mostly living in the Outer and Expanding Circle countries.Some of the varieties are Singaporean English, American English, British English, Indian English, and Nigerian English. Among those varieties, which one should be considered as the Standard English? Many people think that American or British English is a standard variety that should be taught in language classrooms.

McArthur (2003, p. 442) states that Standard English has at "least three identifying characteristics: 1) It is easiest to recognize in print because written conventions are similar worldwide. 2) It is usually used by news presenters. 3) Its usage relates to the speaker's social class and education."The problem is that there is no world-recognized governing body that determines what Standard English is; thus the definition is open to interpretation and each community might come up with their own decision of what Standard English is about. In short, Standard English is not easy to define as there is no official world-wide consensus or agreement of what Standard English is.

Many people are in their opinion that learners of English need to have NESs as their role models. Stern (1983) as cited in McKay (2003, p. 6), for example, states that "native speaker's competence, proficiency or knowledge of the language"should be the point of reference for language learners. Some people believe that English belongs to Americans or British as its native speakers. That is why American or British people are the best models or the best teachers for the language.

It should be argued that in this era of global English, aiming to be like native-speakers is not viable. English is used mostly by NNESs for purposes which might be different from NESs. The majority of our EFL learners might not use their English for communicating with Americans, doing business in New York or for visiting London Bridge. NNESs use English mostly to communicate among themselves for their own purposes in their own context (McKay, 2003).

Another reason is because English is spoken by so many people which means that it now has become everybody's language. It is no longer the property of native speakers because first, second and foreign speaker have the rights to "add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it" (Crystal, 2000, p. 5). Considering the number of English speakers in the world, it is NNESs who will have the main responsibility for the ways in which the language is used, maintained, taught and learned (Jenkins, 2007 and Seidlhofer, 2005).

English that language teachers advocate should not be chained to inner-circle communities only. Limited exposure to varieties of English may cause learners to get confused or to resist linguistic variations when they encounter varieties of English in authentic contexts (Matsuda, 2003). Teachers need to show that there are English varieties and all of them are highly valued.

Should our students get exposure to all of English varieties in the world? In general, English speakers are expected to be able to communicate in local / national and international levels. There is a need for mutual intelligibility within a region / country and across countries.

In many cases, American and British English varieties are still considered the most established varieties that are popular and acceptable in many international contexts. The established varieties here refer to "English varieties that are codified, are used for a wide variety of communicative functions (so that students can learn to do what they need/want to do in English) and are relatively well accepted in different kinds of international contexts as well as different realms of use (e.g. business, academia and entertainment)" (Matsuda, 2012, p. 22). The established varieties need to be introduced to learners of English because such varieties enable the users to cover more (or wider) communicative functions (Matsuda, 2012).

In addition to the established variety, one or a couple of other varieties should also be introduced to learners of English. The choice of which particular varieties should be selected as the instructional model will obviously depend on two major factors, namely students' context or needs and the focus or the goal of the language classrooms. To this, Renandya (2012, p. 5) provides an excellent example: "When teaching a group of business people from Thailand who have business dealings with business people from Singapore, it makes sense to include teaching materials that depict features of Singapore English commonly used by Singaporeans in business settings".

How to Introduce Englishes in Language Classrooms?
There appears to be some concerns about how to introduce Englishes in language classrooms. The major concerns seem to be related to the availability of English varieties especially non-native varieties and the aspect of material development.

With the rapid growth of computer and internet applications, teachers will find many Internet sources offering millions of speech samples of speakers around the world. *The International Dialects of English Archive* (http://web.ku.edu/~idea/), for example, provides more than 1,000 recordings by people (natives) living in 100 different countries. For Asian region, this website offers recordings from 20 different countries including Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan and Thailand.

These are some ideas on how to use the audio files in language classrooms:
1. Students are asked to search English speakers that they think are good. Students then present their choices as well as provide analysis on their selected speakers' language qualities.
2. Students are asked to choose several English speakers coming from different countries. These speakers will then be analysed on pre-determined dimensions such as based on the vocabularies and the grammar used.
3. Students are assigned to compare and contrast native varieties to the non-native varieties.

Another idea is for students (and teachers) to watch international news on similar topic which are broadcasted on different TV stations, for example, *CNN* (US), *BBC* (UK), *Channel NewsAsia*(Singapore), and *Al Jazeera* (Qatar). Students are then asked to spot the differences and similarities of the news on pre-determined dimensions such as based on the vocabularies and the grammar used by the reporters. Online or printednewspapers such as *Bangkok Post* (Thailand), *People's Daily* (China), *The Korea Herald* (South Korea), and *Daily Nation*(Kenya) can also be used for this activity.

Literary texts can also be used to introduce Englishes in language classrooms because such texts always present authentic language use and a wide variety of cultural values reflecting the diversity Englishes (see Floris and Chanpermpoonpaul, 2002 for some sample activities). There are many poems, short stories and novels written in English by both NESs and NNESs. Some international authors who come from non-English background are Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Karim Raslam (Malaysia), and Agnes Lam (Hong Kong).

More proficient (advanced) learners can also be required to engage in focused English conversations with other students (and teachers) from other countries. Edmodo, Skype, or other online communication applications offer a "physical" space for students (and teachers) to converse in English. Some of the common global issues, such as globalization, technology, nature, health, world peace, and gender differences can be discussed in such a safe and supportive environment.

There are many other ways to bring Englishes in language classrooms. Exchanging e-mails, watching movies, doing internet-based projects, listening to online radio programs are some activities that can be used to have students' repertoire internationally expanded, to get them exposed to wider varieties of English, and to have their deeper reflection regarding the different Englishes encountered.

Conclusion

English is recognized as an international language, with nonnative speakers of English outnumbering native speakers. English has undergone some changes; and these changes provide "a different way of looking at the language, which is more inclusive, pluralistic, and accepting than the traditional, monolithic view of English in which there is one correct, standard way of using English that all speakers must strive for" (Matsuda, 2003, p. 727).

The changes also require a paradigm shift in the practice of English Language Teaching as McKay noted (2003, p. 13) noted "as an international language, English belongs to its users, and as such it is the users' cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy". The new ELT paradigm should equip language learners with skills that can help them to achieve high language competency and proficiency as well as to become English speakers who are aware of the diversified contexts of English.

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