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Attitudes to English as a Second and as a Foreign Language

The subject of my paper has emerged from my professional and private contacts with people worldwide, which are carried out most of the time by means of English, the contemporary language of international communication. Nowadays it would be impossible to disagree that, willy-nilly, we are experiencing a global rule of the English language (cf. Phillipson 1992). English is spoken in all corners of the world; however, a closer scrutiny of the language used in various parts of the globe and various contexts shows immediately that it is not a uniform entity by any means, and for this reason a new term *Englishes* has been coined to at least partly capture a number of its distinctive varieties (cf. Platt, Weber, and Ho 1984; Kachru 1988; Mesthrie 2000). Kachru (1988) in particular attempted to analyse the diverse character of the varieties of English spoken round the globe, and as a result postulated a very helpful classification of those into three categories:

1) *The inner circle*, i.e. the countries in which English is the first language (Great Britain, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand).

2) *The outer circle*, which includes some post-colonial countries with English as one of the official languages beside the indigenous tongues (e.g. some African territories, the Indian subcontinent and the countries of the Pacific). These are the varieties which are commonly referred to as the *New Englishes* (cf. Platt, Weber, and Ho 1984; Mesthrie 2000; Stockwell 2002).

3) *The expanding circle*, i.e. the remaining countries in which English, a foreign language there, is used as a language of international communication.

A question of interest that arises at this point is whether the perception of the English language in those varying cultural and social contexts is alike. It should stand to reason that the attitudes towards this language cannot be identical due to the differing historical past of the above-mentioned territories and the present-day political and socio-economic relations with the *inner-circle* countries, as well as the individual sense of identity of the speakers. Naturally, the fact that the *inner-circle* countries do not constitute a homogeneous entity either would bring in an additional dimension to such a study. The answer to the posited question therefore appears to be a very complex one, and is unlikely to be thorough; my intention, however, is to identify at least some broad tendencies towards English to be identified in the above-mentioned contexts.

Studies investigating the perception of different languages or varieties of the same language have a fairly long tradition. They are predominantly based on the so-called Subjective Reaction Tests (cf. Labov 1966; Wolfram and Fasold 1974; Wardhaugh 1991; Trudgill 2003), developed from subjective evaluation tests devised by psychologists, notably Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum (1960), Lambert (1967) and Giles and Powesland (1975). The main objective of the original tests, based on the matched guise technique was to obtain some evaluation of a particular language variety from the listeners exposed to the same (or similar) text read out in various languages or dialects – the texts were delivered by the same person, which, however, was as a rule ignored by the text recipients. In sociolinguistics the method of Subjective Reaction Test to obtain additional data was first employed by Labov (1966) in his major variationist study of the New York speech, in which, among other techniques applied, he asked the respondents to rank the taped speakers in terms of their occupational suitability (cf. Wardhaugh 1991; Mesthrie 2000). Subjective reactions to a certain variety of speech could be provoked by open ended questions of the "What-do-you-think-of"- or "How-do-you-evaluate-this"-type, which allows the informant to express their opinion freely; alternately, they may simply elicit the Yes/No type of answer to the statements provided (cf. Wolfram and Fa-

sold 1974). In yet another technique, the respondents may be provided with a series of bipolar scales consisting of descriptive opposites of the "good-bad"-type with a number of steps in between them, on which they have to tick the position of a particular variety with regard to the feature investigated. The technique is that of semantic differential, in which further dimensions of the subjective reaction can be often distinguished, i.e. those of *evaluation*, *potency* and *activity* of a given variety, e.g. "positive-negative"; "strong-weak" and "difficult-easy" (cf. Shuy, Baratz, and Wolfram 1969). As Wolfram and Fasold (qtd. in Coupland and Jaworski 1997: 110) claim, "it is the perception of dialect differences and the social evaluation of these differences by participating members of the society which is the real basis for the existence of social dialects," therefore subjective reaction tests have become a useful tool in the investigation of the linguistic reality.

The open-ended and Yes/No category of questions as well as the technique of semantic differential are two instruments I chose for my questionnaire to conduct an introductory research that aimed to analyse the perception of the English language by a variety of users. An example of the open-ended question from my questionnaire is as follows: "I use English and my native language for separate contexts and subjects (can you give examples?)" (Question 9). The majority of the remaining forms of elicitation are the Yes/No or Multiple Choice statements, for example: "The model of language and culture that I follow when speaking English is: a) British b) American c) other (which one?)." The final part of the questionnaire aims at assessing the model of language and culture with the help of the semantic differential analysis, in which the evaluation process is prompted by the following semantic scales: *Difficult-Easy*; *Rough-Smooth*; *Informal-Formal*; *Awkward-Graceful*; *Vague-Precise*; *Rigid-Flexible*; *Complex-Simple*; *Dumb-Smart*; *Non-Prestigious-Prestigious*; *Uneducated-Educated*; *Negative-Positive* and *Primitive-Sophisticated*. The data was obtained by means of a questionnaire distributed by hand or via e-mail to friends and acquaintances who can be said to possess a near-native command of English (none of them, however, can be classified as a native speaker of this language). This generated 43 responses (out of nearly a double of the number approached). The respondents belong to the age group between 22 and 46, all of them but two have

obtained higher education, and they are native speakers of a variety of European and non-European languages. Thus, due to their social and national circumstances, they come to represent the non-native users of English in the three above-mentioned categories pertaining to the types of countries in which English is used – the inner, the outer and the expanding circle, respectively. The informants from the inner circle include immigrants (i.e. speakers of English as a foreign language) to the USA (predominantly), UK and Australia from such countries as Poland, Germany, Switzerland, Palestine and Turkey (10 respondents). The outer circle – the former colonial territories – is represented by speakers (users of English as a second language) from such countries as India, Kenya, Ghana, Malaysia and the Philippines (8 respondents), and finally the remaining 25 persons – the users of English as a foreign language from the expanding circle are natives of such countries as (predominantly) Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Germany, Mexico and South Korea.

According to the variety of criteria devised by such scholars as Lambert (1955) and Ervin and Osgood (1954), all the respondents could be described as bilingual. The definitions of the concept of bilingualism vary considerably, ranging from Bloomfield's (1935) "native-like control of two languages" to Macnamara's view (1967) that a bilingual person is "anyone who possesses a minimal competence in one of the four language skills ... in a language other than his mother tongue" (after Hamers and Blanc 1989: 6). I subscribe to the view of Titone (1972: 11), i.e. that bilingualism is "the individual's capacity to speak a second language while following the concepts and structures of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue." Thus, the respondents can be classified as bilingual; however, their bilingualism is to be differentiated further with the help of criteria postulated by the aforementioned scholars, Lambert, and Ervin and Osgood (cf. Grucza 1981; Hamers and Blanc 1989; Spolsky 1998), these including: the age of the second language acquisition, cognitive organisation, competence, the presence of the L2 community, cultural identity and the status of their native language. Due to the limitation of space a thorough discussion of those is impossible; therefore only a very general characterisation of the speakers will be provided obtained from the personal information from the questionnaire as well as the knowledge of the countries of their ori-

gin and residence. Thus, the bilingualism of the speakers from the inner circle may be described as a minimum adolescent or possibly an adult bilingualism, coordinate, L1 dominant, endogenous (at their present circumstances), but exogenous when acquiring L2, bicultural and, possibly, with the exception of the Turkish and Palestinian respondents, additive. The bilingualism of outer circle respondents, i.e. ESL speakers, by virtue of their early and fairly constant exposition to English can be classified as childhood, rather coordinate, still L1 dominant, endogenous, monocultural and, within the bounds of their own country, rather additive. Finally, the respondents from the expanding circle may, on the whole, be diagnosed classed with an adolescent/adult, coordinate, L1 dominant, exogenous, monocultural (with a tendency to become bicultural), and additive bilingualism.

With these general remarks in the background, let us proceed to observations that can be made with regard to the respondents' attitude towards English in the three groups. We shall begin with the users of English in the outer circle, i.e. the post-colonial territories, for whom English is their second or possibly third or fourth language, but at the same time an official language in their country, and subsequently juxtapose them to the English as a Foreign Language speakers in the two remaining contexts – within and outside the English speaking countries, respectively. The data provided by these ESL speakers shows that they use English often (62%) or sometimes (50%), and, what considerably marks them off from the other two groups, as many as 62% of the respondents use this language when communicating with their parents and 87% with their siblings. There is on the whole a fairly stable high percentage (from 62% to 75%) of the use of English in all the contexts provided, i.e. with intimate friends, friends and acquaintances in both informal and formal contexts, colleagues, superiors in formal and informal contexts, at work, at university, also when shopping or addressing strangers in the street, though the latter was mentioned by only 37% of respondents (the analysis of the contexts indicated shows a bias towards the use of English in the formal rather than informal contexts, such as school or work, or to superiors in formal contexts – with the ratio of 88% to 75%, respectively). This can at least partly be explained by the fact that, as an official language in those countries English enjoys a high prestige there, and at the same time it is an expected choice in those domains.

When asked about their feelings and reactions with regard to their using English, the outer circle speakers mainly focused on three aspects (all ticked by 88% of the respondents): that they can say all they want to, that they feel exactly the same when speaking English as when they are using their own language, as well as that they switch into English unawares. Three other features that followed in terms of preference, but were certainly selected by fewer persons, were the sense of freedom that the respondents felt when using English (63%), and, on the other hand, the feeling of being forced to use the language and that English offered a greater chance to get a better job – both indicated by (38%) of respondents. Also, some importance was attached to the fact that the respondents could express themselves best only when mixing both languages at a time (37%), whereas none of them mentioned e.g. the respect that their using English might evoke in the audience, or the possible feeling of irritation induced by this language in others. This brief summary of the Yes/No questions demonstrates that English has become recognised as one of the many varieties utilised in the former post-colonial territories, but may have to a large extent lost its politically negative connotations – instead, it has become one of the multitude of codes that are used in the African and Asian context on a daily basis.

The general presentation of the responses generated by the Yes/No, Multiple Choice and open-ended from the speakers of English as Foreign Language will be, in keeping with the above classification, subdivided into two groups – EFL users in the inner and in the expanding circles, respectively. As regards the inner circle, it has to be first clarified that 40% of the respondents were women who had married foreigners, whereas most of the remaining ones were persons who had emigrated either for economic reasons or to study. Even with this varying background of the individuals some common denomination can be drawn for all of them – that of a (at least initially) positive and hopeful attitude to those English-speaking countries (the USA, the UK and Australia) that attracted them with a chance of a better-paid job, better life, and possibly a higher social status via marriage to a foreigner. Clearly, it is already at this initial stage that the representatives of the inner and outer circle differed considerably.

Respondents from this group for obvious reasons used L2 either all the time – 50% of them or often – 40%. Interestingly, as many as 50% of

the informants considered English their second language even though none of them was brought up with it – they are all adult (or at most adolescent) coordinate bilinguals, in contrast to ESL speakers, who have been classified, by virtue of having started to learn English early in their childhood, as compound childhood bilinguals. 80% of them also considered English their foreign language. The analysis of the tables of frequency demonstrated that 100% (in two cases 90%) of them used English in most of the provided contexts (with intimate friends, friends and acquaintances as well as superiors in both formal and informal situations, with colleagues, at work and – if applicable – at school, in the shops, and in the street). The choice of English here is naturally the unmarked one – the respondents have to function in a foreign language environment on a daily basis with the help of English as the official language of a given country. It is difficult to establish whether they do it out of pleasure – the use of English also with intimate friends might at least indirectly allow for such a conclusion, though the latter might also be of foreign origin, the dominant function of English here, though, is certainly an instrumental one.

As regards the attitude towards English that the respondents in this group demonstrated, the following could be deduced from the answers provided. The largest number of them (80%) indicated that the knowledge of English offered them a better chance to get a job, which obviously confirms the above-mentioned instrumental motivation for the use of English. An equally high percentage pointed out that they used English unawares, and that they could say all they wanted, thereby proving their fluency in English – and a high degree of bilingualism. What also featured markedly in the responses was the sense of freedom that the use of English offered them (60%), and the respondents' identification with the L2 culture (60%). Moreover, two others choices should be mentioned: the fact that the informants felt the same when using English as when they were using their own L1 (50%), and that their using English evoked the feeling of respect from others (40%). A quick glance at the ESL users in this context indicates a marked difference between the two groups in terms of identifying oneself with the English-speaking culture. The inner circle speakers seem to have to a large extent accepted or shifted into the new culture, possibly both for prestige as well as economic reasons, whereas the ESL users tend to maintain their cultural distinctiveness –

the feature of biculturalism was marked by 60% of the EFL users and only by 25% of the ESL users. A similar discrepancy appeared with regard to a higher chance of getting a job, which featured highly on the list of the inner circle speakers (80%) as opposed to the already mentioned 38% in the ESL group.

The third class of the respondents – that of the EFL users from the expanding circles – all described themselves as EFL speakers, though also some members of the group – 20% – treated English as their second language, despite the fact that English is not an official language in their countries. Unlike the inner circle speakers, out of whom 50% used English all the time, only 8% of the expanding circle speakers indicated this option. Otherwise, 48% of them resorted to English sometimes, and 40% often, which is on the whole similar to the frequencies of usage obtained with the ESL users (62% and 50%, respectively). The analysis of frequency demonstrates that by far the most typical context in which the respondents made use of English in this group was that of work (88%). This points to a fairly formal context for the use of English, this being corroborated by fairly high frequencies of speaking English to colleagues (68%), and at school (56%), the latter domain selected by both student respondents, especially of English studies, and teachers of English. On the other hand, English appeared to be popular also in some informal contexts – as many as 64% of respondents chose this language to interact with intimate friends, while an even greater number (72%) indicated that they spoke English with friends and acquaintances in informal contexts.

The emotional reactions and attitudes generated by the use of English in this group presented themselves as follows: similarly to the other two groups, the claim that the speakers could say all they wanted to exceeded others (76%), this again confirming a high degree of bilingualism among them. Another sentiment shared by the speakers in all the three groups was the sense of freedom that the ability to use English evoked in them – here marked by 68% of the respondents. Nearly as popular a factor that the respondents indicated was the possibility of getting a better job (60%), the feature of an instrumental treatment of English shared with the EFL users in the inner circle in particular. In this group, unlike in the other two, the sense of self-pride aroused by one's own mastery of this foreign language was particularly visible – the statement "I feel smart" was selected by 48% of the users (as compared to 30% in the in-

ner circle and none in the outer one). Another element of a positive attitude towards English that featured rather markedly among this group, being even more pronounced than in the case of the EFL users in the inner circle was the sense of respect from others marked by 44% of the respondents – this feature, on the other hand, was not found among the outer circle users at all. Also in this group, though to a lesser degree, such aspects as using the foreign language unawares, and identifying oneself with a different culture (notably the British one, as 88% chose this variety as their model), both indicated by 40% of respondents, as well as the similarity of feelings that both L1 and L2 evoked in the speakers, at 36%, were well marked.

When analysing the question of the context in which the English language tends to be used, the three groups showed considerable similarities. Even though English is an official language in the inner and outer circles, but not in the expanding one, and the conditions of everyday life put different demands on the speakers in all the three groups, a similarly high percentage of the respondents claimed to use L1 and L2 in different contexts – 60%, 75% and 68% for the inner, outer and expanding circle, respectively. That would indicate that for certain subjects or interlocutors the English language appears to be particularly appropriate. Not all the respondents decided to provide examples of such contexts; however, the survey of the comments of those few who did may lead to a general conclusion that English may be associated particularly with official circumstances. And thus, a respondent from the inner circle claimed to often use English when trying to discipline her children, another tended to use English to write his poetry. Naturally, they all indicated the context of work as the one in which English was the expected choice. With regard to the outer circle, where such constraints should not obey, some respondents still indicated that they chose to speak English only when in the office, or, as one respondent commented, English was the right choice to interact with other students or officials. My personal observation when in Kenya was that English was employed in interactions with strangers who appeared to be educated, whereas, as I was told, it would not be an appropriate choice while speaking to those in lower ranks or jobs, e.g. car cleaners – not out of sense of superiority, however, on the contrary, out of respect not to make them feel intimidated or looked down upon. In the case of the representatives from the expanding circle, many of whom

happened to be either teachers or students of English (one of the major reasons for their mastery of English, and consequently, their bilingualism), the use of English was naturally connected with their job or interacting with other teachers or students, though themselves not necessarily foreigners. Their use of English here is an indicator of group membership, which gives them an additional sense of identity. Moreover, the students of English commented that they used this language when discussing some university subjects or concepts from different disciplines (often not having any Polish alternative to fall back on). Occasionally, some more specific contexts were indicated as e.g. telling jokes, referring to literature or movies, having arguments with one's brother in English so that the parents would not understand, cooking in English or, with some respondents, speaking English to children to teach them the language. It can be seen, therefore, that the EFL users in the expanding circle valued the ability to use English highly as compared to the former two groups since they used the language in a broad variety of contexts out of personal choice, whereas the EFL users in the inner circle and the ESL users as well simply had no alternative there or acted according to the established norms.

This observation leads us directly to the results of the assessment obtained through the semantic differential test mentioned earlier. In this part the respondents were asked to indicate on the 12 provided scales the position of the variety of English that they followed as a model when speaking this language. The instruction specified also that they should mark the position of the language and of the culture associated with it by separate letters if they evaluated each of the two differently. The results will allow us to compare the attitudes towards English as a Second and as a Foreign Language manifested by the three subgroups of respondents. Here, however, a certain limitation on the basis of comparison arises, namely, the fact that different speakers followed different languages (and consequently cultures) as models. The choice of Australian in one case may be safely disregarded; however, as it happened with regard to the inner circle immigrants, 80% of them happened to live in the USA, and they also indicated American English as the model. In the remaining two groups 63% in the outer circle and as many as 88% of the expanding circle followed the British variety of English and culture (only 8% indicate American English), additionally, within the outer circle the

Indian respondents pointed to their mixed background or, specifically, said that they followed their own – Indian – model of English. These distinctions, therefore, have to be borne in mind when studying the results of the differential.

In this test the values assigned to the six slots between the two extremes were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively, so the lower the value of the mean, the closer to the left-hand side extreme the position of the language and/or culture would be (which, with one exception, would point to some negative evaluation). It has to be observed here that, as a rule, no extreme values were recorded for practically any of the scales tested; some of them, however, did demonstrate quite marked differences. In order to assess the obtained results fully, the numerical values of the means obtained have been marked in the grid below (italics refer to the inner circle, bold fonts to the outer circle, and bold italics to the expanding circle):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
			L3.76				
			C3.63				
			C3.83	**L5.28**			
			C3.57	*L4.5*			
Difficult							Easy
			L3.28	***L4.86***			
			C3.75	***C4.33***			
				L4.75			
				C4.12			
Rough							Smooth
		L2.16	**C3.4**				
			L3.5				
			C3.9				
			L3.33				
			C3.0				
Informal							Formal
		C2.66		**L4.0**			
				L4.57			
				C4.12			
				C4.95	***C6.44***		
Awkward							Graceful

	L3.7	**C4.0**			
		L4.55			
		C4.5			
		C4.95	***L5.17***		
Vague					**Precise**
	C3.8	**L4.0**			
		L4.47	*L5.2*		
		C4.75	*C5.25*		
Rigid					**Flexible**
	L3.63	**L4.12**			
	C3.45	**C4.0**			
		L4.37			
		C4.28			
Complex					**Simple**
	L3.71	**C4.75**			
		L4.6	***L4.78***		
		C4.37	***C4.52***		
Dumb					**Smart**
C2.75	**L3.14**	*L4.42*			
		C4.14			
		C4.85	***L5.04***		
Non-prestigious					**Prestigious**
		L4.16			
		C4.06			
		L4.85	***L5.33***		
		C4.14	***C5.68***		
Uneducated					**Educated**
	L3.42	**C4.0**			
		L4.87			
		C4.42			
		C4.57	***L5.80***		
Negative					**Positive**
		L4.62			
		C4.25			
		C4.16	**L5.0**		
		C4.59	***L5.09***		
Primitive					**Sophisticated**

In conclusion to this very general survey of the perception of the English language (and the respective culture) it can be observed that on the whole the English language receives a rather positive evaluation in terms of different values – it is rather easy, not very rough, rather informal, on the whole quite graceful, fairly precise and flexible, not particularly complex, fairly smart, moderately prestigious, rather educated, sophisticated and evaluated quite positively. This considerably favourable perception becomes more diverse when specific categories of users are considered. It may therefore be concluded that the speakers from the post-colonial countries outlined the least positive image of the language and culture of all the three, probably due to the fact that English is only one of the many languages and dialects that they know and/or encounter daily. The comparison to those may, therefore, render English relatively less attractive than others, probably also due to the colonial past, and some negative connotations connected with the language that may have not been fully eradicated. The inner circle speakers showed a moderately positive attitude towards English – the language and culture were superimposed on them, to the disadvantage of their native languages, the respective countries are, however, well off and able to provide for their inhabitants, also, last but not least, it was a conscious decision of those immigrants to choose that country; therefore, naturally, they must see some positives about them. The expanding circle speakers, as the rankings show, demonstrated the most favourable attitude towards the (usually British) language and culture of all. The feeling on the one hand may be explained on the grounds of the fact that, not being fully immersed in them on a daily basis they may have a somewhat idealised image of these in their mind, on the other, the positive attitude was probably already there at the very start, and that is what made the European speakers undertake to learn and study English.

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