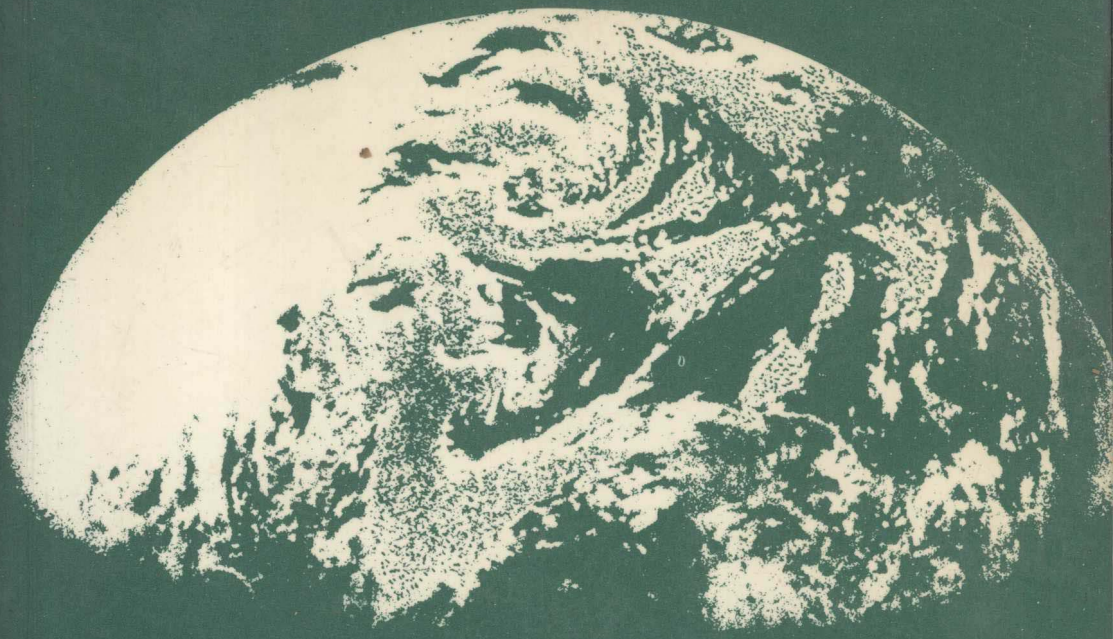

THE OTHER TONGUE

ENGLISH ACROSS CULTURES

Braj B. Kachru

Pergamon Institute of English

THE OTHER TONGUE

English Across Cultures

Edited by
BRAJ B. KACHRU

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Foreword

The papers collected in this volume are important for the world of language scholarship – and the "real world" that lies outside it – in at least three ways. They deal with one of the most significant linguistic phenomena of our time, the incredible spread of English as a global language. They deal directly with one of the most debated current foci of linguistic research, the nature and extent of variation in natural languages. And they deal with an important topic long neglected by linguists, the structure and use of non-native varieties. Let me say a few words about each of these, in reverse order.

Non-Native Varieties of Language

Linguists, perhaps especially American linguists, have long given a special place to the "native speaker" as the only truly valid and reliable source of language data, whether those data are the elicited texts of the descriptivist or the intuitions the theorist works with. Yet much of the world's verbal communication takes place by means of languages which are not the users' "mother tongue," but their second, third, or *n*th language, acquired one way or another and used when appropriate. Some languages, for example, spread widely as lingua francas between speakers of different languages or serve as languages of special functions in communities of non-native speakers; this kind of language use merits the attention of linguists as much as do the more traditional objects of their research. In fact, the whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue should probably be quietly dropped from the linguists' set of professional myths about language.

First, it is often hard to draw the boundary. Of what linguistic significance is X's native-speaking competence in language A if he has not used it since childhood and is much more at home in his later-acquired language B? Why is there something special about Y's knowledge of the local language if her parents have chosen to speak with her largely in another language so she can "get ahead"? Or what of

child bilingualism, or a talented writer's use of his national language instead of his mother tongue?

Second, universal explanatory principles or a general theory of language should account for all linguistic behavior. Variation in structure as between L_1 and L_2 seems just as interesting a subject as dialect or register variation in a completely monolingual community. The phenomena of language acquisition, language convergence over time, and language shift are at the very heart of linguistics, offering valuable evidence on the learnability of natural languages by humans and the nature of linguistic change.

In describing a particular language or language variety, it is necessary to identify its users and to locate its place in the verbal repertoires of the speech communities in which it is used. Without this identification many aspects of the grammar will be mysterious, and those mysteries may range from details of phonology to features of discourse. Most of the papers in this volume make serious efforts at the necessary identifications. They are highly suggestive of possible directions for more sophisticated and linguistically significant social and individual identifications of repertoire and use.

Linguistic Variation

Recognizing that linguistics has made its greatest advances, both in theory and in the practice of writing grammars, when it takes cases of relatively homogeneous or normalized or idealized languages as its objects of description, modern linguists are increasingly tackling heterogeneous bodies of data and the variation in language structure and use which is one of the prime characteristics of human language. They are doing so in part because of inadequacies in existing theories and grammars, but probably more so because of fascination with the phenomena, the linguistically significant generalizations they find, and the new understandings they may reach of the processes of dialect differentiation and language change and the more general social and cognitive aspects of human behavior.

Variation-oriented research in linguistics, however, has been limited to a very few types. Social dialect variation, creole continua, and bilingual code-switching account for the bulk of the current research. The two kinds of variation most prominent in the worldwide development of giant speech "communities" are hardly touched. I refer, in the first place, to the standardization process by which divergent regional dialects are gradually overwhelmed by supra-dialectal norms, and the resulting standards develop regionally colored variation re-

lated in complex ways to the earlier dialect variation. In the second place, I refer to the spread of languages as lingua francas, or as added components within existing repertoires, or as complete replacements for other languages; in all these cases the spreading language shows variation related in complex ways to the earlier language competences of the new users.

It is one of the outstanding merits of this book that these two phenomena are acknowledged and that these kinds of variation are described and discussed. At this stage of research, the papers cannot go very far toward constructing theories or models of variation, but they certainly suggest possible lines of theory development. A sociolinguistic theory accounting for the phenomena of standardization and language spread would make a tremendous contribution toward human self-understanding and thoughts about possible futures for the inhabitants of the planet.

Spread of English

The spread of one language in relation to others is a phenomenon which presumably goes as far back in human history as the existence of a multiplicity of languages. Certainly it is documented as far back as written records go; e.g., in the second millennium B.C., Akkadian replaced Sumerian but the speech community retained the latter in certain learned uses. Also, it is a familiar phenomenon for one language to serve as a lingua franca or language of special functions (religious, commercial) over a large area of many languages: Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Arabic, and French are examples at various periods and in different parts of the world. But there has never before been a single language which spread for such purposes over *most* of the world, as English has done in this century. The importance of this fact is often overlooked in discussions of the characteristic features of this age. The spread of English is as significant in its way as is the modern use of computers. When the amount of information needing to be processed came to exceed human capabilities, the computer appeared on the scene, transforming the processes of planning and calculation. When the need for global communication came to exceed the limits set by language barriers, the spread of English accelerated, transforming existing patterns of international communication.

We cannot know what the future will bring. At some point the spread of English may be halted, and some other language may spread to take its place. Or newly emerging patterns of communication may

eliminate the need for such a single global language. But for the present the spread of English continues, with no sign of diminishing (although its use may contract in certain areas), and two trends are gaining strength. English is less and less regarded as a European language, and its development is less and less determined by the usage of its native speakers.

For some time after its transplantation by settlement and colonial administration, English was still centered on England. However, by the end of the nineteenth century North American English assumed an importance challenging the dominance of the original center. In the second half of the twentieth century England is only one of many centers of innovation and norm creation, and some authors are claiming English as an African language and as an Asian language. The predominant view, that English is a European language, is steadily being eroded and seems likely to disappear.

In some sense, the native speakers of a language may be said to "own" it or to "control" it; i.e., to determine its future structure and use by their own usage and their beliefs about the language. There are, however, cases where the control of the future passes to non-native speakers. This has most often been discussed in terms of a standard variety that is based on one region or sector of the population and then begins to take on a life of its own, diverging from its source dialect. The same phenomenon can happen with the language as a whole. In Eastern Africa there are native speakers of Swahili, descendants of native speakers of Swahili, who resent the standard variety taught in schools that is increasingly spoken by others as a second language and by new native speakers not descended from the original native-speaking community. The linguistic influence mostly works from school standard onto other varieties, though, and some of the traditional native speakers find themselves adopting features of pronunciation, verb morphology, and syntax from the standard. The "control" of the language has passed to other people. This process is just beginning in English. Because there is no single non-native standard, the outcome will be different from the Swahili example, but the passing of control is increasingly evident.

English is widely used on the European continent as an international language. Frequently conferences are conducted in English (and their proceedings published in English) when only a few of the participants are native speakers. At such conferences the English spoken often shows features at variance with the English of England but shared by the other speakers. Continental meanings of *eventual* and *actual,* continental uses of tenses, calques on French formulas of con-

ference procedure, various details of pronunciation, and dozens of other features mark the English as an emerging continental norm. Native speakers of English attending the conference may find themselves using some of these features as the verbal interaction takes place. It is this adaptation which I cite as an example of the trend.

For now, this trend is very limited. Native speakers in many situations around the world may have confidence that they "know" the language better than others, but the differences among native speakers from different areas and the growing importance of non-native norms will increasingly affect this confidence. Whatever the outcome, *The Other Tongue* will contribute to our understanding of these processes and will deepen our appreciation of the different kinds of Englishes in the world and the rich variety of communication and self-expression that takes place in them.

Braj B. Kachru deserves our admiration for the way he has stayed for two decades with these important questions of the spread of English, its linguistic variation, and its non-native varieties. He and his fellow contributors deserve our gratitude for this new volume of studies which pushes the field of English across cultures far ahead and should stimulate the thinking of linguists, specialists in English language and literature, developmental planners, and futurists.

Stanford University, 1981 — Charles A. Ferguson

Preface

This collection of articles, like every book, has its own genesis. It is both the culmination of a collective effort in shared research interests, and a step toward my long-standing personal goal of understanding English across cultures. *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures* is, in essence, the outcome of a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic conference held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1978. It was just a coincidence that during that year the status of English as an international and intranational language was explicitly dealt with in two conferences held only three months apart. The East-West Learning Institute of the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, organized a conference in April (1-15). A selection of papers presented at that conference has been edited by its organizer, Larry E. Smith, under the title *English for Cross-Cultural Communication* (London: Macmillan, 1981). I organized the second conference, "English in Non-Native Contexts" (June 30-July 2), in conjunction with the Linguistic Institute of the Linguistic Society of America; it was hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At that conference twenty-five invited presentations dealt with English in over a dozen countries, including Ghana, India, Kenya, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, the United States, the United Kingdom, the West Indies, and Zaire.

A number of papers included here (to be exact, 60 percent) are substantially revised versions of papers presented at the Urbana-Champaign conference. The rest were specifically commissioned from scholars who were not present at that conference. This volume, then, is not the proceedings of the conference in a literal sense; rather, the conference provided a theme and a focus for *The Other Tongue.* In more than one sense, the conference broke the traditional pattern of such deliberations: no inconvenient question was swept under the rug. The professionals, both linguists and literary scholars, and native and non-native users of English, had frank and stimulating discussions. The issues related to English were discussed in divergent linguistic and cultural contexts, and useful generalizations

were made using ample empirical data. The English-using community in various continents was for the first time viewed in its totality. A number of cross-cultural perspectives were brought to bear upon our understanding of English in a global context, of language variation, of language acquisition, and of the bilinguals' – or a multilinguals' – use of English. The implications of such research on language studies in general and with particular reference to English has been lucidly discussed by Charles A. Ferguson in his foreword to this volume. In this sense, then, *The Other Tongue* is issue oriented, and not merely an anthology of case studies of English as a world language. It is true that such an anthology is overdue, but that is not the primary goal of this volume.

It was not just an accident that this conference was hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During the last two decades the University of Illinois has taken a leadership role in the study and research on English in non-native contexts through faculty research, in graduate courses, and at various conferences. The Division of Applied Linguistics of the University considers non-native English to be one of its major research areas.

I hope this volume reflects the importance of the theme, the freshness of approach, and the pragmatic view of English in the world context which were hallmarks of the conference. A new perspective on English across cultures understandably entails differences in emphasis and variations in approach to the topic. That such a perspective is needed was amply demonstrated in the presentations, and in the congenial and frank interactions in the cross-cultural setting of the conference. What transpired in discussion periods and in various social events was equally important. All that could not be captured in this volume.

This volume should serve as the first step toward our understanding of the complex issues involved in the formal and functional characteristics of the Englishes around the world. One thing is certain: there are no simple answers, no easy solutions, and no methodological remedies which apply to all users of English across cultures. No one group can carry this linguistic burden; it must be shared by the users of this international language, whether they are its native or non-native speakers.

The conference and this volume are the result of the enthusiasm, cooperation, support, and patience of many agencies, organizations, and individuals. My gratitude is particularly due to the Ford Foundation, New York, for their initial grant for the conference and to Foundation Program officers Elinor G. Barber and Melvin J. Fox

for their counsel and interest. (Fox has since retired from the Foundation after making a substantial contribution to language-related research internationally, and specifically in Africa.) George K. Brinegar, Director, Office of International Programs and Studies, University of Illinois, and Carl W. Deal, Chairperson, Publications Committee of the same office, deserve thanks for including this volume in the series. The Research Board of the Graduate College of the University of Illinois supported various projects which directly or indirectly contributed toward our understanding of English across cultures. I am indebted to Charles A. Ferguson for his foreword to the volume; to James E. Alatis, Henry Kahane, Peter Strevens, Rudolph C. Troike, G. Richard Tucker, and Ladislav Zgusta for their advice and support in planning the conference; to Josephine Wilcock for her assistance in organizational matters and beyond; to Farida Cassimjee and Tamara M. Valentine for helping in library research and in preparing the final version of the manuscript; and to Ann Lowry Weir, senior editor at the University of Illinois Press, for her technical skill, expert editorial advice, and cooperation above and beyond the call of duty.

University of Illinois, 1981 — Braj B. Kachru

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Introduction: The Other Side of English

BRAJ B. KACHRU

The other side of English is concerned with English as the "other tongue," or as a second language. "Other tongue" is not an innocent term; actually it is a multi-faceted concept with a long history and different manifestations in various regions of the world. The vision of an other tongue evokes memories of language being used as a powerful — sometimes ruthless — instrument for religious and cultural subjugation and for colonization. There are elevated (standard) varieties, and not-so-elevated (pidgin) varieties for local commerce, international trade, and even political maneuvering. In the past the other tongues (as second or foreign languages) have been associated with majestic empires (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit). In our time Dutch, English, French, Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese have been used, in varying degrees, as the tongues of colonizers. A language has often been used as a tool for unifying a nation, for establishing political boundaries, and for creating dissent. How a language may be used (for non-communicative ends) in a particular national context is difficult to predict. But the powerful ruler, the wily colonizer, the commercial exploiter, and the religious zealot are not the only ones who envision their language being recognized — or imposed on people — as the other tongue.

The association of worldly power or religious sanctity with the spread of other tongues across cultures tells only part of the story. There have always been linguistic romanticists, representing various disciplines, who have seen the limitations of a culture-bound natural language as a universal language. In their view — and rightly so — a natural language always has cultural and linguistic affinities. Those who use it as their first language thus have advantages over those for whom it is a second language.

Why not have an artificial or constructed language as an international language? It would function as an extra linguistic tool, ideally speaking, with no cultural or linguistic connotations. Consequently, no ethnocentricism would arise. As yet, no such perfect