全球化视野下的英语教学研究

The Teaching of English under the Background of Globalization

高慧 著

山东人民出版社
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Contents

Chapter 1

New problems under the background of globalization 1

1.1 A complicated situation: the use of English in the world 1

1.2 Which is the model: a new question in the teaching and learning of English 3

1.3 The problems in the standard of English under the background of globalization 6

1.4 The argues on variations and errors 14

Chapter 2

The choice on the model of English 25

2.1 Introduction 25

2.2 A native-speaker model 27

2.3 A nativized model 33

2.4 A Lingua Franca model ····· 38
2.5 Conclusion ····· 43

Chapter 3

EIL curriculum development under the background of globalization ····· 45
3.1 The changes in English education ····· 45
3.2 Features of English as an international language ····· 47
3.3 Traditional models and present-day English learning goals ····· 50
3.4 Traditional models and EIL instructional materials ····· 57
3.5 Traditional models and communicative language teaching ····· 60
3.6 EIL curriculum development assumptions ····· 66

Chapter 4

A multi-dimensional approach to the teaching of English ····· 71
4.1 Language description ····· 71
4.2 Language planning ····· 73
4.3 The teachers of EIL ····· 76
4.4 Methodology ····· 77
4.5 Conclusion ····· 84

Chapter 5

The innovation of teaching ideas and knowledge ····· 89

5.1 Introducing the tools of our analysis: the N-bound and C-bound perspectives ····· 89

5.2 Theory and reality in the EIL domain ····· 92

5.3 EIcL: English as an Intercultural Language ····· 98

5.4 Advice for the EIL/EIcL teachers ····· 105

5.5 Conclusion ····· 110

Chapter 6

A case situated in multilingual for the ELT profession ····· 115

6.1 Effects of English under the background of globalization ····· 116

6.2 An education based on a political approach to languages ····· 118

6.3 Language and cognition in the ELT profession ····· 124

6.4 Integrating a politics of language with a cognitive role for native languages ····· 127

6.5 A perspective on the relation between policy and implementation ····· 132

References ····· 135

Chapter 1

New problems under the background of globalization

1.1 A complicated situation: the use of English in the world

English is today a truly global language. This has become something of an understatement if one considers the dramatic expansion in the roles of English as a language of international communication in trade, diplomacy, sport, science, technology and countless other fields, in a growing number of regions and cultural contexts. More recently, revolutions in transport, technology, commerce and communications, including satellite broadcasting and the Internet, have all further reinforced the global pre-eminence of English.

The global spread of English, its causes and consequences,

have long been a focus of critical discussion. One of the main concerns has been that of standardization. This is also because, unlike other international languages such as Spanish and French, English lacks any official body setting and prescribing the norms of the language. This apparent linguistic anarchy has generated a tension between those who seek stability of the code through some form of convergence and the forces of linguistic diversity that are inevitably set in motion when new demands are made on a language that has assumed a global role of such immense proportions.

One consequence of the global predominance that English has gained over the last few decades is that today non-native speakers of English far outnumber its native speakers (Graddol 1997, Crystal 2003). One example is in China: English is hot, and the number of people who is learning English is greater than the number of English speakers in the USA (Jiang 2003). This has led to a shift in the numerical balance of power between native and non-native speaker groups. Also, because the range and variety of contexts in which English is used has increased exponentially, this has reduced the importance of the canonical context of native speakers speaking with non-native speakers, as more and more non-native speakers find reasons to communicate with each other using the language.

Indeed, the issue of language diversity is an extremely complex one. Scholars are faced with a number of challenging questions: What is standard English? What are varieties of

English? How can variation be described? And how can this inflect the career of English education?

1.2 Which is the model: a new question in the teaching and learning of English

While an exhaustive description of the use of English is a futile pursuit, with regard to the teaching and learning of English in the classroom such complexities have necessarily to be reduced to manageable models. The language of the classroom tends to be rather static and disregardful of variation in style and register and, more conspicuously, of regional variation. One of the main issues in the pedagogy of English is indeed the choice of an appropriate model for the teaching of English as a foreign or second language. Here "model" refers to regional variation, which is the main focus in the whole book. In this sense, the choice is seen as lying between three principal "rival" systems: Standard English (usually Standard British or Standard American English), World Englishes, and EIL/ELF (English as an International Language/English as a Lingua Franca).

Models for English

Most users of English in "Outer Circle" (Kachru 1985, 1992) speaker of English speak English as a second language.

They have not grown up from a baby to speak English, and they use it to comunicate with people in their own countries. In Outer Circle countries, there are also a considerable number of English-speaking people to learn English from infancy. The English of the native speakers in these locations is indistinguishable from the English of highly proficient non-native speakers, and the variety of English of both is influenced by the fact of English being, or having been, a non-native language for the overwhelming majority of those who speak it. English is used in a range of domains within these countries, and by substantial numbers of citizens.

In the Inner Circle countries, enough of the population is descended from people of British Isles ancestry to ensure a variety of English that is linked to the unbroken normal transmission of English (Thomason and Kaufman 1988) down the generations, and the majority of the population are native speakers of English. The Inner Circle countries have absorbed substantial numbers of people of non-British Isles ancestry who bring in new words and cultural practices, but whose presence has little effect on the general pattern of English.

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s it became accepted, first in academic circles, and then in wider society and government, that the Inner and Outer Circle settings are functionally and attitudinally similar. English belongs to its speakers in the Outer Circle, just as much as to its speakers in the Inner Circle, and all of them need to express their own

culture through an English adapted to their needs, and expressive of their geographical, national, and cultural identity.

The insights from the Outer Circle still be different from that from the Expanding Circle, despite their having been raised by Kachru (1985) over ten years earlier. In the Expanding Circle, English is predominantly a non-native language, used in very restricted domains (typically with foreigners), and learnt in scholastic settings. The teaching of English in mainland Europe is dominated by a monolithic model, usually based on Standard British English and RP, which may involve favouring "native speaker" teachers, requiring teachers to adhere to an out-of-date and highly abstracted sense of what is correct, and penalizing students for failing to use the "correct" accent, typically the Daniel Jones variant of RP which is nowadays little heard. This is my fourth paper making some effort to move the teaching of English as a foreign language into the real world.

The work of those connected with the term "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF) (House 1999, Seidlhofer and Jenkins 2003, Jenkins 2000, Seidlhofer and Jenkins 2003) represents a considerable effort to inject a sense of English as a World Language into EFL teaching. The thinking of the ELF group is most developed at the moment in phonology. Jenkins (2000, 2) seems to accept Quirk's notion of a "common core" as analogous for grammar and lexis. Quirk's common core, as they make clear, (Quirk, 1972) did not amount to a full,

teachable variety, because sometimes there is no core. For example, there is no single international word for a fast road (motorway, highway, expressway, etc.) or for the past participle of get (got or gotten).

A "core" is a way of imagining variation in English visually, a metaphor that might help us or might mislead. Many of the models of World English are strongly geographical. For example, Peter Strevens's much reproduced diagram (e. g. Crystal 1997, 62) creates a family tree for geographical varieties which is not entirely justifiable historically or linguistically. McArthur's concentric model makes more sense to me (McArthur 1998, 97). Its less localized standard centre works rather better than its more localized non-standard periphery: there seems to be no historical or linguistic reason to explain why Canadian English is between American and Caribbean English. It is on this centre that we would like to concentrate. Something that is being neglected in much of the World Englishes discussion at the moment is the concept of Standard English.

1.3 The problems in the standard of English under the background of globalization

Standard English is notoriously hard to define (Trudgill 1999). The concept of Standard English is very weak indeed in speech. There are standard pronunciations of words: for exam-

ple, starting chaos, chutzpah and church with the same sound would be regarded as incorrect. But there is no standard accent. If speakers ask for the correct pronunciation of an unfamiliar word they map the answer onto their own accent. In all English-using places there are high-prestige and low-prestige accents: accents have high or low prestige because hearers associate their speakers with particular social groups which have high or low prestige. These systems of prestige do not operate at international level. Speakers seldom know the prestige systems of countries other than their own. Even within the Inner Circle, one cannot compare the prestige of accents from one country with those of accents from another: it would be ridiculous, for example, to suggest that Canada is more or less prestigious than New Zealand. Nor are all Inner Circle accents more prestigious than all Outer Circle accents: a high-prestige speaker of (for example) Indian English is likely to have higher prestige all over the world than a speaker of an Inner Circle accent that is associated with low prestige and low levels of education.

All of us find it easier to understand familiar accents than unfamiliar ones. This gives rise to problems of intelligibility or comprehension between people from different places. The more localized the accent, the more likely it is to present problems to hearers from elsewhere. These are problems in Inner Circle varieties as well as in the other two circles. The huge range of accent variation means that there is some tolerance in face-to-face

interaction, where interlocutors with goodwill are prepared to exercise patience and work at comprehension. In oral mass media, decisions are made about the kinds of accents that will be intelligible to a sufficiently wide audience. This is reflected in the selection of reporters to fit imagined audiences, and in decisions about the use of dubbing or subtitles.

In writing there is a much stronger sense of Standard English, and much less diversity. I take Standard English as a written performative: it is something writers are supposed to produce in certain contexts, and on which they will accept the possibility of correction, by spell-checks, dictionaries and editors. I will be offended if you correct the way I pronounce the vowel of dance (/dans/), but I will be grateful (and possibly embarrassed) if you correct my spelling of concensus to consensus.

Part of the reason for the difficulty of definition is that Standard English is established not by government bodies or academies, but by a loose consensus of writers. There is no central control of Standard English at either national or international levels. This has long been a part of the linguistic culture of English (Schiffman 1996), and it is something scholars, teachers, and (quite early in the day) learners have to realize.

There is no mechanism for regulated change in English. Change comes about by mechanisms we do not fully understand. New words are not seen as an issue in English: a word can go from dialectal to standard usage in the space of months or even weeks. For example bling swept the world in 2002, first appea-

ring as bling bling. New ideas for food and drink are especially likely to bring words into English (e. g. macchiato). But when it comes to spelling, English is very conservative indeed. We have a spelling system based on fourteenth-century English, which was crystallized in its present form before 1700, and we have no mechanism whatever for reform. It is almost impossible for the spelling of a word to change: the handful of variants we now have (e. g. colo(u)r, hiccup/ough, dwarfs/ves) were the variants that survived to the early nineteenth century. We do have some conventional nonstandard spellings which we use in informal writing of certain types (e. g. nite, 18, thru), but we use these knowing them to be restricted.

So spelling follows a strict standard: there are correct and incorrect spellings, though a few words have more than one correct spelling. On the other hand, lexis is a free-for-all: new words are cheerfully welcomed. Grammar is more difficult to grasp than either orthography or lexis: there is a great deal of choice in grammar, and all too often, there is no way of finding out whether something is standard or not.

Who writes Standard English?

Overview volumes of World English are prone, like Gramley (2001), to represent Inner Circle varieties by their standard manifestations, while Outer Circle Englishes are represented by some of their more extremely non-standard manifestations. Canagarajah (2002) says that "all communities equally despise

their local varieties in deference to 'native' or 'standard' varieties (which attitude shows the power of internalized colonial values)". In fact, in both Inner and Outer Circles, Standard English (with minor variation) is expected and is used in the same kinds of domains, and in both Inner and Outer Circles there are non-standard varieties in other domains or used by some speakers, against which there are many hard words. Standard English is typically seen as "correct" and "grammatical", while non-standard dialects are seen as "wrong" and "ungrammatical", regardless of whether the speaker or the speaker's ancestors spoke English as a native language. Disapproval of non-standard varieties is not the prerogative of the formerly colonized. The reason that Singapore has had a Speak Good English Movement and India does not is that Singapore has a highly informal contact variety, usually known as Singlish, which has no real parallel in India. Standard English is not the property or prerogative of only the Inner Circle Countries, but of the whole English-using world.

Canagarajah (2002) wonders how "we distinguish between speakers with different levels/types of competence (without invoking notions of birth, nationality, or ethnicity and without imposing non-linguistic forms of inequality)". In practice, skill in Standard English, or lack of it, is the linguistic form of inequality that really matters. And we cannot predict that skill from birth, nationality, ethnicity or native-speakerdom. Users of written English are judged by their skill in Standard English.

Skill in Standard English is certainly not linked to native-speakerdom. To put it starkly: without any further information to help your decision, who would you prefer to edit your writing: a non-native speaker of English who is a Professor of English at an Indian (or a Belgian) university, or a monolingual Brit who left school with no qualifications at the age of 15?

There is so much choice within Standard English that the variation from one country to another seems minor. The widespread identification of words as local which are in "General English". The practice of comparing real, attested data from an Outer (or Expanded) Circle country with abstracted, theoretical "native-speaker" English is still all too common. We can only know what Standard English is by careful verification of usage. Luckily this has become much easier since the 1990s when Internet search engines first made it possible to use the web to see what (relatively high-prestige) people all over the world were actually writing.

Standard English on the Web

The Web carries texts of all types. There is a full range of genres, including genres which allow for playful language, and the incorporation of a range of identity codes. There are websites that include the representation of non-standard dialects, and there is also "leet speak", an extreme respelling of English sometimes used in blogs. This kind of insertion of non-standard English is intentional, usually small-scale, and often flagged.