



*Exploring Second-Language
Varieties of English
and Learner Englishes*

Bridging a paradigm gap

Edited by Joybrato Mukherjee
and Marianne Hundt

Studies in Corpus Linguistics

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Volume 44

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Table of contents

Introduction: Bridging a paradigm gap <i>Marianne Hundt and Joybrato Mukherjee</i>	1
Modal auxiliaries in second language varieties of English: A learner's perspective <i>Carolin Biewer</i>	7
English in Cyprus: Second language variety or learner English? <i>Christiane M. Bongartz and Sarah Buschfeld</i>	35
From EFL to ESL: Evidence from the <i>International Corpus of Learner English</i> <i>Gaëtanelle Gilquin and Sylviane Granger</i>	55
Formulaic sequences in spoken ENL, ESL and EFL: Focus on British English, Indian English and learner English of advanced German learners <i>Sandra Götz and Marco Schilk</i>	79
Studying structural innovations in New English varieties <i>Ulrike Gut</i>	101
Interrogative inversion as a learner phenomenon in English contact varieties: A case of Angloveralls? <i>Michaela Hilbert</i>	125
Overuse of the progressive in ESL and learner Englishes – fact or fiction? <i>Marianne Hundt and Katrin Vogel</i>	145
Typological profiling: Learner Englishes versus indigenized L2 varieties of English <i>Benedikt Szmrecsanyi and Bernd Kortmann</i>	167

A principled distinction between error and conventionalized innovation in African Englishes <i>Bertus van Rooy</i>	189
Discussion forum: New Englishes and Learner Englishes – <i>quo vadis?</i> <i>Marianne Hundt and Joybrato Mukherjee</i>	209
Bionotes	219
Index	221

Introduction

Bridging a paradigm gap

Marianne Hundt and Joybrato Mukherjee

University of Zurich and Justus Liebig University, Giessen

The present book goes back to a workshop on “Second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes” at the First Conference of the International Society for the Study of English (ISLE-1) in Freiburg in October 2008, which brought together scholars from all branches of English linguistics. The general topic of this inaugural conference of ISLE was “The Linguistics of English: Setting the Agenda”; the great interest among the conference participants in the workshop on “Second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes” was triggered by the wide-spread feeling that it is necessary to develop an integrated view of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and to put this on the agenda of English linguistics. All the papers in the present collection, most of which have emerged from selected presentations at the ISLE-1 workshop, thus aim at bridging what Sridhar & Sridhar (1986) have called the ‘paradigm gap’ between research into learner Englishes (e.g. English produced by learners of English in Germany and Japan) in the tradition of second-language acquisition (SLA) research on the one hand and research into institutionalized second-language varieties (e.g. Indian English and Nigerian English) in former colonial territories on the other. In spite of Sridhar & Sridhar’s (1986) plea for an integrated approach almost 25 years ago, these two objects of inquiry have continued to be treated as fundamentally different and unrelated areas of research ever since – notwithstanding some early attempts at comparing the features, functions and the underlying acquisitional processes of second-language varieties and learner Englishes (e.g. Williams 1987) as well as a few notable recent publications (e.g. Nesselhauf 2009).

The rigour with which researchers from both lines of research have abstained from taking the other group of non-native Englishes as a product of a different, yet not entirely dissimilar language-acquisition process into account also has to do with linguistic taboos, especially on the part of researchers interested in second-language varieties of English to establish these New Englishes as full-fledged

varieties with the potential to develop endonormative and local standards and norms. These emerging local standards and norms should not be conflated, in their view, with the error-focused description and analysis of foreign language learners' output as a deviation from an exonormative norm; consider, in this context, for example Kachru's (1982) clear distinction between deviations (in ESL) and mistakes (in EFL). However, since both learner Englishes and second-language varieties are typically non-native forms of English that emerge in language contact situations and that are acquired (more or less) in institutionalized contexts, it is high time that they were described and compared on an empirical basis in order to draw conceptual and theoretical conclusions with regard to their form, function and acquisition. Such descriptive studies and comparisons were not possible on a large scale in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s as the relevant computer corpora of second-language varieties of English (e.g. many components of the *International Corpus of English*, ICE) as well as learner Englishes (e.g. the *International Corpus of Learner English*, ICLE) have only become available recently.

This book thus aims at bridging the afore-mentioned paradigm gap by:

1. presenting empirical, in particular corpus-based, case studies of features of learner Englishes and second-language varieties of English, e.g. with regard to the use of formulaic routines;
2. discussing similarities and differences against the background of theoretical models and conceptions, e.g. stages in the second-language acquisition process and stages in the evolution of New Englishes;
3. analyzing forms of English that sit somewhat uneasily on the boundary between ESL (i.e. the Kachruvian 'outer circle') and EFL (i.e. the Kachruvian 'expanding circle'), e.g. English in Cyprus and South Africa;
4. assessing the suitability of categorial labels such as ESL and EFL as well as traditional distinctions such as the one between native and non-native speakers;
5. sketching out the future agenda of an integrated approach to non-native Englishes including both institutionalized second-language varieties and learner Englishes.

An integrated and comprehensive approach to non-native Englishes is particularly relevant to the future agenda of English linguistics because today the English language is used to a much larger extent as a non-native language (ESL/EFL) than a native language (ENL) – be it as the global language of science and technology, as a link language in multilingual postcolonial societies or as a lingua franca between speakers with different mother tongues, to name but a few examples of contexts in which English is used routinely by many L1 speakers of languages other than English.

The papers in the present volume address a range of hotly debated issues involved in – and arising out of – the empirical description, analysis, comparison and modelling of second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes. The authors were asked to address some or all of a number of lead questions in their papers, be it in setting the research context, in the discussion of the descriptive findings or in the concluding remarks. These lead questions were the following ones:

1. How can we distinguish the description of systematic features of a variant/variety from the analysis of errors? Is that distinction relevant in the first place?
2.
 - a. To what extent can similar “routes of development” (cf. Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008) and/or stages of acquisition be posited for English as a second language and English as a foreign language?
 - b. Is it useful and/or possible to provide for an integrated model for second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes, e.g. in a framework based on the notion of contact phenomena/varieties?
3.
 - a. Are traditional distinctions such as the well-established distinction between ENL, ESL and EFL and/or the related Kachruvian distinction between the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle still useful and viable?
 - b. What about the hotly disputed distinction between nativeness/native speakers and non-nativeness/non-native speakers?
4. To what extent are corpus data and corpus-linguistic methods relevant to the joint description and modelling of English as a second language and English as a foreign language?

All the authors have combined their own objects of inquiry with answers to some or all of these lead questions. In the first paper, **Carolyn Biewer** analyzes the use of modal auxiliaries across a wide range of Englishes in Africa, Asia and the South Pacific on the basis of comparable corpora. Her results trigger some interesting questions with regard to the suitability of the ESL-EFL distinction in general and the gradient nature of the second-language status of New Englishes in particular. **Christiane M. Bongartz and Sarah Buschfeld** look at English in Cyprus and assess to what extent it can be viewed as a second-language variety and/or as a learner English variant. Their sociolinguistic description and corpus findings make it clear that English in Cyprus is best viewed as a hybrid case, for which a *variety spectrum* offers a suitable descriptive tool. **Gaëtanelle Gilquin and Sylviane Granger** look at the use of the preposition *into* in the Spanish, French, Dutch and Tswana components of ICLE and compare it with native British English. They show that individual learner Englishes are more or less similar to native English with regard to different aspects of prepositional use, the emerging complex picture corroborating the adequacy of the label *learner Englishes* (rather than *learner English*);

Tswana English even defies classification as either an ESL or EFL variety. **Sandra Götz and Marco Schilk** provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of lexical bundles in native, second-language and learner language corpora. From their findings a very detailed picture of differences in the use of 3-grams between the three types of English speakers emerges, which indicates, *inter alia*, different degrees of formulaicity in ENL, ESL and EFL. **Ulrike Gut's** paper focuses on a core issue in research into non-native Englishes, namely the question of how to categorize structural changes in New Englishes: are they innovations or (learner) errors? She argues that the answer to this question depends essentially on speakers' attitudes and the status of the new variant or variety of English at hand. The non-standard use of inversion is at the heart of **Michaela Hilbert's** paper. Specifically, she analyzes interrogative inversion in Indian English, Singaporean English and Irish English; she argues convincingly that structurally identical forms and patterns may be based on vastly different processes, depending on the individual characteristics of the contact variety of English. **Marianne Hundt and Katrin Vogel** start off from a very detailed quantitative analysis of the use of the progressive in ENL, ESL and EFL forms of English on the basis of comparable corpora. Their findings lead them to call into question the seemingly neat divides between the three types of English, especially in the light of the complex interaction between globalization and localization of English on the one hand and cross-varietal influences between Englishes on the other. In contrast, **Benedikt Szmrecsanyi and Bernd Kortmann** argue that institutionalized second-language varieties and learner Englishes can be distinguished very clearly from a typological perspective. In particular, they analyze and compare the degrees of grammatical analyticity and grammatical syntheticity across a wide range of components of ICE and ICLE. Finally, **Bertus van Rooy** zooms in on New Englishes in Africa and discusses to what extent errors and innovations interact in the formation of new norms in this specific context. On the basis of three case studies, he introduces the notions of *grammatical stability* and *grammatical acceptability* as two essential criteria which allow linguists to identify emergent norms.

In the present book, we have tried to not only collect a selection of papers that have emerged from presentations at the ISLE-1 workshop on "Second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes" but also to capture the essence of the highly inspiring and at times controversial discussions after the presentations and in between the sessions. To this end, we have included a discussion forum in the final section of the book. All contributors were confronted with a selection of theoretical or methodological core statements from the articles (i.e. the starting point for the discussion forum) and were asked to comment on them. The discussion brings together and reviews the key strands of argumentation and the major points of convergence and controversy throughout the papers, and it sheds light on a

wide-ranging debate of the state of the art in research into second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes, some of the major concepts (and also some of the wide-spread myths) as well as potential avenues for future research.

We hope that the present selection of papers and the discussion forum will trigger off a renewed interest in an integrated approach to second-language varieties of English and learner Englishes – another step, hopefully, on the way to bridging the still existing paradigm gap.

Finally, we would like to thank Rosemary Bock and Sandra Götz for their invaluable help at all stages of the editing process.

Marianne Hundt and Joybrato Mukherjee

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Modal auxiliaries in second language varieties of English

A learner's perspective

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Although Sridhar and Sridhar pointed out as early as 1982 that the two linguistic fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and New English studies could benefit from each other, the gap between the two disciplines has never been closed. This article draws attention to some of the reasons why these two disciplines have not come together and discusses how SLA theory could be applied to New English studies to explain grammatical patterns found in many, if not all, L2 varieties of English. As a case study the usage of modals and semi-modals of obligation and necessity in various varieties of English as a second language (ESL) in Africa, Asia and the South Pacific will be considered. In this context it will also be discussed to what extent the (ENL)-ESL-EFL distinction of Kachru's model is still suitable if we now include a learner's perspective and focus on similarities between ESL and EFL (English as a foreign language). As differences in the usage of modal auxiliaries in different ESL varieties are mostly quantitative rather than categorical, a corpus linguistic approach was chosen.

1. Introduction

In 1982 Sridhar & Sridhar drew attention to the lack of cooperation between the linguistic fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and New English studies. Although it had been claimed that SLA theory was generally applicable and that outer circle varieties of English had not explicitly been excluded from this approach, the difference between New Englishes and English as a foreign language had not been considered, so that the application of SLA theory to New Englishes

remained questionable (cf. Sridhar & Sridhar 1992: 91ff).¹ While their article discusses in detail how these two areas of research could benefit from each other, SLA theory and New English studies have until today remained two largely separate approaches to the use of English by non-native speakers. This article will explore some of the reasons for this on-going separation and make suggestions as to how SLA theory could be integrated into the research of New Englishes. It discusses to what extent a distinction between English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) is still a sensible approach, while their similarities, in particular their mutual origin as learner varieties, should not be neglected.

As a case study for these theoretical reflections I have chosen to study modal auxiliaries in second language varieties of English in Africa, Asia and the South Pacific. The system of modal auxiliaries in English is highly complex in terms of function and meaning (e.g. Stephany 1995: 105), which makes it very interesting to follow the development of the modal system in the acquisition process. Similarities in the usage of modal auxiliaries between ESL and EFL may point to similarities in the acquisition process for these two groups of non-native English. On the other hand, in the semantic distinction of epistemic and deontic meaning, which is inherent in all languages of the world (e.g. de Haan 2006: 45 for 'ability'), the appropriateness of the strength of a statement of probability or advice/permission is determined by the value system of the individual society.² These "culturally construed notions of linguistic presupposition and propriety" (Kwachka & Basham 1990: 413) are likely to trigger lasting features in ESL to reflect cultural heritage and cultural identity. This could be one of the major aspects to distinguish ESL from EFL, in which the final goal of the learner will be to achieve native speaker competence. In EFL deviations that arise from learner mistakes will be eradicated; one's own cultural background will not necessarily be expressed with the learned language (also see Kachru's distinction of ESL as 'norm-developing' versus EFL as 'norm-dependent', e.g. in Bolton (2006: 249)). By examining modal auxiliaries in different ESL varieties – which have no historical or genetic connection to each other – one may therefore be able to find common patterns that could be explained with general SLA processes and distinct patterns that could be explained by

1. *New Englishes* in this paper are identified with the terms 'L2 varieties of English', 'English as a second language' (ESL) and 'outer circle varieties of English'. They are to be distinguished from *Learner English*, which is also called 'English as a foreign language' (EFL) or 'expanding circle varieties', and from English used by native speakers, which is called 'English as a native language' (ENL) or 'inner circle varieties'. The distinction ENL-ESL-EFL or inner circle – outer circle – expanding circle is adopted from Kachru (1985).

2. See for instance Basham and Kwachka (1989: 131) on differences of modal usage in Eskimo communities in Alaska or Biewer (2009: 51) on differences of modal usage in Fijian communities in Fiji.

differences in the local communities. One would not only be able to predict a path of nativization of certain patterns but also to discuss, with the modal auxiliaries as an example, the value of SLA theory for the research of New Englishes and Kachru's model of the ESL-EFL distinction. As distinctions in the usage of modal auxiliaries are mainly quantitative distinctions, it could also be demonstrated that a corpus linguistic approach for the study of modal auxiliaries is beneficial.

In Section 2 I will examine more closely how and why the paradigm gap between New English studies and SLA theory emerged and how it can be bridged. The important question to discuss in this context is to what extent we can and should distinguish between ESL and EFL. In that respect Kachru's model of inner circle – outer circle – expanding circle varieties will be re-examined. Section 3 introduces several principles and constraints of SLA which could be applied to New English studies and discusses to what extent they can be used to explain the modal auxiliary system in ESL. Previous results on the acquisition of modality in SLA will be considered; previous findings on modal usage in the research of New Englishes will be reinterpreted. In Section 4 I will study the form and function of seven modals and semi-modals of obligation and necessity in various Asian, African and South Pacific L2 varieties and we will see how SLA theory can be applied to explain the results of the case study. The conclusion will draw attention to the wider implications of the case study. In this way it will be possible to shed some light on how SLA theory can be applied to ESL varieties – how the gap could be bridged before it becomes a gulf, so to speak – for the mutual benefit of both disciplines.

2. Second language acquisition and New Englishes – a bridge to be built

2.1 The (ENL-) ESL-EFL taxonomy revisited

One reason why the so-called paradigm gap between New English studies and SLA theory has not been closed yet can be found in the different usage of terminology. In variational linguistics a general distinction is made between three different speech communities – those using English as either a native, as a second or as a foreign language. This tripartite model – based on an initial distinction of three types of speakers of English by Strang (1970) – was established by Quirk et al. (1972), further developed by Moag (1982) and eventually adapted by Kachru (1983/1985), who called these different varieties 'inner circle', 'outer circle' and 'expanding circle varieties' (also see Mollin 2006: 25, McArthur 1998: 42f, Görlach 2002: 99). In this model the New Englishes, if we apply Platt et al.'s narrow definition (Platt et al. 1984: 2f), are identified as ESL, and defined as institutionalized non-native varieties of English which are used in former post-colonial settings

(Kachru 1985, Granger 1996: 13). In contrast, EFL is learned in a setting in which English is restricted to the classroom and has no historical or official purpose in the country (Granger 1996: 14). It is not an institutionalized variety but a performance variety (Kachru 1983: 54). This terminology is common in British linguistics, whereas in America *any* non-native variety of English may be called ESL (Platt et al. 1984: 22). It is further complicated by the fact that in SLA studies ESL refers to any learners of English who acquire the language in an English-speaking country (Granger 1996: 14), therefore including the English of immigrants (Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008: 5f). Only in a wider definition of ESL and New Englishes in the variationist approach would immigrant English be included in ESL (Mesthrie & Bhatt 2008: 12). Moreover, in SLA studies ESL (in the variationist definition) may be labelled EOL, 'English as an official language', whereas ESL is then exclusively identified with immigrant English (Granger 1996: 14).

The different categorizations in the two disciplines highlight different aspects. In the New English perspective the tripartite distinction of ENL, ESL and EFL has a socio-historical base focussing on the historical role of the English language in different societies; in SLA the main point is that people whose language is studied are learners of the language with different circumstances of acquisition, i.e. the exposure to the target language in everyday life differs. From the SLA point of view it does not matter whether someone who acquires English as a non-native speaker in an English-speaking environment has lived there for a couple of years or is living there permanently, whereas from the point of view of New English studies it is a vital difference, as people belong or do not belong to a certain speech community within the country. In the variationist approach ESL is clearly distinguished from EFL in that deviation from ENL can be an indication of nativization, the process of developing a new variety with its own norms. In SLA the major point is that this is not first language but second language acquisition. This may be one reason why some studies on SLA do not openly distinguish between ESL and EFL (e.g. Stephany, also see definition in Ortega 2009: 1f) or do not give much information on the people whose English is being studied (e.g. Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000). For Sridhar & Sridhar (1992: 93) the lack of recognition in SLA that New Englishes are different from learner English in terms of the goal of learning, the input, the function in society and the motivation of learning is the main cause of the paradigm gap. We can rephrase this as a neglect on both sides: while in New English studies the differences between ESL and ENL are at the centre of interest, distinctions tend to be overrated. In SLA, in which the search for a common core of general acquisition processes is at the heart of the investigation, similarities tend to be overrated.

In this paper, the intention is to apply SLA to the study of New Englishes and show the extra-ordinary position of institutionalized non-native varieties in the paradigm. Thus, I will use the variationist terminology with a clear ESL-ELF