

어문연구 4권 1994년 2월

English and 'New Englishes'

- Implications for the teacher and learner -

Mark C. Thompson*

Mark C. Thompson.(1994). English and 'New Englishes': Implications for the teacher and learner. *Language & Literature Research* . 4.137~154.

In less than six years time the twentieth century will be consigned to history and the world's growing population will embark on a new era: living in an environment increasingly affected by the spread of mass communication. The world's present day economic and political requirements have expanded the population's need to communicate effectively over both geographic and racial boundaries. With this advent of mass communication, English-or some form of new English-has become the pre-eminent language of communication:to such an extent that English is now considered the unofficial world language. This worldwide use of English in its varying forms, has occurred not only amongst speakers of the native varieties of English(British, American, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and South African), but also between non-native speakers of the language where various forms of English are now used as intelligible methods of communication.

The spectacular spread of the English language with its varying diversifications, has its roots in the British and American colonial eras, when English was the principle language of administration and trade. During the colonial period, other native types of English developed e.g.Australian,

*한국해양대학교 교양과정부 객원교수

New Zealand, Canadian which have in turn affected the growth and development of other varieties of new Englishes within each native country's sphere of influence. Today, many varieties of English exist which are used not only in the native speaking countries but also in countries where English now serves as either the language of communication in multilingual societies or as a government endorsed official language as in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Despite the fact that the colonial powers have been in retreat since the Second World war, much of the infrastructure of administration, commerce and education has remained. Even though the political power of the old colonial English speaking nations has in some cases waned, in contrast, the importance and use of the English language has grown. As English becomes more important so greater numbers of people are becoming exposed to the language within their own speech communities and environment. As this has been happening, people have been adopting the English language to their own requirements and functions, and in this way English has diversified and developed into a variety of systems that are now considered as 'new Englishes'. This process has been recognised as having happened in countries such as Singapore, Taiwan and the crown colony of Hong Kong. In the Asian Pacific and Australasia these new Englishes have evolved parallel to the accepted standard forms of British, American, Australian and New Zealand English.

Therefore numerous forms of English are spoken by the region's people and it should be recognised that although these Englishes in their mutually intelligible forms may have enormous similarities they are nevertheless different. It should also be stressed that these differences, whether they

occur within regional standards or new Englishes, are not incorrect, bad or sub-standard English, but must be recognised as standards in their own rights.

This view however, is not entirely supported by some respected linguists such as Randolph Quirk, whose argument against the 'New Englishes' was succinctly summarised in McCrum's and MacNeil's work where they point out:

Professor Sir Randolph Quirk continues to be sceptical about the alleged break-up of the language into the 'New Englishes'. In the series of papers, he has argued with characteristic wit and forcefulness against the classification of English into ever more subsidiary branches, for example, 'Nigerian English, Filipino English' and even 'Chicano English'. These designations, Quirk writes, are freely used, each implying a unitary and reasonably well-established variety of English, specific to the country concerned. He goes on to argue that these designations are not welcomed by those in government and media, who know that by international standards this is 'bad English' and that to recognise a local variety is just an effort to put into respectable disguise low levels of English attainment' (McCrum, Cran, MacNeil Page 391, 1987)

Consequently, the decision of which standard of English to teach, and the manner in which any syllabus is planned,

depends on whether the particular standard of English is recognised by both teacher and learner as the target standard they wish to attain.

English language planners and syllabus/ materials designers should take into account not only the attitude towards the English language of individual learners from specific areas, but also their country's/region's perception of the role that English plays in its day to day life.

This will be determined by who and where the teacher is teaching. Since accepted mother tongue standards of English have themselves been adapted in the Asian Pacific region e.g. in Singapore and Hong Kong, the approach of teachers to the socio-cultural environment in which they are teaching is essential. In this region of the world, learners may consider English to be either a second or foreign language i.e. E.S.L. or E.F.L, and this attitude may in turn affect the learners' motivation and progress. A clear knowledge of the standard of English required, and maybe already used and understood by the learner, enhanced by a knowledge of the ways in which the language functions within the learner's speech community can help teachers/syllabus designers with the type of language and material they choose to present to a class. Teachers should be aware that it is not always enough to approach an English teaching situation with what they believe to be a 'correct English standard', especially if their assumption does not correlate with their learners' expectations.

Obviously, a teacher's idea of acceptable English-its grammar, lexis and phonology - will depend on the teacher's own nationality. It will depend on whether he or she is a native or non-native English speaker, as well as the variety of

English that he or she speaks. Although the majority of E.L.T. course books with their linked materials use either standard British English (with standard R.P. or South Eastern English pronunciation) and General American as a standard to be taught, a great many English teachers are non-natives of England and America; an even greater number are non-native English speakers. These non-native English speaking teachers may not have had any English language training in an English speaking country, and have possibly never been taught by a native English speaker. They may also have never worked with native English speakers, relying on the media and teaching materials (textbooks, cassettes, resource books etc.) for their English language needs. Therefore, their attitude and feeling for the language is formed not only by the variety of English which they find natural, but also through their own learning experiences.

However, very often too much emphasis is placed on the need for 'native speakers' simply because English is their mother tongue. A non-native speaker of English approaches the teaching of the English language from a different perspective than a native English speaker. Since the non-native English speaking teacher has had to learn the language he or she has already experienced the problems in learning the target language. In this situation, it is therefore desirable that cooperation occurs between native and non-native English teachers so that approaches, methods and techniques in language learning can be shared. Every English language teacher has his or her own opinions and strengths regardless of nationality. Consequently, these individual qualities can be enhanced by mutual assistance between native and non-native speakers.

Over a period of time, the variations in each individual teacher's idiolect may permeate through to the manner in which they use the English language, this in turn will be passed on to their respective students. As this procedure advances, so new varieties of English, with their own individual features become further ingrained within the individual speech communities.

The distinction between English as a second language and English as a foreign language is then additionally blurred by the formation of regional variations which are recognised by their speakers as intelligible and correct. Teachers of English and linguists must therefore ask themselves where the boundaries of "acceptable" standards of English for second and foreign English language learners fall. If teachers and language planners are excessively rigid, do they then place themselves in a position where they are perceived to be unnecessarily pedantic? After all, all languages, whether written or spoken, change, develop and are often influenced by other languages.

For example, the vocabulary of the English language is constantly being enlarged and diversified by the borrowing of 'loan words' from other languages. This process has occurred over many years, so much so, that native speakers of English are often unaware of the origin of everyday vocabulary currently in use.

In their 1988 book 'Dictation' Davis and Rinvulcri compiled a list of common loan words taken from a variety of sources. This list includes:

Alcohol, assassin, zero, coffee. (Arabic)

Mother, father, brother. (Anglo Saxon)

Kitsch, doppelganger, kaput. (German)
Disco. (French)
Boss, hamburger, coleslaw. (American English—two
from Dutch, one from German)
Skiing. (Norwegian)
Mosquito, potato, tobacco. (South, American Spanish)
Tea. (Chinese)
Husband, want, get. (Old Norse)
Yacht, cruise, pickle. (Dutch)
Jass, jukebox. (West Africa via Black American English)
Taboo, tattoo. (Polynesian)
Balcony, Opera, umbrella. (Italian)
Telescope, telephone, atom. (Greek)
Shampoo, bungalow. (Hindi)
Sputnik, mammoth, robot. (two from Russian, one Czech.)
Whiskey. (Irish Gaelic)
Pal. (Romany)

Davis and Rinvoluceri point out that this borrowing of vocabulary has made the English language a hybrid language, a strong crossbreed rather than "a delicate thoroughbred". (Davis Rinvoluceri. Page 52)

Subsequently, since the lexis of the English language is ever increasing, teachers and linguists should pay attention to usages that become part of the lingua franca.

Therefore, this forces the English teacher and anyone involved with the English language to ask where the point is reached when the English language ceases to be any recognisable form of new English or dialect (has it even become a recognisable form of creole or pidgin?) and consequently makes up his or her mind as to what constitutes an acceptable English

standard.

Teachers and language planners should also take into account distinctive national characteristics and perspectives of the English language. When a nation has an accepted standard of New English, this is then identified by the indigenous population as a unifying standard. Once in this position, it becomes the language of the media and administration; one that is intelligible to the majority of the populace; regardless of regional variations. Since this unifying standard becomes the language of authority and influence, it gradually becomes to be established as a 'status' variety of the language, which can have the effect of greatly altering the learner's perception and motivation in mastering this accepted standard. By attempting to learn a status variety of English, a learner may feel that he or she will enhance their career prospects along with the salaries they are able to command, and be considered to belong to an elite social class within their own community. In this case, if the learner lives in an environment where a non-standard variety of English is commonly used, then the learner may very well wish to acquire an 'accepted' standard of English which is regarded as the status variety by the regional establishment. The learner's society, his peers and superiors, may judge his suitability for employment and his professional performance solely on the type of English he or she uses.

Even in countries where a new variety of English has emerged, there has often been a backlash against the 'New English' by the ruling establishment. In recent years the most dramatic example of this occurrence was in Singapore, when the government of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a concerted effort to discredit and even eradicate Singaporean

English, since the government deemed it to be an unacceptable and negligent standard. The native citizens of Singapore were urged to master a Standard British English - along with an R.P./South eastern English pronunciation model - as a standard acceptable not only to the government, but to the educated English speaking world as well. However, Singaporean English had already had enough time to develop to such an extent that it bridged the heterogeneous communities on the island, and had evolved into a variety of English plentiful in its own lexis and phonology.

Since the authorities didn't recognise the Singaporean English(Singlish) variety as a status variety of English, many people strove to alter both their spoken and written English - especially for professional purposes - so that it co-ordinated with the government endorsed standard. Therefore many learners may begin to believe that they have to master a status standard, especially phonologically because it is believed to be 'correct' and will improve their standing in the eyes of their superiors. Some teachers may also feel that a higher authority wishes them to attempt to eradicate new varieties of English by their teaching, and continue teaching the accepted status standard regardless of the fact that language changes naturally with time and is not a monolithic entity. Whilst the authorities may have achieved a limited success in the media and amongst members of the establishment Singaporean English thrives and can be distinctly heard throughout the streets and shopping malls of the island state.

Attempting to remove a new variety of English, especially one which has become deep-rooted within a speech community, is no different than if the British government tried to forcibly

eradicate a British accent or dialect. Second, and foreign English language learners, should be made aware that the complexities of regional variation occur in native English speaking countries as well, and that this fact is especially true of the United Kingdom. A Singaporean learner who has studied and practiced a South Eastern English standard over a lengthy period of time, may on arrival in Britain be greatly surprised to find that this standard is only used by a minority of native English speakers. The enormous diversity of accents, dialects and vocabulary within the British Isles is often unknown to many English language learners prior to their first visit to the U.K. Consequently, this first visit can be a bewildering experience.

This particular problem can also be transferred to any region where teachers of English may find themselves in classrooms with a heterogeneous class who all consider themselves to be the same nationality (in that they all hold the same nation's passport) but who have different mother-tongues, and therefore, different problems due to mother-tongue interference. Within a class like this, different ethnic and nationality groups may be motivated to learn English and orientate themselves towards a particular standard of English for a variety of reasons, thus their preference for a particular standard may have embedded historical and social reasons.

The English language has been changed, developed and adapted by native English speakers within native English speaking nations in much the same manner as the English language has progressed in non-native English speaking regions. Circumstances and history have always had a profound effect on the direction - and diversification - that the English language has taken. A knowledge of this history and the influence it has had on native, second and foreign speakers

and learners will undoubtedly assist not only English teachers in the area, but language planners, syllabus/material designers as well as English language examiners and their evaluation systems.

Only then can teachers and language planners begin to evaluate the status that English holds within a speech community. It is then possible to direct our teaching and language planning towards a standard which is both appropriate and relevant to our learners needs, as well as to the requirements of the society within which they live and work.

The continuing worldwide spread of English and the development of new Englishes both in their standard and non-standard forms has played a decisive role in the selection of teaching/learning materials for teachers of the language everywhere.

Consequently, the development and adaptation of the English language now make it even more important for native and non-native English language teachers to be aware of their learners' respective language requirements as well as the needs of the society in which the learner lives and works. It is imperative that relevant and valid language is presented in the teaching/learning situation; relevant to the learners' needs, as opposed to the English teacher's own perception of the language which could easily be determined by an individual teacher's country of origin.

For example, an Australian English teacher dealing with Vietnamese or Hong Kong immigrant learners in Sydney will have little use for text-books and materials specifically directed at a standard British English. Much of that material will be irrelevant not only to the immigrants language

requirements, but also to the social needs of their new lives in Australia. Whilst in this situation the grammar of English may vary only very slightly from a standard British English, there are however, important lexical and phonological differences in Australian English. Certainly in terms of lexis, colloquial vocabulary will have to be introduced to the learners, so that they can carry out everyday social activities and be able to intergrate themselves successfully into the community. A native Australian English teacher should be aware of the native standard, but if a British or American teacher found themselves in the same teaching situation they would need to familiarize themselves with the Australian standard of English required by their immigrant learners. In these situations the learners' and teachers' environment dictates the standard of language used. J.Platt describes this as 'External standards' and states that:

There is a difference between learning English in a country such as Germany, where it will remain a foreign language, and learning English in a country where it is used not only as the medium of instruction but in various activities outside the classroom and where it has slowly established itself as a variety in its own right (J.Platt et al, page 163)

A pitfall the teacher must avoid is not to teach an inappropriate standard. If the learners find themselves in a foreign speech community expecting to use a standard learnt, and are unable to use or understand the language around them because the normally spoken language is of a different variety, then this is either a failure or deep misunderstanding

on the teacher's/institution's part to the needs of their learners. Therefore, it is paramount that both native and non-native English teachers familiarise themselves with the historical and social significance that English-or a variety of English - has played in the individual Asian Pacific nations, and that this knowledge is subsequently used to adapt the teacher's English language teaching skills to the needs of his or her English learners.

It must not also be overlooked that learners with highly specific language needs not only require possibly a status standard of English, but also E.S.P.(English for specific purposes)and therefore should if possible be taught according to the requirements of their specialist areas. The nature of their occupational needs will reflect the teachers priorities, especially in an area of highly technical and scientific terminology. Indeed, many industries employ English language teachers for these purposes, combining a general standard of the language with the learners' specific requirements.

As in any area of the world, appropriate language standards differ from generation to generation, therefore the teacher needs to take into account the age group of his learners and the type of language they are acquiring from sources outside the classroom. In their social lives, the type of English teenagers take an interest in-pop lyrics, comics, escapism films - can differ widely from the types of English a director or teacher finds interesting.

These generational differences may also manifest themselves in deep rooted historical attitudes to English, and to the type of English used by old colonial powers. In many parts of the world especially where the colonial past is still within living memory, the attitude of the older generation is often biased by

the way it perceives the place of the English language within the nation's history. They must often wonder whether the introduction of English has improved the quality of their lives, or merely eroded the fabric of their national identity.

In this context there remains one additional area for the native or non-native English speaking teacher to comprehend and one which is of particular relevance to all learners.

It is not enough to simply apprise and understand the variety of English - or New English-which individual learners need in order to master the language. It must be pointed out to English language learners that when people communicate and interact amongst themselves, they do so in the context of the culture and situation in which they are operating. Consequently, communication, and the activities which take place within cultures and situations are governed by what society perceives to be both permitted and possible. In different situations the function and meaning of language changes, and the appropriate choice of register often proves a difficult choice for learners of the language. Halliday and Strevens pointed out that:

The choice of items from the wrong register, and the mixing of items from different registers are among the the most frequent mistakes made by non-native speakers of a language.

(Halliday et al, Page 19)

The choice of register also differs from one variety of English to another. The concept of what is recognised as formal/ appropriate/correct or vice versa, changes according to the socio/cultural and ethnic background of the speech community.

Since register depends on what the speaker is doing at the time of speaking, it is important to stress to the learners that their speech acts will be determined by the activities they are involved in. Communication and interaction between people involve not only the topic but also the participants, their roles/status, and the role the language takes i.e. written or spoken. It is not particularly relevant to teach learners all the different ways of carrying out a communicative act, especially if the learner remains ignorant of how to use it in the correct context and situation. Learners often choose items from the wrong register simply because they have been issued lists of communicative functions, (i.e. all the ways to make a request, and the lexical items that accompany it), without being made aware of the different usages for particular social contexts.

The teacher needs to point out to learners that grammar and vocabulary vary from register to register, and can be affected not only by the speaker's actions but also by the social or occupational context. Many learners, especially those with specific professional requirements, will learn special structures and vocabulary - technical/scientific - directly relating to the type of communicative act and registers used by them inside the confines of their specialist fields. However, a command of specialist English, and appropriate registers used to relay messages to fellow colleagues, will not be sufficient if the learner needs to communicate effectively with people outside his particular specialist field. English language learners need to be able to use conversational registers so that they can make themselves understood in general everyday situations. An awareness of how language changes from one occasion to another and a correct choice of register will enhance the learners' confidence and performance.

When the learner realises that what he says or writes depends on the variables of the activity, the participants and the role of the language in any given situation, then he will be able to choose an appropriate register using grammatical and lexical items which reflect particular social/situational contexts. Therefore, teachers must make themselves aware of the type of situations that their learners are likely to face, and the appropriate registers needed by either the learner's own speech community or the speech community into which the learner wishes to integrate.

The teacher must not impose a set of rules solely concerning either dialectal or diatypic varieties, which are not relevant to the requirements of the learners and their speech communities.

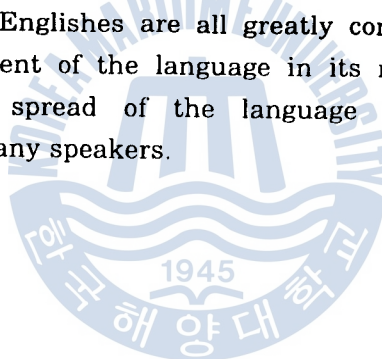
There is little doubt that the use of the English language as a 'common language' will continue and inevitably increase. That is not to say that English in all its native forms, as well as the 'New Englishes' will necessarily follow the same directions in their development.

However, the English language has remained basically mutually intelligible to English language speakers (native and Non-native) and this mutual intelligibility will further sustain any area's economic and political influence - a fact that no English language teacher must forget; regardless of what level, area, or nationality happens to be in the teaching/learning situation. Teachers should not forget that when teaching English the relevance and appropriacy of the language must parallel the needs of their learners and the communities in which they live. An understanding of the problems which can arise due to variational differences, and the role the language plays in reflecting the activities of the learner will enable teachers to position their teaching so that it corresponds to

the expectations of their learners.

It has been proved that the growth and development of the English language is going to continue. In all regions of the world as greater numbers of national new Englishes are recognised, so this diversification of the language makes the statement 'English as a world language' redundant. We should instead be referring to 'the family of Englishes as a world language'. By doing this we are recognising that Englishes in their many mutually intelligible forms may have enormous similarities, but are nevertheless different.

These varieties of Englishes are all greatly contributing to the overall development of the language in its many forms, and this use and spread of the language reflects the requirements of its many speakers.



References

- Bailey, R. and Gollach, M. (1982)
English as a World Language
Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, P. and Rinalucchi, M. (1988)
Dictation.
Cambridge
University Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K., McIntosh, A. and Stevens, P. (1964)
The Linguistic Sciences and
Language Teaching
London : Longman.
- Platt, J. Weber, H. and Ho, M.L. (1984)
The New Englishes
London : Routledge and Kegan Paul.