

INCORPORATING WORLD ENGLISHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

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Scopul acestui articol este de a valorifica cercetările recente ce se referă la „limbile engleze” care există în lume și la statutul limbii engleze ca Lingua Franca. Ne vom axa în jurul implicărilor fenomenului „limbii engleze” în procesul de predare a acestei limbi și a gradului în care această diversitate este luată în considerare de către profesorii de limbă engleză, lingviști și metodiști. Limba engleză este predată și învățată datorită statutului său de limbă internațională. Engleza este văzută ca un mijloc care va deschide uși în multe părți ale lumii și în domenii diverse de specializare. Însă, atât predarea limbii engleze, precum și învățarea acesteia, s-au dovedit a fi niște sarcini complexe și dificile. Întrebarea firească ce apare pentru acei care învață limba, dar și pentru acei care o predau este: care variantă a limbii engleze este corectă – limba engleză vorbită în Marea Britanie sau cea utilizată în SUA?

The global spread of English together with increased migration, advances in telecommunication, travelling across international borders has resulted in a growing linguistic diversity in English-speaking countries. At present the English language occupies rightly the status of a lingua franca. It has developed a diverse functional range being the language of communication in technology, science, business, tourism. The language is studied worldwide in the most remote regions due to the social prestige it confers to its speakers. English is taught and learned in many countries because it is indisputably the international language, it is seen by many as a means to open doors to parts of the world that are not accessible to everyone otherwise, and learners are delighted by the increased international opportunities they believe the knowledge of English will bring to them. Due to all these factors it is imperative that both teachers and learners should develop an understanding and be aware of the linguistic diversity and have positive attitudes towards World Englishes. Interacting with people from different countries, we hear English with a range of fluency, which often deviates from the Standard English we have been taught in terms of accent, vocabulary, grammar. Although a certain level of variability exists among World Englishes speakers from the same country, a general categorisation of World Englishes is possible. B.Kachru represents the stratification of World Englishes by three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. Inner Circle countries include Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. English in these countries has official status. In Outer Circle countries English has an official or semi-official status. These are the former British and American colonies such as Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania etc. In these countries, the indigenous population speak a different mother tongue, but because of the status of English associated with prestige and career-making, many of them are fluent speakers of English. However, in these regions a large number of pidgin Englishes have developed, which are mixtures of English and the mother tongue of these populations. Expanding Circle countries include China, Caribbean countries, Egypt, Israel, Japan Korea, Central and South American countries; here English does not have an official status, but is taught widely as a foreign language [5, p.77-78].

The model of English that should be taught in the classroom has been a subject of debate for a long time. Analysis of English language teaching practices points out the fact that the English taught is based almost exclusively on American or British English, and textbooks include characters and cultural topics from the English-speaking countries of the inner world, that is from the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand. Another issue in teaching English is related to dialects, that is standard versus non-standard English. Notions of 'the good' in English-language usage are informed by teachers' experience and by authoritative linguists. In recent decades, new ways of evaluating language interpretation and use have been explored and tested; such recent conceptions of what it means to be intelligible may be seen as 'better' in that they accord more closely with the observable data and situations around us. In particular, the choice of overall model of English that is presented to students and by which their English is evaluated ought to be considered in pragmatic rather than a priori terms.

A distinction is customarily made between *native* and *nativised* varieties of English. Thus, the British, American and Australian Englishes are referred to as native varieties, while the newer varieties that have developed in regions where English was not originally spoken and has undergone changes under the influence of local languages and cultures by being in direct contact with them are attributed to the nativised varieties. Andy Kirkpatrick considers the following criteria for classifying a variety of English as “native” rather than “nativised”:

- a) the native variety has been around for a long time;
- b) it has influenced younger varieties of English in some way [4, 5].

There are two more criteria, which, in the linguist’s opinion, are based on prejudice. By native English “people usually mean a variety of English spoken by a native speaker of English and this speaker is usually thought of as being white” [4, 6]. Following this criterion, British and American Englishes would be considered as being “native” Englishes, while Indian, Malaysian and other varieties as being “nativised”. According to the last criterion, mentioned by Andy Kirkpatrick, “a native variety of English is superior to a nativised one. Some people feel that the older a variety is, the better it is” [4, p.76]. In consequence, if a variety of English is old (British, American Englishes), it means that it is purer than nativised varieties.

However, it is difficult to consider this classification rational. Not only Andy Kirkpatrick, but also many other researches believe that all varieties of English are, in fact, nativised. Even the earliest form of English was a mixture of many languages. Around the 15th century Standard English took shape, which was a truly mongrel language, consisting of a mixture of Latin, Greek, French, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon forms.

Each variety reflects the culture of people who speak it. Therefore, *Standard English* should be treated as an abstract term, designating that aspect of the English language that is considered as being the most representative of this language spoken in the British Isles. Originally, it was the speech of the educated people of London and of the southeast of England. Today this form of English is the language employed in schools, official institutions and broadcasts, and it is also the form of English that is described in grammars.

In the same way, we may speak of American English standard, New Zealand English standard, Malaysian English standard etc. What is important to keep in mind is the idea of unity that stands at the base of a language without denying the idea of diversity. All the varieties of English should be treated as dialects. The phrase *Standard English*, because of its prestige, led to some misunderstandings regarding the place of this form of English among the other dialects. Linguistically, Standard English is a dialect of the English language as it is the speech used by people belonging to a certain regional area, and it is also the speech of the educated people, favoured by the official authorities. The impression that it rises above the dialectal features results from the fact that it is the language of culture, and, as such, it is the language of literature, of the press and, generally speaking, the language of the educated people all over the country. Another preconception, concerning the superiority of this form of language over all other forms, is that people often attach to the standard language the idea of correctness, dismissing all the other dialects and treating them as samples of incorrect “bad” language. A third prejudice related to the phrase *Standard English* is that it is considered to be *the* English language, which inevitably leads to treating other varieties of English as a kind of deviation from a norm and regarding the large number of people who speak English as their mother tongue as not being able to speak *the* English language.

The scientific truth consists in the fact that Standard English is only one variety among many, although a significant one. Scholars are convinced that all languages, and correspondingly all dialects, are equally appropriate and good as linguistic systems if they meet the needs of their speakers. According to P.Trudgill, “value judgements concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are *social* rather than linguistic. There is nothing at all inherent in non-standard varieties which makes them inferior. Any apparent inferiority is due only to their association with speakers from under-privileged, low-status groups” [6]. Therefore, prejudices against non-standard dialects are the same prejudices that reflect the social structure of society. No pronunciation, word or grammatical construction can be considered objectively as being superior to others from a strictly linguistic viewpoint. It was the chance of the London region to impose its dialect as the standard language, but if any other capital area had been chosen, the dialect of that region would have acquired that function, and, no doubt, the same prejudices would have existed concerning the speech characteristics of the other areas. “To say that some word or form is better than some other, because Shakespeare or Milton or King James Bible used it, is like saying that a particular colour of red is better because Titan or Rubens used

it. It may perhaps be better for getting a particular aesthetic or artistic effect – that is the creative artist’s or critic’s concern, not ours; but it is obviously not better from a scientific or practical point of view.” [2, p.50] (borrowed from [3, p.2341].

The study of regional linguistic variation has much to offer as the more we know about regional variation and change in the use of English, the more we will appreciate the striking individuality of each of the varieties that is called a dialect, and the less we are likely to adopt a despising attitude towards people from other parts of the world who speak English. An understanding of World Englishes can promote multiculturalism and enrich one’s teaching of history and geography. Students come to understand the sociocultural, political, and moral issues related to linguistic diversity. A first step, according to D.Crystal, is “to replace the notion that a regional variety is ‘only a dialect’, because it lacks prestige of the standard language, with the realization that every dialect is a source of great linguistic complexity and potential” [1, p.299]. Further, the linguist notes that it is difficult to persuade ourselves that a dialect which we find worth detesting is “a variety of the English language which deserves as much respect, as the variety we speak ourselves” [1, p.299].

When learning a language, the foreign student generally learns the standard variant of the English language, because this is the variant which is accepted everywhere in the English speaking world, constituting at the same time, an important instrument of international communication. However, in most cases, English is taught to non-native speakers by non-native speakers, neither teachers nor students being in much contact with native speakers. That is, people do not always speak the way they think they do, and linguistic insecurity is perhaps one of the main motivations for linguistic prescriptivism. Models need to be found which will accommodate the population trends and interactions. Teachers of English are expected to be exposed to multicultural ideas and examples, otherwise they “go out into the world in very much the same state of mind as a certain zealous sort of religious missionary who seeks to show ‘the lost’ the error of their ways – without knowing anything about their ways” [5, p.95]. Teaching English and learning English turn out to be complex and difficult tasks. In order to achieve positive results, it is of utmost importance in the process of training teachers to create awareness of the status and functions of World Englishes in the world today and in that of the future.

Therefore, teachers should lead students to discover language differences as a way of laying a foundation for examining the World Englishes. The teacher of English should teach the common core that stands at the basis of all the English dialects and guide the learner to stick to one variant of the English language rather than select what seems more likeable and attractive from each variant. Moreover, this common core will enable people to pass any tests in English, as they will be made up based on the essential features of English, which are a component part of all the World Englishes.

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