Part I

ELT in the world

Contexts and goals
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World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca
A changing context for ELT

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Introduction: Englishes around the world

English in the world today is a language which has an unprecedented global spread, is marked by its diversity and variety, and plays a fundamental role in the lives of millions of people in countries all around the globe. This chapter gives an overview of the current state and status of the language, and considers the implications that its global standing has for ELT theory and practice. It looks at how two notable paradigms – World Englishes studies and English as a Lingua Franca – have been instrumental in theorising the nature of English in the modern world and in refocusing debates about how the language is perceived by those responsible for its regulation in terms of planning, policy and education. The chapter reviews the development and aims of these two paradigms and explores the implications that an understanding of the diversity and variety of the language has for ELT practices.

Let us begin looking at what it means for English to be a ‘global’ language by considering the question of how many people speak English in the world today. It is a challenging task to calculate with any degree of accuracy the number of English speakers globally, but the processes involved in making these calculations illuminate a number of key issues about the language as it exists today and thus offer a good starting point for our wider discussion. There are two main difficulties in estimating the total number of current English speakers globally. The first of these is a practical issue: no purposefully designed data-gathering procedures exist for recording the use of languages around the world. As such, figures need to be deduced and pieced together from various different sources, and this inevitably results in a wide margin of error for any total one puts together.

The second problem is a more theoretical one and involves issues which have direct relevance to ELT. The difficulty here concerns decisions about precisely whom one includes in the figures. If we wish to calculate the total number of English speakers in the world, we obviously need a stable idea of what counts as an ‘English speaker’. And although at first glance the answer to this may seem self-evident, once we begin to take into account the great variety of ways in which people use and engage with English around the world, it soon becomes apparent that
it is actually a rather complex issue. We need to decide, for example, what level of proficiency is necessary to qualify as a speaker of the language. Will everyday conversational ability (which is in itself difficult to define) do, or should the threshold for competence be set at a higher level? Then there is the question of what range of varieties should be included within the broad concept of ‘English’. Should we include English-based pidgins, for example, or ‘mixed’ varieties such as Singlish? With English being spoken in communities stretching all around the globe, diversity of both form and function – how the language looks and sounds, and how it is used – is a fundamental element of its modern-day identity. But this diversity makes it increasingly difficult to define ‘English’ and ‘English speakers’ in a simple or straightforward way.

Despite these difficulties, there has been much work done on compiling statistics about the number of people who speak English in the world today, and, as we shall discuss below, the nature of these statistics – and the theoretical issues that are involved in the criteria upon which they are based – have important implications for the teaching of the language. In effect, they provide the broad context in which the teaching and learning of the language takes place, and as such they are a good place to begin when thinking about how English’s global status might influence ELT.

David Crystal has estimated that, by the first decade of the twenty-first century, there were somewhere between 400 and 500 million first language speakers of English in the world (Crystal, 2012). This figure is arrived at by combining the numbers of first language users in all the English-dominant countries such as the UK, USA and Australia (while being mindful of the caveat that, in all these countries, large proportions of the population do not have English as their mother tongue, and that several of the countries are officially bi- or multilingual, such as South Africa) and adding to this estimates of people living elsewhere around the world who have English as a native language. (The concept of the ‘native speaker’ is a complicated and, at times, contentious one. I am using it here in its ‘common-sense’ frame of reference, while at the same time noting the complexities around its use. A full discussion of these can be found in Llurda, this volume.) The rough figures for the main English-dominant countries are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>approximately 250 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>approx. 60m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>approx. 24m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia and New Zealand</td>
<td>approx. 20m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Caribbean</td>
<td>approx. 5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>approx. 3.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>approx. 3.6m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This figure for native speakers is, however, only a part of the overall picture. In addition, there are approximately 60 countries (for example India, Nigeria and Singapore) where English is used as a second or additional language. In these societies, English has an official status alongside local languages and is often used as the primary means of communication in domains such as education, the law and bureaucracy. It has been estimated that only around 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the population in countries such as these are likely to speak the language, as use is predominantly clustered around urban areas and limited to white-collar workers (Mufwene, 2010). However, given the size of the population of some of these countries and the number of regions in which it is used, the total figure for speakers of English as a second or additional language around the world is in the vicinity of 600 million (Schneider, 2011).
A third and final category that can be included in the overall figures is those to whom English is taught/has been learnt as the primary foreign language: people who are or have engaged in formal education of the language for a number of years. This accounts for speakers in over another hundred countries (McArthur, 1998), further extending the reach of the language. By adding these three groups of speakers together, the total that Crystal arrives at is somewhere between one and a half and two billion people. In other words, somewhere between a quarter and a third of the world’s current population currently speak English to some level of proficiency.

There are a number of interesting implications to note from these figures, even when we take into account the lack of precision in the overall total. The first point to make is that, although English is not the language with the most native speakers in the world – Chinese overshadows it in this respect with over 1.2 billion native speakers, while Spanish is also a close rival with around 414 million first language speakers (Ethnologue, 2014) – when one adds those who speak it as a second or additional language within their communities and those who use it as a foreign or international language, English emerges as very much the pre-eminent global language of the modern era. And, as the summary of figures above reveals, a significantly larger proportion of English users – a ratio of around four to one, in fact – are now non-native rather than native speakers. In other words, the majority of people around the world who speak English – and who use it as a fundamental resource in their daily lives – have learnt it as an additional or foreign language. ELT, therefore, has played a very significant part in the spread and current role of the language around the world.

A further important point of note, however, is that over two-thirds of the world’s population do not speak English. Thus, although it can be described as the pre-eminent global language in today’s world, when compared to other languages, it is not by any means a universal resource, and a majority of the global population do not speak it. Yet, given the range of functions and the nature of the domains in which it is used (e.g. its status as the language of global business, its role in the global knowledge economy, etc.), it nevertheless often still plays some role in the lives of those who do not have any practical knowledge of it and is a significant part of the environment in which they live. For example, such is the nature of contemporary global commerce that a farmer in rural Bangladesh may well need to find ways to decode the instructions on the pesticides he (and it usually is ‘he’) uses on his crops as these are printed in English, even if the language has little other existence in his life (Erling et al., 2012). In contexts such as this, therefore, access to English language education is often desirable or in some cases necessary, although such provision is often not provided or sufficiently resourced (for a critical perspective on the access or barriers to material benefits created by the spread of English, see Pennycook, this volume).

**Theoretical paradigms: a multiplex of Englishes**

**World Englishes**

The current status of English around the world, as well as the different ways it is used and exists in different societies, is a product of the language’s global spread. The extent of this spread has meant that, since the 1980s, there has been a trend within scholarship to talk of it in the plural form. English in the world today is not a single entity; it is multiplex, with different forms, different identities and different histories. In the words of Braj Kachru, one of the pioneering scholars in this field, “The result of its spread is that, formally and functionally, English now has multicultural identities. The term ‘English’ does not capture this sociolinguistic reality; the term ‘Englishes’ does” (Kachru, 1992: 357).
To highlight the multiplexity of the language, and the sociolinguistic profiles of these many ‘world Englishes’, Kachru (1992: 356–357) devised what has become a very influential descriptive model. Known as the *Three Circles of English*, this focuses upon a number of key issues responsible for the ways in which English is now used in particular countries. It views the language in terms of three concentric circles, each of which is composed of countries whose use of English is a product of the history of its spread, the patterns of acquisition in that country, and the ways it is used. In other words, he highlights the following three issues which he sees as fundamental for the identity the language has in different parts of the world:

- the historical process that has resulted in English occupying its current position in a particular country;
- how members of that country usually come to acquire the language (e.g. as a first language learnt from birth, as an additional language learnt via formal education later in life);
- the purposes or functions to which the language is put in that country.

Using these issues, he divides the world up into three broad groups which he terms the Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles.

The Inner Circle comprises those countries where English is the mother tongue for the great majority of the population and where it is used as the default language for most domains of society. Along with the UK, this includes countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand – i.e. those which were colonised by the British and where English displaced indigenous languages. Kachru (1992: 356–357) refers to these as “norm-providing” in that the type of English that is spoken by their populations has generally acted as the model for the English taught and learnt elsewhere in the world. That is to say, when people learn English in, for example, Japan, there has been a tradition of using standard American or standard British English as the model. American and British Englishes have been seen as the standards to which to aspire and viewed as ‘authentic’ forms of the language.

The second grouping is known as the Outer Circle, and this again comprises countries where English’s current status is the product of a colonial history. The difference here, though, is that in these countries English did not displace indigenous languages but came to be used alongside them, often fulfilling specific functions in various institutional domains. English is therefore predominantly an additional language in this circle, used in contexts such as bureaucracy and education. In 1992, Kachru referred to these countries as “norm-developing” in that the varieties of English spoken here have their “own local histories, literary traditions, pragmatic contexts, and communicative norms” (1992: 359), and have thus become indigenised to a significant degree. They do not, however, have the same status as the Inner Circle varieties (they are occasionally known as ‘new Englishes’) and have thus not normally been used as teaching models in EFL contexts. Countries in this circle include places such as India, Kenya and Singapore.

The final grouping is what Kachru calls the Expanding Circle. This, in effect, comprises the rest of the world, i.e. countries in which English has been predominantly taught as a foreign language. The spread of English here is not tied specifically to a history of colonisation but is the result of other factors, predominant amongst which are processes of globalisation. Historically, these countries have been “norm-dependent”; these are the countries which have followed an Inner Circle standard English as their model. They can be categorised as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) countries in that the education system has, at least traditionally, assumed that English is taught for purposes such as foreign travel and engagement with foreign literature – although in recent years
this has been added to by the notion of English for international communication in domains such as business. Countries in this circle include China, Japan and most of the countries of Europe.

**Strengths and critiques of the Three Circles model**

One of the major strengths of the Three Circles model – and one of its important legacies – has been the way it has focused scholarly attention on the diversity of English and particularly on the history and current cultural identity of non-native varieties. In promoting interest in these, the model – and scholarship which takes a World Englishes perspective – has done a great deal to legitimise these varieties as valid linguistic systems in their own right. By referring to these varieties as separate Englishes rather than simply non-native dialects, this approach makes a case for seeing what were often previously viewed as deficient versions of Inner Circle varieties (e.g. Quirk, 1990) as legitimate varieties in their own right, and research conducted in this field has provided empirical evidence of the ways in which these varieties are linguistically stable and have firm roots within the culture of the societies which use them.

Since the introduction and development of the Three Circles model, however, it has been subject to a number of critiques, focusing on certain limitations in its scope, detail or theoretical assumptions (e.g. Bruthiaux, 2003; Pennycook, 2007). In its attempt to generalise across the broad sweep of English speakers globally (a population which numbers, as we have noted above, up to two billion people), the model necessarily looks on a broad level at certain aspects of the phenomena it is explaining. Limitations to which people have drawn attention include the fact that it deals with language only at the level of the nation state, thus ignoring the immense amount of variety, e.g. the regional and social dialects, the domain-specific registers, which occur within countries. It has also been criticised for conceptualising varieties as separate and distinct entities (e.g. Indian English, Singapore English) rather than attempting to deal with the way that people often tend to mix English with other languages in an ad hoc manner, creating hybrid patterns of language use which draw on the various linguistic resources they have to hand (Pennycook, 2007). In other words, the critiques claim that the model is built on distinct national varieties that do not reflect the real-world fluidity of language use as experienced by speakers around the globe and thus gives a skewed picture of the sociolinguistic realities of much of the world’s population.

Another problem concerns the way that several countries do not fit neatly within the categories used by the model. Kachru himself noted this weakness for the case of South Africa, which now has eleven official languages and where English exists as a mother tongue for large sections of the population but not for others. As noted above, several of the Inner Circle countries are officially bilingual, and thus even these complicate clear-cut distinctions between the three groupings.

A further problematic area (again intimated by Kachru in his early writings, e.g. Kachru, 1985) is countries such as those in Scandinavia, in which English is, on paper, a foreign language but where it now exists as such an integral part of everyday life that to all intents and purposes it operates more as an additional language. Despite these areas of critique, however, the model has been greatly influential, both in broadening the scope of research and debate about the nature of global English and in providing a conceptual vocabulary to talk about these phenomena.

**Schneider’s dynamic model**

Other models for explaining the roots of the diversity of Englishes around the world have also been proposed, aiming to further refine our theoretical understanding of the current nature of
the language. One such is that devised by Edgar Schneider (2011) who, like Kachru, focuses on the historical development of worldwide varieties and the way that patterns of contact between different speech communities that took place as a result of colonialism have shaped the current form and function of the language in post-colonial countries. Schneider identifies five broad stages that varieties in what are now post-colonial countries can pass through which influence the way the language is used and perceived. Not all territories go through all five stages — depending on the particular historical circumstances, different parts of the process will be more prominent than others for some territories — but as a model, this attempts to provide a more detailed explanation of the development of worldwide varieties than the Three Circles model.

The first stage — what Schneider calls “foundation” — sees English being brought to a territory where it was not previously spoken as part of the broader process of colonial expansion. In this first phase of contact, the two communities — the indigenous people and the newly arrived settlers — view themselves as distinct groups, and though some language contact takes place, communication is usually conducted via interpreters or high-status members of the communities.

In stage 2, “exonormative stabilisation”, English starts to be spoken on a more regular basis in the territory, although it is confined mostly to domains such as education, administration and the legal system. The variety that is spoken is exonormative in that it is modelled on norms external to the territory itself — i.e. from the ‘home’ country (i.e. Britain) — and thus it has no distinct linguistic or cultural identity of its own. This is followed by Stage 3, “nativisation“. At this point in the process, the cultural and political allegiances of the pre-colonisation period are beginning to wane, and the territory is instead developing a new cultural identity which includes a localised variety of English. The fourth stage of the process, “endonormative stabilisation“, then sees this local variety become viewed as a legitimate entity in its own right, to the extent that it starts to be promoted as a significant element of the territory’s culture. The population of the territory thus no longer looks to a British model of English but instead relies upon local norms, which often begin to be codified in national dictionary projects. This stage often occurs after political independence for the colony, and linguistic issues, along with other cultural issues (e.g. the promotion of a national literature), are part of the process of forging a distinct political identity.

Once the local variety is firmly established, the fifth stage of the process takes place, termed “differentiation” by Schneider. This refers to processes of internal linguistic variation that happen within a territory as different sectors of the community begin to establish their own specific usage patterns. For example, differentiation will occur between the way different geographical regions use the language, or between age groups, and the extent of this is such that these can be considered as separate dialects. The five-stage model thus maps a process which accounts for how diverse world varieties develop and the role that historical and cultural issues play in shaping this development. As we shall discuss later, when we look at implications for ELT, this historico-cultural background and the influence it has on the relationship between English and local identities is a key issue for teaching as it provides the background context for questions about language form and function.

**English as a Lingua Franca**

Research and debate in World Englishes has, then, done a great deal to highlight the full extent of the diversity of English around the world and the deep cultural roots it has in various world contexts, especially in so far as it is bound up with the cultural identity of different communities. There is another significant way in which English is presently used as a language across the globe, however, and this is as an international language: a *lingua franca* allowing communication between those who do not share a mother tongue. The phenomenon of English as a Lingua
Franca (ELF) is another important site for research for English language studies and one which also has implications for the teaching and learning of the language. The term ‘lingua franca’ originally referred to a trade language that was used in the Levant from the eleventh through to the nineteenth centuries. The name, the Latin for ‘Frankish tongue’, comes from the way that Muslims in the area would commonly refer to the Crusaders as Franks irrespective of their actual background. From the nineteenth century onwards, the term began to be used for any medium of communication between people who do not share a native language. As was noted above, the demographics of English use around the world today mean that non-native speakers outnumber native speakers significantly and thus, for a large proportion of interactions in which English is used, it has precisely this role, as a means for international dialogue in an increasingly globalised world.

Within scholarship focusing on English as a Lingua Franca, there is some debate about the scope of the term – whether it should include interaction which involves both native and non-native speakers (e.g. Firth, 1996) or whether it is best reserved for interactions where neither party have English as a native language. Given the complex patterns of mobility that now characterise the lives of great sections of the world population, an inclusive use of the concept seems most useful, focusing attention on how English is used in a variety of contexts and domains as the preferred medium for international communication. While early research on the topic looked to identify habitually used language features in ELF interactions (e.g. Dewey, 2007), recent research has moved to viewing ELF more as a function than a specific variety in its own right and to focusing on the range of strategies that people use in order to accommodate to each other’s communicative practices (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). In essence, English as a Lingua Franca is an aspect of intercultural communication (see Kramsch and Zhu, this volume). Unlike varieties which are used by particular speech communities, it is better conceived of as something drawn upon by communities of practice who have shared interests, goals and emergent ways for engaging in these (Wenger, 1998). Research attention thus focuses on how people adapt their English usage to ensure that it is appropriate for the culturally and linguistically diverse contexts in which they are communicating. For example, those accustomed to using English in this way are likely to avoid the use of idioms, given that these are usually highly culturally specific; they will also adapt their pronunciation according to the audience they are addressing so as to ensure maximum clarity of expression.

In summary, both the above paradigms have had great influence in focusing research interest in, and raising general awareness of, the ways that English is actually used around the world today. Their findings have mapped out the diversity in form, function and beliefs about the language. In doing this they have played a role in countering attitudes which stigmatise usages that differ from standard British or American as being in some way ‘broken’ or imperfect. Thus, through the collection and analysis of empirical data, they have made the case for legitimising the diversity that is found in English around the world today. In the next section, we will go on to look at how our understanding of this diversity impacts on the teaching of the language.

**Implications and challenges for ELT practice and practitioners**

As we saw from both Kachru’s and Schneider’s models, the issue of norms – of how the systematised features of the language are spoken by a speech community – has been an important factor in how varieties are perceived and the status they are accorded. This is, of course, a crucial issue for ELT, as any language class needs to have a model of the language with which to work, and the insights from World Englishes and ELF both provide challenges for finding straightforward answers about what this model should be. In this section, we will examine the most prominent
of these challenges, addressing the questions of what form(s) of English should be taught, as well as who should teach it and how it should be tested.

**What model of English should be taught?**

The issue of teaching models is relevant for almost all those who speak the language, both native speaker and non-native speaker alike. Those for whom English is a first language acquire its spoken form as a natural part of their development, but in doing so they learn the variety that is spoken around them, which, for the majority of the population, means a regional or social dialect which differs in various ways from standard English. When they then enter formal education, they are most likely to be taught using a model based on a standard form of the language, both for their writing and speech. The standard model used in institutional education thus has a strong influence on the sociolinguistic habits of all those who pass through the school system and frequently figures as the subject of political debate about what precisely constitutes standard English and the way it is positioned within the curriculum.

In non-mother-tongue countries, a similar and equally influential process occurs. As noted above, the majority of English speakers around the world acquire the language initially via some sort of formal schooling, and thus the ELT profession operates as a key mediator for the way the language is introduced to them. A fundamental question for ELT professionals, then, is which variety is best taught to students? The answer to this question involves issues relating to consequences for the learning process, to the practices and perspectives of students and teachers and to the politics of the language as it exists within society more generally. Three broad approaches can be taken. The first is to opt for a native speaker standard, i.e. one spoken in an English-dominant country such as the UK or USA. The second is to adopt a local variety as teaching model. In other words, the choice of model is between one which looks to external norms, i.e. those used in native speaker countries, and one which uses norms that have developed as the language has become indigenised by the local community (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The third option focuses less on specific models (i.e. choosing an Inner Circle or local variety as a teaching standard) and more on intercultural communication strategies, drawing on research on the ways English is used in lingua franca contexts.

In taking a decision about which of these alternatives is likely to be more appropriate, there are a number of factors to take into consideration. The exact nature of these factors will, however, vary considerably depending on the circumstances in which the language is being taught. There is thus no straightforward correct or incorrect answer which is applicable for all ELT contexts, and teachers working within particular contexts will be in the best position to judge what works for their students, taking into account the following factors: (1) how suitable the variety or ELF strategies are as a means of communication in the context for which the language is being learnt; (2) what implications the choice of variety has for the practice of teaching in that context; and (3) how the decision relates to the cultural politics of the variety as this is manifest in that context. For each of these factors, there are both practical and ideological concerns which relate to the purpose for which the language is being learnt, the status accorded to different varieties in particular contexts, the availability and suitability of resources, implications over the cost of accessing or generating materials and pedagogic concerns relating to motivation and attainability. The relative balance of these issues will differ depending on the contexts in which English is taught, and the challenge for educators is to make informed decisions which navigate these various factors while taking into account the insights about the use of language in a global context which research into World Englishes and ELF provides. For the remainder of this section, I will look at these factors in further detail, beginning with arguments in favour of native speaker teaching models.
A first argument in favour of using native speaker varieties as teaching models relates to their current status both around the globe and within the ELT profession itself. One of the motivations for many people learning English is that it has a global reach, and an argument in favour of using a standard British or American variety is thus based on the belief that their current status and history mean they are better placed than other varieties for offering wide-ranging intelligibility. As global sociolinguistic trends evolve and alter, the affordances that these varieties currently possess may also change, of course, and different varieties may, at some stage, emerge as candidates for a preeminent international standard. For the moment, however, not least because native speaker varieties are currently used globally as teaching standards, these varieties are the ones which come closest to acting as international standards. Yet the question of whether an international standard is necessarily any better for intelligibility purposes is a moot point, and thus this argument is one which, in many ways, relates more to perceptions rather than practicalities (Seargeant, 2012: 40).

On the other hand, an issue which does have specific practical implications is that standard British and American Englishes are already extensively codified; there are a range of available dictionaries and grammars for them which act as reference resources for the teaching of the language. In addition, the UK and USA both have large ELT industries which supply English language education expertise around the globe and provide for a wide range of teaching resources. The availability of these pre-existing materials is thus both convenient and cost-effective for those working in the profession, providing as it does a ready-made support structure (for further critical discussion of the claims and controversies surrounding ELT materials, see Gray, this volume).

Practicality issues alone will not determine the choice over variety, however. There are ideological issues to take into account as well. In the current ‘marketplace’ of world languages, native speaker varieties of English have prestige and legitimacy in many parts of the world in a way that local varieties do not, and this in turn makes them an attractive choice both for individual learners as well as policy makers and educationalists. Furthermore, the prestige of these varieties is often a motivational factor for learning them, as students will associate these varieties with aspirational lifestyles or with a range of instrumental benefits (Seargeant, 2009). However, the obverse of this is that a native speaker model is unlikely to be something a student will ever perfectly attain, and if acquisition of this model is the goal for the student, the learning journey may prove to be frustrating and, ultimately, disheartening (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

What then are the issues relating to the teaching of a local variety instead? As suggested above, one of the arguments given against local varieties is their lack of international intelligibility. As noted, though, evidence that this is actually the case is, at most, slight, and varietal difference need not be an impediment to international communication. Moreover, if the language is going to be predominantly used in local contexts – as is the case in Outer Circle countries where it is an official language – the local variety will probably be the more appropriate choice. Furthermore, from a motivational point of view, a local model is likely to be not only more familiar to the students but also more attainable.

Another issue to take into account with local varieties is that, whereas standard US or UK varieties are well codified, many local varieties are either only in the very early stages of this process or have not begun it at all. As such, teaching resources such as textbooks and assessment instruments do not exist for many local varieties, with possible financial and workload consequences for educators. However, adopting a local variety as a teaching model can lead to further codification projects, and thus, from a language policy perspective, the choice of a local variety can have long-term advantages in terms of enhancing its status and providing secure foundations for its identity as a distinct and legitimate variety. There are also other, more general, political
arguments for the use of a local variety to act as a counter to the hegemony that US and UK varieties, and the cultures with which they are associated, continue to have in the world and which continue to have implications for issues related to global social inequality (see Pennycook, this volume).

The third approach to the issue reframes the question to concentrate less on the notion of alternative varieties and more on strategies for intercultural communication. Drawing on research into the way that people use English in Lingua Franca contexts, this approach aims to ensure that teaching is sensitive to the ways in which speakers co-create meaning using English as a resource (Jenkins et al., 2011).

**Who should teach English?**

Along with the question of which variety or strategy to use as a teaching model, there is also the issue of who should do the teaching. As different teachers speak differing varieties, they are often seen to represent differing cultural associations of English; thus, they can be viewed as an embodiment of the diversity in the language, and their own linguistic profiles can act as a key variable in the educational process. For example, a teacher’s linguistic profile often plays a part in hiring practices in educational institutions and, in certain parts of the world, also becomes co-opted as part of the promotion of what counts as successful language teaching. Issues around this topic are again a mixture of the practical and ideological, while also having an ethical dimension.

As with the debate over teaching models, a basic distinction for categories of English language teacher is made between native-speaker teachers, i.e. those emanating from one of the English-dominant countries, and local teachers who have English as an additional language (see Llurda, this volume). Decisions over who teaches the language have effects both for learners and for teachers themselves. From the perspective of students, a native speaker teacher is often seen to be able to model what is viewed as an authentic form of the language as it is spoken in English-dominant countries and is also thought to have an intuitive knowledge about norms of usage. Additionally, if English is being learnt as part of the culture of one of the mother tongue countries, the native speaker’s personal background provides an exemplar of that culture. This is, however, a rather simplistic view of the situation and does not correspond to the diversity of linguistic practices even within Inner Circle countries; nor does it reflect the patterns of mobility in modern societies.

An argument in favour of non-native speakers is that they are likely to be familiar with local educational and cultural practices in a way that teachers from outside the community are not and can also act as role models of successful later-life acquisition in that they have experience of learning English in circumstances similar to those of their students. They are also likely to be more attuned to the communicative strategies used in ELF encounters and thus have practical knowledge about how the language operates for these purposes.

There are also implications for teachers themselves from decisions around this issue. In many regions of the world where a standard British or American model is held in high esteem, there is often a tradition of ELT instructors being hired solely on their status as native speakers and of them having little or nothing in the way of professional teaching qualifications. This practice can obviously be to the detriment of the local teacher population – it can deprive them of work and also undermine their own status as professionals, not to mention the professional status of the teaching industry in general. The teaching of a local variety, on the other hand, can professionally favour local teachers and avoid a situation where promotion of a native speaker model has the effect of framing local teachers as imperfect speakers of the language. Additionally, local teachers will, by definition, be multilingual (knowing both the local language(s) and English) and will
have been English learners themselves; this is likely to have positive benefits for their teaching (for further discussion, see Llurda, this volume).

**How should English be tested?**

The final element of the education process I wish to look at is testing, and here again, the pedagogy and politics of World Englishes and ELF are of relevance. Testing has an important role both within and beyond the classroom. As part of the education process, it acts as a means of evaluating learning as well as bringing into focus the aims of the curriculum. Beyond the classroom, it has an influential role in social organisation. These two roles relate to the effects of what are known as washback and impact. Washback is the effect the content of the test has on the teaching process. In other words, in so far as teachers shape their teaching to prepare students for passing tests, the content of the test will determine what is being taught. Impact, on the other hand, refers to the effects felt from the shape and role of the test in society more generally. For example, an immediate and practical purpose of learning English for many students is to pass what are known as high-stakes tests, i.e. those which regulate access to things such as employment and further education opportunities or act as determinants for people’s right to citizenship in a country (McNamara and Roever, 2006). Tests such as these play an important role in the political regulation of society and have very real consequences for the lives of those who take them (Shohamy, 2006; see also Fulcher and Owen, this volume).

The salient issues around testing English are similar to those relating to its teaching. The majority of tests are based on the idea that English is composed of a set core of correct usages (usually understood as those of the idealised native speaker) and that design of the test is able to check for understanding of these usages. Within the context of World Englishes and ELF research, one major concern relating to mainstream English language tests therefore is that they are structured around linguistic norms which do not accurately represent the range of varieties and communicative strategies used around the globe (Davidson, 2006). A fundamental question for testing thus becomes: what norms should provide the standard for the test?

Here again, there are two traditions of answer, the first advocating the use of a standard native speaker variety, the second the ability to communicate fluently according to local communicative norms. The arguments for each are much the same as those outlined above for different teaching models. Recent research relating to ELF, however, has led to certain people, such as Suresh Canagarajah (2006), suggesting that this traditional dichotomy oversimplifies the way the language is actually used in the present day. Canagarajah’s argument is that because English is a language of such diversity in today’s world, proficiency in it necessitates being ‘multidialectical’, i.e. people need access to different types of English as they move from context to context. Tests, he therefore suggests, should examine communicative strategies which allow people to negotiate this diversity, and in this way their washback will influence teaching in such a way that it better prepares students for the actuality of modern-day globalised English use. Thus their impact will stop promoting the hegemony of native speaker varieties and help democratise the use of English around the world.

**Conclusion**

The challenges for ELT from the theoretical perspectives and empirical research provided by World Englishes studies and ELF are all to do with context. The overriding theme from this research is that English today is multiplex. It has different identities in different communities and operates on multiple levels, both local and translocal. In contexts where it is used as a lingua
franca, it has an identity which is no longer tethered to any particular culture or nation and instead has become a functional means of communication which interlocutors can draw on for transactional purposes. In other contexts, localised varieties are embedded within the culture of the places in which they are used, and the language has come to reflect this local culture and become a part of its identity. This multiplex nature of English has implications for the way that it is taught, for decisions about who teaches it and for how it is tested. Given this multiplex nature, it is not possible to advocate straightforward approaches that will apply equally to all contexts. Instead, teachers and other ELT professionals need an awareness of the nature of the contemporary profile of the language and of the issues it raises – both in their context and globally, and for both learners, institutions and policy makers – and with this they can then tailor their professional practice to the particular circumstances of their students and to the contexts in which those students will be using the language.

Discussion questions

• What are the implications of the demographics of English speakers globally for the teaching of English?
• In what ways does the global spread of English complicate the notion of a single standard of the language?
• What practical implications can teachers draw from the theoretical insights of World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca?
• In what sense will decisions about which variety should act as a teaching model be based on both practical and ideological concerns?
• In what ways is English used in your own local context? What functions does it fulfil, and what form does it take?

Related topics

Bilingual education in a multilingual world; ELT materials; Language and culture in ELT; ‘Native speakers’, English and ELT; Politics, power relationships and ELT

Further reading

Kirkpatrick, A. (2007) World Englishes: Implications for international communication and English language teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (This introduces issues and debates around World Englishes, with a specific focus on the implications of the spread of the language for teaching and education.)

McKay, S. (2002) Teaching English as an international language: Rethinking goals and approaches. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (As with the Kirkpatrick book, this also focuses on the issues involved in teaching English in contexts where it operates as an international language.)

Seargeant, P. (2012) Exploring World Englishes: Language in a global context. Abingdon: Routledge. (This book examines issues around World Englishes from an applied linguistics perspective, focusing specifically on real-life challenges that are faced by language professionals in contexts such as language education and language planning.)

Seargeant, P. and Swann, J. (eds) (2012) English in the world: History, diversity, change. Abingdon: Routledge. (This is an introductory textbook about the global spread of English, tracing its historical development and examining its diversity today. It includes chapters by leading scholars such as David Crystal, Kay McCormick and Miriam Meyerhoff.)

Seidlhofer, B. (2011) Understanding English as a Lingua Franca. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (This provides an overview of the issues and debates relating to the use of English as an international lingua franca, including a chapter dedicated to implications of ELF for English language teaching.)
References


