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English as a Global Language

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The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine the construct of English as a global language and to suggest approaches to second language teaching that are supportive of an increasingly globalized world in which border crossing and cross-cultural exchanges are common. The chapter begins by comparing various approaches to the study of English as a global language as a means of delineating an alternative approach that is in keeping with the reality of a good deal of cross-border communication today. It then examines various strands of research that support this view and suggests areas of needed research in the field.

Defining Paradigms

With the increasing spread of English, many terms have arisen to address the complexity and variation of English use today, including terms such as World Englishes, English as a lingua franca, linguistic imperialism, and language hybridity. Each one has its own agendas and assumptions regarding linguistic norms, linguistic variation, and linguistic capital. However, what most of these approaches lack is a recognition of the somewhat limited role English serves today in cross-border, cross-cultural exchanges. The fact is that three-quarters of the population today does not speak English (Graddol 2006). Hence, a good deal of cross-border exchanges that occur today do not occur in English but rather in the dominant language of the host society. For example, a Brazilian immigrant to Japan today will, in the majority of cases, be using Japanese rather than English as the language of exchange, in the same way that a Turkish immigrant to Germany will use German. Granted there may be instances of the use of English, but this will likely be among the elite of the population. In addition, much of the communication may make use of several languages that are available.

Many of the current approaches to English, while providing valuable insight into the use of English today, do not take into account the fact that English is one of several languages used in today’s cross-border exchanges. What follows is a critical examination of major approaches to the spread of English with a discussion of the contributions of the approach to an understanding of the complexity of English use today, along with its limitations.
World Englishes

The World English paradigm, developed largely by Braj Kachru, seeks to document the variation that exists in English today based largely on geographical context. In a seminal work on varieties of English, Kachru (1989) argued that the different roles that English serves in countries around the world are best conceived of in terms of three concentric circles: (a) the Inner Circle, where English is the primary language of the country, such as in Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom; (b) the Outer Circle, where English serves as a second language in a multilingual country, such as in Singapore, India, and the Philippines; and (c) the Expanding Circle, where English is widely studied as a foreign language, such as in China, Japan, and Korea. He argues that World Englishes develop largely in Outer Circle countries because in such countries two or more languages are in constant contact. As such, the use of English in the country begins to vary through linguistic borrowing. The goal of World Englishes research is to document the phonological, semantic, and grammatical variation that exists in various Outer Circle Countries.

This paradigm was the first to recognize the variation that exists today in English usage around the world and, more importantly, to recognize the legitimacy of norms other than those of the Inner Circle. This was a major step forward in challenging the Inner Circle focus of much research and pedagogy. However, this approach views language use as a factor solely of nation states, whereas, in fact, today national borders are becoming much more porous, so, for example, immigrant groups may retain their language and culture outside of their nation state. Even more importantly, World Englishes research typically fails to recognize the issue of power as it relates to language in examining how and why English impacts the uses of other languages due to its economic and political power.

English as a Lingua Franca

English as a lingua franca (ELF) examines how English is used between speakers of different languages and cultural backgrounds. Firth’s (1996) seminal definition of ELF is “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” [emphasis in original] (p. 240). A major contribution of this approach is that it recognizes the common use of English among L2 speakers rather than suggesting that the main purpose of English is to use English with native speakers. Even more importantly, it documents that manner in which less proficient speakers of English manage to communicate and repair breakdowns in communication. Its limitations, however, are that by documenting so-called core features of ELF, some may conclude that such language patterns should be the target of English learning, thus promoting a target of a somewhat limited English rather than full proficiency in the language. In addition, like the World English model, it does not recognize how issues of power affect language use.

Linguistic Imperialism

Phillipson’s (1992, 2009) contribution to an understanding of the role of English today was his recognition of the linguistic power of English as described in what he terms linguistic imperialism. In arguing for the linguistic power of English, Phillipson documents how colonial nations frequently imposed the use of English on particular nations. In his seminal work, Linguistic Imperialism, he also delineates several major tenets regarding language teaching. Phillipson lists these tenets as follows:

- English is best taught monolingually,
- The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker,
The earlier English is taught, the better the results,
The more English is taught, the better the results,
If other languages are used much, standards of English will drop.

(p. 185)

Phillipson (1992) argues that each tenet is basically false and can be epitomized in the following fallacies:

- The monolingual fallacy
- The native speaker fallacy
- The early start fallacy
- The maximum exposure fallacy
- The subtractive fallacy.

(p. 185)

In highlighting these fallacies, Phillipson rightly challenges the Anglophone focus of a good deal of English pedagogy and the use of an English-only classroom. However, Phillipson is often criticized for not recognizing the agency of language learners. While, as Phillipson rightly points out, throughout history individuals have been coerced into English learning by colonial powers, at the same time many individuals have chosen to learn English because of the power they believe it has.

Hybridity

Finally, scholars such as Pennycook (2007) have made a valuable contribution in pointing out the hybridity of English use today in that English is only one of many languages used in cross-cultural exchanges and in pop culture. In this way, the theory of hybridity recognizes the multilingual and multicultural element of cross-cultural exchanges today. However, the concept of hybridity raises critical questions, such as determining what is meant by the term itself and how issues of power affect the way languages are used in these hybrid texts and exchanges. In their book on hybridity, Rubdy and Alsagoff (2014), while documenting the value of work in this area, point out several shortcomings of the concept, including the following. First, some (e.g., Gómez-Peña 1996) criticize the difficulty of defining the term \textit{hybridity} itself in that it is so broadly defined that many types of language use can be included, even traditional notions of code-switching. Second, there is also the criticism that the very concept of hybridity presupposes that languages are “discrete and identifiable entities” (p. 9). Finally, the field has also been accused of not adequately addressing issues of power and inequality.

In light of the shortcomings of many of these approaches to address issues of power and to recognize the multilingual nature of communication today, Kubota (2012) advocates a pedagogy for border crossing that includes three key components. First, such a pedagogy would approach language learning from the position of power and privilege. Hence, all language learners would be encouraged to consider how economic class and racial background affect language learning and teaching. Second, in such a pedagogy, an open attitude would be encouraged in all language learning. As Kubota points out, “English may not function as a lingua franca in many social contexts. Students need to develop open and positive attitudes for interacting across differences” (p. 64). In this way, students need to be encouraged to listen carefully and negotiate fully in order to understand and be understood from people of all backgrounds. Finally, Kubota advocates the development of communication skills. Communication strategies and accommodation skills would be actively taught, including “extralinguistic cues such as gestures and drawings, gauging interlocutors’ linguistic repertoires, supportive listening, eye contact and adjusting the speech by simplifying, paraphrasing, and slowing...
down” (p. 65). Such a perspective is supportive of a more realistic view of English use and learning today. However, it is important to note that underlying such an approach must be a deep respect for multilingualism and an encouragement for all speakers to draw on their full linguistic repertoires for communication across borders. Several recent trends in the field of sociolinguistics and pedagogy fully support such an approach. In the following, I will discuss five of these areas: the sociolinguistics of globalization, the unsustainability of native speakerism, the acceptance of a plurality of norms, an emphasis on pragmatics, and the localization of pedagogy.

The Sociolinguistics of Globalization

One factor that warrants a new look at how English is used in an increasingly globalized world is mobility. People today are moving across borders at a greater rate than ever before and using their linguistic resources to manage daily affairs and to secure employment. They are involved in what Blommaert (2010) calls “a messy market place” of language use in which people crossing borders use all the linguistic resources they have. In order to adequately describe this social situation, Blommaert calls for a new sociolinguistics of globalization, one that reflects real language use in specific contexts. He argues that new terms are needed to describe language use in an era of increased mobility. To this end, he proposes a sociolinguistics of mobility which focuses not on language-in-place but on language-in-motion, with various spatiotemporal frames interacting with one another. Such spatiotemporal frames can be described as ‘scales,’ and the assumption is that in an age of globalization, language patterns must be understood as patterns that are organized on different, layered (i.e. vertical rather than horizontal) scale-levels.

(p. 5)

Blommaert (2010) contends that we live in an era of super linguistic diversity, as evidenced in immigrant communities where recent immigrants, often poor, manage to get their needs addressed by drawing on every linguistic resource they have in which English may play only a small role. While specific language varieties often serve special functions in an individual’s life, the fact is that certain languages today have more linguistic power than others. They have, in other words, what Blommaert calls semiotic value rather than linguistic significance. To make this point, Blommaert points to the example of a sign in an upscale shopping center in Tokyo in which a very exclusive chocolate store had the name *Nina’s derrière*. The store owners clearly had no idea of the French meaning of *derrière* (behind), but they recognized the semiotic power of French to connote high-quality products. The same is true of the use of English in many contexts. English is chosen because of its association with economic affluence, cosmopolitanism, and power. This semiotic value of English can play an important role in the learning and using of English. It is, in addition, what leads one to imagine that English fluency will bring with it all of the characteristics listed previously—economic affluence, cosmopolitanism, and power.

Blommaert’s delineation of a sociolinguistics of globalization is important in understanding the role and spread of English today. By highlighting the importance of mobility, he suggests how English often is only one of many languages that can be used for cross-border exchanges. In addition, his idea of the semiotic value of English demonstrates one of the factors that can motivate language learning. For many, English knowledge is viewed as a sign of education, affluence, cosmopolitanism, and power. This belief, whether accurate or not, can motivate individuals to assume the arduous task of mastering a second language. As Kachru (1986) points out in a book entitled *The Alchemy of English*, “knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin’s lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science and travel. In short, English
provides linguistic power” (p. 1). While the semiotic value of English is evident, its actual value in terms of access to employment and education is open to question.

A second aspect of the sociolinguistics of globalization outlined by Blommaert (2012) is a new view of what has traditionally been viewed as code-switching. Whereas traditionally code-switching has been viewed as a more or less deliberate switch from one discrete language to another, Blommaert contends that in many instances the “mixed language” that is used is the only code spoken and that this “language” includes features of speech that differ depending on such things as genre, topic, and style. He proposes an alternative model to account for language use today, one that is much more complex than the traditional idea that bilinguals use two distinct languages in discrete contexts. Instead, he proposes a new theoretical orientation to language use in a highly mobile society that includes the following essential assumptions:

1. People do not use ‘Languages,’ they use resources for communication, driven by concerns of effect, and deployed in practices of languaging (‘doing’ language).
2. Specific sets of such resources are language-ideologically associated with a Language such as ‘English’ or ‘Russian.’ The Languages we know are therefore not objective units but ideological ones: we say that we write in ‘English’ because of the widespread association of specific features with ‘English’ (rather than, say, ‘Russian’).
3. The effects brought about by deploying specific resources are indexical: the specific ordering of resources into recognizable registers, genres, and styles triggers powerful standard sociocultural interpretations. Such forms of order are often labeled ‘norms’ or ‘speech conventions,’ and every meaningful form of communication will be grounded in conventionalized (hence recognizable as meaningful) ordered patterns of deployed resources.
4. The collective resources available to anyone at any point in time are a repertoire; repertoires are biographically emerging complexes of indexically ordered, and therefore functionally organized, resources. Repertoires include every resource used in communication—linguistic ones, semiotic ones, sociocultural ones.

(Blommaert 2012, p. 4)

What does a view of language as resource based on an individual’s repertoire of indexical resources suggest for language learning and teaching? In answering this question, it is important to recognize that each language learner has acquired very “specific bits of language such as standard orthographic literacy, control over advanced professional jargons, specific accents and so forth” (Blommaert 2012, p. 4). In this way language proficiency consists of the particular bits of language that individuals acquire due to their experience with the language. They draw on these resources in whatever language they have available to communicate. This kind of communication is in stark contrast to many L2 classrooms where the use of the L1 is strictly forbidden. Fortunately, several educators today are advocating that L2 learners and teachers draw on all the linguistic resources they have in a classroom to make language learning happen. This view of language use reflects what Garcia and Wei (2014) advocate in discussing translanguaging in language classrooms.

The Unsustainability of Native Speakerism

The frequent use of the term native speaker and the constant comparison of the native and non-native English-speaking teachers warrants a careful examination of what it means to be a native speaker. Several key questions arise in trying to define a native speaker, including the following.

Must you speak English in your home from birth to be a native speaker of English?
Can you speak two languages in your home and still be a native speaker of English?
Must you continue to speak English throughout your life to be a native speaker of English?
If you start to use English as your sole language as an adult, can you be considered a native speaker of English?

Traditionally, native speakers are viewed as individuals who acquire English early in their childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where they live. Davies (1991), for example, defines a native language as “the first learned language, in which one achieves a high degree of competence and linguistic intuition” (p. ix). He notes that being a native speaker is only partly about native naturalness... it is also, and in my view more importantly, about groups and identity: the point is of course that while we don’t choose where we come from we do have some measure of choice of where we go to. Difficult as it is, we can change identities, ... we can join new groups.

(p. ix)

Davies then entertains the possibility that one can achieve a native naturalness in another language by joining a new group and identifying with this group. If then being a native speaker is about possessing native naturalness, one does not need to necessarily achieve this naturalness at birth but could do it later in life.

Tay (1982), in her definition of a native language, maintains that in addition to the criteria of the first learned language, native intuition, and identity as central to a definition of a native language, there is the criterion of continued use. She argues that a native speaker who is not from an Inner Circle country is one who learns English in childhood and continues to use it as his or her dominant language and has reached a certain level of fluency. According to Tay, three conditions are necessary to be a native speaker. One must learn a language early in life, attain a high level of native intuition, and continue to use the language throughout life.

If we return then to our initial questions, we might answer as follows.

Must you speak English in your home from birth to be a native speaker of English? No. One can achieve native intuition in a language later in life through continued use and group identity.
Can you speak two languages in your home and still be a native speaker of English? Yes. What is essential is that you achieve native intuition in the language.
Must you continue to speak English throughout your life to be a native speaker of English? Yes. Continued use is essential to promoting and maintaining native intuition.
If you start to use English as your sole language as an adult, can you be considered a native speaker of English? Yes. However, you must achieve native intuition.

A central concern in defining a native speaker is what is meant by native intuition. Here, Rampton’s (1990) discussion of expertise is helpful. Because of the difficulty of defining a native speaker or native intuition, Rampton argues that a better term to use is expertise. He argues that the term expertise is preferable since it suggests that one can become more of an expert through learning and use, that one individual can have more expertise than another, and that no one ever knows everything about a certain body of knowledge. More recently, Higgins (2003) argues that the term ownership be used in place of the term native speaker. For Higgins, ownership is a factor of the degree to which speakers of English “project themselves as legitimate speakers with authority over the language” (p. 615). Such ownership is reflected in an individual’s certainty and confidence in his or her own linguistic intuitions.

Given the difficulty of defining a native speaker, it is surprising that the term continues to be widely used and that so-called native speakers are often considered to be more effective teachers,
resulting in their being hired over local bilingual teachers and at times paid higher salaries. This situation may be due to the fact that there are many widely accepted myths regarding native speakers, including the following:

Myth One: Native speakers are more proficient than L2 speakers.
Such a generalization is undermined by the fact that many native speakers in Inner Circle countries do not speak or write the language well due to a lack of education and practice with the language.

Myth Two: Native speakers have native speaker intuition.
The problems with this generalization are that (1) native speaker intuition is difficult to define and (2) to the extent that it involves a naturalness in the use of the language, this can be developed by anyone through constant use of the language and a sense of ownership of the language.

Myth Three: Native speakers are better teachers of English.
This is clearly not the case if the native speaker is lacking in expertise in the language and has not acquired competency in language pedagogy.

How then is the unsustainability of native speakerism related to globalization and English? There are two significant factors. First, the difficulty of defining the term suggests that a new pedagogy and view of English as a global language needs new terminology to discuss language users, one in which the term native speaker is not present. Second, to the extent that native speakerism has led to an emphasis on Anglophone culture in classroom materials, a new perspective on English as a global language suggests that classroom materials need to value all cultures equally and include readings that discuss cultures around the world, whether English speaking or not. Finally, a de-emphasis of native speakerism should lead to the evaluation of teachers on an individual basis. Effective language teachers must have a variety of skills—proficiency in the language, a critical understanding of L2 pedagogy, knowledge of the local culture and how English is used in it, and ideally, a knowledge of prevalent local languages.

A Plurality of Norms
A major concern in pedagogy and research in the area of English as a global language is the question of what standards of use and usage should be promoted in classrooms. The spread of English has brought with it the development of many new varieties of English, which has led to much discussion regarding what standards should be promoted in the teaching of English. Implicit in discussions of variation are the notion of standards, a standard language, and issues of power and identity that are built into such concepts. Standard language is the term generally used to refer to that variety of a language that is considered the norm. It is the variety regarded as the ideal for educational purposes, and it is usually used as a yardstick by which to measure other varieties. It largely reflects formal written English. The related notion of language standards has to do with the language rules which inform the standard and which are then taught in the schools.

The challenge that World Englishes presents to the Standard English ideology is one of plurality—that there should be different standards for different contexts of use; that the definition of each Standard English should be endonormative (determined locally) rather than exonormative (determined outside its context of use). However, if there are different forms of Standard English, the concern of mutual intelligibility emerges. The fact that some speakers of English use a variety of English that is quite different from a standard variety of English has led some to argue that the use of these varieties of English will lead to a lack of intelligibility among speakers of English. This fear
has led to a widespread debate over standards in the use of English. However, it is important to note that formal written English varies little from context to context. This fact will help maintain a core of English usage. However, there are still legitimate concerns regarding the relationship between local and global standards.

Within each country where a local variety of English is spoken, some speakers are familiar with both the local variety and a more universally accepted variety of English. At the same time, some speakers, often the less educated and less affluent, are familiar only with the local variety of English. Whereas many would argue that it is the responsibility of English classroom teachers to familiarize students with a widely accepted variety of English, in some contexts, the teachers may not be fully familiar with such a variety of English. This raises extremely complex questions as to what standards are appropriate for some local contexts. To illustrate this situation, let us consider the example of Wesbank High described in Blommaert (2010).

Wesbank is one of the first post-apartheid housing projects in the Western Cape. Most of the inhabitants are what was previously termed “coloreds” and speak Afrikaans, while approximately 25% are black and speak Xhosa. The poverty and unemployment rate in the settlement is extremely high. Wesbank, the only secondary school in the area, is dual-medium, meaning that classes are offered in English and Afrikaans. In every grade, a small minority of the classes are English medium, and the rest are Afrikaans medium. Very few students in the school have English as their mother tongue. Hence, as Blommaert (2010) points out, teachers in Wesbank face a number of challenges: “large classes with a very heterogeneous population with respect to backgrounds, capacity and levels of achievement; a poor and marginalized community; an under-resourced school in which special educational needs cannot be adequately addressed” (p. 83).

All of the learners have problems with basic literacy. Data gathered from their writing showed that almost all students typically display the following features in their writing:

- erratic use of capitals (not using them where needed, using them where not needed);
- difficulties with singular and plural markers;
- difficulties with verb inflections, esp. plural marking and tense marking;
- problems with the use of definite and indefinite articles (not using them where needed);
- a wide range of spelling problems, mostly a result of phonetic spelling (writing according to pronunciation);
- a tendency to aestheticize writing, even when struggling with basic writing skills—writing as drawing.

(Blommaert 2010, p. 84)

Such features lead to the production of sentences like the following.

Because they thought that is a Gun Sound and the boy wasn’t back @ home.
If I loved him, He would marry me. . . .
BECAUSE You can Communicate with Everyone with it.
You can go to the far lands that they speek other language lets say maybe they speek French they may understand english.
English. Because it’s the oFFicial Language in South Africa.

(Blommaert 2010, p. 84)

As Blommaert (2010) points out, these features of writing are not unusual; they are termed “grass-roots literacy” and are widespread in Africa and elsewhere in the world where “people are inserted in sub-elite literacy economies and have restricted literacy repertoires, and often assume the shape of
a skeleton writing competence in which acoustic images of words are noted in an unstable spelling system” (p. 85). What is significant for our purposes is that the teachers display some of these same features, resulting in their not correcting what many might consider “errors.” The reason is that the teachers come from the same community as the learners.

The norms that are applied in this context are what might be termed peripheral norms rather than a universal or singular norm, a norm which neither the students nor the teachers have access to. And as Blommaert (2010) notes, as a consequence, “doing well in school means doing well by local standards” (p. 93). He goes on to argue that

Even though, from one perspective, it amounts to lifting ‘errors’ to the level of norms (and thus ‘normalizing’ errors in writing), another perspective suggests that it offers interesting pedagogical opportunities and is thus a productive, positive procedure. It can be seen as the localization of education standards—something which probably occurs everywhere (we have seen that all over the world English is learned with an accent), but is rarely recognized and acknowledged.

(p. 95)

While the localized standards may provide a productive learning environment for learners in a difficult social environment, “the localization of norms also involves a move away from the norms of the ‘centre.’ And these norms, as we know, are hegemonic in the end” (Blommaert 2012, p. 96). Ultimately, some skills offer a very low degree of mobility while others offer a considerably larger degree of mobility and transferability across social and spatial domains. ‘Standard’ literacy usually falls in the second category, while ‘non-standard’ literacy falls in the first category, even if from one perspective it can be see as ‘full’, developed, complex literacy within a restricted repertoire of literacy skills and resources (p. 100).

The point is that English today is “a multiplex item composed of at least two different objects: English1 an ideologically conceived homogenous and idealized notion of ‘English-the-language-of-success, and English2, a situationally and locally organized pragmatics of using ‘English’ in ways rather distant from English” (p. 100).

What does the complexity of linguistic norms suggest for the teaching of English as a global language? First and foremost it suggests that a global language will have local norms. However, such varieties are not less valuable than so-called standard norms, especially in a local context. On the other hand, there is no question that a standard variety of English, based largely on written formal English, differs little from context to context and is, by far, the variety with the most linguistics and economic capital.

Increasing Emphasis on Pragmatics

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of pragmatic competence in cross-border exchanges. In the majority of such exchanges, speakers have different levels of competence in the grammar of English, as well as differences in their sense of pragmatic appropriateness. As Canagarajah (2007) notes, in most EIL exchanges,

the form of English is negotiated by each set of speakers for their purposes. The speakers are able to monitor each other’s language proficiency to determine mutually the appropriate grammar, phonology, lexical range, and pragmatic conventions that would ensure intelligibility. Therefore, it is difficult to describe this language a priori.

(p. 925)
In order for communication to proceed smoothly, speakers have to work to negotiate understanding and adjust the form of their language so that the listener is able to comprehend the intent of the message. Firth (1996) contends that as long as interlocutors in an intercultural exchange achieve a certain level of understanding, they seem to adopt a *let-it-pass principle*, acting as if they understand one another even when they don’t.

This seems to be the state of affairs in low-stakes exchanges that occur mainly for camaraderie. However, in some exchanges, such as business exchanges in which precision of meaning is critical, speakers can work hard to make their meaning clear. This is evident in the following exchange collected by Firth (1996), in which management personnel are using English as a lingua franca. Notice how a Dane (H) and a Syrian (B) work to achieve an understanding of what the Syrian speaker means by the term *blowing*:

*B:* So I told him not to send the cheese after the blowing in the customs. We don’t want the order after the cheese is blowing.

*H:* I see, yes.

*B:* So I don’t know what we can do with the order now. What do you think we should do with this all blowing, Mr. Hansen?

*H:* I’m not uh (pause). *Blowing?* What is this, too big or what?

*B:* No, the cheese is bad, Mr. Hansen. It is like fermenting in the customs’ cool rooms.

*H:* Ah, it’s gone off!

*B:* Yes, it’s gone off.

(Firth 1996, p. 244)

Notice in this exchange that speaker B assumes H knows the meaning of the term *blowing*; since H is not familiar with this term, he directly asks “What is this, too big or what?” Notice also that it is not errors in grammatical form (of which there are many) that impede comprehension. Instead, it is a lack of semantic understanding. In order to repair this breakdown in communication, H has to resort to the pragmatic strategy of clarifying meaning. In more informal, low-stakes exchanges, speakers may indeed employ the let-it-pass principle. The point is that speakers typically employ the negotiating strategies that suit their purpose for the exchange. Often form is less important than making themselves understood.

Canagarajah (2007) rightly argues that in many English cross-cultural exchanges, form can in some ways be less important than meaning and use, pointing out that in such exchanges, form receives reduced significance, or, rather, form gets shaped according to the contexts and participants in an interaction. More important are the range of other skills, abilities, and awareness that enable multilingual speakers to negotiate grammar. In addition to grammatical competence, we have to give equal importance to language awareness that enables speakers to make instantaneous inferences about the norms and conventions of their multilingual interlocutors; strategic competence to negotiate interpersonal relationships effectively; and pragmatic competence to adopt communicative conventions that are appropriate for the interlocutor, purpose and situation.

(p. 928)

Since the present-day community of English speakers is composed of individuals speaking different varieties of English, at different levels of proficiencies for different purposes, a truly competent speaker must be able to shift among these contexts. Competence in cross-border exchanges then includes
the ability to shuttle between different varieties of English and different speech communities. In this sense, the argument becomes irrelevant whether local standards or inner-circle standards matter. We need both and more—that is the ability to negotiate the varieties in other outer- and expanding-circle communities as well.

(Canagarajah 2006, p. 233)

Developing such abilities and assessing them is challenging. However, it is important to point out that, in order to accomplish this task, learners do not need to be “proficient in every variety under the sun” (Canagarajah 2006, p. 233). Rather, as Canagarajah (2006) notes, we need to shift our focus both in pedagogy and assessment to developing negotiating skills:

Such realizations suggest the need for an important shift in assessment practices. From focusing overly on proficiency in grammar or in abstract linguistic features, we have to focus more on proficiency in pragmatics. Sociolinguistic skills of dialect differentiation, code switching, style shifting, interpersonal communication, conversation management, and discourse strategies are important for shuttling between English varieties.

(McKay 2005, p. 233)

Ultimately we need to shift our emphasis “from language as a system to language as social practice, from grammar to pragmatics, from competence to performance” (Canagarajah 2006, p. 234).

Given the importance of strategic and pragmatic competence in English exchanges, an essential aspect of English classes should be to develop these competencies. McKay (2011) argues that all English-language curricula should give attention to the following components of language use:

- Explicit attention should be given to introducing and practicing repair strategies, such as asking for clarification and repetition, rephrasing, and allowing wait time.
- A variety of conversational gambits or routines should be introduced and practiced, including such items as expressing agreement and disagreement, managing turn-taking, and taking leave.
- The curricula should seek to promote students’ understanding of how pragmatic norms can differ cross-culturally.
- Students should be free to express their own pragmatic norms but to recognize that to the extent these differ from the norms expected by their listener, there may be cross-cultural misunderstandings.

(p. 133)

All of these theories regarding the globalization of sociolinguistics, native speakerism, norms, and pragmatics have important ramifications for pedagogy, primary among these being the need to localize pedagogical decisions to suit the particular context. This is the topic we turn to now.

The Localization of Pedagogy

Kumaravadivelu (2001), in a seminal paper on a postmethod pedagogy, argued persuasively for the localization of methods. For Kumaravadivelu, pedagogy is a broad concept including “not only issues pertaining to classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also a wide range of historical, political and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 education” (p. 538). He envisions a postmethod pedagogy that includes three parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. Particularity refers to the need for all pedagogy
to be sensitive to “a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals with a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu” (p. 538). This means that one set of pedagogical objectives and aims will never be appropriate for all teaching contexts.

The second feature of a postmethod pedagogy is practicality. In explaining this construct, Kumaravadivelu shuns the notion that theory should come from theorists and teacher educators and teachers should merely put such theories into practice. Rather, Kumaravadivelu sees the teacher as key to the making of pedagogical decisions and practical theory. For Kumaravadivelu (2001), it is the “practicing teacher who, given adequate tools for exploration, is best suited to produce such a practical theory” (p. 541). He advocates a pedagogical thoughtfulness in which teachers “understand and identify problems, analyze and assess information, consider and evaluate alternatives, and then choose the best available alternative, which is then subjected to further critical appraisal” (541).

Possibility, the final feature of a postmethod pedagogy, is derived from the assumption that “pedagogy, any pedagogy, is implicated in relations of power and dominance, and is implemented to create and sustain social inequalities” (p. 542). The example of Wesbank High is a case in point. The grassroots literacy that exists there is directly due to relations of power and dominance in the South African society. As Kumaravadivelu (2001) rightly points out, “the experiences participants bring to the pedagogical setting are shaped not just by the learning/teaching episodes they have encountered in the past but also by the broader social, economic, and political environment in which they have grown up” (p. 543). Because of this, it is imperative that all pedagogical decisions take into account the social, economic, and political context of the local classroom.

McKay and Brown (2016) continue Kumaravadivelu’s discussion of a postmethod pedagogy, arguing specifically for a locally defined pedagogy in keeping with the view of language discussed in this chapter. There are three major benefits to considering local needs and context in defining pedagogy. First, as suggested in this chapter, each language learner and teacher brings to the classroom particular “bits of English.” If the learning objectives are locally defined, materials and methods of that classroom can be suited to that particular group of learners. Second, by recognizing the resources that students and teachers bring to a particular classroom, all of their resources can be brought into play, including linguistic resources, gestures, visuals, and so on. Third, basing pedagogical decisions on a view of language as one of several available resources the student possesses frames the learner not as deficient in some particular resource, but rather as possessing several additional valuable resources. The goal of the classroom then is to help students acquire other repertoires that they see as important to them.

Future Directions/Needed Research

What kind of investigations will be necessary to enact such a pedagogical approach? First, a good deal more research needs to be undertaken in how speakers negotiate meaning in cross-border exchanges using all of the repertoires they have available. Whereas lingua franca research does address cross-border exchanges, by restricting the data to largely English-only interactions, it minimizes the other resources that speakers draw on to negotiate meaning. Second, more attention needs to be given to needs analysis and how to localize this process so that local educators are fully aware of what resources their learners have available to them, how they use these resources in the community to serve their needs, and what additional resources they believe they need. Given this assessment, it may well be that students do not need or want to acquire the Standard English that is currently promoted in most language classrooms. Third, teachers need greater guidance in acquiring strategies for designing materials that meet their students’ needs and enacting learning methods that are best suited for the particular group of students in that specific environment. As suggested in this chapter,
it may well be that for English learning to be most successful, the other resources students have available to them in terms of other languages and negotiating strategies need to be fully employed in the classroom. Finally, assessment measures need to adequately assess the skills that students possess and to include in those skills not only grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge of English, but also the strategies they employ to engage in meaningful interactions using what they have. This is an ambitious undertaking, involving both sociolinguistic and educational endeavors, but it is the only way that a pedagogy designed to meet the communication needs of a global society will be reached.

References