John Benjamins Publishing Company

Discussion forum

New Englishes and Learner Englishes – *quo vadis?*

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During the workshop at the ISLE conference in Freiburg, the participants agreed to engage in an online discussion on how to bridge the paradigm gap in researching ESL varieties and EFL variants of English. The most productive strand of this discussion concerned the modelling of different Englishes, but some participants also took up the threads initiated by the editors who had selected quotations from the articles in this volume as a possible starting point for discussion. The following is a summary of the main points of the discussion.[1] Some of the threads initiated by the editors are woven into the discussion of the Kachruvian three-circles model in Section 1. Section 2 focuses on the terminological problem of categorizing and labelling features found in New Englishes and Learner Englishes. In Section 3, different developmental trajectories are discussed as the main reason for the ESL-EFL dichotomy. Section 4 addresses issues of corpus methodology and the role of frequency in the description of ESL varieties and EFL variants. The summary of the discussion brings the different contributions together but does not aim at providing answers to questions that can be addressed from different angles. These parallel (and maybe sometimes contradictory?) strands in the discussion might inspire future directions of research.

1. Modelling Englishes in the world

One of the lead questions sent out by the editors of the volume touched on the distinction of English as a native, second and foreign language. An obvious way of

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approaching the distinction was to refer to Kachru's (1986, [2]1992) concentric-circles model and discuss the usefulness of the distinction. Bertus van Rooy points out that "[w]hen the three concentric circles were proposed, the basis for classification was countries and the socio-political circumstances, rather than linguistic correspondences". Kachru's model was primarily concerned with 'ownership' of English and norms, building on the different social histories of spread and the current functional profiles of English in various countries. His model has had an impact on the perception of the New Englishes that evolved in the outer circle, but it seems to have been largely disregarded in its potential relevance for the expanding circle, as Fraser Gupta (2006: 95f.) observes:

> Having spent most of my adult life in Asia, and having been involved in these issues in the Outer Circle [question of 'norms' and ownership of English], I was surprised to find, on my return to Europe in 1996, that the insights from the Outer Circle had not been fed into the Expanding Circle, despite their having been raised by Kachru (1985) over ten years earlier. In the Expanding Circle English is predominantly a non-native language, used in very restricted domains (typically with foreigners), and learnt in scholastic settings. The teaching of English in mainland Europe is dominated by a monolithic model, usually based on Standard British English and RP, which may involve favouring 'native speaker' teachers, requiring teachers to adhere to an out-of-date and highly abstracted sense of what is correct, and penalizing students to use the 'correct' accent, typically the Daniel Jones variant of RP which is nowadays little heard.

Apart from applying the labels ENL, ESL and EFL to speaker communities, i.e. to particular countries, they can also be used to distinguish different types of (a) individual speakers and (b) varieties of English and their structural properties.[2]

1.1   ENL, ESL and EFL countries?

In some postcolonial societies, speakers of ENL, ESL and EFL live alongside each other (Carolin Biewer, Marco Schilk, Sarah Bongartz, Bertus Van Rooy), a fact that Kachru's model does not deny but abstracts away from as it assigns a country to a particular circle on the basis of the majority of its speakers. Obviously, linguistic realities, especially in multilingual settings, may be quite complex, as in the case of South Africa, a country that was not assigned to a particular circle by Kachru himself, probably because its status as ESL or EFL was far less than clear:

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2. Individual speakers will orient towards different norms, and this norm orientation, in turn, will have an influence on the structural properties of the variety/variant that the speaker uses (see also the remark at the end of Section 1.2).

> Kachru did not include South Africa in his early statements, and this is one of the more interesting examples, because there (a) is a native speaker community of about 10% of the population (although just under half of them are of Indian descent, and shifted to English in the last half century – not typical Inner Circle material!), (b) an African majority population (about 75%), who generally speak a Bantu language at home, and make extensive use of English for educational, economic and government functions. Besides them, there is an Afrikaans community (an Adstrate for Schneider 2007), that is largely in the same position as the African community, except for enclaves (in some rural parts of the country); their linguistic experience may be much more akin to the EFL context – they enjoy access to education, entertainment and economic opportunities in Afrikaans and have little use for English, except if they choose to watch certain foreign films. (Bertus van Rooy)

From the perspective of individual speakers or groups of speakers within a country, van Rooy therefore finds Schneider's (2007) model more helpful because it considers the (changing) sociolinguistic relationship between speaker groups and the different acquisition histories within a community rather than grouping them all together into either an undifferentiated ENL, ESL or EFL community.

1.2   ENL, ESL and EFL speakers

With respect to the acquisition histories, Bertus van Rooy and Ulrike Gut (see Section 1.4) point out that there are language-acquisitional characteristics that are shared by ESL speakers and EFL speakers. Bertus van Rooy sees some overlap in particular in the individual, psycholinguistic experience, i.e. the fact that acquiring an additional language "is a more conscious and often a more laborious process than native language acquisition that comes 'for free' in the Inner Circle experience. Similar linguistic phenomena may have their basis in similarities across individual learner experiences". But he also points out that in some countries (and for individual learners) the acquisition of English comes closer to that of a first language because learners are frequently exposed to the additional language before entering school and because there is extensive code-switching and possibly some form of diglossia at home. As regards ESL and ENL speakers, Bertus van Rooy also sees similarities in the social experience of English which is connected to the issue of national ownership and an awareness and acceptance of a local norm in countries that have reached stage four of Schneider's evolutionary model of Englishes. Different regional norms for speakers will thus result in a divergence of the English spoken in the inner and outer circle, whereas orientation towards the ENL model on the part of the EFL speakers is likely to lead to structural similarities between ENL and EFL usage (note how this obviously links the

speaker-based definition of the terms at hand to the resulting variants/varieties or usage patterns). The orientation of usage norms in the expanding circle towards ENL varieties is also emphasized by Marco Schilk, and there is further empirical backing in the research by Szmrecsanyi & Kortmann (this volume) and Coetzee-van Rooy (2006).

1.3 Structural properties of ENL, ESL and EFL: Discrete variety types or continuum?

The studies in this volume investigate language use in ENL, ESL and EFL contexts. One concern, therefore, is with the description of structural properties of these varieties.[3] Bongartz & Buschfeld (this volume) did not find a "clear and static cut-off point between second-language varieties and learner Englishes [...]" in their case study on English in Cyprus. Similarly, Gilquin & Granger (this volume) argue for a continuum rather than a clear-cut dichotomy of ESL vs. EFL varieties, a plea emerging from various corpus-based studies. Szmrecsanyi & Kortmann, on the other hand, found "a clear [typological] difference between ESL varieties (as sampled in ICE) and EFL varieties (as sampled in ICLE): the former are demonstrably closer to native varieties of English than the latter" (Benedikt Szmrecsanyi). There are five features that discriminate particularly well between ESL and EFL varieties, one of them typical of the former (inflected verbs) and four of the latter (see Szmrecsanyi & Kortmann, this volume).

Van Rooy (this volume) points out why innovations in ESL varieties are more likely to become entrenched, namely because "recurrent situations and contacts between speakers occur to support conventionalization". As an example of this, Marco Schilk mentions the stablization of new patterns of usage (e.g. new verb complementation patterns) through their recurrent use in prestigious local news media which "may serve as a linguistic yardstick for speakers of a variety".

There are thus several factors that may lead to a divergence of ENL and ESL varieties, especially in the area of lexico-grammar. At the same time, there are structural features that are similar across some EFL samples in the *International Corpus of English* and varieties of ENL (e.g. ICLE-Czech, see Section 1.2) whereas other samples of EFL usage clearly diverge from the ENL model

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3. Whether the use of English as a foreign language results in a 'variety' of English or not is discussed in the individual contributions in this volume. The label 'variety' can, thus, be used in different ways: either as a configuration of usage patterns or as a full-fledged and stabilized variety of English. With respect to corpora of English as a learner language, it is used to refer to patterns of usage rather than a stabilized variety.

(e.g. ICLE-Spanish).[4] Corpus-linguistic methodology allows us to chart the variance in the data, but this variance needs to be accounted for:

> As corpus linguists, our next challenge, perhaps a little outside our comfort zones, will be to identify some of these external forces pulling varieties in different directions, and substantiate our claims with at least some meaningful correlations to the observed variance in the corpus data. (Bertus Van Rooy)

Some studies in this volume provide corpus-linguistic evidence of a structurally clear-cut distinction between ENL and ESL which is possibly motivated by socio-linguistic and psycholinguistic factors. However, the degree to which a clear distinction between types of Englishes and individual varieties is possible may depend on the descriptive approach. If based on a bundle of features, varieties may well be grouped together as predicted by the Kachruvian model (as applied to varieties rather than countries). If an individual feature is studied, however, varieties may cluster in unexpected ways, as shown, for example, in the study by Hundt & Vogel (this volume): "Systematic corpus linguistic investigation and comparison of outer-circle and expanding-circle usage with ENL data are likely to reshape our perception because they bring to the fore the similarities and tone down the 'exotic' aspects of ESL and EFL usage [...]". To this, Benedikt Szmrecsanyi replied that corpus-linguistic evidence seemed, on the whole, to provide more evidence of divergence rather than convergence, even if only the non-exotic features were compared across varieties. Carolin Biewer added an important methodological caveat, namely that for corpus-based comparisons to be valid, the corpora used as a basis for general comparative claims need to be truly comparable, and that comparability may not even be given in seemingly 'comparable' corpora. Different compilers of ICE corpora, for example, may interpret text-types differently, and this might affect the results we will obtain from the data. Similarly, if a text category such as social letters were sampled from one part of the population only (e.g. students at a university), this is also likely to affect data comparability.

If we increase the level of granularity and home in on the use of English in a particular country, it may turn out that the degree of variation within the country defies easy labelling of a variety as either ESL or EFL. Sarah Buschfeld and Christiane Bongartz point at their way of modelling variation within Cyprus in terms of a Variety Spectrum:

> We therefore developed the concept of a *Variety Spectrum* that depicts (individual) feature occurrence in form of a scatter plot and thus shows the degree of

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4. Note that these differences might simply reflect different degrees of proficiency in the speakers/writers sampled in the corpora rather than fundamental levels of structural difference between EFL usage in the Czech Republic and Spain.

homogeneity/heterogeneity within a speech community. It can therefore account for hybrid cases like Cyprus English, since it considers the influence of sociolinguistic variables and depicts variety-internal variation.

1.4   Labelling and the paradigm gap

The terminology inherent in the Kachruvian model (whether applied to countries, speakers or varieties) might partly account for the paradigm gap between research into New Englishes and Learner Englishes. Researchers working within second-language acquisition (SLA) find the term 'L2 variety' for New Englishes misleading and would prefer their colleagues to use the label 'indigenized L2 varieties' (Benedikt Szmrecsanyi). A label that takes the sociolinguistic rather than the structural peculiarities of new Englishes into account would be 'institutionalized L2 varieties' (Marianne Hundt). But the term 'second language' is also far from clearly defined in SLA research itself: even though the label is 'second' language acquisition, it actually includes situations in which learners acquire it as an additional language alongside a second, or third, etc. language and covers a range of different learner characteristics. The obvious conclusion is that "[i]t is high time that the similarities betwen the two fields are recognized so that a methodological and theoretical exchange can begin which will be to their mutual benefit" (Ulrike Gut).

2.   The error-innovation cline

As mentioned above, an important language-political motivation for the development of Kachru's model was the distinction between errors and innovations.[5] Frequently, usage patterns that diverge from the native-speaker norm are referred to as errors or mistakes if they occur in a text produced by an EFL speaker, as in the following comment on a text produced by a German learner of English:

> I am inclined to say that this text is written 'in' Standard English, with many mistakes or errors. [...] The non-standard verb forms (and the other non-standard features in the text) arise from the structures of Standard English, and the writer's difficulties with those structures. The features are similar to the features found in many learners of English in Outer Circle locations too. (Gupta, fc.)

Gupta also writes that "[i]t would be good if we could think of some firm linguistic criteria to distinguish 'learner varieties' from contact varieties [ESL in her

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5.   Van Rooy mentions that a critique of Kachru's model is based on the renaming of 'errors' or 'deviations' as 'innovations' (see Krishnaswamy & Burde 1998).

terminology] and from continuity varieties [her label for ENL]". On purely linguistic grounds, however, we cannot distinguish between errors and innovations and even the political and attitudinal distinction represents a cline rather than a dichotomy (see Gut, this volume). Bertus van Rooy argues that the identification of a deviation is based on a linguistic procedure. "To go one step further and label such differences as 'errors' is indeed extra-linguistic (unless, of course, what the speaker him/herself intended, did not realize – which would correspond to 'mistake' in the older error/mistake dichotomoy of some 1970s error analysis exponents)" (ibid.). Since the labelling of a pattern that diverges from the ENL norm as 'innovation' or 'error' is not based on linguistic criteria, it is hardly surprising that the corpus-based approach taken in this volume fails to provide a solution to the problem.

3.   ESL and EFL: Developmental differences

Carolin Biewer (this volume) argues that "[a]ll ESL varieties [i.e. institutionalized and non-instutionalized ones] may develop in the same direction due to a common learning process but they will have different starting points and endpoints depending on norm orientation and different social value systems". Bertus van Rooy sees a similarity in the developmental process "[...] because the invidividuals learning languages in different contexts have similar individual attributes – they all speak at least one other language already, which they may draw on, and they all acquire the new language bit by bit, and probably much more consciously, since they are aware of differences with their existing language(s)". The different starting points are in the different functions the language has in the community; the different exposure to the language and opportunities in using it outside the classroom context add to the divergent development alongside differences in norm-orientation. Van Rooy further adds that "the individual aptitudes for language learning, strengthened or weakened by attitude differences, may also lead to further differences within each society [...]". But he also maintains that differences in the starting point as well as process will result in "a persistent difference between the native-speaking and all other contexts".

4.   Corpus methodology and the role of frequency

Götz & Schilk (this volume) argue that the different contexts of acquisition and use result, among other things, in a lower frequency of collocations in the EFL learner data. Corpora are the prerequisite for making such statements. But frequency is a slippery issue. Referring to a previously published article (Granger 1998), Sylviane

Granger points out that learners are not 'virgin territory' when it comes to the use of prefabricated language chunks as they tend to transfer phraseological units from their L1 to the target language but tend to underuse those of the target language. In other words, learner language may turn out to be less phraseological only if those chunks are investigated that ENL speakers would use. Furthermore, they tend to use a limited set of prefabs (so-called phraseological 'teddy bears') – a finding that is confirmed in the case study by Götz & Schilk (this volume). Sylviane Granger, like others, attributes differences in the frequency and type of phraseological units that are used to differences in the input. A further area of study is the impact that a different learning environment might have on the phraseological profiles of different learners: "It would be great to compare the use of prefabricated language by French or Spanish students acquiring English in Great Britain or the USA vs. learning English in Belgium or Spain". But Sandra Götz also points out that they found that ESL speakers used 3-grams more frequently and with a greater variability in some contexts than ENL speakers; an aspect that, in her opinion, merits further research. Her final comment highlights the fact that corpus-based studies tend to abstract away from the individual learner because corpora are intended as representative samples of a speech community. She refers to a recent study on lexical diversity by Foster & Tavakoli (2009) that shows how EFL speakers "who live in the target language community, increase their performance in this area even to the extent that there are no more significant differences compared to ENL speakers". Corpus-linguistic studies on ESL and EFL language use can therefore benefit from case studies on individual learners/speakers as well as other sources of data (e.g. psycholinguistic evidence).

5.   Looking ahead

The focus of the papers in the present volume is on the corpus-based description of ESL and EFL varieties/variants. These descriptions are the basis for the discussion of theoretical issues. The strength of the contributions in this collection is on the wide range of varieties/variants that are studied as well as the breadth of features which are described. All the same, we have only seen the tip of the iceberg of what is possible to achieve with the corpus-based approach to second-language varieties of English.

At the same time, it is obvious that the corpus-based approach also has its limitations. Future studies are likely to profit from a methodologically integrated approach that combines corpus-based description with sociolinguistic data on the one hand and psycholinguistic evidence on the other hand. Among the sociolinguistic methodologies that are likely to benefit the modelling of second language

varieties are attitudinal studies, which might allow us to distinguish between 'features' and 'errors', for instance. Variable rule analysis is likely to contribute to a better understanding of the degree of variability within varieties/variants. As far as psycholinguistic methodology is concerned, integrating the study of the underlying acquisitional processes with the description of structural properties of the resulting varieties/variants leaves a wide scope for further research. The studies in this volume have therefore only started to close the gap in the study of ESL and EFL varieties/variants.

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