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Incorporating World Englishes in Teaching English as an International Language

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■ The discussion of World Englishes in the applied linguistics profession for the most part accepts multiple varieties of English as legitimate and worthy of study even if legitimacy remains the object of inquiry (see Higgins's article in this issue). Consistent with the value applied linguists place on World Englishes, English is taught and learned in many countries because it is an—and arguably the—international language. English is seen by many in Japan, for example, as a means to open doors to parts of the world that are not accessible to them otherwise, and learners are fascinated by the increased international opportunities they believe the knowledge of English will bring to them (Matsuda, 2002, in press). The international scope of learners' English learning agenda should logically be matched by pedagogical approaches that teach English as an international language (EIL), in part through inclusion of varieties of World Englishes. However, examination of English language teaching (ELT) practices in Japan reveals that English is still being taught as an inner-circle language, based almost exclusively on American or British English, and textbooks with characters and cultural topics from the English-speaking countries of the inner circle (Iwata et al., 2002; Kiryu, Shibata, Tagaya, & Wada, 1999; Matsuda, 2002).

Issues associated with teaching English as an inner-circle language versus EIL need to be clarified if concrete changes are to be brought about in the way English is portrayed, valued, and taught in expanding-circle countries where it is not the native language of the majority or an official language. In this commentary, I therefore draw on research conducted in Japan (Matsuda, 2002) to demonstrate ways in which current practices in ELT teach English as an inner-circle language, why this approach to ELT is not appropriate in view of the curricular goals and learners' needs, and how World Englishes can be incorporated to teach EIL.

ELT IN JAPAN: ENGLISH AS AN INNER-CIRCLE LANGUAGE

The national curriculum of Japan specifies that the target model be present-day standard English that is intelligible in international communication (Monbusho, 1999b). Even though multiple varieties can meet this criterion, English textbooks in Japan show a strong inner-circle orientation in the choice of the linguistic samples and the representation of English users and uses (Matsuda, 2002). The introductory textbooks that the ministry of education has approved are all based on American English, and the overwhelming majority of the main characters in these books are either from Japan or inner-circle countries, rather than the outer circle countries (i.e., postcolonial countries where English is used as an additional language), or expanding-circle countries (i.e., EFL countries) other than Japan. Consequently, the majority of the dialogues are either between Japanese characters and native speakers of English (NSs) or exclusively among NSs; the representation of exchanges between nonnative speakers of English (NNSs), which is believed to be increasing (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997; Smith, 1981/1983), is infrequent and sporadic.

A similar reliance on inner-circle English speakers is evident among assistant English teachers (AETs) recruited through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. The JET Program was initiated by the Japanese government in 1987 to recruit young people to assist foreign language instruction at public schools and to promote international understanding locally. During the first year, all 848 AETs came from inner-circle countries (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand). The program began recruiting in two other inner-circle countries (Canada and Ireland) in 1988 and later in three outer-circle countries (South Africa, Singapore, Jamaica), but participants from the inner circle consistently outnumber those from the outer circle significantly. For instance, in 2000, 98% of the 5,444 AETs came from the inner circle (Monbukagakusho, 2001).

In addition to curriculum developers and school administrators, Japanese EFL teachers and learners also privilege inner-circle Englishes (Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto, 1995; Matsuda, 2000, in press; Matsuura, Chiba, & Yamamoto, 1994). When asked which variety of English should be taught in Japanese high schools, one teacher whom I interviewed responded immediately that it was American English, although he occasionally talked about different pronunciation and vocabulary found in British and Australian English. Varieties from other parts of the world, such as Indian English or Singaporean English were not mentioned during this interview, during other informal conversations with me, or in any of his or his colleagues' classes that I observed (Matsuda, 2000).

Students of these teachers expressed their belief that English belongs to NSs, although they also indicated that they see English as an international language. Although most said they did not know that English is spoken in India or Singapore, when they learned of outer-circle varieties, they expressed a strong preference for American and British English because they believed American and British English were “pure” and “authentic” (Matsuda, 2000, p. 123). The idealization of inner-circle varieties of English seems at odds with the stated motivations for teaching English in the current national curriculum for middle schools in Japan, which specifies that English be offered as the required foreign language because it is an international language (Monbusho, 1999a). Beyond the desirability of consistency with national curriculum goals, however, are the deeply rooted problems associated with reproducing the status of inner-circle varieties in the minds of Japanese learners.

THE PROBLEM OF INNER-CIRCLE ENGLISH ONLY

The inner-circle orientation to ELT may be appropriate for ESL programs that prepare learners to function in the inner circle, but it is inadequate for a course that teaches EIL because of important differences in the ways in which EIL learners use English among themselves relative to the ways in which NSs use English (Kubota, 2001; Smith, 1981/1983). Moreover, teaching inner-circle English in Japan neglects the real linguistic needs of the learners, eclipses their education about the history and politics of English, and fails to empower them with ownership of English.

EIL Linguistic Needs

Japanese EIL users are as likely to be exposed to outer- and expanding-circle Englishes as they are to inner-circle Englishes. The limited exposure to English varieties in the classroom may lead to confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English users or uses outside of class. The exposure to different forms and functions of English is crucial for EIL learners, who may use the language with speakers of an English variety other than American and British English. Even if one variety is selected as a dominant target model, an awareness of different varieties would help students develop a more comprehensive view of the English language. (See Chiba et al., 1995, for a discussion of the familiarity with and attitudes toward different varieties of English.)

The History and Politics of English

An inner-circle-based curriculum fails to open the topics of the history and politics of the English language around the world. A curriculum that teaches EIL, in contrast, must address the colonial past (and, possibly, the postcolonial present) of the language and the power inequality associated with its history (Pennycook, 1998, 2000; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Tsuda, 1997). The teaching of EIL is inextricably linked to the stories of its worldwide spread; its changes in forms, functions, and users; and the politics of the language. In other words, EIL is not a neutral possession of those of the inner circle to be learned according to their norms, but a topic of study itself, consisting of examples of diversity of functions (Kachru, 1992), coexistence with indigenous languages, use as the medium of education or language of law, service as the vehicle for international communication, and change through nativization.

Without the awareness of such potential power struggles associated with EIL, learners may internalize a colonialistic view of the world (Pennycook, 1998) and devalue their own status in international communication. They may also feel that their peripheral position (Phillipson, 1992) in international communication in English is irreversible. In order to resist the linguistic imperialism, scholars such as Canagarajah (1999) have argued for incorporating a critical pedagogy perspective. Historical understanding of the spread of English and of the users and uses of the language in various parts of the world is a prerequisite for critical awareness of the power inequity that the language's colonial past may imply and that the users of EIL may need to deal with.

The Right to Ownership of English

An understanding of the role of NNSs in shaping the future of English is essential for EIL users. The worldwide spread of English has changed not only forms and functions of the language but also the demographics of English users. English today is used not exclusively among NSs or between NSs and NNSs, but also among NNSs (Graddol, 1997; Smith, 1981/1983; Widdowson, 1994). The notion of NSs and NNSs is further complicated by the emergence of NSs of nonnative varieties of English (Kachru, 1998; Yano, 2001).

The assumption of native-speaker authority that underlies teaching inner-circle varieties of English puts the other circles in an inferior position to the NSs and threatens to undermine Japanese learners' agency as EIL users. Japanese students unfamiliar with the norms of EIL may conclude that their own English, which differs from the inner-circle varieties, is unacceptable. Not having interacted with NNSs who can communicate effectively, students would have no way of knowing how

communicative they could be with their accented English. They may feel embarrassed about their accent and hesitate to use it. Exposure to varieties of EIL and successful EIL users through classroom instruction seems essential to contribute to the legitimacy of new varieties of English and better attitudes toward their own English (Chiba et al., 1995).

WORLD ENGLISHES IN EIL CLASSROOMS

A change in English teaching from inner-circle-based to a genuine EIL curriculum on the surface might be conceptualized as a matter of changing books and materials. However, such a change actually involves multiple levels of initiatives, from the classroom to society at large.

Interaction With EIL Users

One way to expose students to various Englishes in the classroom is to bring in speakers of multiple varieties. For example, the JET Program, which currently recruits mostly from the inner circle, could begin recruiting fluent speakers of English from other parts of the world. Alternatively, teachers could invite international visitors and residents in the community to the class. Such interaction not only creates opportunities for students to interact in English (which is hard to accomplish in EFL countries) but also shows them that being an effective EIL user does not require being an NS. It is also likely to have positive influence on students' ability to comprehend World Englishes because English users tend to find familiar varieties easier to understand (Gass & Varonis, 1984). If face-to-face interactions are not possible, teachers can introduce different varieties of English through e-mail exchanges, projects that require students to visit Web sites in various Englishes, or by showing movies and video clips of World Englishes speakers.

Assessment Focusing on Communicative Effectiveness

Assessment in Japanese EFL classrooms tends to focus on how closely learners conform to the native norm, mostly American and British. Being norm-dependent countries, without a localized variety of English, EFL assessment in Japan seeks a model in the inner circle (Kachru, 1985). However, the pluralistic standards found in the use of EIL challenges the assumption that the inner circle always provides the most appropriate norm for assessment (Lowenberg, 2002).

One way to address this change in classroom assessment is to evaluate students on their communicative effectiveness rather than solely on grammatical correctness based on the American or British norm. Communicative language teaching, which defines language proficiency not

only in terms of grammatical competence but also discourse, sociolinguistics, and strategic competences (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) have been slowly incorporated into English classrooms in Japan in the form of class activities. Extending the notion to classroom assessment would not only allow teachers to better assess students' overall communicative competence but might also encourage students to use the language more, feel more confident about their ability to communicate in English, and focus more on being effective than being native-like, which may overlap but are not the same. For example, a test in a speaking class may focus more on general comprehensibility than on how closely and precisely students manage to imitate NS pronunciation and intonation. Replacing one of the traditional tests with an alternative mode of assessment, such as role play, oral presentation, poster session, or portfolio, may encourage students to focus on language functions that include but go beyond grammatical accuracy. An assessment rubric that specifically addresses communicative effectiveness, perhaps like the one used in the Test of Spoken English (Douglas & Smith, 1997) would be useful, assuming that teachers can evaluate the effectiveness in an international context.

Outside the individual classrooms and schools, the pluralism found in today's English poses particular challenges to standardized testing. Although the standardized exam based on American or British English may be valid for assessing English proficiency in U.S. and British contexts (e.g., the Test of English as a Foreign Language assesses the English proficiency needed for American universities), it may not be valid for assessing the type of English proficiency needed in international contexts. (See Lowenberg, 1992, 2002, for a discussion of the need for standardized exams of localized English and Major, Fitzmaurice, Bunta, & Balasubramanian, 2002, for challenges in incorporating varieties of English into a standardized test.)

Teaching Materials Representing EIL Users

Teaching materials can also improve their representation of EIL by incorporating World Englishes. For example, textbooks can include more main characters from the outer and expanding circles and assign these characters larger roles in chapter dialogues than what they currently have. This would better reflect the increasing role that NNSs have in defining EIL. Also, the presence of characters from outer- and expanding-circle countries makes the inclusion of cultural topics and pictures from those countries easier. *One World English Course 1* (Sasaki, 1997), one of the textbooks I analyzed (Matsuda, 2002), has a chapter on Hong Kong because one of the characters is from there. *New Crown English Series 1* (Morizumi, 1997) also has a page on Kenya, home of one

of the characters. Dialogues that either represent or refer to the use of English as a lingua franca in multilingual outer-circle countries can also be added to chapters. The inclusion of the users and uses in the outer-circle and the expanding-circle countries that students are unfamiliar with would help them see that English uses are not limited to the inner circle.

Furthermore, chapters in textbooks designed for older students can specifically address the issue of EIL: its history, the current spread, what the future entails, and what role the EIL learners have in that future. Some of the common global issues in EFL textbooks, such as history, nature, health, human rights, world peace, and power inequality, can be discussed in relation to internationalization, globalization, and the spread of English. Recent discussion on critical pedagogy (e.g., Pennycook, 1999) can help EIL teachers encourage students to engage in such discussion and to seek their own voice in English.

Teacher Education

To incorporate World Englishes in ELT, teachers themselves must be aware of the current landscape of the English language. Programs for preservice EFL teachers tend to focus on the inner circle (Kachru, 1997) and would benefit greatly from incorporating a World Englishes perspective (Brown, 1993). Brown and Peterson (1997) argue that a brief introduction to issues surrounding World Englishes is simply not enough. Ideally, every course should be informed by the current landscape of the English language, but having preservice teachers take a World Englishes course (or an English sociolinguistics course whose scope is not limited to the inner circle) early on in their preparation is likely to result in a “world view . . . [that is] more consistent with the sociolinguistic realities of the spread of English as an international language” (p. 44).

Additionally, preservice teachers who are not NSs should have the opportunity to reflect on their own strengths as NNS teachers, and these issues should be discussed among all students. An increasing body of literature on NNS teachers suggests that they are not a deficient version of native-speaking counterparts; rather, the two groups of teachers bring in different strengths and complement each other (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001). Although it is crucial that programs provide enough support for preservice teachers to gain adequate proficiency in English, NNS EFL teachers should not be defined only in terms of their nonnativeness. They must be given ongoing opportunities, both during and after the program, to evaluate their weaknesses and strengths, to overcome their weaknesses, and to make the most of their strengths. Some TESOL programs in the United States address this issue by offering a seminar specifically on NNS teacher issues (e.g., Samimy, 2000), reconceptualizing

an existing course to better address the needs of NNS preservice teachers (e.g., Brady & Gulikers, in press), or by encouraging students to connect to other NNS teachers (e.g., through the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus). It seems only reasonable to make similar efforts in teacher education programs outside of English-speaking countries where NNS teachers dominate (see Braine, 1999, and Kamhi-Stein, in press, for more discussion on NNS teachers).

Educating the General Public

Whereas the notion of World Englishes and its implications to ELT may be familiar to TESOL professionals, the public, including students and their parents, may find these ideas new, radical, or even outrageous. For curriculum changes to be implemented successfully, teachers and administrators should not only be aware of the general public's attitudes toward English varieties and possible resistance, but also take actions to address any concerns they may have (Lewis, 1981). Many schools have conference days, open-campus days for prospective students, or Parent-Teacher Association meetings, where administrators and teachers can discuss curriculum strengths and innovations. These opportunities can be used to explain that incorporating World Englishes does not mean removing native varieties from English classes or replacing them with less-perfect ones; rather, they add to the current repertoire and thus enrich the curriculum. Parents are more likely to be supportive if they are better informed about the spread of English and convinced that changes are good for their children.

Mass media is another way to reach the general public. In Japan, several language specialists and journalists have written popular books and magazine and newspaper articles that problematize the dominance of English in today's world (e.g., Tsuda, 1990, 1993, 1996) or that advocate for the Japanese variety of English that is not restricted by the native-speaker norm (e.g., Funabashi, 1998; "Tsukaeru eigo," 2000). In countries where the print and visual media can be used to reach out to the general public, applied linguists can use these media to raise people's awareness about the role of English in the global society.

CONCLUSION

In this commentary, I have challenged the current ELT practice in Japan that focuses almost exclusively on inner-circle English and have argued for incorporating World Englishes in EIL curricula. Presenting the complexity of the sociolinguistic reality of English is needed to prepare learners for their future use of English that may involve both NNSs and NSs and that may take place in any part of the world. The

understanding of World Englishes does not consist of a set of discrete items or topics that can be tucked in at the beginning of the semester, between formal chapters, or during the first 5 minutes of every lesson and then be forgotten. It is, rather, a different way of looking at the language, which is more inclusive, pluralistic, and accepting than the traditional, monolithic view of English in which there is one correct, standard way of using English that all speakers must strive for. In a sense, incorporating World Englishes is like putting on a new pair of glasses—the detail and complexity of the world we suddenly see may initially be overwhelming, but in the long run, we would have a better view and understanding of EIL.

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“Seeing” Teacher Learning

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■ During the past decade, teacher learning has been conceptualized as normative and lifelong, emerging out of and through experiences in