

New Varieties of English

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Abstract

In the past, English was used as a mean of communication by people living in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia only. However, nowadays, different kinds of “Englishes” have emerged in many different countries. Some interesting phenomenon of English varieties can be found in Asia. The usage of English in Asia is blended with the characteristics of the countries’ native languages, which results in English with different pronunciation, vocabularies, grammar, and so on. In this paper, the writer will discuss the emerging English varieties in countries located in south-east of Asia. In addition, the possibility for the emergence of Indonesian English will also be discussed in this paper.

Keywords: *English varieties, English in Asia, World Englishes*

1. Introduction

Currently, English is enjoying the status as the *lingua franca* and as the international language in all over the world. However, the process of evolution of English language does not happen overnight. English has undergone decades and centuries of constant changes and shifts until it can reach its current position.

The history of English language starts around the fourth or fifth century. Gelderen (2006, p. 2) explains that at first, Celtic was the language which was used in Britain, and during the invasion of Roman Empire, Latin created a big impact on language use in Britain. English started to be in use when German tribes conquered Britain. Therefore, it is safe to say that English, at its very core, is originally Germanic.

English, at that time, was further influenced by Danish since the Danes invaded and occupied some lands in Britain. However, during the invasion of Normans, English was dropped, and French and Latin replaced English as the main means of communication. Eventually, after three centuries, English (with some influences from French and Latin) was used again by Britain society. Afterwards, due to the Industrial Revolution, the invention of printing press, and

the active explorations across the globe, English continued to spread all over Britain and all over the world (Knowles, 1997, pp. 1-2).

The effect of the spread of English across the globe is that English is used more and more which leads to the emergence of new varieties, such as Singaporean English, Malaysian English, and so on. These varieties are products of English and the native language of the country. For example, in the case of Singaporean, Malaysian English, and Brunei English, the speakers often use the particle 'lah' at the end of the sentence. Sentences such as "You don't be like that lah", "Stop it lah" and so on are very common in those varieties (Kirkpatrick, 2007, pp. 126-127).

Due to the emergence of the new varieties, in this paper, the writer would like to review briefly about the emerging English varieties, especially varieties in south-east region of Asia from their phonological, lexical, and syntactic aspect. Afterwards, the writer would like to explain her opinions regarding the establishment of Indonesian English.

2. Literature Review

2.1. World Englishes

The term "World Englishes" was coined by Kachru in 1985. Kachru (as cited in Kilickaya, 2009) explains that English is no longer monopolized by the English-speaking countries. In fact, English has been "indigenized" in non-English speaking countries. As a result, new varieties of English emerge and form "World Englishes." There are several definitions and interpretations for World Englishes. Bolton thinks that the term "World Englishes" acts as a superordinate term for all varieties of English while Jenkins proposes the usage of the term to refer to newly-emerged English varieties in Africa and Asia (as cited in Kilickaya, 2009).

Kachru proposes a model of World Englishes, namely "Three Circles of English." These three circles explain in brief about the emergence of English and its pattern.

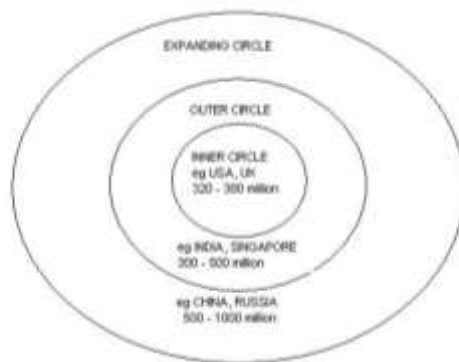


Figure 1. Kachru's Model: three concentric circles of English (Crystal, 2003, p. 61)

Kachru (as cited in Chen, 2011, p. 7) explains that the Inner Circle belongs to countries that use English as their mother tongue, such as the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and so on. The varieties of English which are used in these countries act as the foundation and parameter for English varieties in other countries. According to the diagram, the amount of speakers of English as native language range from 320 to 380 million people.

The Outer Circle belongs to the countries that use English as a second language. In most cases, those countries used to be occupied by countries in the Inner Circle, such as India, Singapore, the Philippines, and so on. In brief, the Outer Circle is comprised of “countries where English is not an official language, but is important for historical reasons (e.g., the British Common Wealth Countries) and plays a part in the nation’s institutions” (Chen, 2011, p. 7). Based on the model, the estimated amount of English speakers in the Outer Circle is 300 to 500 million speakers.

The last one is the Expanding Circle. This circle includes countries which use English as foreign language. Unlike countries in the Outer circle, English does not give any contributions towards the history of countries in the Expanding Circle. Yet, English still develops rapidly, and it is estimated that the English speakers of the Expanding countries is around 500 to 1000 million speakers. Those countries include China, Russia, Korea, Indonesia, and so on.

Kachru's model of concentric circles was criticized because the circles implied that the Inner Circle not only as the center of language but also center of

culture since language and culture are closely related. Kachru then revised his model into overlapping circles (Chen, 2011, p. 7).

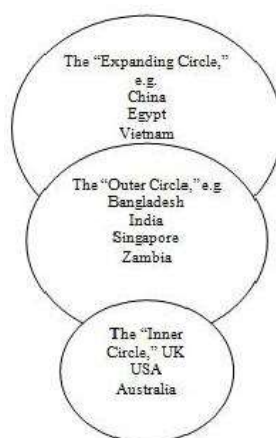


Figure 2. Kachru's Model: three overlapping circles of English. (Taken from Google)

In other words, English does not exclusively belong to the Inner Circle any longer. It has become the identity of the non-native English speakers as well. Those non-native speakers incorporate and combine their own native language systems with English. As the result, different varieties of English emerge. The emergence of English varieties in different parts of the world is the reason why the term “World Englishes” was coined

2.2. Englishes Across Asia

The process of creating a variety of English is not an easy feat. O'Hara-Davies (2010, p. 416) states that the countries have to face a lot of challenges “in order to ‘qualify’ as a distinct variety.” However, some varieties of English have successfully established themselves in the linguistic community and have undergone standardization and approval from their speakers. Some examples of the community are China, Japan, and Korea.

2.2.1. China

China is one of the countries which are located in the Expanding Circle. Nevertheless, the varieties of English used by the Chinese emerge in the linguistic society. The term “China English” was first popularized by Ge Chuangui in 1980.

China English is different from Cinglish. Cinglish is not considered as a variety of English since it does not follow the convention of Standard English. Liu (2008, p. 30) defines China English as:

“China English, with Normative English as its core, is an English variety used by Chinese people; it has the Chinese features unavoidably influenced by both the Chinese language and the way of Chinese thinking; it possesses the linguistic characteristics shown at the levels of phonology, lexis, syntax and discourse.”

The most distinctive features which differentiate original English from China English are the phonological, lexical, and syntactic aspects. In phonological level, the Chinese have several types of sound variation. For example, Jiang (as cited in Liu 2008, p. 31) explains that the consonants /ð/ and /θ/ are often pronounced as /z/ and /s/. Thus, the pronunciation of ‘this’ /ðɪs/ would sound like /zis/ and the pronunciation of the word ‘thank’ /θaŋk/ would sound like /saŋk/.

In terms of lexical feature, China English contains many cultural-specific items which do not have the equivalent terms in English. As a result, many of those items have undergone the process of transliteration and loan translation in order to form local vocabularies, such as *wushu* (traditional Chinese martial arts), *baozi* (Chinese dumplings), teacup (from the word *chabei*; *cha* means ‘tea’ and *bei* means ‘cup’ or ‘glass’), and so on (Liu, 2008, pp. 31-32)

The syntactic feature of China English adopts Chinese sentence structure. For example, in Chinese, it is very common to put the cause in the first clause and the effect in the second clause. This structure is adapted into China English, making sentence *Because they are naughty, they are punished* an acceptable form in China English while the speakers of native English prefer to say *They are punished because they are naughty* (Liu, 2008, p. 33-34).

2.2.2. Japan and Korea

Japan and Korea started to realize the importance of English since the ages of trade. At that time, traders doing business in Japan and Korea caused the increasing need for translators. As a result, Japan and Korea started to introduce English into their education system. According to Kachru’s “Three Circles of English”, Japan and Korea are located in the Expanding Circle. However,

Japanese and Koreans are highly aware of the importance of English, so they try to develop their education system so that their future generation can contribute and compete in the global level.

Both Japanese English and Korean English are two different varieties of English, yet they share similar characteristics (Takeshita, 2010, p. 276). In phonological level, for example, Japanese and Korean English do not differentiate between the sound /l/ and /r/. As the result, when the speakers pronounce the words 'late' and 'rate', both will sound the same. Another phonological example is that both Japanese and Korean English do not recognize some fricative sounds, which are the sounds /f/, /v/ and /z/. Consequently, the speakers of Korean English will substitute those sounds with aspirated /p^h/, and the speakers of Japanese English will use the sound /h/ instead.

In the lexical aspect, Japanese and Korean English have included their own cultural-specific items, ranging from food (*sashimi*, *kimchi*), people (*samurai*, *ninja*), clothing (*kimono*, *hanbok*), martial arts (*karate*, *taekwondo*) and so on.

In the grammatical aspect, singular and plural nouns are sometimes discernible in Japanese and Korean English. Moreover, Japanese and Korean English are heavily influenced by the native Japanese and Korean language which results in some adaptation of Japanese and Korean syntactic features respectively within the English varieties.

3. Englishes in South-East Region of Asia

In the south-east region of Asia, English has also become a popular language. Some countries use English as their second language while others use it as a foreign language. Some countries mix the features of their own mother language into English, which results in very distinctive and easily-identified varieties of English. Some examples of those countries are Brunei Darussalam and Singapore.

3.1. Brunei Darussalam

According to Kachru's "Three Circles of English", Brunei Darussalam is located in the Outer Circle. It is a country which was invaded by British army in the past. Although Brunei has declared their independence from the United Kingdom and has declared Malay as their official language, they continue to embrace and recognize English as a means of communication. They adhere to Standard British English, yet they also develop their very own Brunei English to ensure equal communication among their multicultural society. Regarding the usage of English, the Bruneians prefer to use Standard British English when they write, especially for formal and academic purposes, whereas they prefer Brunei English when they talk (O'Hara-Davies, 2010).

Standard British English and Brunei English are different in terms of their phonological, grammatical, and lexical features. Sharbawi (2012, Abstract) explains that when speaking English, the Bruneians are often inconsistent with their vowel pronunciation which results in significant differences with Standard British English.

Regarding the grammatical aspects, Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 125) also points out that Brunei English tends to treat some uncountable nouns as countable nouns such as *luggages*, *homeworks*, *equipments*, and so on. There are also some unique occurrences in the usage of past forms and the usage of particle 'lah' at the end of a sentence.

In terms of lexical aspects, Brunei English adopts many cultural items into its vocabulary. Moreover, there are certain words in English which have undergone the semantic shift (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 124).

3.2. Singaporean English

Based on Kachru's model, Singapore is a country located in the Outer Circle. Singapore originally was a part of Malaysia until the Singaporeans decided to separate themselves and declared their independence. When Singapore was still a part of Malaysia, just like Brunei Darussalam, it was under the occupation of British army. Therefore, English language actually plays a significant role in the history of Singapore. The society of Singapore is comprised of a lot of people

from different backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities. Naturally this diversity is also absorbed into their varieties of English, Singaporean English.

According to Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 123), in terms of phonological aspect of Singaporean English, there is no distinction between long and short vowels. Both are pronounced the same which results in difficulty in differentiating some words, such as the words 'ship' /ʃɪp/ and 'sheep' /ʃi:p/. There are also other phonological components which are deemed different from the Standard English, such as the pronunciation of consonants and the placing of the stress.

In terms of lexicon, local and cultural-specific vocabularies are adapted into the lexicon of Singaporean English. Terms such as *amok* (crazy), *kampong* (village), and *barang* (things) are included into the system of Singaporean English which results in further enrichment of the variety.

In the aspect of syntactic features, articles are rarely used in both oral and written communication. Moreover, the differences also lie in the usage of preposition and the treatment of uncountable nouns as countable nouns.

3.3. Indonesian English?

The existence of the varieties explained above shows that English has truly become a global language, but instead of using the original Englishes (British English, American English, Australian English), many countries decide to combine English language and their own native languages. As the result, lots of English varieties emerge and keep on developing until now.

Considering the fact that almost most of the countries in Asia have their own version of English, the writer wonders whether Indonesian English will emerge. In the writer's opinion, the formation of Indonesian English will be beneficial for the development of Indonesia. Indonesians will be able to participate and contribute in global setting while still upholding the cultures, customs, and characteristics of our nations. This can be seen from the previous explanation of English varieties across Asia and in South-east Asia. The speakers of those varieties can still maintain the uniqueness of their language (phonologically, lexically, syntactically, and grammatically) even when they speak English.

One of the benefits of the existence of Indonesian English in the future is in the field of English language pedagogy. There has been increasing interests of teaching English while using the country's specific culture. Current practices of English teaching and learning have started to give emphasis on the role of culture, and the teachers start to view English as something local, flexible and negotiable. They can focus on the characteristics of their own English variety instead of following the characteristics of native Englishes, such as British English, American English, or Australian English (Coskun, 2010, p. 11).

Nevertheless, recent studies show that English is only considered as an additional language in our country. Lauder (2008) explains that in Indonesia, English is recognized as an important tool to compete in global level, yet it is not used frequently as the medium of communication and instruction. It is only treated as a local content in Indonesian schools, especially after the implementation of 2013 Curriculum. English complements the native language, *Bahasa Indonesia* in different domains and dimensions, and it is used widely for different purposes, yet the status quo still holds English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Moreover, current situation shows that there is no immediate need for Indonesian English.

Lauder also lists down some possible problems regarding the usage of English in Indonesia which include the problem of function and status, variety, and culture (2008, pp. 17-18). Furthermore, not all Indonesians have positive language attitude towards the usage of English in Indonesia since English is viewed as a threat towards the core value of Indonesia. As a result, even if there is a need in the future to form Indonesian English, the process will be full of obstacles and difficulties.

4. Conclusion

English is no longer an exclusive language that is exploited only by those in Inner Circle. Many varieties start to emerge in every continent in the world. There are other varieties of English which are spread across Asia, such as Indian English, Sri Lankan English, Malaysian English, and so on. This occurrence

shows that the world adapts to the need of wanting to be internationally recognized while maintaining the unique and local characteristics.

Regarding the Indonesian English, it can be concluded that the decision and the urgency of forming Indonesian English remains unclear. Nevertheless, if one day, the Indonesians feel the need to establish their own variety of English, further researches are needed in order to design the features and the standardization, to back up the rationale, and to convince the policy makers that the notion would be beneficial for further development of Indonesia.

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