

# The Future of English as an International Language: A Preview

国際語としての英語の将来

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英語は国際的な言語です。当たり前のことと思われるほどよく言われる言葉です。ただし、英語はいわゆるネイティブスピーカーに属している、またはネイティブスピーカーによって管理されるべき言語であるという感覚があります。これは、第二言語として英語を話す人々が第一言語としてそれを話す人々よりもはるかに多いという事実にもかかわらずです。国際語としての英語は、ますますグローバル化する世界における多くの社会的、文化的、経済的要因とともに、当局としてのネイティブスピーカーのこの規範的な見方からの変化とともに変わります。

## キーワード

英語、国際語、ネイティブスピーカー、ノンネイティブスピーカー、第二言葉、2Lスピーカー、グローバル化、国際化

No other language has nearly as many speakers, is spoken in so many countries by such a range of people for such a variety of purposes and in such a variety of styles, as English. Approximately one quarter of the world's population (over 1.5 billion people) speak English to some degree of proficiency, the majority of which speak it as a second language. Approximately 1.4 billion people live in a country where English has official governmental status. It is the most commonly learnt foreign language in the world, and since gaining independence, former non-British colonies, such as Indonesia and Vietnam have changed their main foreign language focus from Dutch and from Russian and French respectively, to English (Kachru, 2009). It is the dominant language used for air traffic control, international business, academic conferences and publications, science, technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music, advertising and the internet (Goodman, 1996). It is the product of centuries of colonisation and military power on behalf of Britain initially, and the cultural and economic power of America in

more recent times, and it seems to be irreversibly entrenched as the dominant international language, save for some kind of radical world-changing event, and will most likely remain so for the foreseeable future (Kachru, 1982). Yet the power and influence of English is shifting, or rather has already shifted from the hands of these two nations and the so called 'native speaker' to the hands of the L2 speaker or the so called 'non-native speaker'. Indeed, English is used more on a global scale between L2 speakers than it is between native speakers or between native speakers and non-native speakers. This imbalance is steadily growing and will undoubtedly be one of, if not *the* major factor that will change English as we know it (Kachru, 2009). But before we look more closely at these changes and try to predict them, it is important to negotiate the meaning of the terminology used to describe these language users and the misconceptions attached to them, as this will help us better understand how they will influence English as an international language.

The earliest definition of a 'native speaker' of a language is someone who learnt to speak that language before any other, from childhood. (Cook, 2001) and this seems to be the common consensus of the term today despite the many cases it cannot be so easily applied. The most common assumptions of what it means to be a native speaker, or the speaker of a mother-tongue, according to Rampton (1990: pp.97), are:

1. A particular language is inherited, either through genetic endowment or through birth into the social group stereotypically associated with it.
2. Inheriting a language means being able to speak it well.
3. People either are or are not-native/mother-tongue speakers.
4. Being a native speaker involves the comprehensive grasp of a language.
5. Just as people are usually citizens of one country, people are native speakers of one mother tongue.

However, as she and many others point out (e.g. Cook 2001; Medgyes 1992) there are a number of exceptions that do not fit neatly into these criteria or the prior definition. Consider a boy who was born in Italy to an Italian mother and a German father and moved to America at the age of five and hence grew up speaking Italian, German and English. Which language (if any) is he a native speaker of? Where do factors such as ability or the order in which the languages are learnt come into play? As Cook (2001) points out, there are great differences in the language proficiency of native speakers (as there are in non-native speakers). Some are more adept at writing or story-telling, or have larger vocabularies than others, while some understand certain

dialects or accents better than others or write poetry or songs that others cannot. One would surely have a hard time disputing that the likes of Joseph Conrad and Henry Kissinger are more proficient in English than a typical 4-year-old Australian boy, or a very large number of Australian adults for that matter, yet the latter is a native speaker and the former, technically, are not.

These misconceptions are based on a monolingual normative attitude, although the reality is that the majority of the world's population is brought up in multilingual environments where it is not always clear which language is one's native language (if any), or even which language is their L1 or L2 (Jenkins, 2000), if indeed there is a need to make this distinction. However, the stigma and privilege associated with the terms 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' have very concrete effects on their users, especially with regard to employment, confidence and linguistic authority. Non-native speakers are often discriminated against, and the question of proficiency is often ignored while biological factors are given prominence. Yet, in reality these non-native speakers often create English that is clearer and more universal or original than native-speaker English, a representational example being Korean Airlines choosing a French supplier over a UK supplier for their flight simulator programmes because they use clearer language (Jenkins, 2000). The aforementioned Joseph Conrad, who did not gain proficiency in English until reaching his early twenties, earned many plaudits for bringing a fresh sensibility in his style of prose. As previously mentioned, the number of L2 English speakers already outnumbers that of L1 speakers, and this number is growing. This coupled with the rapid economic and populational growth of countries (China, India, Brazil, Indonesia and Vietnam in particular) with large numbers of people who speak English as an L2 or foreign language, or speak a non-western variety of English, will help shift the power into the hands of the multilingual majority, and the respective Englishes that they produce will be more widely diffused, gain international recognition and certainly also affect the status and shape of so-called 'Standard English' controlled largely by the US and the UK. This quantitative global change in the number of English speakers is something that needs attention, as it is important to know who the future of English will be shaped by before we can predict what will happen to it.

Although Asia, Latin America, and North America have similar rates of population growth, the fact that the former two areas have much larger populations will mean that there will be a steadily greater gap in numbers over the next 100 years, according to the UN. The estimated population in 2100 will be just over 5 billion in Asia, around 730 million in Latin America/The Caribbean, and around 470 million in North America. These 3 areas will account for roughly the same percentage of the world's population in 2100, (around 55–50% for Asia and 5% for North

America, and around 8% for Latin America/The Caribbean), whereas Africa will rise dramatically from around 13% in 2000 to around 25% in 2100. Europe's population, on the other hand, is in steady decline and will drop from 12% in 2000 to around 6% by 2100. (United Nations, 2000). Significantly, the bulk of North America's population growth will be created by the rapid increase in immigration of Hispanic people from Latin America, who will account for more than 50% of its total population in the next 50 years (Graddol, 1997), creating a majority of bilingualism not only on behalf of these Hispanic Spanish/English speakers, but also because of the increasing importance for people living in America to know Spanish. Also, notably there will be a huge growth in the population of India (from approximately 1 billion now, to around 1.5 billion in 2100), where Indian English is a native language for an increasing proportion of the country (United Nations, 2000). Economically, China, South Korea, Indonesia, Brazil and Japan have a much higher growth rate in per capita income than the US and the UK. Asia now holds around 21% of the world's wealth and is set to triple to around 60% by 2050 (Graddol, 1997). This means that the L2 English speaker will not only gain power through numbers, but also through economic strength. With this economic strength comes the power to better facilitate the increasing demand for English education. There is a growing middle class in Asia and Latin America, who will not only be able to afford better English education, but will also be more likely to adopt English in their homes (Graddol, 1997). Asia also has the world's highest rate of urbanization (Graddol, 1997). More and more people will be living in cities, which are much more linguistically progressive, harbour more foreigners and have more English-related jobs than rural areas. So, it seems clear who the future of English will be influenced by, and we have mentioned some key geographical areas this will take place, but before we can predict how English will change, we need to finally look at the purposes it will be used for and the status it holds in these areas of influence.

Kachru (1990) groups countries into three circles in relation to the status of English. The inner circle consists of countries where 'Standard English' is the primary native language. The outer circle consists of countries where a 'non-standard' variety is being learnt as a native language, usually in combination with other languages. Finally, the expanding circle consists of countries where English is learnt as a foreign language. Depending on which circle a country belongs to, its goals and purposes for English will vary. In the expanding circle, we can see what is called the exonormative model, in which the typically American or British 'native speaker' is the model learners strive to emulate. The bond between cultural identity and English is insignificant, and telling a Spanish speaker of English, for example, that their English is Spanish-like is most likely to be received negatively. (Jenkins, 2000). However, in the outer circle we can see

an endonormative attitude, where local varieties of English are given more prominence, are naturalised, and speakers from these countries are better able to use English as a tool to serve local goals and feel it is tied to their own identities (Jenkins, 2000). As the name suggests, the expanding circle is expanding, and in the future it is possible we will see more countries from this group enter the outer circle. Kachru (1990) and Kirkpatrick (2007) both describe in detail the process by which countries make such transitions. Though a detailed description of this process goes beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that with the inevitable shift of dominance away from UK and US speakers, we will see that countries in this expanding circle will find it easier to make the transition and accept their own varieties of English and use them for their own particular needs.

These needs are of course dependent on which group of people they serve and are changing as the world becomes ever more globalized. The expanding populations and economies of countries in Asia and South America in particular will see increased international business and consequently a greater need for English, specifically Business English, as a tool for communication. In Chile, 30% of all jobs advertised in newspapers require English (Kachru, 2009) and in Japan many local companies already use English as an in-house language (Kachru, 2009). Recently, Japan and Korea have launched national education programmes establishing English language curricula from the elementary school level and there have even been proposals to make English an official language in both of these countries (Kachru, 2009). There will be more people learning English as a foreign language from an earlier age in many other countries as well, which will require teachers to be proficient in English. As English is the dominant language of academic research, countries that gain economic strength, and consequently educational strength, will need to use English to participate in the international academic community and gain access to the world's knowledge. The vast majority of the world's internet home pages are in English, and the growing popularity of social network sites, such as Facebook are international communities that will continue to encourage and facilitate international communication and friendship.

With a better understanding of how the world will change with regard to who English will be used by and for what purposes, we can make some estimations of how it will change with the assistance of some observation of how English has evolved historically until now and how these new varieties of English differ to the so-called 'standard English' of the US and UK. Throughout its history, English has constantly grown with the influence of other languages and has adopted words and grammatical characteristics from Latin and early Germanic languages, French, German, Danish and others. Because of this influence we can see dramatic changes in

the grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation from Old English, to Middle English, to Modern English. More recently it has absorbed languages from economically or culturally powerful countries such as China and Japan. Sushi, sumo, kimono, and karaoke are just a few famous examples of the latter's many lexical exports. But it is not just foreign language words that are being adopted by English. There are many cases of English adopting original English words and expressions that are used within another language such as Japanese English or 'Japanglish' and Chinese English or 'Chinglish'. These are original, coined English lexical items that are used within Japanese and Chinese. From the former, English has already taken on expressions such as 'case-by-case', 'walkman' and 'forward-looking', while words such as 'washlet', 'hot carpet' and 'paper driver' could find their way into the English language soon. (Kachru, 2009). While non-English languages often adopt English words to express new or foreign concepts, as is common in Japanese, new English expressions are also invented to express concepts unique to a particular culture that do not already have a word in English, as is common in China, where expressions such as 'paper tiger' (something that appears more threatening than it really is) or a variety of expressions to do with 'face' or pride and respect, such as 'face negotiation' or 'losing face'. (Kachru, 2009). As other nations gain more economic and cultural power, as is happening in Asia and South America, their languages also will begin to filtrate more into the English language and vice versa, as has already begun to happen with Chinese and Japanese. Such cultural expressions and colloquialisms will help foster cultural understanding and provide English users with a new and rich variety.

It is not just words and expressions that are being cycled between English and other languages, but also grammar that is affected due to mother tongue influence on L2 English speakers' language. Japanese speakers often produce sentences like 'I went to Kyoto by car' rather than 'I drove to Kyoto' due to similarities with Japanese sentence construction. Korean speakers of English find it difficult to distinguish between 'in' and 'at' due to a lack of similar prepositions in their own language and often produce sentences like 'He works in a university' rather than 'at a university'. In creole languages like Bislama in Vanuatu, we can even see the emergence of a singular sexless pronoun 'hem', which is something the English language desperately needs. (Börjars, 2010). In Singaporean English, and in many other varieties of English we can see non-countable nouns being treated as countable nouns, the lack of articles, and varying questions tags like 'is it?'. (Kachru, 2009). Pedantic English grammatical rules are often problematic for the L2 learner (and L1 speakers), and we can see simplification and systemisation occurring in the English produced not just by the L2 speaker, but also from L1 speakers. 'Gotta', 'gonna', 'wanna', and 'innit?' are examples of spoken language (the historical

catalyst of language change) that could become standardised in the future (Börjars).

The pronunciation of English also will vary of course, and big changes have already been made to make English words easier to say since the times of Old English, such as the omission of the /t/ sound in words like 'often' or 'listen' and the omission of the /r/ sound in 'beard' or 'scared'. (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Kachru (2009) identifies common phonological variations in Asian countries, recurring examples of which include the absence of the schwa /ə/, varied pronunciation of /ɜ:/, such as /e/ in the Philippines or /a:/ in Japan, simplification of consonant clusters in the final position, interchanging of /r/ and /l/, and syllable-timed, rather than stress-timed rhythm, to name but a few. Accent is something very closely tied to identity, and with the power shift towards the L2 speaker and with the acceptance of these new varieties we will see more people take pride in their accent rather than trying to mimic the British or American model, just as L1 speakers in countries like Australia and New Zealand have done (Jenkins, 2000).

In general, English will become more simplified, clearer, and more efficient and will also gain new words and expressions to evoke concepts it never could have before. It will be much more varied in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and there will be a more open-minded approach as to what is 'correct'. The authorities of English will be international, not just American or British. This will be facilitated by the growing need for a Lingua Franca brought about by globalisation, the quantitative growth in speakers of different varieties of English both L2 and mother tongue, the growing acceptance and respect for these varieties brought about by populational and economic growth, and the change of status accompanied by an expansion of purpose for English, both local and international.

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