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The spread of English and its contact with other languages

Orville Omar Villanueva

Resumen

ESTE ARTÍCULO RESUME BREVEMENTE LA DISEMINACIÓN DEL INGLÉS desde su comienzo en el siglo 5 hasta el siglo 21. También discute las razones que lo llevaron a convertirse en un idioma mundial. El inglés de Singapur es utilizado en este artículo como un ejemplo de las variedades conocidas como "nuevas modalidades del inglés," que han surgido como resultado de la expansión del inglés como idioma mundial.

Palabras claves: expansión del inglés, evolución del inglés, formación de dialectos, lenguas en contacto, inglés singaporiano

Abstract

THIS PAPER BRIEFLY SUMMARIZES THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH from its beginning in the 5th century up to the 21st century. It also discusses the reasons that led English to become a World Language. Singaporean English is utilized in this paper as an example of the so-called "New English" varieties, which have resulted due to the spread of English as a World Language.

Keywords: spread of English, English evolution, dialect formation, contact languages, Singaporean English

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of the English language, as Schneider[1] discusses, has been viewed from two different perspectives. The first one acknowledges English as the world's leading language when it comes to international communication, since English has become essential for international economy, diplomacy, sciences, and the media. The second classifies English as a "killer language," which is responsible for the extinction of many indigenous languages, dialects, and cultures around the world. This is the reason why Morrison[2] refers to English as "the only great shark in the pool" since, according to him, every fortnight, somewhere in the world, a language dies.

Nevertheless, would it be fair and unequivocally correct to name English as the main reason for the death of these languages? In order to answer this

question, we would have to refer to the inevitable, unstoppable, ever-going process of globalization and account the continuing spread of English as a result of it. Nonetheless, today's English as a global language is more than a predominant lingua franca, which is currently being appropriated by local speakers who diversify and develop it into new dialects.

THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH

ACCORDING TO BRUTT-GRIFFLER,[3] ENGLISH HAS FOR A LONG TIME been regarded as an imposed language. This view is founded in the theory of linguistic imperialism, which implies that World English is the product of domination by English language nations, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States. Brutt-Griffer divides the spread of English into two phases. Phase I began in the 5th century in the British Isles when their Celtic languages were being replaced by Old English and ended in the 16th century when Middle English turned into Modern English. During this phase, English did not spread to other countries. Phase II started in the 17th century with the establishment of the British colonies in North America where the English language was imposed over the colonies' native languages. The second phase ended in the 18th century with the establishment of the British colonies in Australasia as well as the Caribbean where English came into contact with indigenous and African languages, allowing English-based Pidgins and Creoles to emerge. This resulted in a number of colonies that established English as their national language such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and several islands of the Caribbean, among others. In these countries, the Europeans became the majority through migration. In other countries such as in Asia and Africa, English has been established as a national language or is used as an additional language alongside their local languages. These countries were conquered by the Europeans who remained the minority. Finally, Crystal[4] attributes the spread of English and its influences on other languages in the 19th century to the economic and cultural globalization as a result of the role of the United States.

Brutt-Griffler[5] provides four reasons for the development of World English and its continuing influence on other languages. Reason one states that as science and technology became international, English came to be the language that fulfilled their functions. Reason two affirms that English was used as an elite lingua franca to unify the world market which was facilitated and at the time constrained by imperialism, since it allowed the use of World English but restricted its use to the elite and commercial classes. Reason three specifies that the struggle against imperialism has allowed English to spread to other domains, since it emerged as an instrument of liberation in the British colonial empire, both in Africana and Asia. Reason four explains that English has progressed greatly as a world language since the fall of

imperialism, and especially since the decline of the British and American hegemony in the world market. Although French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese, Persian, and Turkish were also imperial languages, none of them developed world econocultural functions. Brutt-Griffler concludes that contrary to France, which struggled to expand its language, the British, who did not want their language to become a universal language, ended up with precisely that fate.

THE EVOLUTION OF NEW ENGLISHES

Inevitably, as the English language came into contact with the languages spoken in postcolonial settings and countries around the world, different forms of New Englishes emerged which have been regarded as unique varieties shaped by historical conditions and contact settings. According to Schneider,[6] the important thing here is not the former colonial history of a country, but rather the type of contact situation caused by the historical circumstances. These new linguistic developments are products of the colonial expansion of the British Empire from the late 16th century to the 20th century. They were driven by economic, political, military, and religious reasons. Their precursors were the state, business companies, religious communities, missionaries, and colonization societies. Consequently, different types of contact scenarios emerged. Thomason[7] mentions contact scenarios such as the movement of one group into another group's territory, immigration of small groups or scattered individuals, imported labor force, or cultural contacts through long-term relationships. Mufwene[8] also distinguishes contact situations which are directly related to the Caribbean scenario such as trade colonization, settlement colonies, and exploitation colonization.

To better understand the different scenarios from which the New Englishes were born, Gupta[9] distinguished five different patterns for English-speaking countries: monolingual ancestral English (e.g., United States), monolingual contact variety (e.g., Jamaica), monolingual scholastic English (e.g., India), multilingual contact variety (e.g., Singapore), and multilingual ancestral English (e.g., South Africa). These distinctions provide for variations but for Schneider,[10] they are not prime determinants of the outcome of the process of a new dialect emergence. Nonetheless, two main classifications have been suggested to classify New Englishes. The first model distinguishes English as a Native Language (ENL) in countries where English is spoken as a native language by at least the majority of the population as in the United States, from English as a Second Language (ESL) in countries where, in addition to the indigenous languages, English assumes official functions in domains such as politics and education as in India, and from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in countries where English performs

no official function but is still widely used in domains such as science and technology, as it is in the case of Israel.

The second classification is Kachru's[11] Three Circle's Model, which depicts the spread of English around the world as three concentric circles (an Inner Circle, an Outer Circle, and an Expanding Circle) representing different ways in which English has been acquired and is currently used. The Inner Circle refers to the traditional historical and sociolinguistic bases of English in the areas where it is the native or first language (e.g., the United States). The Outer Circle comprises regions colonized by Britain; the spread of English in non-native settings, where the language has become part of the country's chief institutions, and plays and important "second language" role in a multilingual setting (e.g., Singapore). The Expanding Circle involves nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, but they do not have the history of colonization, nor does English have any special status in their language policy (e.g., Japan). In these areas, English is primarily a foreign language. The three circles largely correspond to the ENL/ESL,EFL distinction. What distinguishes the two models is Kachru's emphasis that norms and standards should no longer be determined by Inner Circle/ENL contexts. In other words, he meant that the English language belongs to all the speakers who use it.

The term New Englishes is used for the varieties that have developed in the Outer Circle, have been transplanted, and therefore can also be called diaspora varieties. In a historical and linguistic sense, these varieties are not new. They are called "new" because it is only recently that they have been linguistically and scholarly recognized and institutionalized although they have a long history of acculturation in geographical, cultural, and linguistic contexts different from the English of the Inner Circle. There is a decline of competence from educated English to non-standard English, which is considerably mixed with local languages.

The study of the "New Englishes" is relatively new. It can be dated back to the early 1980's. Since then, there have been many attempts to explain the scenarios that gave birth to the New Englishes. Three of these have been discussed by Schneider:[12]

> **Nativization**: refers to the process an individual undergoes when reconstructing his interlanguage to conform more closely to that of the input.
> **Variability**: characterizes new varieties of English depending on context, education, government, colonial history, etc.
> **Critical Discourse Analysis**: explains that statements regarding ESL, ENL, and EFL are culturally biased.

Schneider discusses two theories that play an important role in the model

he proposes for the evolution of New Englishes. The first one is identity, which has been defined by Mendoza[13]

as the "active negotiation of an individual's relationship with larger social constructs, in so far as this negotiation is signaled through language and other semiotic means." According to Schneider, social identity plays a vital role in the classification and evolution of New Englishes. Choosing a group-specific language form is central to the construction of an identity. The difference between Us (those who share an essential part of the history of the language) and the Others (those who do not share the language history) finds its most fertile ground by means of linguistic variability. Hence, this is the most influential force behind the reconstruction of group identities.

The second theory is ecology. According to Schneider, for the New Englishes to emerge, there had to be some contact between the different language groups. The New Englishes can then be viewed as a process of linguistic convergence where the settler (STL) and the indigenous population (IDG) strands coexisted. This coexistence allowed for features of one group to be accepted as the norm by the other group and vice versa. In 2001, Mufwene explored the development of pidgins and other new languages such as creoles. He surveyed a wide range of examples of changes in the structure, function, and vitality of languages and suggested that similar ecologies have played the same kinds of roles in all cases of language evolution.

PHASES IN THE EVOLUTION OF NEW ENGLISHES

Following the same line of thought proposed by Mufwene in his theory of language ecology, Schneider proposes that all the New Englishes undergo the same evolution process, which he divides in five phases: foundation, exonormative stabilization, nativization, and differentiation. In phase one (foundation), STLs from different linguistic backgrounds came to one place. They start a process of accommodation where linguistic forms shared by the speakers are used to achieve successful communication. STL strands progressively accommodate speech pronunciation and lexical usage to facilitate communication. The contact between the STL strands and IDG languages is limited to trading at this stage . The STL strands do not bother to learn the IDG languages because they keep natives captive to serve as interpreters. Hence, at this stage, IDG languages have no influence in English.

In the second phase (exonormative stabilization), after STLs stabilize in the new country, English becomes the language spoken by most of the speakers. Their language begins to move toward a local language form in which they start to adopt local vocabulary. At the same time, the indigenous strands begin to expand and bilingualism spreads among IDG speakers through education and increase language contact. These bilingual groups see the benefits of the ability to communicate with members of the local

community as well as other countries. This opens their eyes to aspects of another worldview giving them experience and competitiveness within their own group.

In the third phase (nativization), both linguistic communities realize that traditional realities, identities, and sociopolitical alignment have been changing for good. Therefore, a new identity reflects their new reality where the old and the new identities merge to form a new one. During this phase, a new state of affairs increasingly finds linguistic expression, and language becomes an issue as language observers claim that linguistic usage keeps deteriorating. Nonetheless, borrowing, the development of a local accent, idioms, new word formations, and other phenomena occur at this stage.

In the fourth phase (endonormative stabilization), gradual adoption and acceptance of a new linguistic norm emerges. This phase typically follows and presupposes political independence. The new identity construct will give greater prominence to a group's territory of resistance than to historical background and, to some extent, ethnicity which is a social construct and a parameter of identity negotiation. The emergence of new identities results in the acceptance of local forms of English as a means of expressing that new identity. Also at this stage, indigenous ethnic groups have undergone a process of language shift; and in many cases, the original IDG languages are endangered.

In the fifth and last phase (differentiation), the new nation achieves independence by freeing itself from external dominance, developing an identity of its own which cannot be compared to others. As a reflection of this new identity, a new language variety emerges. However, this is not the end of language evolution. This new status gives way to internal diversification. Parameters such as age, sex, social status, and regional background will play an important role in this evolution and in the evolution of social networks. Also in this stage, group identification and social categorization become more important than the collective identity of previous phases. Additionally, differences between the STL and IDG strand varieties are likely to resurface as ethnic dialect markers at this stage. Moreover, the identity constructions of communities along ethnic lines (e.g., dialect differences) may be reinforced or developed as markers of ethnic pride.

DIALECT FORMATION

WHEN GROUPS OF SPEAKERS DIFFER NOTICEABLY in their language, which is different in some words, grammar, and/or pronunciation from other forms of the same language, they are often said to speak different dialects.[14] This simply indicates that speakers show some variation in the way they use elements of the language. No two speakers of a language, even if they are speakers of the same dialect, produce and use their language in exactly the

same way. There is not a language that is used at all times by all speakers. The form of a language spoken by a single individual is referred to as an idiolect. In this regard, every speaker of a language has a distinct idiolect. In popular usage, dialects have been regarded as "incorrect" forms of the "standard" or "correct" form of languages. But the truth is that there is no such thing as a single language; rather, there are many dialects and idiolects. No dialect is "better" than any other dialect of a language. All dialects are effective forms of language in the sense that any idea or desire expressed in a language can be expressed just as easily in any dialect.

Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, and Harning[15] distinguish three different types of dialects. The first one, the regional dialect, refers to the distinct form of a language spoken in a certain geographical area. For example, inhabitants of the regions where Appalachian dialects are spoken have distinct linguistic features that differentiate them from speakers of other forms of English. The second one, the ethnic dialect, identifies the distinctive form of a language spoken by speakers historically associated with a particular ancestry such as Yiddish English with European Jewish decent. The third one, the social dialect, characterizes the distinct form of a language spoken mainly by African Americans in working class areas. It has been argued by Sheperd[16] that when people speaking different languages come into contact, one group learns the other's language but does it imperfectly, carrying over native habits of pronunciation into the language of the other group. This situation can result in what Sheperd has called a hybrid dialect, which is a dialect that has resulted from the heavy influence of borrowed words. A clear example of this type of dialect is Spanglish, which is Spanish spoken with the insertion of English loanwords, among Spanish-speaking residents in the United States and Janglish, which is Japanese spoken with the insertion of English loanwords, among Japanese speaking residents of Japan.

Although regional, ethnic, and social dialects are often discussed separately, the speech of any given population exists within a multi-faceted context. In addition, speech varieties are in a constant state of change, although as Pyles and Algeo[17] point out, there has been a widely erroneous popular notion that there are "pure" languages and that dialects are corruptions of these. Varieties of language are constantly being revised by their speakers because they define who people are, where they come from, and what their social, regional, and ethnic ties are. The linguistic revision occurs as people's circumstances change or as they attempt to project new identities. This has been the case with Spanglish among U.S. Hispanics. Although as a variety of Spanish, this dialect also contains unique phonological, morphological, and syntactic features.

Dialects are most likely to develop where there is physical separation. The earliest English-speaking inhabitants in America came from different

parts of the British Isles, where dialects were already in place, spreading to different parts of America. According to Wolfram and Schilling,[18] this settlement segregation takes place in several phases. In the initial phase, the immigrants bring with them their culture, in the next phase, a new cultural identity emerges. The creation of this new culture is often accompanied by the elimination of established cultures and ways of speaking. In the final phase, the new created culture becomes an important part of the definition of the localized population, as it maintains aspects of its dialect that reflect a unique identity.

Terrain, migration, and language contact are also important factors in the development of dialect differences. For instance, geographical factors such as rivers and mountains determine the routes that people take and where they migrate. Along the paths of migration, contact with other language groups often takes place. This contact can influence dialect formation as the languages borrow from each other. In areas where contact with other languages has been intensive, borrowings from the languages may remain restricted to a given dialect. In many cases, borrowed items are in such widespread use among the speakers of a dialect that they are no longer considered dialect-specific features. However, dialect influence from language contact is not limited to vocabulary items, although this is the most obvious kind of influence.

The distinction between rural and urban lifestyles is reflected in dialect differences, since it brings the development of specialized vocabulary items associated with different occupations. In addition to this, metropolitan regions have been centers of change, while rural locales have been slower to change. On the other hand, dialectal differences tend to be found among lower-status speakers in all dialect regions rather than confined to speakers in particular areas. According to Windford,[19] the assumption is that language change begins in the upper classes, perhaps because speakers in this social stratum feel a need to distance themselves as far as possible from the lower classes, which continually try to imitate them for prestige purposes.

The kinds of people speakers tend to interact with can be an important factor in the development of dialectal differences, since people often want to be considered as a part of a particular social group. For example, the dialect of an entire community may be affected by population movement, and so they project their identity by talking like other members of the group. Some speakers of American English such as the Nuyoricans speak two dialects in order to live in two different worlds: the world of intra-group identity and the world of mainstream social status.

THE CASE OF SINGAPORE
A VIVID EXAMPLE OF THE APPROPRIATION OF ENGLISH by a foreign coun-

try is that of Singapore.

In 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles obtained the rights to establish a trading outpost for the British East India Company on the island of Singapore. The strategic location resulted in a massive arrival of traders, travelers, colonizers, and laborers of mainly Chinese and Indian origin. By the late 19th century, Singapore had experienced massive population growth and was home to a small European ruling class as well as a growing number of Asian professionals who adopted aspects of the British lifestyle, thus resulting in a cultural blend of Europe and Asia. This stable situation lasted until the Japanese occupation during World War II (1942-45).

When the British returned in 1945, they were faced with a mixed Singaporean identity which had broken with the colonial tradition. A resistance movement political party, the PAP (People's Action Party), emphasized the island's Asian roots and promoted the desire for independence. This and similar allied movements lead Singapore to independence in 1965. As a result, the country experienced an enormous economic growth and prosperity in the post-independence decades, which transformed the country into a highly modern and industrialized nation with a unique and novel identity characterized by a blend of a western oriented business and lifestyle that emphasizes Asian values.

Singaporean English has come to be the means of expression of this Asian-Western culture; the vast majority of the people consider themselves primarily Singaporean rather than Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. According to Tickoo,[20] this was caused by the nation's strictly imposed educational policy of ethnicity-based bilingualism, which states that "Every child is educated in English as a first language and in one of the other three official languages (Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay) as a second language.[21] For the younger generation growing up under this policy, English is the only bond between them. Furthermore, the ethnic languages taught in the schools are the standard varieties of these languages, which are frequently distinct from the dialectal home varieties spoken by the parents and grandparents. This effectively weakens the position and usefulness of the indigenous languages and strengthens that of English.

Thus, Singaporean English emerged as a symbolic expression of the country's bicultural identity, which encodes both the country's global pursuit of economic prosperity and the country's traditions. On the one hand, professional Singaporeans nowadays claim that they are able to identify compatriots abroad by their accent and that they are proud of this. On the other hand, a distinctive local variant called Singlish, strongly marked by a Chinese substrate, has evolved. Singlish can therefore be regarded as an identity carrier dialect which facilitates emotional expressiveness.

Singlish has a distinctive phonology, including features like reduced con-

sonant clusters, a tendency to use glottal stops, and a tendency toward syllable-timing.[22] Its lexicon, largely shared with Malaysian English, contains a strong component of Singaporeanisms, including fauna and flora words (e.g., taugeh 'beansprout') as well as cultural terms (e.g., kelong 'fish trap') but also words from everyday life (e.g., chin chai 'lazy and careless'). Finally, its syntax is marked by many distinctive rules and patterns (e.g., the use of can as a complete utterance, without a subject or complement, or count use of British English non-count nouns, like a fruit or staffs).

CONCLUSION

ALL LANGUAGES ARE DYNAMIC SYSTEMS THAT ARE CONSTANTLY in the process of changing. The patterns that underlie any given language are constantly being adjusted and readjusted. Changes may originate from contact with other languages or dialects in which structures may be borrowed or subsumed. If a new language feature continues to be used by a certain group but not by others, then a dialect difference is born. Eventually, the adoption of different language changes by different groups of speakers may lead to the splitting of two dialects into entirely separate languages. Unfortunately, many people are under the erroneous impression that dialects are nothing more than imperfect versions of standard varieties. Nonetheless, language changes that lead to dialect differentiation are simply the result of natural processes which have to do with how language is articulated, organized, and processed in the human mind.

Notes

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2   R. Morrison, "Speaking in one tongue" en *The Weekend Australian*, June 15-16, 2002, p. 26.

3   J. Brutt-Griffler, "The becoming of a world language" en *World English: A Study of Its Development*, Clevedon, England, Multilingual Matters, 2002, p. 107-125.

4   D. Crystal, *Language Death*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

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