

JALT2007

Challenging Assumptions
Looking In, Looking Out

Native English in high school?: The concept of world Englishes

Kayo Sugimoto

Department of World Englishes Chukyo University

Reference data:

Sugimoto, K. (2008). Native English in high school? The concept of world Englishes.

In K. Bradford Watts, T. Muller, & M. Swanson (Eds.), *JALT2007 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

The internationalization of English has led to its diversity, and the field of world Englishes which encourages toleration of varieties of English in the world has spread. To introduce this concept into English education in Japan, some changes are necessary, such as the expectations of 'native like fluency.' According to the research of textbooks which will be used in high school English courses I and II from April 2008, students do not have the opportunity to learn about the present situation of English which has been diversified, or to use their variety of English. This article proposes educating students of the existence of various Englishes, and allowing them to use their own style of English in classes with confidence without stressing American or British English.

本論は、英語を国際コミュニケーションの言語として認識し、様々な英語変種を認容することを基礎としている「世界諸英語 (world Englishes)」という理念に基づいた英語教育への提案を、特に教材研究の観点から試みるものである。この世界諸英語の理念から英語教育に応用し得る点、そして今日の高校英語教材に対する新しい提案を世界諸英語の立場から申し述べるものである。この研究が、英語学習者が英語の国際的普及に対する正しい認識のもとに、自らの英語に対する自信をもつことができるような英語教育の開発に寄与することを期待したい。

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology or MEXT has had a long term objective “to foster a positive attitude toward communication (1998).” In 2002, MEXT defined “cultivating ‘Japanese with English Abilities,’” and an action plan for this policy was announced in 2003. According to the action plan, English learners in the school system are required to acquire the ability to communicate in English so that they can flourish in the internationalized society. However, there is much variation in the English language programs between schools, with only the four-skill classes of English I and II and Oral Communication being curricula constants. This variation causes problems. According to the survey by MEXT (Tedsuka, 2006), 13.9% of students in high schools feel that they do not use enough

English in the English I class, and 76.7% of students think that they use English half or less than half of class time (as compared to 0.9% and 65.5% respectively in junior high schools). Therefore, there are many areas that should be improved, such as consistency in curriculums, teaching styles, and teaching students to be able to use English in real communication.

Yamuna Kachru (2003) of the University of Illinois identifies one reason of the current state of teaching in Japan is that passing the entrance examination for university is more emphasized in high schools, so teaching English tends to focus on only grammatical aspects, and it leads students to be passive in classes rather than being active. However, to achieve the goal of “cultivating ‘Japanese with English Abilities,’” it is more important for even high school students to have the opportunity to learn English for communication which requires learners to use English practically.

This paper will focus on the English education in high school, from the perspective of world Englishes which urges toleration of varieties of English. The first section will detail the concept of world Englishes. The second section examines the application of world Englishes theory, and the last section will show the current situation of English education in high schools from an analysis of textbooks, and propose how to introduce the concept of world Englishes in the high schools.

The Concept of World Englishes

English has now spread internationally, and it is used as an international language. This prevalence of English causes

diversity in English, and it is true that English is owned not only by native English speakers, but also English users, including non-native English speakers. In Japan however, this fact has not been accepted widely, and one reason for this is that the current situation of English varieties has not been introduced into English education in Japan. Therefore, most people still believe that native speakers’ English is correct, and other types are wrong. This misunderstanding can lead people to be ashamed to use English if it is not like native speakers’ English. To communicate effectively and more easily in English in the world, it is important to know the existence of varieties of English, and to cultivate the tolerant attitude toward various Englishes. Statistics show that the number of English speakers in the world is approximately two billion (Honna, 2006). The number of native English speakers is about 375,000,000 (Melchers & Shaw, 2003), while the number of non-native English speakers who use English as their second or international language is about one billion and seven hundred million (Honna, 1999). Non-native English speakers have their own English style which is different from native speakers’ English. Therefore, it can be said there are various Englishes in the world today. The field of world Englishes was originated by Braj Kachru. He organized English into three concentric circles; the *inner circle* which includes countries where people use English as their native language; the *outer circle* which includes countries where people use English as their second language; and the *expanding circle* which includes countries where people use English as their international language (Kachru, 1992). This organization suggests that English is not owned by only native speakers any more. Besides, English cannot be considered as a foreign

language in many countries of the world, such as in Japan, China and Korea. Actually, many people in various countries learn English plus their native language, and use English as an additional language rather than foreign language in many different situations (Honma, 1999). In the case of Japanese too, English is an additional language to communicate internationally (Honma, 2003).

There are three important concepts of the idea of world Englishes. First, it is important to tolerate various Englishes. From the perspective of world Englishes, both speakers and listeners have a responsibility to understand each other, so interlocutors need to be flexible towards other Englishes. The second point is users do not have to have native speaker competence. Most people in Japan tend to believe that native speaker English is correct, and other variations are wrong. Therefore, they feel embarrassed to use their own style of English. In world Englishes however, it is important to feel free to use one's own style of English. As professor Takeshita from Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin University says, as long as Japanese keep trying to use English like native speakers, they will not be able to communicate in English as Japanese with confidence (2005). Furthermore, Japanese can communicate and exchange ideas and opinions in English by releasing themselves from the expectations of 'native-like fluency' (Sakai & D' Angelo, 2005). They should use their own style of educated Japanese English with confidence. The third point is to use internationally intelligible English. According to Smith (2003), intelligibility can be classified into three dimensions of understanding. First, intelligibility is recognition of a word. For example, if a person says shoes, the word "shoes" is recognized as S-H-O-E-S.

Second, comprehensibility is recognition of meaning of the word. "Shoes" means something worn on feet. Third, interpretability is to recognize the intent of the words. When someone says "shoes" in Japan, it may mean "Take off your shoes before you come in." This cultural meaning doesn't exist in all countries; however Smith maintains cultural competence is more important than grammatical competence because it is a more significant aid to intelligibility. Thus in world Englishes, cultural awareness is a larger factor in internationally intelligible English than grammatical accuracy.

These aspects help English learners to understand the diversity of English, and release them from their idea which they have to use English like native speakers. Learning English based on the concept of world English makes it easier for students to acquire the ability of international communication.

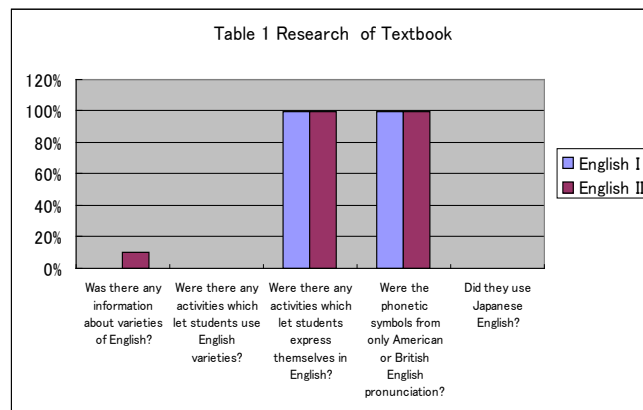
World Englishes in the Classroom

This section emphasizes three points of the educational theory of world Englishes which will be important when world Englishes is introduced in classes. The first point is to let students develop confidence using English. In Japan, most English classes tend to focus on grammar only, so students develop an error-making phobia because of the grammar emphasis. However in world Englishes, it is more important to let students use their own style of English to develop fluency than to correct their grammatical mistakes. The second point is to provide more time for students to express themselves than to be passive in the English classes. This idea incorporates methods of the communicative approach.

While appropriateness is emphasized in this approach, it is not as important in the concept of world Englishes because everyone has a different level of English ability. If the English is internationally intelligible, it is deemed acceptable even if the appropriateness does not exactly match the context. Thus it is necessary for students to have more time to get used to using English and develop confidence, making active classrooms essential. The third point is not stressing native English. Itaru Ijima of Atomi Gakuen Josi University suggests in the epilogue of his translation of the book, *The New Englishes* (Shin Eigo no Jissou) written by Platt, et al. that languages essentially relate to the cultural and social environment of their users, but still English education in Japan is separated from this fact (1991). However, from the world Englishes perspective, if the English of students is not like that of native speakers, teachers should tolerate it so students gain confidence. Correction should come later to make students' English more internationally intelligible.

The Study of Textbooks

In this section, the current state of English course I and II textbooks for high school that incorporate world Englishes is studied. As a result of the research, it is clear that there is little introduction of world Englishes in the classrooms today. However, there are some positive consequences.



Forty textbooks were chosen randomly out of eighty-one which will be used in English I and II courses in high schools in Aichi prefecture from April 2008. Five criteria were used in the analysis; was there any information about varieties of English, were there any activities which let students use English varieties, were there any activities which let students express themselves in English, were the phonetic symbols from only American or British English pronunciation, and did they use Japanese English. The first point was whether there was any mention about English varieties. None of English course I textbooks had information about varieties of English. On the other hand, 10% of English course II mentioned English varieties. The second criterion was whether textbooks included lessons or activities using English varieties. Zero percent of both English course I and II textbooks included activities for students to use English varieties. However, of the third criterion, about the existence of activities which

let students express themselves in English, 100% of them contain activities in which students can use English to express themselves. The fourth criterion was whether they included phonetic symbols indicating only American or British English pronunciation. 100% of both English course I and II textbooks used phonetic symbols of only American or British English pronunciation. The fifth point was whether they included Japanese English. Neither English course I nor II textbooks included the Japanese variety of English.

Discussion of Textbook Data

There are four perspectives from which to examine the study of textbooks. The first is cultural content. The contents of textbooks used in 1960s Japan featured only American or British culture, and the characters used in the textbooks were from only America or Britain (Hino, 2005). This bias suggested educators believed that English was owned only by native speakers. The following conversation was used in one such textbook (Hino, 2003).

Uncle: It's half past two now. Where shall we go next?

Roy: I want to see the British Museum.

Uncle: All right. I often go there to read.

Roy: Is it a library?

Uncle: Yes, it is. It's a museum, too. You'll find a great many books there. Many people go there to study the fine arts, too. It's the biggest museum in the world. I have a friend there. (New Prince Readers for second grade 1968:42)

This conversation between Roy, who is an American visiting his uncle living in London, and his uncle, is about planning to go to the British Museum. As Nobuyuki Hino of Osaka University noted about this content, this conversation is just the interaction between Anglo-Americans, and is a clear example that people used to consider that English was used in American or British cultural environments only. Although this example is from a junior high school textbook, the contents were influenced by the general idea in society (2003).

Recently however, all textbooks in English I and II include various countries' culture in the content. For example, some textbooks include lessons which are about Japanese culture, such as Sushi, and about the damage of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. Also the characters used in textbooks are from different countries, such as Korea, Malaysia, and Japan. From this fact, it is obvious the idea of which English is owned by only native speakers has been changing.

The second perspective is linguistic rules. Even though the cultural contents have changed, all textbooks still stress only American or British English. Using only American or British English pronunciation is one of the examples. This circumstance causes students to believe they have to be like native speakers.

The third perspective is the description about varieties of English. From the data mentioned above, no English course I textbooks refer to English varieties, so both teachers and learners do not have any opportunities to learn about English diversity. On the other hand, there are two English course II textbooks which mention varieties of English: *PRO-VISION* by Kirihara Shoten, and *Power On* by Tokyo Shoseki. The

following is an example from *PRO-VISION*, which explains about the concept of world Englishes.

The category of World Englishes includes Japanese English, American English, Spanish English, and Korean English as its members. The basic point about World Englishes is that English no longer belongs exclusively to native speakers but is a global resource shared by all peoples of the world, and that the English norms are not to be decided locally but globally. (*PRO-VISION* for second grade 2007: 96)

Through reading articles written in these textbooks, teachers and students can learn that there are various Englishes in the world.

The fourth perspective involves activities. All textbooks have some activities in which students use English, so they have the opportunity to improve their own English. However, these activities do not mention using varieties of English. Therefore, teachers and learners might try to use English like native English speakers. However, through these activities, they can express themselves in English in the classes. As Hino mentions, in the concept of world Englishes, it is important for the students to have the opportunities to express their own ideas or cultures in English (2003). From this perspective, the contents of activities in current textbooks are suitable for the textbooks of world Englishes.

The Textbook Proposal

Textbooks which are based on the idea of world Englishes should include three points. The first is an explanation of the concepts of world Englishes to let both teachers and students learn about the diversity of Englishes. Kiyoshi Naka of Kyushu Joshi University (Kyushu Women's University) says it is important to teach students that there are various Englishes in the world because some students misunderstand that all English speakers use the same English (2007). The second is the introduction of various Englishes by using articles or speeches by people from different countries in their own style of English. The third is the use of activities which require students to improve their English especially communicatively. As mentioned before, in the concept of world Englishes, it is important for the learners to be able to express their own culture or ideas in English (Hino, 2003), so the activities in which students can describe themselves are more proper. These activities might enable students to use English in real communication in our internationalized society.

Conclusion

There are textbooks on the market which utilize the ideas of world Englishes. This paper introduces eight of them as the example of the world Englishes style education; *Nice Talking with You 1* and *2*, and *The Active Learner – Communication Strategies for the Real World* by Macmillan Language House, *Identity*, and *J-Talk* by Oxford University Press, *On the Go* and *On the Move* by Pearson Longman Asia ELT, and *Englishes of the World* by Sanshu-sha. The similarities of these textbooks include using no phonetic symbols, which

means students do not have to try to mimic native English speakers, including activities which let students express their opinions or ideas, and recorded CDs attached to each textbook that don't contain only native speakers, but also non-native speakers English including Japanese English. They provide several topics which will interest students, and let them use English often in classrooms. For example, the contents of *Englishes of the World* include speeches about the way people from different countries learn English. Therefore, students can not only learn varieties of English, but also widen their view about learning English.

To acquire the ability of English for real communication, world Englishes education should be introduced in classrooms. It lets students know the existence of varieties of English, which can change their conceptions that they have to be like native English speakers. Also, the concept of world Englishes lets students use English with confidence when they communicate with others in English because in world Englishes, it is important to make students feel successful to achieve using English.

When world Englishes education is introduced, it is necessary to reconsider and improve the current textbooks. If the textbooks are revised, the contents of classes can be improved for students to gain the ability of using English, not like native speakers, but in their own style.

Kayo Sugimoto is a graduate student of the department of world Englishes, Chukyo University. <k10701m@cnc.chukyo-u.ac.jp>

References

- Hino, N. (2005). Theory and Practice in EIL Education. In Fukuyoshi, Eiko & D' Angelo, James & Yoshikawa, Hiroshi (Eds.). *Chukyo World Englishes* Vol.1, Nagoya: Association of World Englishes of Chukyo University.
- Hino, N. (2003). Kokusai Eigo no Kyozaï. Osaka Daigaku Gengo Bunka Bu (Eds.). *Gengo Bunka Kenkyu* Tsugo29, Osaka: Osaka Daigaku Gengo Bunka Bu.
- Honna, N. (1999). *Ajia wo Tsunagu Eigo – Eigo no Atarashii Kokusaiteki Yakuwari*, Tokyo: Kabushikigaisha Aruku.
- Honna, N. (2003). English as a Japanese Language for International Communication. In French, Gary & D' Angelo, James (Eds.). *First Conference on World Englishes in the Classroom Proceedings*. (pp.60-66). Nagoya: Chukyo University.
- Honna, N. (2006). *Eigo wa Ajia wo Musubu*, Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu.
- Kachru, B. B. (1992). Teaching World Englishes. In Kachru, Braj (Ed.). *The Other Tongue*. (2nd ed.). (pp. 355-365). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Melchers, Gunnel & Shaw, Philip. (2003). *World Englishes*, London: Arnold.
- Naka, K. (2007). Values Represented in the Current English Textbooks in Japan: An Idealized Image of English Language Learners. In Tsuda, Sanae (Ed.). *Asian English Studies*, Vol. 9, Tokyo: The Japanese Association for Asian Englishes.

- Monbukagakushou. (1998). Daihassetsu Gaikokugo. Retrieved February 18, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shuppan/sonota/990301d/990301i.htm>
- Platt, J., Weber, H., & Lian, H.M. (1991). *“Shin-Eigo” no Jissou* (Ijima Itaru Trans.) Tokyo: Shohaku-sha. (Original work published 1984).
- Sakai, S. & D’ Angelo, J. (2005). A Vision for world Englishes in the Expanding Circle. In Kachru, Braj B. & Smith, Larry E. (Eds.). *World Englishes Vol. 25, No.3*, London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Smith, L. E. (2003). English Across Cultures: The Problem of Intelligibility. In French, Gary & D’ Angelo, James (Eds.). *First Conference on World Englishes in the Classroom Proceedings*, Nagoya: Chukyo University.
- Takeshita, Y. (2005). New Englishes – Atarashii Eigo to Sono Kanosei. In Takeshita, Yuko & Ishikawa, Taku (Eds.). *Sekaiwa Eigowo Dou Tsukatteiruka <Nihonjin no Eigo> wo Kangaeru Tameni*. (2nd ed.) (pp. 4-14) Tokyo: Shinyo-sha.
- Tedsuka, Y. (2006). *Eigo ga Tsukaeru Nihonjin no Ikusei*. Retrieved February 18, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/18/01/06013100/003/001.pdf>