

# Perspectives

## English in Japan: The World Englishes Perspective

**Phillip R. Morrow**

*Nagoya Gakuin University*

This paper examines the role of English in Japan from the World Englishes (WE) perspective, concentrating on two issues: the implications of WE for English education, and the status of Japanese English (JE) as a variety of English. An overview of WE is followed by a discussion of its implications for English teaching in Japan. Important implications include the need to familiarize students with multiple varieties of English and to encourage them to regard all varieties, including their own, as valid. In this connection, the status of JE is discussed and research findings are cited to support recognizing JE as an independent variety of English.

本論文では、“World Englishes”(WE)の観点から、二つの関連した問題を検証する。すなわち、WEが日本の英語教育に対して果たす役割、および、英語の一形態としての“Japanese English”(JE)の位置づけである。まず、WEの理論を概観した上で、WEが日本の英語教育において果たす役割を論じる。次に教育において英語のどの形態を用いるべきかということについて、学生に多様な形態に親しませること、および、自分たちの英語を含めて、様々な英語の形態が正当なものであることを学生に気づかせることが重要であることを論じる。これに関連してJEの位置づけを行い、JEは多様な形態をもつ英語の一つとして認めるという主張を裏付ける研究結果について論じる。

The use of English in places where it is not a native language has been the object of much recent research by linguists (e.g. Crystal, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; Thumboo, 2001), and the area of linguistics most directly concerned with the description of these varieties and their users and uses has come to be known as *World Englishes* (hereinafter, WE). The aim of this paper is to examine the role of English in Japan from the WE perspective. It will deal mainly with two issues. The first is the implications of the WE approach for the teaching of English in Japan. The second concerns the status of Japanese English (hereinafter, JE) as a variety of English. I will argue that the English used by Japanese native speakers has characteristics and usages that distinguish it from other varieties of English and justify regarding it as an independent variety of English. As evidence for this position, I will cite the findings of a number of discourse-level studies of the English used by Japanese speakers. By way of introduction to these issues, I will briefly review some pertinent facts about the spread and use of English and the WE perspective.

### The Spread and Use of English

English occupies a unique place in the world today and in history. There has never been a language which has been used so much by so many different people. David Crystal, in his book, *English as a Global Language* (1997), lists 75 countries where English is used. In some 47 of them, the non-native speakers of English outnumber the native speakers, and in many of those countries there are almost no native speakers of English. In these places, English often has the role of a *lingua franca*, that is, a language of communication among people who do not speak the same native language. English is not the first language to serve as a *lingua franca*, of course. Since antiquity there have been languages that have had this function at different times and in different parts of the world, for example, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, French, and Hausa. In each case, the choice and use of a language as a *lingua franca* has been related to political factors, and English is no exception. The position of English in the world today can be seen as one legacy of British colonial policy.

What is exceptional about English is the extent to which English has come to be used. There are now five languages in the world that have a very large number of speakers: Chinese, English, Hindi-Urdu, Russian and Spanish. But among these, only English can claim to be a real universal language, that is, a language used for communication between

peoples of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In this sense, English is unique.

Today the position of English as an international language is unrivaled. It is now the official or semi-official language in more than 60 countries. Moreover,

English has become the dominant language in many fields of activity such as business and banking, industry and commerce, transportation, tourism, sports, international diplomacy, advertising, pop music and so on. But above all, English has become the common language of scientific discourse in a world where the relative “development” of a nation can best be measured in terms of its access to science through English. (Medgyes, 1994, p. 1)

It is very difficult to estimate the number of English users with accuracy; after all, who counts as a user of English? Is it a matter of education? Or is it a matter of regular use? If having studied English for some years in school qualifies a person as an English user, then there would be about a hundred million users of English in Japan, but many of these people cannot be said to “use English” in any meaningful way. Thailand is similar to Japan in being an Asian country that was not colonized by any European power. In Thailand, as in Japan, English is considered a foreign language rather than a second language, but unlike Japan, a large number of ordinary people—shop attendants, clerks, office workers, and so on—are able to use English and do use English for at least some functions in the course of their daily lives. Many of these people have had little formal instruction in English, yet they use English regularly, often because their work brings them into contact with tourists, and tourism is a major industry in Thailand. Should these people be considered English users? There is no widely accepted criterion for deciding who is a user of English, and this accounts for the great variation in estimates about the number of users of English.

Crystal (1997) puts the number of English L1 speakers at about 337 million and the number of English L2 speakers at 235 million as of 1995. These speakers come from countries whose populations total more than 2 billion, or more than one third of the world’s population. In theory, most of these 2 billion people are routinely exposed to English, and besides the English L1 and L2 speakers that are included in these figures, some others have varying degrees of proficiency in English. For instance, in India only about 4% of the population are counted as English L2 speakers in Crystal’s figures, but if anyone who uses English for any function

were included, the figure would double or treble. Furthermore, these figures do not include the EFL speakers in countries like Japan, Taiwan, or Thailand. Whatever criterion is used for counting users of English, the fact remains that the number of English speakers is very large, and it is increasing with the spread and use of technology.

### The World Englishes Perspective

*World Englishes* is the term that has come to be used to designate the area of research that encompasses the issues related to the spread and use of English throughout the world. These issues fall within many of the traditional areas of linguistics: Sociolinguistics, Dialectology, Language Contact, Bilingualism, Language Education, Language Planning, and others. Clearly, these are very diverse areas and the WE studies that deal with issues in these various areas are not all based on a shared theory. Rather, they are based on a few common premises that have important linguistic, pedagogical, and social implications. One of these premises is that English has become a global language. It is learned and taught and used to an extent unprecedented in history. Another basic premise is that there have been significant demographic changes in terms of who the users of English are, and where they are. A third important premise is that there are many, many varieties of English, and these varieties can be distinguished from one another in terms of their phonological, lexical, syntactic, and discursive characteristics.

Kachru (1985) has proposed a useful scheme for classifying the areas of the world where English is used. He divides the English-using world into three concentric circles: an Inner Circle, an Outer Circle, and an Expanding Circle. (See Figure 1 below.) The Inner Circle consists of the countries where English is learned and used as a first language by most of the inhabitants. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA are examples of countries in the Inner Circle. The Outer Circle comprises mostly the former colonies or spheres of influence of the UK and the USA. This includes: Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, India, Israel, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda, Western Samoa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, among others. In these countries, nativized, that is, local varieties of English have achieved the status of being either an official language, or a language widely used in education, administration, law, business, the mass media, and literature. The Expanding

Circle consists of countries where English is on the way to becoming a dominant second language in the domains of education, science, and technology. These countries include, among others, China, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and the countries of Europe.

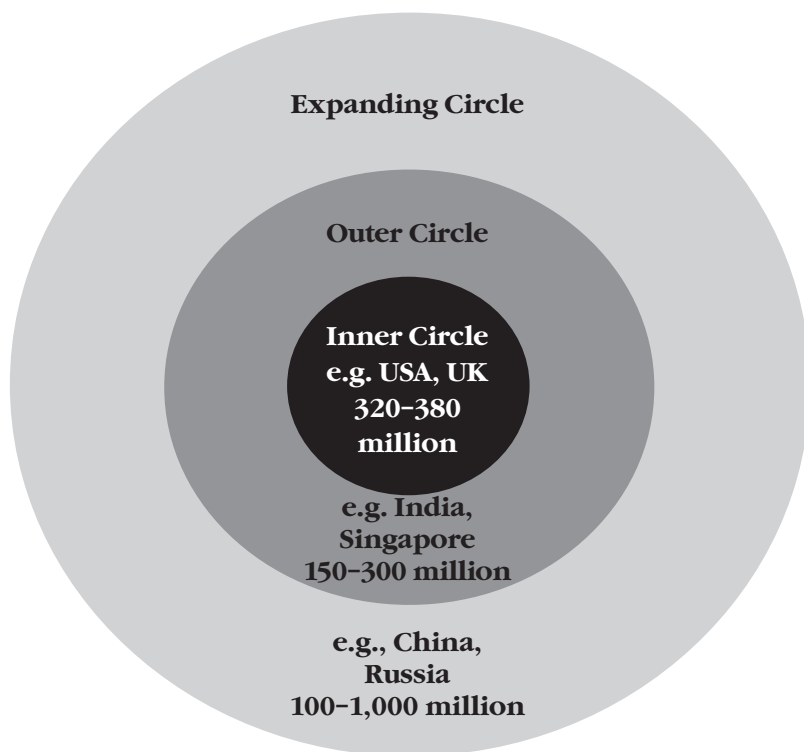


Figure 1. The three circles of English (from Crystal, 1997, p. 54)

With the spread of English there has been a significant change in the demographic distribution of its users. The proportion of English users from the Outer and Expanding Circles has become larger and is increasing. There are, for example, more English speakers in India than in Australia and New Zealand combined. An important implication of this is that more and more users of English today are bilinguals or multilinguals for whom English is a second, or a third language.

The spread of English has also fostered the emergence and development of new varieties of English. There are now many varieties of English, each of which reflects the cultural conditions of the place or places where it is used. The existence of these varieties raises a question about their relative ranking. Are some varieties better or purer than others? Linguists do not believe that any language or variety is inherently better than any other, though they recognize that varieties and languages may differ as to the size of their lexicons and the functions for which they are used. However, languages and varieties are not all equal in the eyes of their users. There are large differences in the levels of prestige that accrue to different varieties, and these differences are related to many factors including the functions for which the variety is used and the region with which it is associated. For example, the varieties of the national language used in the political capitals such as Paris, London or Tokyo tend to have more prestige than the local varieties of the same languages that are used in different areas of the countries, although there is no linguistic reason for this. Rather, this reflects the tendency that languages or varieties used by those with greater status and power are more highly valued than those used by speakers with less status and power (Romaine, 2000).

In the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle, the extent to which English is used and the functions for which it is used vary greatly from one place to another. In WE studies the concepts of *range* and *depth* are used to describe the different dimensions of the spread and use of English. According to Kachru, “The *range* of a variety refers to its extension into various cultural, social, educational and commercial contexts....The term *depth* relates to the penetration of bilingualism into various strata of society” (1986, p. 92). Saying that a variety has wide range means that it is used in a number of areas such as commerce, religion, and law. If a variety has depth, then it is used by individuals from many different levels of society, for example, government officials, scholars, professionals, merchants, and technicians.

Among the varieties of English in the Outer and Expanding Circles, a general distinction is made between Institutionalized Varieties and Performance Varieties. Institutionalized Varieties (e.g. Indian English, South African English) are those used in places where English has some sort of official status, either in law or through established and recognized usage. Institutionalized Varieties are generally associated with the Outer Circle, and for those who use these varieties, English is a second language. Performance Varieties (e.g. Korean English, Thai English) are

varieties used in places where English has not received any kind of official recognition. They are usually associated with the Expanding Circle, and for their users, English remains a foreign language.

The distinction between Institutionalized and Performance Varieties becomes clearer if we look at individual cases. Indian English is a good example of an Institutionalized Variety (D'souza, 2001, Kachru, 1986). English in India has a long history dating back to 1600 when the East India Company was formed for purpose of trade with India. Since then, and particularly during India's colonial period, the use of English became firmly entrenched. After independence, English was given the legal status of "associate official language" and has come to be widely used in the media, in education, in commerce, in technology and in other domains. It is also used as a *lingua franca* among Indians who have different native languages. The variety of Indian English used by many speakers has certain phonological characteristics and lexical and grammatical usages (described in Kachru, 1983) that set it apart from other varieties. English is used in some states of India much more than in others, and there is considerable variability in the level of English proficiency among individuals, but it is fair to say that English has considerable range and depth in India.

The situation in Korea is quite different: "...in Korea English has never been institutionalized, nor has it been a(n intra)national or official language" (Song, 1998, p. 263). Song adds that although most Koreans have studied English at school, the majority are unable to carry out simple communicative functions. While Korean English clearly has much less range and depth than Indian English, Korean English does have a number of lexical, morpho-syntactic and pragmatic usages, which distinguish it from other varieties of English (Shim, 1999). These usages have been codified by being included in the English textbooks used in Korea. In WE studies, the distinctive usages that set Korean English (and other performance varieties) apart from Inner Circle varieties of English are termed *deviations* rather than *mistakes* since they reflect the norms of the linguistic and cultural setting in which they are used, and are therefore acceptable usages within certain contexts.

Studies of the many varieties of English have drawn attention to the diversity of the language. This is an aspect of English which has not been emphasized much in the teaching of English, and yet would seem to have important implications for learners. In the following section some of these implications are considered in relation to the case of TEFL in Japan.

## World Englishes and the Teaching of English

Research on WE has raised awareness of how English is used in non-native contexts, and has shown that non-Inner Circle varieties are functionally adequate and valid as varieties of English. For EFL teachers, the existence of multiple varieties of English raises a question: Which variety should be used as a model, and how should other varieties be treated in the classroom? For many teachers, there is an obvious answer: Standard English.

### *Standard English*

The adoption of Standard English (hereinafter, SE) as the model for EFL teaching is not quite as straightforward and unproblematic as it might seem. One large problem has to do with the very notion of SE, as Widdowson (1996) has shown in a paper entitled, "The Ownership of English." SE has usually been defined in terms of its grammar and lexis, but Widdowson believes that a standard lexis does not exist. He points out that there are many technical words that are used in newspaper articles and yet are not found in dictionaries. Surely those words must be considered part of SE. Similarly, the grammatical usages which are supposed to set SE apart from other varieties of English are rather slight, and not so great as to impede communication. Is SE really different then from other varieties in any significant way? Widdowson thinks not. Rather, SE is a variety, a kind of superposed dialect, which is socially sanctioned for institutional use and, therefore, particularly well suited to written communication (Widdowson, 1996).

Widdowson notes that the idea of a standard language implies stability and this is an attractive feature for a language variety that is going to be used as a model for pedagogical purposes. But a language is a living thing, and like all living things it is continuously growing and changing. It is, therefore, inherently unstable. There are always new words coming into use and others falling into disuse. The innovating aspect of language is a natural one and it comes into play when a language is used in a new cultural context or when users have a need to develop ways to talk about new technologies or other new things. There is always some innovation going on at the edges of the language. This is the normal state of affairs, and linguistic innovation is something that speakers admire. Using words in new and unexpected ways is one expression of creativity in the poems of the great poets and in the speeches of skilled orators. But, as Widdowson (1996) points out, creativity with words is not admired



nor even permitted in the case of EFL learners. Learners are expected to learn the rules and usages of SE and adhere to them strictly.

Widdowson is not the only one to express doubts about SE. Nayar (1997) and Davies (1999) have also questioned the validity of SE, and even among those who, like Widdowson, accept the existence of an SE variety the definition of SE is controversial. According to *The Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language* (McArthur, 1996) "Standard English" is,

A widely used term that resists easy definition but is used as if most educated people nonetheless know precisely what it refers to. Some consider its meaning self-evident: it is both the usage and the ideal of 'good' or 'educated' users of English. A geographical limitation has, however, often been imposed on this definition, such as the usage of educated people in Britain alone, England alone, of southern England alone, or the usage of educated people in North America and Britain generally. Others still find standard English at work throughout the English-speaking world. (p. 902)

Thus, there are multiple and conflicting definitions of "Standard English." But if we discard SE as the model for language teaching, where does that leave us? What can replace it? D'souza (1999) has addressed this point:

The emphasis in the total English curriculum should be on diversity, richness, variation rather than on sameness and uniformity. ... Students must be given the maximum exposure to written and spoken texts so that they realize that they can expect to encounter Englishes that differ from their own and are equipped to deal with them. Advocates of a single monolithic standard never fail to raise the bogey of 'intelligibility' as one of the arguments against acceptance of multiple standards. What we must keep in mind is that intelligibility depends in large part on familiarity. Therefore exposing all speakers of English to as many varieties of English as possible would do more to insure intelligibility than trying to impose a single standard on everyone. (p. 273)

This view receives support when we look at the needs of Japanese users of English. Some years ago I conducted a survey of some 20 Japanese businessmen who were in a one-year training program for international business at an American university. One finding was that they most often used English not for interacting with native speakers, but for interacting with other non-native speakers. Their needs would therefore be better served by exposure to many varieties of English rather than just SE.

*Native and non-native speakers*

When the subject of different varieties of English is broached, the difference between native speakers and non-native speakers is still often stressed. This brings up another point: the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers. While it may be possible to identify native speakers and non-native speakers in speech communities that are basically monolingual, it becomes very hard to say who is a native speaker in multilingual communities. Davies (1995) has proposed five defining features of a native speaker: a) childhood acquisition, b) intuitions about one's idiolect and the standard language, c) ability to make fluent spontaneous discourse, d) potential for creativity, and e) unique ability to translate into L1. But Nayar (1997) counters that,

...none of these are really necessary or invariably shown to be present in all average speakers of any Inner Circle variety. Besides, anyone, with some fluency and the right citizenship, without fulfilling any of these conditions can claim to be a native speaker while someone who fulfils all the above may still be denied the status on ethnopolitical or domicile reasons. (p. 286)

Kachru (1985) also believes that the native/non-native speaker dichotomy has become irrelevant and other sociolinguists hold this view, as well. Ferguson (1992) has written,

Some languages ... spread widely as lingua francas between speakers of different languages or serve as languages of special functions in communities of non-native speakers; this kind of language use merits the attention of linguists as much as do the more traditional objects of research. In fact, the whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue should probably be quietly dropped from the linguists' set of professional myths about language. (p. xiii)

Whether or not the concept of "native speaker" has validity is a question of some moment for EFL teachers, because being a native speaker has been counted as an important—and sometimes, required—qualification for employment. But if the validity of the concept of a native speaker is dubious, then the requirement that EFL teachers be native speakers must also be questioned. From the WE perspective, it is highly desirable to expose students to different varieties of English, and for this reason it is desirable to employ not only English teachers who are speakers of one of the Inner Circle varieties, but teachers who are speakers of one of the Outer Circle or Expanding Circle varieties, as well.

*Teaching Varieties of English*

In Japan, there are a few teachers from India, but very few, and there are almost none from any other Outer Circle or Expanding Circle country. This is unfortunate, as having a teacher who speaks an Outer Circle or an Expanding Circle variety could be a positive role model for Japanese students. It would help to make students aware that English is not something that belongs only to native speakers or is used only when speaking to someone from an Inner Circle country. Those responsible for English education should prepare students to interact with users of English whose variety of English may be very different from the students' own. Communicative success in such encounters may depend in part on having a positive attitude toward the language of others who speak a different, but equally legitimate variety of English. One way of inculcating this attitude is to promote contact with speakers and with teachers from the Outer Circle. This could have the additional merit of encouraging students to see their own variety as a valid one.

Recognizing the need to familiarize students with multiple varieties of English is a first step toward incorporating the WE perspective into EFL teaching, but there remains the problem of locating teaching materials that present multiple varieties of English, particularly varieties from the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. Most EFL textbooks, including those published in Japan, take Standard American English or Standard British English as the model. Some listening materials, for example, those in the *Cambridge Skills for Fluency* series do present alternative dialects of English, although in this series the alternative dialects of English all seem to be other Inner Circle dialects (Doff, 1993). Jenkins (2003) provides a comprehensive introduction to key topics and present issues in the area of WE. Each chapter includes discussion questions and activities that could be used with advanced EFL students to increase their awareness of the different varieties of English and the issues related to the use of these varieties. Aside from textbooks there are a few useful sources, which could be used to advantage in acquainting students with different varieties of English. One in particular is *The Story of English*, a book (McCrum, Cran & MacNeil, 1986) and video series (McCrum, Cran, MacNeil, & Pett, 1986), which portrays the history and spread of English. This series has the merit of showing very clearly the variation, which is so much a part of the language, in all of its varieties.

Another reason that students do not learn much about different varieties of English is that many teachers are not themselves too knowledge-

able about varieties of English, especially the non-Inner Circle varieties. Y. Kachru (2001) has written that,

...a perspective on language variation and its implications for language learning and teaching...is almost totally absent in SLA ('second language acquisition') literature. There is resistance to acknowledging the social reality of varieties and their relevance for human interaction across languages and cultures. (p. 349)

This is reflected in a lack of courses about language variation and World Englishes in teacher training programs for EFL teachers. The WE perspective has hitherto been a minority one. It is only minimally reflected in current TEFL methodology texts or in the most popular education journals. In 1993, Brown reported that in three popular methods texts (Celce-Murcia, 1991, Brown, 1987, and Long & Richards 1987), there was very little about WE, and that it was sometimes left out altogether. Ten years later, a cursory look at some representative texts used for EFL teacher training (e.g. Brown, 2000, Cook, 2001, Harmer, 2001 and Ur, 2001) indicates that the situation remains little changed. Thus, at this point, the inclusion of the WE perspective remains an individual effort.

### Japanese English: A Variety of English?

When EFL instructors in Japan attempt to integrate the WE perspective into their teaching, one central issue that they must consider concerns the status of the English used by Japanese L1 speakers. Is there an identifiable variety of English that can be called Japanese English?

In Japan, English is clearly the number one foreign language. Almost all junior high school and high school students study English (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). But although it is the most studied foreign language, its use within Japan is quite limited in range and depth. Regarding range, Yano (2001) observes that there are very few domains or functions in which English has supplanted Japanese, nor even where English is an alternative. And as for depth, the numbers and types of users who have occasion to interact with others in English are small, though there are an increasing number of users in scientific or technical fields who read English materials for professional purposes and there are others who use English for business-related correspondence.

Those who have used the term *Japanese English* have usually done so in the context of discussions of English loanwords, and numerous research articles deal with the topic of loanwords in Japanese (e.g. Kay,

1995, Morrow, 1987, Stanlaw, 1982). There are large and increasing numbers of loanwords from English in Japanese, and the spread and use of these loanwords furnishes interesting data for a study of language contact. Loanwords are pronounced following the rules of Japanese phonology, they often take on new and quite different meanings, and they are used for certain discourse functions, such as making something sound fashionable (Takashi, 1990). Because of their distinctive phonological forms, meanings and usages they have been referred to as *Japanese English* in studies of loanwords, but the use of loanwords cannot be considered strong evidence for a Japanese variety of English since the loanwords are used in Japanese discourse, not English discourse.

Better evidence for JE as an independent variety of English is available from studies of Japanese speakers' spoken and written English. There are now a number of studies that have identified discourse level features that distinguish JE from other varieties of English. From a study of Japanese and American ways of participating in business meetings, Yamada (1990) found some noteworthy differences in turn-taking. The Japanese in her study took short turns and shared turns fairly equally—that is, each speaker took roughly equal numbers of turns regardless of who initiated a topic. In contrast, the Americans took long monologic turns, and distributed their turns unevenly, with the participant who initiated a topic taking the highest proportion of turns in that topic. This indicates a difference in turn-taking rules between JE and American English (hereinafter, AE).

Another discourse characteristic of JE is a high frequency of backchanneling, the verbal and non-verbal signals that a listener produces to indicate that he/she is attending to what the speaker is saying. White (1989) measured the frequency of five verbal backchannel expressions (*mmhm, yeah, oh, uh huh, hmm*) and found that Japanese listeners in English conversations used these expressions far more than American listeners did. Similar results were obtained by Maynard (1997), who studied backchannel behavior as one aspect of interactional management. Her analysis was based on videotaped conversations between four American native English speakers and four Japanese non-native speakers of English, who were all attending an American university. By using videotaped conversations, she was able to include both verbal and non-verbal backchanneling in the analysis. The Japanese speakers of English in her study used backchanneling much more frequently than the American speakers did. Furthermore, there were differences in the type and placement of the backchannel responses used by the

Japanese and American speakers. The Japanese speakers used head movement (nodding and head shaking) as the most frequent type of backchannel response, whereas for American speakers brief utterances were the primary device. American speakers did not make backchannel responses during phrasal units, but waited until the pause after the phrasal unit. Japanese speakers, on the other hand, gave backchannel responses within the phrasal units while their interlocutor was speaking. Maynard concluded that these differences in backchannel behavior reflected differences in “interactional management” between Japanese and American speakers.

There is evidence of other types of interactional differences, as well. Murata (1995) noted a difference between Japanese speakers of English and native English speakers in the use of repetition, especially hesitation repetition. She suggested that one possible explanation for this is that quick turn-taking may appear to be too aggressive and intrusive to Japanese speakers and that they seek to lessen the intrusiveness and show respect for the “territoriality” of their conversation partner by using repetitions. Murata also observed a special tendency for Japanese speakers to use repetition for reformulation, and hypothesized that it was because Japanese speakers were “error-conscious” when they were speaking English (Murata, 1995, p. 352). In studies of topic maintenance (e.g. Chaudron & Parker, 1990, Sasaki, 1997) Japanese speakers of English have been found to have distinctive strategies of topic maintenance, particularly in the kinds of nouns and pronouns that they use to maintain topics. There may also be differences in the frequency of use of different categories of lexical items. Suenobu, Yamane & Kanzaki (1997) found that Japanese speakers and native English speakers used different proportions of content and function words. Yano suggests that Japanese speakers have a preference for the passive voice, saying, for instance, “The plan was decided on,” rather than, “We decided on the plan” (2001, p. 127).

Pitch is another distinguishing feature of JE, at least among male speakers. Loveday (1981) made a study of Japanese speakers speaking in Japanese and in English. He compared the pitch levels that these speakers used with the pitch levels used by British English speakers. In this study, male Japanese speakers of English used different pitches from those of male British English speakers. Physiologically, Japanese males and British males have about the same pitch range, but the top pitch used by the Japanese males was much lower than the top pitch used by the British males. Japanese males used lower pitch for greetings, goodbyes, and thank you’s than British males. This was true when they

spoke in Japanese, and also when they spoke in English. For instance, in thanking someone for a dinner invitation, all the British males raised their pitch, but the Japanese males did not.

From a study of pragmatics, there is evidence that Japanese speakers of English carry out some speech acts differently from American English speakers. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) found that the refusals of Japanese speakers showed evidence of negative transfer in the order, frequency and content of elements. For instance, in refusing a request to a lower status person both American and Japanese speakers tended to give excuses, but the Japanese speakers gave the excuse second, after an expression of positive opinion or an expression of regret, while the American speakers tended to give both a statement of positive opinion and an expression of regret before the refusal itself. In content, the excuses given by the Japanese speakers were more vague. For example, one Japanese speaker refused a request saying, "My children have many problems." Another study of refusals by Maeda (1989) found variation between the refusals of Japanese speakers of English and those of American speakers. Interestingly, she found that Japanese speakers used less politeness than American speakers, but she noted that variation depended on demographic factors, especially age and sex. Teenagers used the least polite forms and males used less polite forms than females. In particular, she found that Japanese males used far fewer politeness strategies than American speakers when they refused a request made by a lower status person or family member.

The findings of the studies reviewed here indicate that at the discourse level, Japanese speakers of English are operating with a set of rules that differs in many respects from those of speakers of Inner Circle varieties of English. Thus, these findings provide strong support for accepting JE as an independent variety of English. This does not mean that JE is or will become an institutionalized variety like Singaporean English or Indian English; rather, it means that we are justified in considering JE a performance variety.

More such findings that show the distinctiveness of JE may be forthcoming soon from another source. A group of researchers has been compiling a Japanese EFL Learner Corpus (JEFLC) which, when completed, is to include samples not only from advanced learners, but also from novice and intermediate learners. At present, they have collected some 200,000 words of both written and spoken (but mostly written) data.<sup>1</sup> Such corpora of actual usage of English by Japanese speakers will furnish a basis for the description of JE.

This brings us to the question of acceptance of JE and other non-Inner Circle varieties. In Japan, this issue is linked to a larger, political one: the acceptance and use of English itself. There are, as Kubota (1998) has pointed out, conflicting ideologies of English in Japan. On the one hand, there is a trend toward *kokusaika* 'internationalization' in government and business, and this ideology has stressed learning English as a means of making the Japanese nation and people more "international." On the other hand, another prevailing ideology is *nihonjinron*, which "attempts to define a distinct Japanese cultural and linguistic identity vis-à-vis the Western culture and language: particularly English" (Kubota, 1998, p. 299). This ideology, which emphasizes the cultural uniqueness of Japan, has often been cited by scholars and business leaders who see it as a major cause of Japan's economic success in the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Sugimoto & Mouer, 1980 [cited in Kubota, 1998]). This view does not encourage the teaching and use of English, and some (e.g. Tanaka, 1993 [cited in Kubota, 1998]) even see the teaching and use of English as a form of colonization. They fear that the spread and use of a foreign language (in this case, English) could diminish the role of the national language, and in this way threaten Japan's distinctive culture. This is an extreme view, and there are of course many more nuanced positions between those opposed to the teaching and use of English and those who welcome it wholeheartedly. The fact that English is included in the curricula of almost all secondary schools can be seen as an indication of a general and official acceptance of English, but some groups and individuals have ambivalent views toward English, and others who are in favor of the teaching and use of English may be unwilling to accept varieties of English from outside the Inner Circle. Toward these varieties, there is resistance from the educational establishment and from many learners themselves.

Some influential scholars (e.g. Quirk, 1995) feel that it is essential to have a single standard variety to serve as the norm for pedagogical purposes in EFL contexts, and that if multiple varieties of English are accepted, it will lead to confusion and problems of intelligibility between speakers of different varieties. For EFL teachers, expertise in Standard English has been counted as a valuable professional qualification, and teachers may feel that if alternative varieties of English are introduced and accepted, it will detract from the value of Standard English, and consequently, their value as experts. Finally, learners may feel that it is unnecessary for them to study different varieties of English that they do not intend to use and regard as inferior.



Such attitudes have been documented in numerous cases related to bilingual education, for example, in the use of *Tok Pisin* (an English-based Creole language) as a medium of instruction in Papua New Guinea (Romaine, 2000), or in the use of Ebonics in the Oakland California School District (Fasold, 2001, Murray, 2001). While not strictly parallel, these cases illustrate the point that learners (and their parents) have strong opinions about which language varieties are acceptable and prestigious, and which they consider unacceptable or lacking in prestige, and therefore do not want to use nor have their children use—even if using such a variety would facilitate learning. In the case of JE, there is indirect evidence of a pejorative attitude in cartoons that occasionally appear in Japanese periodicals that are based on the misuse or mispronunciation of English words by Japanese. In light of these negative attitudes, one cannot expect that JE will be readily accepted. If there is to be greater acceptance, it can come only through action on the part of teachers, researchers and materials writers.

### Conclusion

The WE approach provides a useful perspective for analyzing several important issues concerning the teaching and use of English in Japan. In Japan, as in other places where English is used as a foreign language, one key issue concerns the variety to be used for pedagogical purposes. Usually Standard English is used as a model and other varieties receive only scant consideration. In contrast to this, the WE approach stresses that rather than selecting a single variety as the one to emulate and teach, the important thing is to expose learners to as many varieties as possible so as to prepare them to encounter English as it is actually used in the world. Besides making students aware of the existence of other varieties, this has a beneficial effect on their attitudes: It helps Japanese speakers of English to view speakers of non-Inner Circle varieties in a more positive light, and it could enable them to regard themselves as not as speakers of “broken English,” but as speakers of what should be a recognized variety of English.

Another pedagogically related issue is the native speaker/non-native speaker distinction. Whether or not a teacher is a native speaker tends to be an important factor in selecting teachers, but on examination this distinction seems spurious and irrelevant. In advocating greater acceptance of EFL teachers who are not speakers of Inner Circle varieties, one can anticipate resistance from those who feel that the quality of teach-

ing and learning will be endangered, but it is well to bear in mind that diversity and quality are not incompatible, and that quality itself may be diminished if diversity is not accepted. While a teacher's experience and academic qualifications should remain primary considerations in hiring decisions, being a speaker of an Outer Circle variety need not be seen as a detriment to one's suitability as an EFL teacher. Indeed, it can be viewed as a merit, for it helps to make students more aware of a vital aspect of English: its diversity.

The WE approach is concerned with describing the many varieties of English and the roles they have in the contexts in which they are used. From this perspective, one might question the status of JE and whether it should be considered an independent variety of English. In the preceding section, the findings of discourse level studies of the English used by Japanese L1 speakers were presented, and these findings, taken together, were found to furnish stronger support for JE as an independent variety of English than has previously been offered. Considering JE as an independent variety does not, of course, mean that it is a variety in the same sense as the Inner Circle varieties, or the institutionalized varieties from the Outer Circle. JE is, and will probably long remain, a performance variety. The functions for which it is used are limited, though in the future it may gradually come to be used for an expanded range of functions.

Continuing research on various aspects of Japanese speakers' use of English will enable a more complete description of JE to be made. This will put EFL teachers in a better position to distinguish between errors on the one hand, and JE usages on the other. Teachers can then point out learners' non-standard usages, but where these reflect JE, they may choose to deal with them not as errors to be corrected, but as alternative usages. This would entail teachers discussing with learners the contexts in which a JE usage would be more appropriate (as when interacting with another JE speaker) and the contexts in which it would be less appropriate (for example, in formal writing, or in speaking with an interlocutor who is unfamiliar with JE). Such an approach is very much in line with the current TEFL trend toward communicative competence, for it is concerned with training learners to adjust their use of language (in this case, their choice of variety) to make it appropriate to the context. In this way, the WE approach offers a valuable contribution to the practice of English teaching in Japan.

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*Phillip R. Morrow* is a professor in the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Nagoya Gakuin University where he teaches courses in linguistics and EFL. His research interests are in the areas of World Englishes, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics.

### Note

1. Details of this project are available on the internet at:  
<http://leo.meikai.ac.jp/~tono/>.

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