

## **Short Article**

### **ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE (EIL): SMITH'S PHILOSOPHY OF ENGLISH FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

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#### **Introduction**

The term "International English" first came to be frequently used in Japan in the late 1960's when intercultural contacts dramatically increased. It was, however, only in the middle 1970's that scholars began to carry out academic research on International English from the viewpoint of "English as an International Language." This short article reviews the philosophy of *English as an International Language (EIL)* advocated by Larry E. Smith, a Research Associate at the East-West Center, Hawaii, and highlights some important published works in the field.

#### **English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

Among the acronyms that have been created in English language education are: ESL, EFL, ESOL, ELT, EST, EAP, ESP. Of these the most common are ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language), which are usually grouped together under the term ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) or ELT (English Language Teaching).

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## English as an International Language

Marckwardt (1963: 25) states that when the term ESL is used, “the reference is usually to a situation where English becomes a language of instruction in the schools, as in the Philippines, or a lingua franca between speakers of widely diverse languages, as in India.” Another type of ESL situation is observed in the USA. The overwhelming experience of the USA in teaching ESL “has been aimed at the linguistic and cultural assimilation into an English-language nation of indigenous groups and, more especially, of immigrants, having other languages as their mother tongue” (Strevens 1980: 92).

What is the concept of EFL? Marckwardt (1963: 25) states that EFL is “English taught as a school subject or on an adult level solely for the purpose of giving the student a foreign language competence which he may use in one of several ways – to read literature, to read technical works, to listen to the radio, to understand dialogue in the movies, to use the language for communication possibly with transient English or Americans.” In short, English has been used for the purpose of absorbing the cultures of England and the USA.

### English as an International Language (EIL) and English as an Auxiliary Language (EAL)

In their discussions together at the East-West Center, Marckwardt stated, in referring to the terms ESL and EFL, that he was “no longer satisfied with the terms and felt it was time we looked into the possibility of creating a new term which would more accurately reflect the present state of English language usage around the world” (Smith 1978: 5). In response Smith suggested *EIAL (English as an International Auxiliary Language) (EIL + EAL)*, (1976).

Smith (1976: 38) defined *EIL* operationally as English “which is used by people of different nations to commu-

nicate with one another,” and wrote that “English is the most frequently used international language.” On the other hand, he defined *EAL* operationally as English “which is used by nationals of a country for internal communication.” and that “English also frequently serves this purpose.”

In this paper Smith argued that “there is a single English language but many varieties” (38), and that “English can and should be de-nationalized” (41). His thesis is that we should explore the English language from the perspective of *EIAL*, not merely as ESL or EFL, largely an Anglo-American-dominated view of the language. He went so far as to say that “native speakers need as much help as non-natives when using English to interact internationally. There is no room for linguistic chauvinism” (1981a: 32).

Smith changed the acronym from *EIAL* (English as an International Auxiliary Language) to *EIIL* (English as an International and *Intranational* Language), but his thesis remained basically the same; his operational definition of English as an *International* Language is English “which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another,” while English as an *Intranational* Language is English used by nationals of the same country for communication” (Smith 1978: 5; see Kachru and Quirk 1981).

### English as an International Language (EIL)

Below are some of the distinctive features of *EIIL* which Smith instances, with special reference to *English as an International Language (EIL)*: (1) The Purpose of Learning is international communication, (2) Medium of Communication is in spoken and written form, (3) Student Population is native and non-native speakers, (4) Language Interactions are between (a) native speakers of different nations, (b) native speakers and non-native speakers, and (c) non-native speakers of different nations, (5) Cultural Emphasis is on

cultures of specified countries, (6) Language Model is any "educated English," native or non-native, and (7) Performance Target is "intelligible English" and "appropriate English." (1976; 1978; 1981a and elsewhere).

In conclusion, Smith notes that the English language is now used most frequently as a medium of international communication, and advocates that native speakers as well as non-native speakers should be taught to interact effectively with one another. Noting that English is used for the following interactions: between (1) native speakers of different nations, (3) native speakers and non-native speakers, and (3) non-native speakers of different nations, the cultural emphasis should be placed on the cultures of specified countries in which the students are interested, or about which they have developed specific needs. The language model, the spoken and written text which is used in the classroom, can be any "educated English," either native or non-native, while the ultimate performance target should be intelligible and appropriate English.

Of particular interest in the references below may be the accounts of Smith's empirical research (see 1979; 1982ab; 1987b), edited academic texts (1981b, 1983) and his editorial contributions to the Journal, *World Englishes* (from 1985).

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