ENL, ESL and EFL:
The Quest for a Paradigmatic Model

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Abstract

The acronyms of ENL, ESL, and EFL have been around for long enough as names of certain varieties of English depending on their locale and related circumstances of use. In their expanded form, they are known as 'English as a Native Language', 'English as a Second Language', and 'English as a Foreign Language'. Far from being hypothetical varieties of the language, the three have their distinctive traits that are measurable along sociolinguistic and linguistic clines. On both the clines, ENL assumes the status of a functional standard or norm, and ESL and EFL get their respective designations according to their proximity with that supposed norm of ENL. However, the two do not indicate fixed locations on the clines. Over a period of time, given favourable circumstances, EFL may grow to acquire the traits of ESL, and ESL may grow to attain those of ENL in the sense that Andy Kirkpatrick attaches to the acronym in *World Englishes* (2007). After a well reasoned argument, Kirkpatrick redefines ENL as 'English as a Nativised Language'.

The redefined notion of ENL modifies or throws afresh the question of model(s) for ESLs, EFLs and what can be called the emerging Englishes. Briefly talking about the notions of Nuclear English, Utilitarian English and Lingua Franca English, the paper attempts to settle this question with reference to Kirkpatrick's theorization in terms of exonormative native speaker model(s) and endonormative model(s) for the countries of 'outer' and 'expanding circles'.


Sociolinguistically and linguistically, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) characteristically get measured by their varied deviations against the supposed constant of ENL (English as a Native Language). In terms of the shift from ENL, EFL is seen as situated a step further than ESL. Apart from such apparent features as the degree of official recognition and the magnitude of the population using the language, there are many more vital considerations along the sociolinguistic cline that help to distinguish among ENL, ESL and EFL. The significant considerations among these are the use of English in formal and informal domains, the prestige and influence of English speaking population in the society, the kind of motivation for learning the language, the degree of informal learning and the kind of bilingualism in the concerned speech community. Placed on this cline, the three evince their respective distinctiveness in accordance with the extent to which they measure up along the considerations. To be specific, and to draw on Rodney Moag's tabular analysis of the three, EFL has a low degree of official recognition, has a low percentage of population using it, is not used in informal domains, cannot bring social prestige or heightened influence to its users, has an instrumental motivation for learners, is minimally learnt informally, and exists in a 'functional' multi/bilingual situation beside the first and / or mother language of the concerned speech community (Moag, 1982: 12). Put on the cline, ESL stands closer to ENL, comparatively or otherwise. As such, it enjoys high official recognition, brings prestige and clout to its users, is frequently used outside formal domains, has integrative motivation for learners of the language, is considerably learnt in informal situations, and exists in coordinate multi/bilingual situation along with the first language or/and mother tongue of the community.

To make the distinction between EFL and ESL clearer and sharper, we redo the exercise and now put the two on linguistic cline, quite clinical in nature as compared to the sociolinguistic cline invoked earlier. On linguistic plane, EFL has a native competence model, has minimal stylistic variation, has minimal space between lectal variations and has a minimal range of registers. At a removal from this situation on this plane is ESL with its non native competence model, moderate stylistic variation, moderate space between lectal variations, and its moderate range of registers.

The discussion above shows one from the other, that is ESL from EFL; but it needs to be seen where ENL stands on these twin clines. Sociolinguistically, ENL has a high (comparatively the highest) degree of official recognition, has a big chunk of population using it, lends prestige and dominance to its users, is extensively used in informal domains, is maximally learnt informally, and exists in a more or less monolingual situation. Linguistically, ENL has a native competence model, has maximal stylistic variations, has regional and social bases for lectal variations, and has a maximal range of registers.

Taking a glance at the emergent sociolinguistic and linguistic profiles of EFL, ESL and ENL, it becomes clear that the three are situations in flux on a continuum that might not have a definite point of end; they rather represent changeable situations than constants on the clines or off them. The earliest, arguably the elemental, stage on the continuum is that of EFL, which
sooner or later has to undergo “the process by which the target of language use and learning ... gradually moves from an external to an internal norm...” (Richards, 1982: 228-229). This process is a phenomenon that Richards calls, by reference to Einar Haugen, a part of “language ecology”, which involves “a shift in structure ... co related to a shift in cultural and social form” (Haugen, 1982: 229). Defined as indigenisation and nativisation, the process has been illustrated and exemplified by the transition of colonial nations from earlier EFL to subsequent ESL status. The transition is most apparent and manifest in “three crucial domains” ... of “education, government activities, and the media (Moag 22).

The foregoing discussion throws up an implicit conclusion; that EFL and ESL are transient situations shifting toward the supposed ultimate of ENL. This becomes a kind of fallacy in making, because ENL, too, would essentially signify changing a sociolinguistic and linguistic situation. In a recent study, Andy Kirkpatrick has put the concept of ENL to a critical sociolinguistic test and has made certain amendments with far reaching consequences. He disputes the traditional method of defining and measuring ENL, ESL, and EFL as separable varieties, and questions “the criteria for classifying varieties of English as native” (Kirkpatrick, 2007: 07). Kirkpatrick primarily questions the twin criteria that the linguists have traditionally used to designate a native variety of English. The first, that the native variety has existed for a long time, cannot fix a definite time scale or duration; and the second, that the native variety has exerted formative or modifying impact on the later varieties, doesn't make a definitive criterion in view of the fact that languages and dialects do influence one another in all inter language and intra language situations. Ever since it was brought to England in its nascent form from the Germanic territories in the main continent of Europe, English in British Islands has undergone an unimaginable degree of mutations and metamorphoses to reach its present shape. Different regional habitats and cultures account for the dialectal varieties of English within British Islands. Taking David Crystal's Encyclopaedia of English Language as our source of information, there are prominent phonological, structural and lexical variations within England as found out by Dietch-Orton Survey published in 1978. As such, Viereck identifies seven dialect zones in England; and Trudgill demarcates 16 major dialectal zones in England from northeast to lower southwest (Crystal, 2003: 318-325). Wherever it is used and in whatever scale and form, English has gone through the natural process of acculturation and indigenization under the influence of local cultures. Therefore, “all varieties of English that are spoken by an identified speech community are nativised” (Kirkpatrick 07). The notion of 'native' variety, which is suggestive of a constant, thus, gets substituted by that of 'nativised' variety, which incorporates the inherent and inevitable mutation. English in England would therefore be recognised as the oldest case of nativised English. The later cases where English would be seen as nativised rather than native are all those places like America and Australia where the language was brought from outside, but in the course of time became the language of the people. English was brought here in its linguistically developed form, quite unlike in England where it had to grow from its tribal and near barbaric parent. Post transplantation in these newer climes, English diversified to flower into the locally viable modes. As such, we have the distinctly discernible and qualified variation among the NmE (North American
English), AAVE (African-American Vernacular) and SAE (White Southern American English). In Australia, too, where English reached much later, there are significant variations between Standard Australian English and Australian Aboriginal English.

On the heels of this recent recasting of the notion of ENL crops up a question: why these nativised varieties in America and Australia, and for that matter in Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and West Indies, are still designated as examples of ENL and not of ESL? The answer to this question is afforded by certain chapters in World History, those dealing with expeditions and explorations by individual adventurers and colonizers. The universal pattern has been that English has grown from a Foreign Language to the Native Language wherever it has been the language of the eventual settler who might have been an explorer or a colonizer to begin with. Conversely, in all cases of English as a Second Language, it has been the language of the colonizer or the invader with his temporary economic or political interest in the concerned geographical region that has had its own substantial culture and language. An empirical and linguistically oriented search for the answer to this question yields that English as a Second Language primarily exists in a bi-lingual speech community that widely uses English for formal and informal interaction alongside a well developed mother tongue or first language. These two answers, with their different orientations, rise almost to the level of a joint hypothesis and, thus, forestall any further enquiry.

The preponderance of various variants of ESL in different geographically apart parts of the world had been the major motivation behind the series of conferences in late 1970s and early 1980s: a two week conference of specialists at East West Centre in April 1978, another at the University of Illinois in June 1978, and yet another at the Regional Language Centre, Singapore in 1981. An important fall out of the conferences has been a canonization of sorts of the extant and future varieties of ESL and EFL. Another fall out of the conferences, as also of the immense proliferation of the language, has been the change of the uncount noun English to the count. The acronyms ESL and EFL, therefore, are rendered somewhat redundant by the acknowledgement of the indigenised and nativised character(s) of Englishes in use around the globe. A socio-political reason behind this attitudinal change, and the consequent displacement of the terms ESL and EFL, has been the awareness of a subtle form of imperialism among the speakers of the non-native Englishes, as evident in this quote from a Journal article published in 1997: “Linguistic imperialism is a theoretical construct, devised to account for linguistic hierarchy..., is a sub type of linguicism... used to draw parallels between hierarchisation on the basis of race (racism), gender (sexism), and language (linguicism)” (Phillipson, 1997: 239).

(Acknowledging the transfer of the word English from the class of uncount nouns to that of count, the acronyms ENL, ESL and EFL only serve an academic purpose. This paper seeks to carry on with the acronyms and their significations for the sake of the character and nature of the main argument that follows.)

The issue of model or models for new and emergent Englishes, or, for ESLs and EFLs, is intertwined with the role and function that English has to play in a non native environment. As such, there have been suggestions from the scholars about the developmental cycles that the
non native varieties of English have to undergo. Braj Kachru, for instance, talks of a three phase passage through which “the non native institutionalised varieties of English seem to pass” (Kachru, 2007a: 31). At the start of the passage, there is a strict non recognition of the local variety; the second phase is that of the co-existence of the imported and the local varieties; and the third is that of a complete normative acceptance and recognition of the home grown variety.

Till only these three decades ago, the question of the model for non native varieties did not exist; and if it did, it was not asked because of its supposed redundancy. Irene Wong makes a perceptive observation in this regard: “the goal for excellence in language, it was believed, was acquiring a native like command of the language. The realization that very few foreign learners ever managed to achieve this, except possibly in the case of immigrants who tried to assimilate themselves into their new environment, only served to increase efforts to make the goal more attainable by more people, not to a modification of the goal itself” (Wong, 1982: 261). This obviously is a linguistic imperialistic or linguicistic view. The said goal for excellence, though, is improbable to be achieved and irrational to be laid down. A reasoned and calculated response to this hedonism is offered by Kachru, who calls for a ‘choice of function, uses and models of English...on a paradigmatic basis, keeping in view the local conditions and needs. It will, therefore, be appropriate that the native speakers of English abandon the attitude of linguistic tolerance” (kachru, 1982b: 263). The contention here is that the new, non native Englishes have earned their dignity from their indigenized status, and that the native standards may practically fail in the non native contexts.

Once it is decided that native standards would lose their functional effectiveness in the non-native socio cultural contexts, it becomes imperative to look for replacements or alternatives. So, because it would be practically impossible to learn the language without a standard, norm or competence model to follow up to. TESL experts have spoken of two approaches in this context, integrative and instrumental. The former is usually individual, assimilative and imitative desire to identify oneself with the members of the native linguistic and cultural groups. Driven by the integrative motivation, the learner may want to assume the native style of speech, behaviour and even culture along with the language. Undoubtedly, the native speaker English would be the only model for the integrative approach. The instrumental approach, on the other hand, would look upon language dispassionately as an instrument of communication. From among quite a few available for this approach, Irene Wong takes up two models for detailed discussion 'Nuclear English' and 'Utilitarian English'. As an alternative, the Nuclear English model (proposed by Randolph Quirk) tries to fulfil the supposed need for an 'international auxiliary language'. The model has been clinically prepared in a very methodical way to offer simplified structures. At the notional level, the model appears sufficiently appealing. However it would be next to impossible to bring the entire English speaking/using world native and non native to subscribe to it. Wong, therefore, dismisses it as a proposition that is “no more than a plaything for linguists to amuse themselves with” (Wong 269). In contrast with the impracticable polarity of Nuclear English, the model of Utilitarian English, as represented by Wong, seems diversified and flexible, and
doesn't ask for polarity. Applied specifically to the case of Malaysian English, the model can accommodate 'contextualization' for all regional and cultural situations. There is focus on communication rather than the quality of it, that is, on the functionality of language rather than the style. To put this notion in proper perspective, it would be more appropriate to say that Utilitarian English is an open ended family of sub models to suit the individual socio cultural conditions of English speaking/using regions of the World.

Though quite logical, the notion of Utilitarian English, proposed in late 1970s and endorsed in early 1980s, fails to put to an end the issue of a model English. The onset of Globalization in mid 1980s brought in as one of its consequences a proliferation of English in the true sense of the term. As of today, the world has at least two cases of emerging Englishes in China and Korea (there may be more in the offing), and at least two cases of lingua franca Englishes in ASEAN and European Union countries (Kirkpatrick 137-152 & 155-170). A significant change of perspective and outlook has taken place with the onset of the process of Globalization. To borrow Gorlach's perception of this post Globalization mindset, “English has apparently become totally detached from the concept of Colonial Oppressor's language in Africa and Asia...(it) is regarded as having been a vital asset in the fight for independence and it has eminent advantages as a nation building language in multi-lingual nations” (Gorlach, 2007: 179). Of course, we must admit that the changed mindset and outlook about English has much to do with the depletion of the hegemonic Linguicism of the native English Speech Communities that had been the colonial powers in the past.

As against the near xenophobic attitude towards English in non native English Speech communities in mid twentieth century and earlier, there has been an opening up and liberalization most probably as an impact of Globalization. The significant attitudinal shift is encapsulated in the views of DCS Li with special reference to Hong Kong: “English helps one access more information and people through higher education, on the job, in cyber space and international encounters...In this light, rather than a tool of hegemony, English may be looked upon as a resource to enhance learners' linguistic repertoire, which in turn has good potential for enriching their quality of life through higher education and professional development.” (Li, 2007: 180).

The Choice of model English for learners in post globalization scenario functions along a classification of the English speaking/using countries of the world into Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle Countries. The first of these can roughly be seen as loosely referring to what were formerly called ENL Countries, the second to ESL Countries and the third to those where English has just been introduced. China, Korea and Japan (perhaps) today, for instance, would fall in the class of the Expanding Circle Countries. Though there can be some reservations about it, an exonormative native speaker model appears more suitable for these countries. The model tends to be an easy, convenient and appropriate choice for Expanding Circle Countries because of its obvious advantages of standardized codification, availability of grammars and dictionaries and teaching material. Added to these is the enticing advantage of what Kirkpatrick calls “the massive English Language Teaching Industry that exists in the US and Britain” (184). Moreover, the exonormative model has the promise of future
Indigenization of English in the concerned local context. Whatever amount of time it may take, this local indigenization would move the country from the situation of an Expanding Circle Country to that of an Outer Circle. Whenever this happens, we would have another stable English calling for full-fledged linguistic identity and study.

The choice between British and American exonormative native speaker models can be equally fascinating, and can be decided politically according to the foreign policy leanings of the local Governments or the concerned Ministries. Or, it can also be decided academically by experts (usually language) of individual educational set ups of School or University education. Taking into account the emergence of the US post World War II, the politico economic unipolarity of the world today, and given the post Globalization glitz and glare, it is quite likely that American native speaker model would be preferred in the Expanding Circle Countries. The only reckonable, legitimate disadvantage of the model, though formidable in nature, is the indiscriminate way in which the resource persons are recruited for the wide spectrum of English teaching programmes in these countries. As such, the sole qualification that the Resource person/teacher requires is being a native speaker of English carrying any kind of graduation degree in any discipline. Surprisingly, knowledge of pedagogy and training in teaching are not supposed to be required if the candidate is from the ELT Industries of either Britain or the US.

There cannot be any viable possibility of an endonormative model in Expanding Circle Countries. It is so because English in these cases is still a foreign language without acculturation and indigenization to fit in the local cultural and linguistic environment. Theoretically an alternative though, Lingua Franca English, such as those Kirkpatrick points out in the cases of ASEAN and EU Countries, can only be adopted for a short time initially. If the language has to continue in the locale, and more people and coming generations are expected to learn and use it, Lingua Franca English cannot be said to be a suitable choice. Not only is Lingua Franca English not codified for steady long term courses, it also lacks broadness and flexibility and, therefore, is not conducive for the acculturation and indigenization of the language.

In principle, Outer Circle Countries do not have a choice between exonormative and endonormative models. In practice, however, the pragmatic option for them is the indigenised endonormative model. The other, exonormative, can be taken up for specialized courses at the level of University education. The problem of the choice between exonormative and endonormative models in the case of Outer Circle Countries can be settled by reference to a statement of Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian writer who has used non native English with an exemplary command:

"Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative way?...Certainly yes...If on the other hand you ask: 'can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker?', I should say, 'I hope not'. It is neither necessary, nor desirable for him to be able to do so... I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings (Achebe, 1983: 223)."
References/Works Cited


