

The Globalization of English and the English Language Classroom

Claus Gnutzmann and Frauke Intemann (eds.)

Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen, 2005, 287pp., €48.00

ISBN 3 8233 6136 8

The term 'the globalization of English' can be interpreted in at least three ways. It can refer to the increasing intrusion of the English language into the lives of town and city dwellers all over the world. This is a worrying phenomenon. Not only does it threaten to contaminate or wipe out local languages and cultures, but it also skews the socio-economic order in favour of those who are proficient in English. How should the non English-speaking world react?

The globalization of English can also refer to the rapid spread of English as a second and foreign language. The world's non-native speaker (NNS) to native speaker (NS) ratio for English is estimated to be between 2 to 1 and 4 to 1 (Crystal 1997; Graddol 1997). With this preponderance of NNS speakers of English, it seems clear that NNS–NNS communication is far more common than NS–NS or NNS–NS communication; in other words, English used as a lingua franca (ELF) is by far the most common form of English in the world today. But can ELF be considered a variety of English in its own right? Descriptions of World Englishes (e.g. Melchers and Shaw 2003) normally follow Kachru's (1985) geographical classification into 'inner circle' countries (where English is generally the L1), 'outer circle' countries (where English plays an institutional role as an L2), and 'expanding circle' countries (where English is learnt as a foreign language). Inner circle Englishes have been described and codified, and outer circle varieties are also in the process of standardizing (Crystal 1997). Should learners in expanding circle countries therefore continue to look upon NS English as their model? Or should they follow the example of outer circle countries and confidently develop their own standards of English based on effective NNS–NNS communication? How much should English teachers around the world know about and even participate in this development?

Finally, the globalization of English can refer to changes taking place in all varieties of English due to contact with other varieties. Does this mean that English will become more homogeneous, unifying around one world standard? Or will it perhaps

lead to NSs losing their role as custodians of the language?

The Globalization of English and the English Language Classroom attempts to answer almost all the questions posed above. It is a collection of 17 papers given at a conference held in Braunschweig, Germany in 2003. Many of the authors are well-known in the field and therefore in a good position to contribute to the discussion. The book is divided into five sections, each devoted to a particular dimension of global English or its implications for ELT.

Section 1, 'Political and sociocultural dimensions' looks at some consequences of the globalization of English in two rapidly developing countries, South Africa and India. South Africa is often counted as an inner circle country, yet the majority of its citizens are not native speakers of English; in fact, it would be more accurate to locate South Africa in the outer circle. In her article, Janina Brutt-Griffler uses case studies to illustrate the point that poverty can condemn speakers of English as a second language to low English proficiency, which in turn blocks access to better-paid jobs. Those who, through language, are excluded from the chance to improve their socio-economic position naturally prefer to become more proficient in English rather than preserve their mother tongue. Brutt-Griffler argues that this spread of English to other social classes has nothing to do with linguistic imperialism, which is ethnically based, but is part of a class-based struggle. People need the opportunity to become high-proficiency bilinguals before they can become concerned with preserving their L1. In the second article in this section, Mahendra Verma depicts a similar situation in India: global English and IT ensure that economic (and political?) power belong to the 'whiz kids' of the new elite, whose parents can afford to send them to English-medium schools.

Section 2, 'Linguistic and sociolinguistic exemplification', is devoted to exemplifying the impact of English on other languages. Ulrich Busse summarizes research on English words assimilated into the German language, a phenomenon that has been going on for some time, but which has recently intensified. The German language is in no way threatened by borrowed English words, but Busse calls for development of a more critical attitude to the use of Anglicisms in the media. Frauke Intemann follows on with an analysis of Aviation English, the formally prescribed and artificially restricted lingua franca used by pilots and air traffic controllers. Using authentic cockpit data, Intemann shows that NNS pilots and

controllers also need to be able to understand spoken NS English, and that their NS colleagues should be made aware of communication difficulties caused by deviation from Aviation English phraseology. Finally, in the last article in this section, Christiane Meierkord investigates the nature of the global English lexicon, which can be imagined as the product of verbal interaction in the Englishes of speakers from the inner, outer and expanding circles. She then analyses examples from her own (still rather small) corpus of 'Interactions across Englishes' to characterize the properties of this new, hybrid lexicon.

Section 3, 'Teaching and learning English in a global context', actually contains little about teaching and learning, but a great deal about the question of standard forms and models for global English. Since the newly developed lingua franca varieties of English have not yet been codified, Claus Gnutzmann argues, Standard English (i.e. NS English) should continue to be used as the linguistic model for ELT in Europe, although 'teaching models will have to become as tolerant of errors as possible' (p.117). Barbara Seidlhofer replies by pointing out that, rather than being monolithic, Standard English is in fact something linguists find rather hard to define. She then goes on to critically review and debunk arguments favouring NS language norms in ELT. Jennifer Jenkins reinforces the argument for an ELF model, summarizing her by now well-known work on a new core pronunciation model for international English (Jenkins 2000), which legitimizes NNS accents. In the second half of her article, Jenkins considers the implications of this model for teaching, and outlines the pedagogical steps teachers would need to take in teaching pronunciation for ELF. In her contribution, Svenja Adolfs emphasizes the point that NS English does not always provide a model for NNSs, reporting on how international students become disillusioned in their desire to imitate NSs when they encounter local dialects during studies in Britain. As a result, many students change their goals from sounding like a NS to understanding NSs and being understood in their own NNS variety. Finally, Allan James considers evidence for the existence of identifiable ELF varieties. After first identifying several general linguistic features, he argues that, because of the specific situations in which ELF arises, descriptions must also be related to sociocultural aspects of use.

The last two sections of the book concern themselves with English teaching, as promised by the book's title. The five articles in Section 4,

'Learners in primary, secondary and higher education: focus on Europe', provide the reader with situated glimpses of how global English is affecting various kinds of European learners and, to some extent, government education policy. Janet Enever describes an emerging bourgeois 'parentocracy' in Hungary that has successfully demanded early-start ELT for its children, while Angelika Kubanek-German looks at ELT materials used in German schools and questions their realistic reflection of English in the (European) learner's world. Two further articles focus on what could be called the success of English learning in Europe. Margie Berns and Kees de Bot report on an impressive comparative study (soon to be published in book form) of English proficiency among secondary school students in Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Germany. According to the study, the extensive and easily accessible presence of English in many European countries, both inside and outside schools, is leading to different groups of learner-users creating 'their personal language environments according to their individual needs and capacities' (p.210). This situation, as well as differing attitudes to learning English, helps to explain differences in teenagers' English proficiency. Ulrike Jessner's article makes the point that, for many Europeans, English is often learnt as a third language, facilitated by previous language learning and contributing to general language awareness. But what model of English do proficient European learners feel most comfortable with? Elizabeth Erling presents a study of university English majors in Berlin, whom she classifies into (1) a US-friendly cluster, (2) a pro-British cluster and (3) a lingua franca cluster, demonstrating that, although highly proficient, European learners are far from agreeing on a European model of English.

Some implications of global English for teacher education are discussed in Section 5, 'English as a global language—what do future teachers have to say?' Unfortunately, there are only two articles in this section. Maike Grau reports on a survey conducted among future English teachers studying at a German university. Her findings show that students are fairly open to teaching materials that include a variety of NS and NNS accents, and generally receptive to the notion that the main pronunciation objective should be international intelligibility as opposed to near-nativeness. However, when survey questions become concrete (e.g. whether or not to correct 's' for 'th' or 'if you would be' for 'if you were'), the majority vote for correction towards the NS model. In Grau's opinion, this only reflects the fact that future teachers have not been adequately exposed to the

concepts and related decision-making implied by an acceptance of NNS English as a suitable model for German pupils. In another vein, George Braine's article reviews research on NNS teachers of English, covering studies of teacher self-perceptions as well as learner appraisals. Braine summarizes results for NNS teachers thus:

NNS teachers admit that they rely on textbooks, apply their knowledge of the differences between the L1 and the L2, use the L1 as the medium of instruction, . . . are sensitive to the needs of students, know the students' background and have exam preparation as the aim of teaching. (p. 282)

He ends by calling for greater emphasis on ELF and global English in the education of NNS teachers.

What makes this book attractive first and foremost is its list of contributors, of which about half are known internationally for their research and writing in the field. However, even high-profile experts can only churn out so many new findings per year: about half the contributions are really re-presentations of previously published research and arguments. The new research (especially the Berns and de Bot paper) is, however, interesting and worthwhile. The fact that the book actually practises what it preaches and is written in the English of the contributors—NS or NNS—also impressed me favourably.

Books based on conference papers can probably be expected to discuss questions rather than answer them, and this one certainly discusses all the questions I raised at the beginning of this review, which is no mean feat. However, and perhaps inevitably, the papers tend to discuss the questions in terms of highly local situations, making it difficult to draw more general conclusions. Thus, because most of the contributors are European applied linguists and language educators, the dominant focus of the book is Europe, although, as mentioned, situations in South Africa and India are also analysed.

Finally, who is *The Globalization of English and the English Language Classroom* for? The title makes it

sound as if it might be for teachers who want advice on how to take account of NNS Englishes in their teaching, but it isn't. Nothing is offered that is directly applicable in the ELT classroom. I see it rather as a collection of evidence and arguments that could be used with students as a basis for discussion in (applied) linguistics and teacher education courses. Some global English aficionados may be disappointed that so few of the papers discuss anything new; but for future applied linguists, teacher trainers, and teachers new to the field, particularly those based in Europe, this is as good a way as any to enter the discourse.

References

- Crystal, D.** 1997. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graddol, D.** 1997. *The Future of English?* London: The British Council.
- Jenkins, J.** 2000. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kachru, B.** 1985. 'Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle' in R. Quirk and H. G. Widdowson (eds.). *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Melchers, G.** and **P. Shaw** 2003. *World Englishes*. London: Arnold.

The reviewer

Heather Murray is a senior lecturer in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Berne, Switzerland. Her main areas of interest are English for scientific communication, English as a lingua franca and teacher language awareness. She is also involved in an EU project aimed at standardizing evaluations of school-based language learning and teaching.

Email: murray@aal.unibe.ch

doi: 10.1093/elt/cci110