

Towards the Accommodation of EIL Pedagogy in Yemeni English Language Teaching Institutions

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Abstract

The accommodation of English as an International Language (EIL) is very appropriate for Yemeni learners of English. English language is gaining more importance every day in Yemen; thousands of learners of English of different ages are seeking to join educational institutions to learn English. These institutions devote most of their curriculum and teaching to identify the particular linguistic characteristic of English spoken in specific parts of the world. These varieties are presented as target models that learners should follow. The various varieties of English have led the Yemeni learners into dilemma as for which they should go. However, these learners may have different purposes in studying English which are usually more limited than of those seeking immigration to English speaking countries. Many of these learners choose to learn English to use it in multilingual contexts; some other English learners probably wish to learn English to seek certain jobs, share knowledge about their own countries with others for purposes such as economic growth, encouraging trade and tourism, and contributing to international academic exchanges. Therefore, English language learners are made to pay more attention to these varieties at the expenses of their learning the language. This study seeks to propose EIL accommodation in ELT scenario in Yemen as neural way to adapt by different English language

institutions. It also seeks to denationalize English and to detach British and American hegemony from its claim to English. It illustrates that English language has become a global language and not a property of native speakers and there is no need to attach it with native speakers anymore.

Keywords: Pedagogy, curriculum, International, Imperialism, Linguistic, communication, accommodation, hegemony

Introduction

International English is a concept which indicates that English is an international means of communication in various dialects and the movement towards a language international standard (Modiano, 1999). It can be also called World English, Global English, Common English, Continental English or General English. International English is shorthand for (EIL). International English is commonly referred to as English, spoken by both native and non-native speakers, and a language that is not the privilege of native speakers, but the privilege of the world. Language scholars have concentrated on studying the community of English-speaking countries along with the language itself since a long time ago. Language scholars have concentrated on studying the community of English-speaking countries along with the language itself since a long time ago. As the concept suggests, inner circle cultures are respected to a greater extent than those of outer or expanding circles (Shin et al., 2011), while the number of non-native speakers has far exceeded that of native speakers.

In her book *Teaching English as an International Language Taught*, McKay defines the concept English as an international language as follows:

“International English is used by native speakers of English and bilingual users of English for cross-cultural communication. International English can be used both in a local sense between speakers of diverse cultures and languages within one country and in a global sense between speakers from different countries”. (McKay, 2002: 132)

The redefinition of English as an international language is an effort to denationalize English and to detach American hegemonic influence from its claim to English. The EIL is a movement which is founded by fluent non-native English speakers in different countries who have been unable to gain access to the higher levels of

power in American hegemony, aims to establish a linguistic power base free of American influence (Hadley 2004).

EIL as a Tool to Resist English Linguistic Imperialism

According to Modiano (2001), EIL “English as an international language” is the solution for linguistic imperialism, whereas the alternative, which promote the so-called 'prestige' varieties, placing the practitioner as a purveyor of Anglo-American hegemony and perpetuating the negative influence that foreign language learning may have on learner's cultural integrity. A lot of suggestions have been made to make International English more available and accessible to people of various countries. An example for that is Basic English, but it has not made much significant progress. More recently, calls for English as a lingua franca (ELF) have been proposed, in which non-native speakers have a very active role in language development (Modiano 1999). There has also been argument the International English traditional spelling which holds it back and progress in adopting alternate spellings has been very slow.

International English seeks cultural neutrality. What could be better than a form of English that protects you from having to re-edit regional-market publications. It is also an attractive concept for both teachers as well as learners of English as a second language — all often worried that their English has to be neutral, without British, American, Canadian, or Australian flavors. It is believed that since English is an international language, the culture viewed specifically in English language teaching materials must reflect the world instead of being restricted to cultures of native speakers (McKay, 2002). Any regional English variety has attached to it a set of social, political, and cultural implications, even what is called standard forms. What can be understood from International English is it refers to an English concept that seeks to minimize the aspects identified by either Victorian British colonial imperialism or United States 20th century cultural imperialism. Although British colonisation is the basis of English in many parts of the world, international English is the product of an evolving world culture that is conceptually focused on a far larger degree of cross-talk and linguistic transculturation that tends to reduce both British colonial influence and US hegemonic influence.

EIL, World Englishes and English Lingua Franca

Pennycook (2017) maintains that World Englishes (WE) and more recently the rise of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) studies have dominated the discussion on the international spread of English throughout the last twenty years. The late Three Circle model of World Englishes of Braj Kachru has definitely modified the ways in which we view varieties of English and norms of correctness. Many scholars question the difference between the concepts of World Englishes and English as Lingua Franca on one hand and EIL on the other hand. According to (McKay, 2018) the basic feature of each concept is necessary to be taken into account. World Englishes emphasizes on identifying the distinctive features of different English varieties. Therefore it is involved with content and not interaction. In comparison, English as Lingua Franca is involved with content as well as interaction. Even though EIL is involved with both interaction and content, its primary emphasis is on specific aspects. So the difference between EIL and both English as Lingua Franca and World Englishes (WE) is that EIL emphasize on idea that the use of English for international communication must depend on a collection of particular elements. According to McKay (2018), these are some of those main principles:

1. Due to the different varieties of English used now worldwide and L2 learning diversity context, the pedagogical plans in respects to curriculum and standards must be taken in accordance to the need of native languages and local social and educational factors.
2. The generally held assumption that an English-only classroom is the most effective for language learning needs to be thoroughly reevaluated; further, due consideration must be paid to how to develop language proficiency properly through the use of L1.
3. In all EIL classrooms focus should be given to improve strategic intercultural competence.
4. EIL is not related to a specific cultural / social background.

The Pedagogy of EIL

The presence of many English varieties creates significant teaching and evaluation consequences. The presence of basic level literacy requirements shows that students can carry varieties of English to the classroom in many English-speaking settings that have significant roles in their society in creating a sense of identity and interaction with other speakers in society. Teachers need to have clear understanding of these variations and the

roles they represent in the local society. In certain situations teachers may be able to introduce other types of English to the students' English inventory as they have a wider range of acceptability. However, in other situations where there is a restricted access to knowledge, it is probably more necessary to concentrate on improving students' general education and knowledge, instead of concentrating on improving a far-reaching English standard. These kinds of options can be taken only by local educators who are well informed of the aims and needs of the students (ibid).

The redefinition of English's sociolinguistic reality and the changing in the perspective of this area have created a new scenario in ELT. Many linguists and ELT practitioners stress the importance of teaching English as a diverse language with various vocabulary, accents, grammars, and functional conventions of discourse. English language professionals and teacher-educators are encouraged to question the idea of adopting the native-speaker or 'monomodel' (Kachru, 1992) paradigm for teaching English (Marlina, 2014). So English language practitioners, educationists and teachers have been motivated to reevaluate their curriculum, syllabus materials, teaching methodology and ELT techniques based on the changing nature of English.

According to the EIL theory, EIL pedagogy refers the practice of directing students from all Kachruvian circles properly to (a) acquire knowledge and understanding of the pluricentricity of English and the multilingual essence of present communication; (b) encourage students to offer reasonable and valid appreciation to different varieties of English and (c) develop the ability to engage and communicate respectfully in different cultures and Englishes in current intercultural, global and multilingual communicative environments of nature (Marlina, 2014). EIL advocates and some sociolinguists urge teachers of language to encourage their learners to gain specific awareness, knowledge and attitudes that crucial for language learners as follows:

Awareness

- Awareness of resisting linguistic Imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999).
- Awareness of learning as political not as instrumental
- Awareness of the complexity of discourses and equipment of learners with the power to negotiate effectively (Canagarajah, 1999).
- Understanding the values of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity (Matsuda, 2002).

- Socio-political understanding of English spread and its influence on other languages.
- Awareness that English is a second language and should not replace the mother tongue.

Knowledge

- Knowledge as critical (Canagarajah, 1999)
- Awareness of English's spread and its consequences
- Knowledge of other different accents of English
- Knowledge of different varieties of English

Attitudes

- Opposing the monolingual fallacy of Anglo-American pedagogy (Phillipson, 1992)
- Acknowledging the validity of other English varieties (Marlina, 2014).
- International understanding (ibid).
- Appreciation of different cultures

English Situation in Yemen

The spread of English have been fascinating in the sense in which this phrase has been used by contemporary biographers and prophets of English like David Graddol and Braj Kachru. My interpretation of the word spread, however, has more to do with attitude and motivation than with geography. English is being perceived increasingly across the world as a language of opportunity and of professional advancement. English is also being promoted universally as a language that confers unique advantages to professionals in any field, especially those in the knowledge industry.

In Yemen, the situation with respect to English is both exciting and exasperating: *exciting* because the attitudinal change is real and perceptible, as borne out by the increasing numbers of young people enrolling in an equally increasing number of institutions to study English at great costs to themselves in terms of time, money, and effort, and *exasperating* because University departments and private institutions have not responded appropriately to the pedagogic challenges engendered by this social-psychological phenomenon as well as the international pedagogic challenge of English . I mean there is a disappointing divide between what the young

aspirants to the knowledge of English need and what is offered to them by the educational establishment. There is also a big gap between Yemen and many other countries where English is foreign language i.e. Thailand, in how Yemen deal with English language and its pedagogical policy. In Yemen many people, not only students, enroll in institutes expecting to acquire the degree of proficiency in English required by prospective employers. However they find themselves stuck with learning American and British English differences in accents as well as other features. They are also learning about the culture of the native speakers. In addition to that, the inner circle methodologies of teaching and native materials are used despite of the fact that these methodologies and materials doesn't suit and match the Yemeni educational institution infrastructure. The continuous change of English position and importance of English in the world have proposed prominent changes to the background of users of English in Yemen as well as the world. On the basis of many years of my teaching experience, I find that neither the students nor the employers are satisfied with what is given in these institutes. It is an inescapable conclusion that there should be matching and coordination between course offerings and professional communication needs.

Actually, this significant change regarding English language must be taken into consideration when developing and preparing the curriculum. The ELT traditional assumptions need to be reexamined and interpreted to conform with the realities of how English is used in today's world (Floris, 2014). Commonly, many teachers and ELT experts have had some deep-rooted norms about the process of teaching and learning English as a second and foreign language, to mention some: (1) students have to learn the native English; (2) the model and standard of English to be followed by learners is the native speakers model ; (3) the culture of native speakers such as American or British have to be taught; and (4) the most effective method to teach English is the communicative method (Brown ,2012). But, nowadays as McKay suggested, the teaching of English as an International Language (EIL) must be focused on completely different principles which have essentially guided the teaching of English Teaching

McKay (2012) also argued that language education pedagogy should include encouragement of multilingualism in the classroom, knowledge of other English varieties, intercultural skills, the teaching materials uses that involve domestic and international cultures and the introduction of teaching methodologies that are socially and

culturally sensitive. However, it should be taken in to account that the change in the scenario of English language teaching to EIL cannot be implemented effectively without involving the teachers it is important to present the EIL idea to pre-service teachers in order to be more equipped to meet the demands the learners of today's English (Renandya, 2012).

Conclusion

The present study has discussed the EIL's distinguishing features. It highlights how EIL is guided by simple beliefs that promote a pluricentric view of standards, realize the importance of the other languages of students, seek to encourage practical awareness, and appreciates the different original speakers' cultures. Bearing in mind the complication of English's linguistic and cultural basis, all pedagogical actions should be focused on the local cultural and linguistic settings. They should be also created by aware educationists and teachers who believe in the principles mentioned in this study. Through highlighting this, we do not claim to give a solution, rather we seek to provoke more debates and start more discussions about how practical it would be to adopt the pedagogy of EIL in Yemen viz, how possible it might be to put the EIL theory into practice in Yemeni ELT educational institutions.

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