Current challenges and benefits of teaching World Englishes

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ABSTRACT

The existence of multi varieties of English in today's international communication requires the inclusion of what is called World Englishes (WE) in English teaching. While many have attempted to incorporate WE in English classrooms, such clear procedures on how to implement this along with the outcomes are so far hard to find. Therefore, this review elaborates on the implementation of WE, examines the challenges, and highlights the benefits of this incorporation. 18 research articles from the year 2010 to 2019 on the incorporation of WE worldwide starting from school to university context were reviewed. The review reveals that the teaching of WE is mostly still in the introduction phase since a majority of English teachers and learners still prefer the native English varieties. On the other hand, the introduction of WE to English learners may improve their confidence to use English. This review is expected to be able to provide clear current conditions of WE teaching, impose challenges that need to be addressed, and at the same time encourage the incorporation of WE in an English classroom.

1. Introduction

The value of World Englishes (WE) in the pedagogy context is gradually becoming more widely recognized with the trend of treating native-like ability as a secondary goal in the English teaching process. English nowadays functions as the medium of international communication and the existence of multi-English varieties requires someone to be able to understand and produce intelligible varieties of English to determine the success of communication (Lee, 2012).

The term WE was firstly introduced by Kachru in 1986 to refer to the various variants of English that existed at the time around the world (Kachru, 1992). Kachru divides English users into three circles: Inner Circle - for those who use English as a mother tongue, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, Outer Circle – for those who use English as an institutional second language,

such as Singapore and the Philippines, and Expanding Circle - for those who use English as a foreign language, such as China and Korea. According to Kachru, the emergence of English variations is largely due to British colonization in the Outer Circle countries, where English has become acculturated with the indigenous languages. Indian English, Nigerian English, or Singapore English, for example, is now widely recognized as representing Kachru's argument. McKay (2010), nevertheless, argues that the Expanding Circle countries, such as Europe, are currently developing their standardized English varieties. Furthermore, she claims that the creation of many English variants occurs not only between countries but also within countries. As a result, it is possible to say that WE now exist all over the world, with variations developing in nearly every country, even those in Expanding Circle.

In today's world, English is used for both intranational and international communication. In this scenario, WE have evolved as a tool that individuals from various countries can utilize and contact. According to Lowenberg (cited in Bhowmik, 2015), the number of people who speak English as a second language has surpassed the number of people who speak English as their first language. He also claims that nonnative-to-nonnative English interactions have become more common than native-to-native and native-to-nonnative English interactions. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that the use of WE in this communication context is more obvious. This viewpoint has sparked interest in teaching WE in the English pedagogical sphere (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010).

Many parts of the world have included WE in the domain of English teaching, either in regions that Kachru (1992) classified as expanding circles, such as China, Iran, and South Korea (Chang, 2014; Rezaei et al., 2019; Tanghe, 2014); outer circles like the Philippines and Singapore (Martin, 2014; Schaetzel et al., 2010); or even inner circles like the USA (Eslami et al., 2019; Wetzl, 2013). The inclusion of WE in English teaching has altered the concept of language instruction to put more emphasis on communicative and discoursal strategies in nonnative English variants since its early inception (Kachru, 1992). It also has to do with the teaching models and methods, as well as the curriculum designs, that cater to the demands of nonnative English users.

In more recent perceptions, the challenges of embracing nonnative English varieties and their situational usage are still a major concern in English language education. According to McKay (2010), today's English language instruction should incorporate at least these elements: a) various English variants in today's use. It is to underline the equal position of these variants, raise awareness of their applications, and confirm that English is no longer the exclusive domain of the Inner Circle.; and b) interactions between L2 and L2 English speakers. It has to do with the fact that L2 English speakers have more English interactions than L1 English speakers. Learners will benefit from being aware of how to use English not only with Inner Circle speakers but also with speakers from different nations, as well as learning real-life English interactions with persons who may lack in their English competence.

Despite these widespread initiatives to incorporate WE into classrooms, no clear elaborations on the procedures and outcomes were reported. Instead, challenges were the most often feature conveyed when embracing WE in English teaching. In China, for instance, native-speaker norms are still perceived as the ideal paradigm for teaching English by both teachers and students (Chang, 2014). Furthermore, Matsuda and Matsuda (2010) believe that deciding which English variants to teach is a

tough undertaking, particularly in the setting of expanding circles. Nonetheless, introducing WE in the classroom has also resulted in positive traits for English learners, such as those demonstrated by Chang (2014) and Tanghe (2014), where the learners, as non-native speakers, improve their confidence in speaking English.

This literature review, therefore, aims to elaborate on the problems that are faced in introducing WE in an English classroom while in the end emphasizing the positive outcomes that may result in incorporating WE. This elaboration will be beneficial for current English teaching implementation considering that English varieties are now common to be encountered and, thus, knowing and comprehending them is essential in this current international communication.

In exploring the implementation of WE incorporation in an English classroom, as well as the problems faced and the possible positive outcomes, 18 research articles, ranging from the year of 2010 to 2019 were reviewed. The review is presented into three categories: the implementation of WE inclusion in English teaching around the world, the basic challenges in integrating WE, and the benefits of WE inclusion.

2.   The implementation of WE inclusion in English teaching

Some of the recent practices of English language teaching reviewed have included the WE idea in their classrooms (Chang, 2014; Martin, 2014; Tanghe, 2014; Wetzl, 2013). These practices have also involved at least one of the features mentioned by McKay (2010) in today's English language instruction. Chang (2014) and Tanghe (2014) are two examples of expanding-circle teachers that have implemented WE into their classes. Chang (2014) instructs her Taiwanese university students in a WE course. She covers "… the spread of English as the global lingua franca, varieties of English, native and non-native division, [and] the standard ideology, … [and deliver it with] lectures, in-class discussions, student presentations, reflection paper writing, and a final exam" when teaching the course (Chang, 2014, p. 22). Tanghe (2014), on the other hand, who teaches university students in Korea, also introduces WE into one of their English-speaking classes. Lesson discussions and blog postings on themes including re-designing Kachru's circle model, distinguishing various English accents, and criticizing the privilege of native-English speakers as English teachers are all used to present the class.

The teaching of WE in the outer-circle setting, such as in Singapore (Schaetzel, et al., 2010) and the Philippines (Martin, 2014), is limited to the variation of English spoken in these countries. According to Schaetzel et al. (2010), there is a focus on teaching two types of English spoken in Singapore: Standard Singapore English (not very dissimilar from International Standard English) and Singapore Colloquial English. This focus is evident in the National Institute of Education of Singapore's introduction of a 'Feature of Singapore English' course for prospective English instructors. The contrasts between standard and colloquial English elements are stressed in this course, as well as when, when, and to whom these varieties should be used. A similar tendency is currently occurring in the Philippines, where teaching American English is being encouraged to be replaced with teaching Philipinne English as the national English teaching goal (Martin, 2014). To carry out the transition, some initiatives have been made, such as the development of new English resources based on Philippine English corpora, and retraining instructors and instructional leadership.

WE is also taught in the inner-circle environment, as demonstrated by Wetlz (2013) in the United States. She improves linguistic variety and WE awareness among her students in an Ohio university composition class by giving knowledge and thought on language variation, as well as rethinking their experiences with WE users and texts. Wetlz believes that introducing WE into classrooms is critical in the United States, given the country's varied population and the growing number of exchanges between American English and WE users in both oral and written communication. Thus, it is claimed that introducing WE to students will affect their positive attitudes toward WE users and better prepare them for intercultural dialogue.

Not only limited to the implementation in different circles, but some studies also explore techniques and activities that can be applied in any English teaching program. Lee (2012), for example, proposes the 'Intercultural English Learning/Teaching (IELT)' approach to incorporating WE in the English classroom. This approach emphasizes the comparison and negotiation of different English-speaking cultures, including the English varieties existing within the cultures. Lee, furthermore, lists some activities that can bridge IELT into the WE classroom, including movies, guest speakers, virtual learning, role-plays, and quizzes. In a more specific language skill, writing, Lim (2015), develop a strategy that he calls 'Creative Writing in World Englishes Contexts'. This writing strategy deploys the 'Show and Tell' technique – where the students are shown a text then they have to tell anything that they feel about the text based on their real-life situation. This is the part that Lim highlights can be filled with the students' English variety (the varieties shown in the study include Chinglish and Singlish). The results of this strategy as shown in the study reveal that the students use more of these varieties in their writing, and Lim argues that this learning environment can improve the students' confidence, motivation and pleasure to learn English.

The inclusion of WE also takes place in the pre-service English teacher program. Eslami et al., (2019) demonstrate such implementation in a 'Language Acquisition and Development' course in one university in the southwestern United States. The activities involved in this course include listening and watching different English varieties, observing miscommunication due to variants of English, and evaluating discriminations of English varieties happening in the United States. All the elaboration about the studies that incorporate WE show that the inclusion of WE is currently taking place in worldwide English classrooms, even though most of them are at an introduction phase.

3. The challenges of WE inclusion in English teaching

In the situations of WE teaching described earlier, it appears that the implementation is still sophisticated where some are in the introduction phase or merely as a discussion activity, as indicated in Chang (2014), Tanghe (2014), Schaetzel et al. (2010), and Wetzl (2013), while others are in the preparation phase, as revealed in Eslami et al. (2019) and Martin (2014). There is no clear instruction on how WE can be included as part of the English curriculum at the school level, and the causes for this need to be examined. The challenges such as teachers' and learners' preferences for native norms as the ideal model, difficulty in selecting the suitable English variety to teach, and the undeveloped acceptable traits of the variants are all thought to be obstacles that obstruct this realization.

The primary difficulty that obstructs the adoption of WE teaching is teachers' and students' attitudes toward native norms that privilege inner-circle English varieties over others. This attitude is commonly found in English teaching in Asia, including those reviewed in South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Iran. According to Chang (2014), most English teachers, particularly those who are not native English speakers, still prefer British or American English as the paradigm for English communication. Despite comprehending the concept of English as a lingua franca, teachers in Taiwan nonetheless stress teaching native-speaker standards and stating native-speaker ownership of English (Lai, cited in Chang, 2014). Teachers in Korea have the same mindset, putting a privilege on English variations from the inner-circle countries (Tanghe, 2014). Teachers in Japan, on the other hand, while being open to WE varieties, are still concerning the practical challenges of it (Takahashi, 2017).

A slightly different yet interesting finding was found in (Young & Walsh, 2010) where they investigated the beliefs of English teachers from West, Southeast, and East Asia, Africa, and Europe about the usefulness of incorporating WE. Most of the teachers are not aware of the English variety that they teach and assume it is the English native speaker variety, even though they do not know the distinction between other non-native varieties. Nevertheless, the teachers express their openness to teaching non-native English varieties, especially their local variety, but they question the availability of such teaching material. Thus, these attitudes imply that teachers would primarily expose native English varieties in their classrooms and question the practicality of WE inclusion.

As a result of the teachers' beliefs revealed above, learners exhibit a propensity for using native-speaker norms as their English model. According to Chang (2014), students believe that native English speakers are superior teachers for them. This viewpoint is supported in Korea by the government's decision to allow nationals of inner-circle countries to work as English teachers (Tanghe, 2014). As a result of this constructed belief, learners are reluctant to learn WE, as Tanghe (2014) discovered while teaching the topic to her pupils. Lee and Green's (2016) study in Korea also finds out that the students still prefer the inner circle Englishes and express that the varieties are easier to be recognized.

A similar preference is also found in Iranian students, where studies by Rezaei et al., (2019 and Tahmasbi et al. (2019) reveal that the students privilege inner circle English varieties. Tahmasbi et al. (2019) even report that the students accept the status of English as a foreign language in their country even though they have no negative attitude towards WE. Meanwhile, Rezaei et al. (2019) mention one reason that the students prioritize learning standard English varieties is to be able to pass such standard English tests, such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

A quite distinctive attitude, however, is shown in Si (2019). Chinese students in his study show enthusiasm and demand the English learning in their country to include more Chinese cultures as well as Chinese English in the materials. This study, nevertheless, is the only one that the reviewers could find that shows such a positive attitude towards WE. This indicates that more efforts from teachers and the government to improve positive attitudes towards WE is needed.

Related to this matter, Bhowmik (2015) believes that conducting teacher training is necessary before applying WE in the classroom, especially when dealing with instructor attitudes. Appropriate training for English teachers in both English competence and teaching methods is critical to meeting the present English teaching demand, given the increasing number of non-native English-speaking

English teachers in the world (Canagarajah, cited in Bhowmik, 2015), Nonetheless, Bhowmik (2015) claims that teacher training programs are still focusing on the inner circle English varieties. Many of the initiatives are either sponsored or operated by English language groups from inner-circle countries, which contributes to the problem. As a result, the curriculum for this training is based on English native-speaking conventions as well. Thus, the lack of well-designed teacher training based on WE paradigms would stymie the deployment of WE teaching in schools, perpetuating the preference for native varieties as the English teaching model.

Another stumbling block to WE integration in English classes is deciding which variety to teach. Teachers are unsure which English variant will best suit the English that is used in the students' daily lives or that they will encounter in the future, even when teachers are aware of and eager to include WE in their classrooms. Matsuda and Matsuda (2010) provide cases of how Singaporeans are exposed to many English varieties, including those used in the marketplace and those used in academic settings. They also claim that the more difficult option is presented in expanding-circle circumstances, particularly in rural locations such as Hokkaido, where English may be argued to be non-existent. Another example mentioned is how Korean managers of manufacturing enterprises in Chennai would not have imagined that they would contact Indian English users on a regular basis. Because of these uncertainties, English teachers must continue to teach the Standard English course.

The inability to decide which WE variant should be taught is evident in the existing English textbooks. Even if the consideration to integrate diverse English varieties in English textbooks is expanding, according to Takahashi (2017), the publications still use American or British English, for instance in the Japanese context, due to this inability to decide. Indeed, according to Matsuda and Matsuda (2010), textbook writers and teachers consistently promote the dominance of these native English variations. As a result, the scarcity of English textbooks with WE materials may stymie teachers who want to use this type of instruction in their classrooms.

The lack of WE elements in English textbooks could be due to the WE variants' lack of acceptability as norms to be taught. According to Hamid et al. (2014), these new English characteristics are not yet considered appropriate for completing their grammatical roles. These characteristics are debated whether they are accepted by varietal norms or errors, given that they may be perceived differently at the local and global levels. Furthermore, Hamid et al. (2014) contend that teachers' differing perspectives on Standard English forms make rendering such judgments more difficult. On the other hand, establishing and accepting these kinds at a local and global level may take a long time before they can be used in classrooms.

Martin (2014) and Schaetzel et al. (2010) also touch on the topic of WE variations being accepted as norms to be taught in schools. According to Martin (2014), the current state of Philippine English is insufficient to serve as English teaching material. It is because Philippine English scripts are mostly still in documents of research projects rather than being used in English language classes. Martin (2014) further claims that there is a perception that Philippine English belongs solely to educated Filipinos, and that it does not reflect the identity of the majority of the Filipinos who speak their native language. A similar situation exists in Singapore, where teachers are hesitant whether or not to teach Singapore English to their students (Schaetzel, et al). (2010). There is even a concern about avoiding utilizing Singapore English in classrooms because it is thought to be a mistake in

comparison to normal English. Then it may be deduced that these English variations are not widely accepted, which prevents their inclusion in the English language teaching domain.

4.   The benefits of WE inclusion in English teaching

Despite the challenges that have been shown in adopting WE instruction, such introduction activities as those indicated earlier have helped to transform students' perspectives about WE and boost their confidence in using English. Chang (2014) demonstrates how including the idea of WE into her English teaching leads to students' knowledge that English is not entirely controlled by inner-circle countries and, as a result, students value the status of different kinds of English. Wetzl (2013) uses the same language to indicate that following the WE integration, her students learn to tolerate the linguistic diversity of English. Student teachers in Schaetzel, et al. (2010) experience a shift in attitudes around WE, where they no longer consider Singapore English to be "poor English" and instead use it to create a more comfortable classroom environment for their future students.

Students' confidence in using their own English is growing as a result of these positive attitudes regarding WE. Chang (2014) demonstrates that after adding WE, students no longer believe their productions should be native-speaker-like, and hence feel more at ease using English with non-native speaker accents. Tanghe (2014) expresses a similar result, stating that her students are no longer embarrassed by their "bad English" because they have learned that people speak English in different ways all around the world. As a result, including WE in English classes can help students recognize and respect the various variations of English as well as confidently use 'their kind of English' as the accepted variety.

5.   Conclusion

WE has been incorporated into English instruction in a variety of countries, even if it is merely a debate topic for university students in certain cases. The difficulties of sticking to American or British English as a teaching model, uncertainty about which other English varieties to teach, and the unacceptability of various varieties as suitable English norms have been identified as barriers to implementing WE in schools. Nonetheless, such concerns should not dissuade educators from embracing WE as a teaching resource, given the benefits it provides for students' understanding of current linguistic diversity challenges and confidence in using English. Teaching WE to students, as indicated by Matsuda and Matsuda (2010), can be done as a supplement to raising their knowledge of how these variants of English work in today's social inclusion is a brief summary of findings and discussion. It is strongly recommended to avoid mere repetitive statements from the previous sections. Besides, the writer should address the suggestions.

6.   References

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