ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA: IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

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Abstract: The English language functions as a global language that facilitates communication among people of different lingua-cultures. This background leads to the question of whether the traditional language assessment still fulfils the needs of the majority of language learners who will use English for various purposes with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This article illustrates the development and spread of the English language by focusing on two key paradigms: World Englishes (WE) and English as a lingua franca (ELF). This article argues that a native-oriented means of English pedagogy and assessment does not fit the current functions of the language and cannot meet the various and complex needs of the majority of English language learners. It therefore emphasizes the importance of an ELF-informed approach, such as the 'post-method' approach to English language teaching and more flexible language assessment focusing on students' performance of tasks. The article concludes that English language teaching and assessment need to be more informed by ELF than by the entrenched, anachronistic native-oriented ideology.

When looking at the global status of the English language, it is hard to deny that English has spread across the world as a lingua franca (ELF), especially during the 21st century. In the context of Kachru's early paradigm of World Englishes (WE) (1985, 1992) that categorizes the spread and use of English into the three concentric circles (the inner-, outer-, and expanding circles), English is used today as a fluid and flexible lingua franca for international and intercultural communication that transcends between the three circles. The devel-

opment of the theory of WE and the role of ELF has led to debates about the pedagogy of English, language assessment, and whether native standard should remain the learning target for students (Brown, 2005; Dewey, 2012; McKay, 2002) who will likely encounter people from different lingua-cultural backgrounds in the future.

The majority of English learners will use English for various purposes after graduation, and their future interlocutors are likely to be non-native speakers of English (NNSEs), who outnumber native speakers of English (NSEs)[1]. Therefore, from the perspective of ELF, English no longer solely belongs to NSEs (Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 1994) and should be viewed from a broader perspective in which legitimate language users can also claim ownership. However, many current language assessments may largely ignore these facts and native standard is still the norm on the majority of national and international tests. The ELF paradigm has raised questions and concerns about the methods, goals, and needs of English language teaching (ELT) (Matsuda, 2017; McKay, 2002; McKay & Brown, 2016), as well as possible changes to the assessment of English (Hu, 2012; Jenkins & Leung, in press).

By recognising the gap of language assessment in today's multilingual world, this article will first introduce the theory of WE and its development, and then link the theory of WE to the recent development of the ELF paradigm in order to challenge the entrenched native ideology and native speakerism (Holliday, 2006) in the ELT world. This article will also explore the development of ELF in relation to assessment of the English language by challenging the traditional mode of assessment. Finally, the article will argue for the necessity of an ELF-informed English pedagogy and assessment that aims to benefit the majority of English learners and challenge traditional English language assessment model from the restricted perspective of English as a foreign language (EFL).

WORLD ENGLISHES

The theory of WE was originally developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As the pioneer of the theory, Kachru (1985, 1992) explored the spread

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[1] I realise that the terms NSE and NNSE have become notoriously unviable because they cannot demonstrate the users of English in today's globalised world. The terms are used in this article, however, because people are relatively familiar with them.

and development of the English language and challenged the traditional perspective of native ideology. He discussed how "the traditional notions of codification, standardization, models, and methods apply to English" (1985, p. 29). Based on the new linguistic background, Kachru proposed WE, a model comprised of three concentric circles.

In the WE paradigm, the inner and outer circles include countries where English is used as a native language (ENL) and a second language (ESL) respectively. The expanding circle, however, has the largest number of English learners and users, most of whom regard English as a foreign language (EFL)[2]. In this light, English speakers in the expanding circle are regarded as language learners who need facility in the language primarily to communicate with NSEs, but this scenario is no longer universally true because English is now more often used for communication purposes between NNSEs whose first language (L1) is not English. This situation has to be recognised. However, when discussing ELT and assessment, it is lamented that "native standard English" has long been and remains as the (only but highly non-achievable and unnecessary) norm.

The paradigm of WE moves beyond the native varieties of English around the world to include post-colonial varieties of English, such as Singapore English, Nigerian English, and Indian English. The post-colonial varieties, also referred to as nativised or indigenised varieties of English, are called *New Englishes* (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Mufwene, 1994; Platt, Weber, & Ho, 1984). Although native varieties of English are described as located in the inner circle, WE research argues the importance of moving beyond the native versions. Post-colonial varieties of English, however, should also be regarded as legitimate varieties of English within different speech communities.

Although the Kachruvian paradigm breaks up the traditional standard English language ideology and thus recognises the varieties of English within a post-colonial context, bringing the English language "a unique cultural pluralism, and a linguistic heterogeneity and diversity which are unrecorded to this extent in human history" (Kachru, 1985, p. 14), it has certain limitations if we

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[2] There is no reliable count of the number of English speakers in the expanding circle, but it is estimated that there are now approximately one billion speakers of English with "reasonable competence" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 16), with that number expected to reach a peak of over two billion now (Graddol, 2006).

view the spread of English from a broader and a more holistic perspective. First, the WE paradigm is primarily nation-based, as it only focuses on "a narrow selection of standardized forms in particular communities" (Pennycook, 2007, p. 21). WE research seeks mainly to codify the features of nativised varieties of outer circle Englishes and does not entirely accept expanding circle Englishes as legitimate on their own. Second, WE model fails to reflect the complex nature of English. Tripartite demarcation has been charged with privileging the English of native English communities in the centre circle and underestimating the role of Englishes in the peripheral circles (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 2007; Phillipson, 1992). Moreover, the demarcation between inner and outer circle has become less meaningful as the role of "functional native speakers" has risen to prominence (Yano, 2001).

Another drawback of the WE paradigm concerns the fact that the characterisation of expanding circle Englishes is still norm-dependent. This does not reflect the diversity of English users but maintains the notion of inner circle Englishes as the "standard" for English, as English is still a *foreign* language in expanding circle contexts. This has led to the critique of the Kachruvian paradigm in the multilingual world, as it reverts to "the logic of the prescriptive and elitist tendencies [to] 'standardize' the language […] to systematize the periphery variants" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 180). From this perspective, WE research is concerned with seeking and constructing endonormative varieties of English.

In sum, WE researchers have argued for the importance of moving beyond the native ideology and recognising the development of post-colonial varieties of English. For example, Kachru (1985) argues that: "[w]hat we need now are new paradigms and perspectives for linguistic and pedagogical research and for understanding the linguistic creativity in multilingual situation across cultures" (p. 30). By seeing the world as a multilingual community, English has transcended national boundaries and become more fluid and flexible among its users. In this way, English is not only used *intra*nationally within certain limited communities, but more importantly, English has been employed as a lingua franca *inter*nationally to link people from different lingua-cultures together for communication purposes.

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

The theory of WE has greatly influenced the development of the ELF paradigm. The field of ELF developed in early 2000s, when Jenkins's ground-

breaking monograph (2000) and Seidlhofer's paper (2001) were published. The subject of the importance of teaching English as an international language (EIL) was raised and explored later (McKay, 2002; McKay & Brown, 2016; Walker, 2010). When discussing the difference between WE and ELF, it should be noted that ELF is not a variety of English and that there is no specific norm or standard to follow.

As a relatively new area of study, the ELF paradigm has been interpreted and reinterpreted through its plurilinguistic, hybrid, and fluid nature (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). ELF is defined as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). ELF is a field of research that focuses on the diversity and fluidity of the English language; it also values communication strategies adopted by interlocutors when encountering difficulties and communication barriers. In terms of communication purpose, ELF is referred as "a means by which English is continually being re-enacted and reinvigorated through the inventiveness of its speakers as they respond to their immediate communicative and expressive needs" (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 304). The ELF paradigm does not assume that native standard English norms should be the only benchmark; instead, ELF focuses on the majority of English speakers, those who speak English as an additional language. For achieving the communication end, a given native norm is far from being the only benchmark in this circumstance.

As a language ideology goes beyond traditional native speaker norms and nation-bounded varieties (compared to WE), ELF research advocates concepts such as "multiculturalism, multilingualism, polymodels and pluricentrism" instead of the traditional notions of "monoculturalism, monolingualism, monomodels and monocentrism" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 134). Differing from the WE paradigm, ELF research does not aim to propose or codify ELF as a variety of English. However, the ELF paradigm recognises and validates the pluricentric nature of the English language as it flows across national boundaries (Cogo, 2012; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). It is argued that in today's globalised context, "ELF is simultaneously the consequence and the principal language medium of globalizing process" (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 303). Against the backdrop of globalisation, English is often the first option for communication in any international arena; Jenkins (2000) reports that "English is often one of several languages available in the repertoires of the multilingual populations" (p. 8).

The study of ELF goes beyond the traditional notion of language varieties and homogeneous speech communities to reveal how ELF users could "skilfully co-construct English for their own purposes, […] and create innovative forms that differ from the norms of native English and do not require sanctioning by native English speakers" (Jenkins, 2011, p. 931). In a more recent discussion, Jenkins (2015) has proposed the notion of *English as a Multilingua Franca* (EMF), in which the study of ELF has been explored within the context of multilingualism (for the development of the third stage of ELF, see Jenkins, 2015).

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA VERSUS ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

To understand how the theory of ELF could impact the way that English is assessed, I shall in this section draw a distinction between ELF and EFL. EFL is the traditional means of teaching and assessment by which English is positioned in the theoretical framework of mainstream traditional second language acquisition (SLA) research. From this perspective, native (or near-native) standard English norms are regarded as the goal of English teaching and learning. Teachers are supposed to teach native (mainly British or American) varieties of English; students should also follow this "standard" during their learning process as the native ideology is set as the benchmark most of the time, despite being unachievable and unnecessary for the majority of students who will use English for more pragmatic purposes than passing exams. Advocates of the EFL paradigm would expect such norms to be acquired by English language learners as the perennial and ultimate goal of the language learning process. In the EFL setting, language learners are expected to defer to native speaker norms and need to "strive to abide by these norms" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 17) as the influence of learners' L1 is regarded as interference or fossilised mistakes (Selinker, 1972). Use of L1 is treated from a deficit rather than a different perspective (see Jenkins, 2006).

Differing from the EFL perspective in which English is perceived as a fixed asset from a native perspective, ELF considers the English language a resource available to its language users instead of the sole property of NSEs (Graddol, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011). In the ELF paradigm, NSEs are not excluded, but they no longer enjoy a privileged status as the only language arbiters in international communication. NNSEs are not required to adjust to NSEs' pro-

tocols during international communication (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). It is argued that ELF is not associated with any particular norm. When communicating in English, NNSEs do not need to follow native norms or to strive to fit in with the NSE's group (Alsagoff, 2012; Cogo, 2012; House, 2003; Jenkins, 2007). As mentioned above, ELF is not a fixed notion. ELF interactions are instead constructed, co-constructed and negotiated by its speakers, for whom the linguistic norms are "primarily regulated by interactional exigencies" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 18).

Although the traditional perspective of SLA as seen through an *interlanguage* theory of the learners of language has been questioned and critiqued (Cook, 1999; Firth & Wagner, 2007) in relation to critical perspectives of language pedagogy and ELF (De Costa, 2012; Kubota, 2016; Seidlhofer, 2011), we cannot deny that a "conceptual gap" still remains between research and the reality (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 14). Language teachers still tend to perceive native English as the only norm worth teaching, regardless of how students might use English in the future. This leads to an "anachronistic anthropological belief" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a, p. 19) about English language pedagogy and assessment, in which, at least in most cases, students are taught to conform to the native norms and are not allowed to deviate or manipulate the language on their own. Students are trained from a *right-or-wrong* viewpoint and there is a clear line between the so-called standard and non-standard versions of English. For example, Kobayashi (2011) demonstrates how students try to sound like NSEs and express indifferent attitudes towards other varieties of English. Pinner (2016) also illustrates how his students devalue regional varieties of English but choose to aim to speak an unrealistic native model of English. From an EFL perspective, a deep-seated language ideology stating that native competence is the inherent target of language learning remains firmly entrenched in the ELT field, as well as in English assessment. In the next section, I shall discuss how the development and theory of ELF would impact on English pedagogy and assessment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

One of the greatest challenges of the application of ELF approach in ELT is assessment. One common misconception about the English language pedagogy and assessment is that the goal is to retain native norms to all learners and speakers of English, which is not attainable or necessary for the majority of

English users if they use English in an international arena to fulfill different needs with speakers of different lingua-cultural backgrounds. It is pointed out that international exams such as IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEIC are discriminatory in a way that they may penalise non-native speakers who do not follow native norms (see e.g., Davies, Hamp-Lyons & Kemp, 2003). Jenkins and Leung (in press) also call for a more ELF-informed approach to English assessment, arguing for "a move away from a monolithic framing of language competence in terms of native speaker norms and practices" (p. 4).

In language teaching and testing today, especially in the international English language tests, a monolingual approach emphasising the native-norm still seems to be the mainstream benchmark. In the current linguistic landscape, a restricted monolingual approach cannot fulfil students' need to use language where situations can be emergent to form various communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, "standardized tests are unable to cope with the fact that language is messy, and lingua franca use is even messier, which renders futile the attempt to impose a present template on contingent use in diverse English contexts" (Jenkins & Leung, in press, p. 10). This also creates practical problems in assessing ELF in relation to ELT and leads to the argument that traditional approaches to English assessment cannot be adopted to situated language use. We need to tackle the issue of how traditional approaches to English testing can be adapted to the situated language use. I argue that the traditional paper testing format can assess only limited levels of English use. English language assessment in the ELF paradigm should focus on performance-related tasks and test students' communication strategies, rather than testing language in a vacuum (Barinaga, 2009; Pennycook, 2009). Native-oriented tests should be revisited and revised in order to measure how students accomplish different tasks and meet the needs when using language in various emergent situations.

I have proposed an ELF-informed approach called ToPIC (Teaching of Pronunciation for Intercultural Communication) elsewhere (Fang, 2015, 2016). This approach of language teaching, however, can be applied to how English is assessed from an ELF paradigm. The approach of ToPIC is based on the "post-method" approach created by Kumaravadivelu (2003, 2006b). Based on the three concepts of *particularity*, *practicality* and *possibility* of the "post-method" approach, I argue for the importance of shifting from an EFL-oriented teaching model to an ELF-informed pedagogy. In the ToPIC approach, teachers and students maintain awareness of the complex culture and context of teaching in order to "raise language awareness on the global status of English and

develop new attitudes towards it to put these new theories into practice" (Fang, 2016, p. 21). When designing assessment tasks based on ToPIC, a series of performative tasks can be designed to focus on various linguistic skills, such as *accommodation strategies* and *communication skills* (Cogo, 2009; Jenkins, 2000; Kubota, 2016). Native standard is not the sole element on which students are judged. In this way, the ability to speak English will not be perceived as "gatekeeping" that creates an invisible hierarchy in many international tests, but as a global skill that will equip people for future opportunities in an international arena and develop them into global citizens.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This article discusses the importance of an ELF-informed pedagogy and assessment of the English language skills for a majority of language learners. Against the backdrop of globalisation, English is no longer the sole property of its native speakers. The international use of English leads to multi-functions and purposes for the complex English use in various emergent communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). I have argued that English language assessment should break away from the traditional accumulative means of testing, in which actual language performance cannot be tested. Furthermore, a traditional native-oriented ideology embedded in testing should be replaced with a more ELF-informed ideology in order to, for example, focus on students' communication strategies, and how they use the language to fulfil different tasks in both academic and non-academic settings.

English language pedagogy and assessment should be revisited because the traditional forms of teaching and assessment do not reflect the actual use of English as a global language. EFL-informed means of English language teaching and assessment ignores the fact that language is performed by human beings in contact (Barinaga, 2009; Pennycook, 2009). I have argued elsewhere that a native-oriented approach to ELT does not equip students to use English in an international arena (Fang, 2015, 2016) because in many situations, conversations occur among non-native speakers of English. It is hoped that both language educators and learners will realise the complexity of English use around the globe. It is unlikely, though, that major examination board and ELT practices will shift to a more ELF-informed frame of testing and teaching in the near future. Only when people use and get more exposure to English in a wider variety of settings, will they revisit and rethink their attitudes (Jenkins, 2007)

and make decisions about what kind of English they need to know for their advantage. English language assessment will also need to adjust in order to match the global status and people's real needs regarding English as a global language, although this may be a long and painful process.

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