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English Around the World

AN INTRODUCTION

Edgar W. Schneider

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English Around the World

The global spread of English has had widespread linguistic, social, and cultural implications, affecting the lives of millions of people around the world. This textbook provides a lively and accessible introduction to world Englishes, describing varieties used in countries as broad-ranging as America, Jamaica, Australia, Africa, and Asia, and setting them within their historical and social contexts. Students are guided through the material with chapter previews and summaries, maps, timelines, lists of key terms, discussion questions and exercises, and a comprehensive glossary, helping them to understand, analyze, and compare different varieties of English, and apply descriptive terminology. The book is accompanied by a useful website, containing textual and audio examples of the varieties introduced in the text, and links to related sources of interest. Providing essential knowledge and skills for those embarking on the study of world Englishes, this is set to become the leading introduction to the subject.

EDGAR W. SCHNEIDER is Full Professor and Chair of English Linguistics in the Department of English and American Studies, and Dean of the Faculty for Linguistics, Literature and Cultural Studies, at the University of Regensburg, Germany.

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English Around the World

An Introduction

Edgar W. Schneider

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A note on using this book

You are about to read and perhaps work with a book on the global spread of English. This is a topic with a number of different and interesting facets:

- the **reasons** why this has happened;
- the **processes** by which it has come about;
- the **results**, in terms of where around the globe you find English nowadays, and in which forms, with which functions;
- the **properties** which these forms of English have, as something like new dialects of the language; and
- the **consequences** of this process – what people think about these so-called “New Englishes” in many countries, how their presence affects their lives, how policy-makers have reacted and attempted to influence this process, and so on.

Personally, I find this a fascinating topic. It is a process which has come to be incredibly vibrant for the last few decades in particular, and it has transformed, or at least affected, many cultures and countries and the lives of many individuals all around the world, for better or for worse. And I hope I’ll be able to share some of this excitement with you.

This **preface** is meant to highlight some of the specific features of this book, especially as a textbook – the features which I have consistently used to give you easier, and a more hands-on, access to the topic. Identifying these features beforehand should help you to use the book more effectively, and possibly to select those components which suit your needs and interests best. Take it as something like an instruction manual – I know many people avoid reading them, but using a gadget, or a book in this case, is easier and more effective if you do. And I promise it’s short and not complicated.

Who is this book meant for? Well, it’s not really restricted, but there is a most likely **target audience**. I suppose most of you reading this will be students, primarily but not exclusively undergraduates, and you may be enrolled in a class on “World Englishes,” “Varieties of English,” or such like. That’s fine, and the exciting thing for me, writing this, is you are really likely to be sitting almost anywhere in this world, given the publisher’s global outreach. (Drop me a line if you feel like it – I’d certainly be interested in

learning who I can reach with this text.) It probably also means that your class is run and organized by a competent academic teacher who may give you further instructions, select materials, work with exercises or features of this text or the accompanying website, and so on – at this point I’ll step back and leave you in the hands of your mentor.

The book is divided into nine **chapters**. Each of them covers a specific topic and is thus designed to serve as basic reading for one course **module** or course session. In fact, some chapters, notably the regional and the bigger ones (**Chapters 4–8** in particular, I’d say) might actually be split up between several sessions, depending on how deeply your instructor and you wish to go into details, to look at individual samples, to work out the exercises, and so on.

Note, however, that none of the above applications are mandatory. I hope that the text as such is accessible and attractive to “the interested **lay reader**” outside of a class or even university context as well. It is certainly also possible to just read it cover-to-cover, or to pick select chapters in which for whatever reason you are particularly interested. There is no reason why you should not read this as a **standalone** text and work through all of this material on your own. I have done my best not to make it too technical (even if one purpose clearly is also to teach you some linguistic terms and concepts in passing).

The **contents** of this book, and its individual chapters, will be detailed further in the first chapter, the Introduction, but for a start, you should be prepared to deal with the following topics and components:

History, culture, society, in specific countries, regions, or continents: obviously, this constitutes the backbone and the necessary background of all the following discussions. Naturally, even if this is a book about varieties of English, language always and only works in social contexts, has been forged by them, and can be explained only in that perspective.

Linguistics: yes, sure – that’s the discipline which describes and studies how language works, so we will need some of the terms and notions which linguists have developed for that purpose. I am not presupposing any substantial familiarity with linguistics and will do my best to introduce technical terms and concepts in an accessible fashion. I suppose you can sidestep this component if you are really not interested in it. But some technical knowledge and terminology simply gives you a much more solid grasp of the phenomena under discussion, and I suppose many of you will be expected to master some of this.

Text (audio) samples: I am convinced that talking about global forms of English makes sense and is fun only if you get some direct exposure to the object of discussion, i.e. to text and audio samples from the respective regions. In fact, this is one of the features that make this book quite different from many others on similar subjects, frequently with “World

Englishes” as part of their titles. Usually you get many general statements and a few short selected examples. Here I am providing authentic language samples representing a wide range of different regions, styles, and text types, to give you a hands-on feel for what we are talking about. Most of the samples you can also listen to – there are audio files (in mp3 format, mostly) of the texts transcribed in the book available on the website that accompanies it. And I am not only asking you to read or listen to these dialect samples – I will also be directing your attention to what is special about them, what to focus on in identifying regional characteristics. Each text is followed by extensive discussions of its noteworthy properties, usually looking at features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Of course, this is also where some unavoidable linguistics sneaks in, because in these descriptive sections I will introduce and use some technical, descriptive terminology, customarily used in linguistic analyses. Don’t worry if you do not understand each and every term. In the long run, however, such descriptions will build a network of connections, similarities between and comparisons with other texts. In principle, this is an open-ended activity – you can search and start analyzing further regional text samples, and some guidance to that is provided in some of the exercises at the end of each chapter.

A couple of **features** have been employed consistently to help you digest the material presented and to make this book more effective as a **textbook**. Features which you will find in each chapter include the following:

- a **chapter preview**, entitled “In this chapter . . .,” which is supposed to signpost the material coming up in the chapter, and thus to guide your attention;
- a listing of the chapter’s **sections**, which structure the material by sub-topics;
- a **Chapter summary** which briefly revises what you have learned and puts things in perspective;
- an “**Exercises and activities**” section, meant to activate you – the best way of learning things! Some of the exercises are reflective in nature, asking you to think about or discuss some of the issues raised, and to bring in your own experiences and attitudes. Others are more practical and analytical, in several cases asking you to investigate further text samples, some of which are also provided on the website;
- “**Key terms** discussed in this chapter” at the end: the terms and notions which you should understand and be able to apply properly in your own discussions and analyses, especially if you are a language student;
- a “**Further reading**” section which guides you to additional sources on the chapter contents which I find recommendable, usually of an introductory or at least not overly technical nature, in case you are interested in pursuing this further.

In addition, some features are found in certain chapters only, depending on the nature of the material covered. In fact, you will find that there are essentially two slightly different **chapter types**:

- chapters focusing on general **subjects, concepts, and issues** (i.e., **Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 8**, in particular); and
- chapters focusing on **regions** and countries, and on their linguistic settings and regional varieties of English, respectively (i.e., **Chapters 4–6**).

Only the regional chapters provide you with materials which relate to specific areas, namely

- **maps** which, unless you know anyhow, show you the countries and locations under discussion, usually in a wider context;
- **timelines** which chronologically identify major events in the historical evolution of the region under discussion; and, of course,
- the **text samples** referred to above.

Finally, at the end of the book you'll find some sections which will also support your understanding of the text and your ability to access specific parts of it or to deepen your familiarity with the subject matter:

- an **appendix** which presents and illustrates the **phonological symbols** employed, for readers who have little or no familiarity with phonetic transcription;
- a second **appendix** summarizing guiding questions which can be asked on the status and properties of English in any region;
- a **glossary** which explains and illustrates technical terms in an understandable fashion (well, at least so I hope);
- the **references** list which provides the documentation which I owe to the colleagues and writers on whose work I have built, and which might guide you to further sources in case you are interested; and, finally,
- the **index** which should help you to spot pages where specific subjects are dealt with more extensively.

As has been implied above, however, that is not all. There is a website which accompanies this book; you find it at www.cambridge.org/edgarschneider. It provides

- the **audio files** for the text samples transcribed in the book, and further samples referred to in the exercises; and
- **links** to further interesting materials, especially other language-related websites.

So – (I hope you'll) enjoy!

Introduction

In this chapter ...

This chapter introduces the topic of “World Englishes.” It points out the present-day global spread of English and the variant roles of the language in different societies. It should also make you, the reader, aware of the fact that most likely you have already gained some familiarity with this fact. Nearly every speaker of English today has been exposed to different varieties of global English. For instance, in the media accents from all over the world are frequently heard – say, by watching an American sitcom, or by listening to an interview with an African politician. Many people have come across different varieties of English whilst travelling, or have met visitors from another country. By reading this book you will learn a lot more about where, when, why, and how such “new” forms of English have emerged.

It is not enough to remain on a purely theoretical level, however. Our topic comes alive only if we seek exposure to real-life language as produced in different regions, and so I suggest we begin by starting with a practical exercise right away. Just as an example of what we can look at and talk about when we encounter a slightly unfamiliar form of English, you will find a text reproduced, and I will comment on some of the properties of this speech form which I find noteworthy and illustrative. You can, and ought to, also listen to this sample by downloading it from the website which accompanies this book. I point out some of the features of this speech sample (i.e. words used, sounds employed, and constructions found in it), and comment on why these properties occur here, also considering the nature of the text itself. Linguists call this the “sociolinguistic conditions of text production.” I hope to show that resulting from these conditions language use needs to be, and typically is, situationally appropriate. Thus, the individual forms used indirectly acquire something like a symbolic function.

Finally, a short preview of topics to be discussed in the book’s chapters will give you a better idea of what to expect.

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| 1.1 | English, both globalizing and nativizing | <i>page 2</i> |
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1.1 English, both globalizing and nativizing

Have you been abroad? Do you travel a lot? Then you know what I'm talking about. Wherever you go on this globe, you can get along with English. Either most people speak it anyhow, or there is at least somebody around who can communicate in this language. But then, you realize that mostly there's something you may find odd about the way English is used there. If you are abroad English is likely to be somewhat different from the way you speak it:

- people use strange **words**;
- it may take you a while to recognize familiar words because they are **pronounced** somehow differently; and
- sometimes people build their **sentences** in ways that will seem odd to you in the beginning.

Well, if you stay there, wherever that is, for a while, you'll get used to this. And if you stay there even longer, you may even pick up some of these features and begin to sound like the locals. What this example teaches us is: English is no longer just "one language"; it comes in many different shapes and sizes, as it were. It is quite different in the many countries and localities where it has been adopted. To grasp this phenomenon linguists have come to talk of different "Englishes."

No doubt English is truly the world's leading language today. It is used on all continents. In surprisingly many countries (more than 100, according to recent estimates) it has important internal functions as a "Second Language" in addition to one or more indigenous tongues, being used in politics, business, education, technology, the media, etc. It is almost always used as the mediator language (a so-called "lingua franca") by people who need to talk with each other but have different mother tongues, for instance, as suggested in [Figure 1](#), in the classic shopping and bargaining encounters in tourism. All around the globe, English is learned by hundreds of millions of people in all countries simply because it is so useful. A recent estimate puts speaker numbers close to two billion (although this is extremely difficult to guess – it depends on how much you have to know to count as "a speaker"). One of the main reasons for all of this is that in many developing countries people from all walks of life perceive English as the primary gateway to better jobs and incomes, thus a better life. And the entire process has gained so much momentum that at the moment nothing seems to be able to stop it in the foreseeable future.

At the same time, however, English has become localized and indigenized in a great many different countries. It is not only viewed as a useful "international" language, as just described, but it fulfills important local functions. In doing so it has developed local forms and characteristics, so that not



Figure 1 Shopping and bargaining with tourists – a classic situation which calls for English (here in India)

infrequently people enjoy using it in “their own” way. In many places local ways of speaking English have become a new home dialect which, like all local dialects, is used to express regional pride, a sense of belonging to a place which finds expression through local culture, including language forms. Furthermore, in many countries of Africa and Asia, where English was introduced just one or two centuries ago, there are now indigenous children who grow up speaking English as their first and/or most important, most frequently used, language. Some of them are not even able to speak the indigenous language of their parents and grandparents any longer. Come to think of it – isn’t this an amazing phenomenon?

One really interesting aspect about all of this is that this indigenization and nativization process of English in many countries, frequently former colonies in the British Empire, is a product of the very recent past and not primarily of their colonial heritage of centuries ago. It is only for the last few decades, quite a while after independence in many cases, that English has made such inroads into local cultures. Again, this should come as a surprise to an outside observer. English was the language of the colonial power, the settlers and expatriate rulers, sometimes perceived as the oppressors. Once they were gone, wouldn’t it have been natural for a newly independent country to breathe deeply and forget about the days of lack of freedom, to do away with all the colonial heritage, including their language? But interestingly enough,

quite the contrary has happened. In many countries English has been embraced, appropriated, transformed, made “our own.” And in fact, this issue of the “ownership” of English is very much a topic of current debate and has even hit headlines in international journalism. For example, on March 7, 2005, *Newsweek* had a cover page and story entitled “Who Owns English? Non-Native Speakers Are Transforming the Global Language.” What has happened here?

This book describes this process of the global spread of English and its various facets, both from a general perspective (looking at sociohistorical circumstances, political issues involved, and linguists’ explanations and categorizations) and in specific cases and regions. The core chapters (4–6) characterize the major world regions in terms of the reasons why English has been brought there, how and why it is used, and what its characteristic properties are. In each case, my strategy is that of “zooming in” from the general to the specific: I combine a general survey of characteristics of an entire region with a closer look at a case study from one select part of that region, allowing me to showcase a typical instantiation of English in use in a given context. Each case study will then include a model discussion of a select text from that locality. In fact, this text-centered, hands-on approach is one of the specific characteristics of this book as against others on the same subject, which may tell you something about English in specific regions as well, and may provide samples, but none will tell you exactly what to listen and pay attention to, which features characterize particular texts as samples of their respective varieties.

I assume no prior familiarity with any of these issues or regions, and very little, if any, with linguistics. Assuming that you, my readership, will comprise both some linguistics students and non-linguists just interested in this subject, I will employ a dual strategy. I offer some technical terms (which the linguists amongst you will know or may have to remember), but I will also do my best to introduce and explain them briefly. In case you find certain technical terms difficult, please have a look at the glossary, where you will find further definitions and explanations. The same applies to phonetic transcription, the conventional way of rendering pronunciation details on paper. Linguists employ some special symbols, “phonetic characters” as devised by the “International Phonetic Association,” for that purpose. The ones I use are reproduced and briefly explained in [Appendix 1](#). Many of you will be familiar with these IPA characters, and there is no other equally powerful and accurate way of providing information on pronunciation, so I will employ them too, using a broad phonological transcription set between slashes. In addition to that, however, I will do my best to indicate what you need to pay attention to, or what happens in articulating certain sounds, in non-technical terms as well.

If this sounds a little abstract and perhaps alien to you, different from your daily concerns and background – let me assure you it isn’t, really. Whenever we communicate (and each of us talks much of the time), whenever we listen to somebody else talking, subconsciously this machinery works inside of us. We assess what we hear – not only the meaning, the message itself, but the way it is encoded. And the details of this encoding (one’s “accent,” for instance) actually signal quite a lot to us: who our interlocutor is in terms of background, status, age, etc., how friendly he or she wishes to be, what the situation is like, or what the hidden message is between the lines. I am not saying that we are all experts on global Englishes anyhow, and sure there may be hidden messages that we fail to understand, but yes, somehow we are all sociolinguists who constantly analyze how something is said, in addition to what is being stated. To each and every new communicative situation we are in we bring our accumulated, if incomplete, familiarity with different ways of talking, and our earlier exposure to all kinds of Englishes, local and global. And we not only listen explicitly but we also read between the lines, as it were. Frequently what we do as linguists (or students of linguistics) is no more than spelling out what on this basis somehow we “know” anyhow. Ultimately, however, this also means we need to develop methods, hypotheses, and “theories” to collect data objectively, to systematize our observations, to make our claims convincing to others (which is what we could call “proving our theory”).

1.2 English, both global and local: a first example

That may sound grand, but I don’t think it is; it begins with the very first steps. And to show you how this works, let us look at one sample text and see what, apart from the contents itself, it contains in terms of interesting, perhaps suggestive, indicative linguistic features as to its origins and implications.

Please read [Text 1](#), “Knowledge,” and, if you can, listen to it on the website accompanying this book. I have deliberately selected a sample which is not explicitly localized in its contents. There are no loan words from any indigenous languages and no local references (the text, you will find, is about the importance of acquiring knowledge). I will point out some properties which I find noteworthy, hoping you share that assessment. Of course, what you will hear and find interesting also depends on your individual background. But there are certainly a few observations which all of us will share and which, based upon your and my partial familiarity with other dialects of English (supported, possibly, by scholarly documentation in

TEXT 1: Knowledge

Okay. No, knowledge is not come from vacuum. You have to read, you have to meet with people, you have to have a discussion, and in fact, you have to appreciate the differences between your opinion and other opinion. Then, it start ... it create a thinking ... it create a thinking skill, it create ... it create ... something that will generate the ... the new things. Some people may be looking at how coconut falls from the tree. And when we ask them why coconut fall from a tree, maybe say, because it('s) is old enough and ripe enough and is fall. But if you ask a physicist, why falls ... why coconut fall from the tree, he will say, this is because due to gravity. So different person have different perception of falling object. Therefore, having a knowledge about falling object will create you some ideas how we can change, we can transform energy from one form to another form. Basically, knowledge is generator. So, if you want to build our nation, if we want to build ourself, if we want to improve ourself, there is no other thing other than knowledge. We have to ... we have ... we have to be very, very concerned about development and knowledge.

linguistics), can be stated objectively, independently of who we are. And this, after all, is the goal of linguistics, the scientific study of how language works.

The extralinguistic context is of course always important in the understanding of a speech selection, so I should state at the outset that this is a sample I recorded in the media, the concluding part of a TV speech, to be precise. Let us start with the obvious and move on to the more specific.

The speaker is a male adult, and clearly not a native speaker (he does not sound like someone from Britain, America, or the like). But we may assume he is educated – that is what the topic and the choice of words (formal and scientific vocabulary like *vacuum*, *physicist*, *gravity*, *perception*, or *transform*) imply. On the other hand, he hesitates repeatedly and sometimes struggles for words, coming up with a generic expression like *the new things*. Context and style are obviously formal, as suggested by the impersonal topic and the slow and careful mode of delivery, and of course also by what we know about the extralinguistic context.

What makes the speaker's pronunciation special, and how would we implicitly compare his accent to what we may know about other accents?

- Amongst his vowels, the most persistent phenomenon worth noting is that in words where British and American English (BrE, AmE) have a diphthong, a gliding movement from one tongue position to another as in *day* /eɪ/ or *show* /əʊ/, this speaker produces a monophthong, a pure