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Table of Contents (EIL Section):

Foreword by John Adamson.....	5-10
1. Rod Ellis.....	11-27
- <i>Educational Settings and Second Language Learning</i>	
2. Rias van den Doel.....	28-38
- <i>International Intelligibility in EIL</i>	
3. Ahmet Acar.....	39-53
- <i>Standards and Competence in English as an International Language Pedagogy</i>	
4. Rana Yıldırım and Zuhâl Okan.....	54-66
- <i>The Question of Global English-Language Teaching: A Turkish Perspective</i>	
5. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh.....	67-76
- <i>EIL, Variations and the Native Speaker's Model</i>	
6. Roger Nunn.....	77-110
- <i>Redefining Communicative Competence for International and Local Communities</i>	
7. Anita Dewi.....	111-125
- <i>Shifts in NNESTs' Professional Identity: An Impact of Language and Culture Immersion</i>	
8. Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo.....	126-140
- <i>High Schools or Private Institutes Textbooks? Which Fulfill Communicative Language Teaching Principles in the Iranian Context?</i>	
9. Saleh M. Al-Salman.....	141-156
- <i>Global English and the Role of Translation</i>	
10. Mingxu Liu and Limei Zhang.....	157-166
- <i>Student perceptions of native & non-native English teachers' attitudes, teaching skills assessment and performance</i>	
11. Peter Ilic & Stuart D. Warrington.....	167-174
- <i>Pre-testing the Annual Activities Survey for Language Teachers (AASLT)</i>	
12. Julide Inozu, Seden Tuyan and Emine Cakır Surmeli.....	175-188
- <i>Overcoming Affective Barriers for Continuous Language Learning</i>	
13. Thor May.....	189-205
- <i>Fractional Language Learning</i>	
14. Roger Nunn and John Adamson.....	206-229
- <i>Towards the Development of Alternative Criteria for International Journal Paper Evaluation</i>	



Table of Contents (Asian EFL Section):

15. Hong Li and Qingying Lin.....	230-239
- <i>The Role of Revision and Teacher Feedback in a Chinese College Context</i>	
16. Mansoor Fahim and Reza Pishghadam.....	240-253
- <i>On the Role of Emotional, Psychometric, and Verbal Intelligences in the Academic Achievement of University Students Majoring in English Language</i>	
17. J. R. Baker, Y W. Luo, & Y.Y. Hung.....	254-279
- <i>Helping Daunted Low Level Adult EFL Learners Get a Fresh Start with a Literature Ladder</i>	
18. Julide Inozu and Gulden Ilin.....	280-288
- <i>How Do Learners Perceive E-Language Learning Programs in Their Local Context</i>	
19. Akemi Katayama.....	289-305
- <i>Japanese EFL Students' Preferences toward Correction of Classroom Oral Errors</i>	
20. Pham Phu Quynh Na.....	306-322
- <i>Some Strategies for Teaching English to Multi-level Adult ESL Learners: A Challenging Experience in Australia</i>	
 Asian EFL Journal editorial information and guidelines.....	 323-329



Foreword

The December 2007 edition of the *Asian EFL Journal* presents the conference proceedings from our May EIL Congress held at Korea University in Seoul. It was a stimulating event for speakers and audience members since views on the role of English could be shared and analyzed from various contexts in Asia and beyond. In this sense, the true ethos of the *Asian EFL Journal* and its related journals, that of a community of researchers and teachers meeting to challenge existing dogma, was seen in practice over the course of the congress. Sincere thanks are extended to the authors who submitted their papers and the team of editors and proofreaders who have processed the submissions. The conference issue is divided into three sections: a summary of the talk by Professor Rod Ellis, papers which directly addressed the main conference EIL theme, and papers related to a variety of other Asian EFL topics.

It was again a privilege to enjoy the insights of Professor Rod Ellis as the main speaker at the congress. His paper entitled “Educational Settings and Second Language Learning” focuses on the foreign language learning setting and refers to the “neglect” of sociolinguistic research into this area compared to ESL settings as indicated by Rampton (2006). This analysis is framed by reference to studies by Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) into the concept of “settings” and Coupland’s (2001) differentiation between Type 1 and Type 2 sociolinguistics. Ellis then investigates the relationship between L2 learning and various educational settings involving submersion, segregation, mother tongue maintenance, immersion, and dual language. Importantly, the variance in learning outcomes is stressed not simply between these settings, but also within them. He concludes by outlining principles of successful language learning which draw upon the arguments outlined in his analysis.



EIL, Variations and the Native Speaker's Model

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Introduction

English language is widely spoken and taught in the world. It is considered a lingua franca and is also considered by many to be the universal and the international language. This language is widely distributed and is currently the primary language of a number of countries. It is extensively used and taught as a second language around the world in countries like India, Pakistan, and South Africa and is also used by more people as a foreign language in a country like Iran and so many other countries.

The primacy of some English speaking countries has spread English language throughout the globe and this language is now the prominent international language in communications, science, technology, business, aviation, and other areas including the Internet. That is why it has often been referred to as a global language. As a global means of communications, English language has inevitably changed in order to suit specific contexts or needs (Crystal, 1997). It has been one of the official languages of the United Nations since its founding in 1945. In 1997, the Science Citation Index reported that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries. In many countries around the world that English is not the first language but is used as a second or foreign language, books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in the society.

English language is the one that is also most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union. It is also the most studied language in countries like Iran, People's Republic of China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and many other countries. Because of this global spread, English language has developed lots of many dialects, variations, English-based creoles and pidgins.

Many people speak English as their first language and as David Crystal (1997) states: “the majority of these English speakers (67 to 70%) live in the United States.” When combining native and non-native speakers, it is probably the most commonly spoken language in the world, though possibly second behind a combination of the Chinese languages that have more than one billion speakers. English language may have a limited number of native speakers compared to Hindi, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish, but the geographical distribution of these languages as first, second, and foreign language is more limited than that of English. Spanish, although more widespread than Mandarin and Hindi, is not much present in Asia or Africa as English is as an international language.

There are some who claim that non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers by a ratio of 3 to 1. Considering the number of English speakers who use the language as their second or foreign language, this is true. English language is used as an international language and is the most widely learned and spoken foreign language and as such some linguists believe that it is no longer the exclusive cultural sign of "native English speakers," but is rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow.

Variations and NS's model

International English is the concept of English language as a global means of communication in numerous variations and dialects. It is also referred to as Global English, World English, Common English, General English, or Standard English. It seems that sometimes these numerous terms refer simply to the array of varieties of English spoken throughout the world. International English sometimes refers to English as it is actually being used and developed in the world; as a language owned not just by native speakers, but by all those who come to use it. “Basically, it covers the English language at large, often (but not always or necessarily) implicitly seen as standard. It is certainly also commonly used in connection with the acquisition, use, and study of English as the world's lingua franca and especially when the language is considered as a whole in contrast with American English, British English, South African English, and the like” (McArthur, 2002, pp. 444-45). It especially means English words and phrases generally understood throughout the English-speaking world as opposed to localisms and native languages.

The international form of English language naturally differs from the accepted native speakers' norms, dominated by British and American English. Although these variations of English are taught and tested in many parts of the world, there are also variations of English with which people manage to communicate, though many want to be accurate too (according to the norms of the native speakers) which is similar to Jennifer Jenkins' idea that we should

focus “far more on intercultural communication and far less on what native speakers do.”

As English has spread all over the world, there are many variations of English in the world. These variations are often categorized into different groups. Braj kachru (1985), for example, describes the varieties of English in the form of a set of circles: the “inner circle” countries including Australia, United Kingdom, and The United States of America where English is considered the first language, and the “outer circle” consisting of countries like India and South Africa that adopted English as lingua franca because of the multilingual nature of their society.

The “center” and the “periphery” are the other two terms used to refer to the variations of English language. The term “center” refers to native variations of English language, something what Holliday (1994) mentions as Britain, Australia, and North America. Although the term “periphery” should naturally refer to non-native varieties of English language, this term does not always stand for non-native variations of this language. If we consider the term “native” to mean people whose first language is English, many people in countries of Asia and other parts of the world as Prodromou (1997) may be recognized as native-speakers of English.

The term “periphery” is also divided into different groups. Quirk (1990) for example, divides this term into two groups, the “outer circle” and the “expanding circle.” The “outer circle” refers to English language where it is spoken as a first language in multilingual societies or English as a second language. The example for this case is Indian English. The second term refers to English language where it is spoken as a foreign language like Iran. The term “periphery” covers English as an international language and that is the reason why many consider the number of non-native speakers higher than native speakers.

Migration from the “inner circle” countries to the rest of the world has caused many variations of English language. It is interesting to note that all these variations have norms and are codified, and that they have gained acceptance. In non-native countries speakers of English language use it more as a lingua franca for communication, thus this language as Barber (1968), Widdowson (1994) and Jenkins (1998) believe, cannot be considered the property of the native speakers of English.

In many countries of the “outer circle,” the speakers of English language who are actually bilingual are using English along with their native languages. The point that the kinds of “Englishes” used by the speakers of these countries are naturally influenced by their native languages should be considered here. In this way, these speakers of English language add some items from their native languages to English or delete some items and naturally change it. These items can be in the area of phonetics and pronunciation, lexicon or syntax.

It comes to mind that these changes seem quite natural. When a language is used as an international language and at the same time used along with the native languages, there is no escape from change. Because these languages are used in one social context, they naturally affect each other. Considering the inner circle countries, one can surely say that changes (which are something natural) happen in the language of these countries as well.

When considering the changes in the “inner circle” countries and the changes in the “outer circle” countries, some believe that the changes in the first group are natural but the changes in the second group as not acceptable or sometimes even not permitted. This sense of not acceptability of the changes is because they consider one form of English language as an international language and the only standard form, and suppose that this standard form is deviating from the norms they have in mind. English language seems to be flexible enough to absorb changes without disintegrating.

As many linguists believe, it will not be the right idea to consider a specific dialect or accent as a Standard English. Leonard Bloomfield’s dictum that “the standard language is most definite and best observed in its written form, the literary language” shows that associating Standard English with writing and the written form of language did not seem unnatural. Richards, Platt, and Weber in their dictionary also say of Standard English: “The variety of a language which has the highest status in a community or nation and which is usually based on the speech and writing of educated speakers of the language.” They then add: “A standard variety is generally: (a) used in the news media and literature (b) described in dictionaries and grammars (c) taught in schools and taught to non-native speakers when they learn language as a foreign language” (1985, p.271).

After carefully studying these definitions, it comes to mind whether or not language remains unchanged. If it does not, why are the variations not considered as usual and instead are considered as damaging or threatening? Kachru (1985) believes that the increasing growth of English language as an international language has brought a need to reconsider the traditional notion of standardization, norms, and models that are related to the speakers of the “outer circle” countries. He then states: “The global diffusion of English has taken an interesting turn: The native speakers of this language seem to have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardization; in fact, if current statistics are any indication, they have become a minority.” The author then adds: “This sociolinguistic fact must be accepted and its implication recognized. What we need now are new paradigms and perspective for linguistic and pedagogical research and for understanding the linguistic creativity in multi lingual situations across cultures” (1985, p.30). It seems that Kachru is considering the norms in which English is used in a certain area, whether “inner” or “outer circle.”

As a spreading language, English has developed many variations and there is no question about that. But each of these varieties has a norm for itself. If we consider a bilingual speaker who is learning English as a second a language or a student who is learning it as a foreign language, both learn the language in a situation that is based on certain standards and norms and this creates the unifying norms.

According to this point, we may say that if English is to be used as an international language, these unifying norms are needed and should be considered. Widdowson (1994) writes that when “English serves the communicative and communal needs of different communities, it follows logically that it must be diverse. An international language has to be an independent language. It does not follow logically, however, that the language will disperse into mutually unintelligible varieties.” He then continues: “For it will naturally stabilize into standard form to the extent required to meet the needs of communities concerned. Thus it is clearly vital to the interests of the international community...(to) preserve a common standard of English in order to keep up standards of communicative effectiveness” (p. 385).

Kachru (1985) considers “inner circle” countries as “norm providing communities” and the “outer circle” countries as “norm developing communities.” In this way, all innovations in “outer circle” countries in which English is used as second or foreign language becomes “institutionalized,” because these variations are based on the norms in the inner circle countries.

The other point that should be noticed is the background each country has for English language and it seems that this background, which is unique for each “outer circle” country, is an important element in the different variations existing in this countries. For example, the historical background of English language in Iran is not the same as that of India. In Iran, English language is used as a foreign language but in India it is used as a second language and a lingua franca. The conclusion that can be drawn from this point is that the variations of English in these two countries are unique.

If we compare and contrast the kinds of Englishes that are used in Iran and in India, we will realize that these two variations of the English language are different and each kind develops its “institutionalized” or “nativized” variations. Because of differences of these two languages, each develops its variety of English and the syntactical and phonological rules of these languages are to a great extent influencing these different kinds of “Englishes.” As a result, these variations can be considered as legal and correct and they are actually a part of the identity of these countries. So the job of the institutions and the authorities is to standardize these different variations.

The reason why American and British dialects are considered as standard is not a matter of linguistics but more a matter of social status, prestige, and power. If we consider this point as true, then we will have many terms such as bad English, non-standard English, sub-standard English, or corrupted English. All these terms may refer to those kinds of Englishes spoken by lower classes of the society or variations spoken by non-native speakers.

In the case of a country like Iran, I may say that English language is actually norm dependent. This language is used as a foreign language in the country and it does not have an official role in the society. Iran is included in the “expanding circle” countries and English is taught at schools (guidance schools and high schools, but not in primary schools) and universities. There are many private teaching centers and institutes in the country that teach English and many parents send their children from the age of six onwards to learn English in these teaching centers.

Private teaching centers have their own specific norms in the country. In some of these centers one can see the norms of British English and in other centers the norms of American English. But the reality is that some of the teachers of these centers do not stick to the specific norm used in the center. Most of the English teachers in Iran if they teach British or American English are not consistent in their dialects or accents and they actually use a combination of British or American English. In some cases even the teacher does not know which dialect he/she is speaking.

Another problem remains with the English books. Most of the books that are taught in the private teaching centers in Iran are written for a society other than Iranian society but these teaching centers, regardless of the cultural or social differences, may use the texts for teaching English. Even some of these institutes and teaching centers present and identify themselves with the books they have chosen to appear as different centers and attract students.

In Iranian schools, the situation remains the same, except for the books that are specifically designed and written by the ministry of education, but the problem is still present in the area of teaching, pronunciation, and accent. One year a teacher with an American dialect and accent goes into a class, next year another teacher with a British dialect goes to the same class, and the other year the class has a teacher who has neither American nor British dialect or has a dialect that is a mixture of both. In this case of having different variations of a language in a class, linguistic rules of the native language intervene and the pronunciations follow the phonetic and phonological rules of the native language in addition to the syllabic system that plays an important role in this situation.

In teaching and learning English as an international language, a contrastive statement of

linguistic relationships can be of great value. Behind such an analysis stands the theory of transfer. This theory claims, for instance, that an Iranian student would tend to transfer the patterns of his native language and ultimately culture to the English language, aware to some extent of similarities but unaware or sometimes ignoring the differences. In this case many errors happen. Some of these errors are caused because of the differences between the two languages, but others originate because the native speaker applies his/her native language rules and regulations on English language.

To have a very brief account of the errors caused from this situation, I can divide them as follows:

1-Orthographic errors are caused by the inconsistency of the English spelling system. In English, there is no one-to-one correspondence between letters and the sound they represent (oo in too and ou in soup, for example). In the same way, some letters of English language may have different pronunciations (a in ate /ei/ and a in car /a/ for instance). In this area again we can talk of homonyms (bee and be for example). In the area of orthographic errors we can see the student's ignorance of doubling the final consonants in monosyllabic words before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel (swimmer becomes swimer, for example).

2-phonological errors happen (a) due to lack of certain target language phonemes, whether consonants or vowels. Persian language lacks /l/, /θ/ and /ð/ phonemes that exist in English, so native phonemes from Persian language are replaced (/t/ or /s/ for /θ/ and /d/ or /z/ for /ð/). (b) Some errors are caused by the differences in the syllabic structure of English and Persian language. Initial consonant clusters are not permitted in Persian, so each consonant of the cluster is either preceded or followed by a vowel. The word school /skul/ becomes /eskul/ or /sekul/ and fresh /freʃ/ becomes /fereʃ/.

(c)-Other errors are spelling pronunciations, which make the speaker pronounce the words as they are spelled. The word kitchen, for example, is pronounced /kit-tʃen/ or the word skull becomes /eskul/ or /sekul/ or /eskal/ or /sekal/.

(d)-Persian speakers sometimes do not consider silent letters in English and pronounce them. The word knife for example becomes /kenif/, /kenife/ or /kenaif/.

3-Other kinds of errors happen in the area of semantics and lexicon.

(a)-My father works twenty four *o'clock* (hours) each week.

(b)-My father *learned* (taught) me English.

4-Other errors are caused in the area of syntax and morphology.

(a)-They *left* (had left) before I arrived. (Simple past instead of past perfect).

(b)-My brother *is working* twenty four hours a week. (Present continuous instead of simple present tense).

Other processes of errors are:

(a)- Omission (I have---apple).

(b)- Addition (he answered *to* my letter).

(c)- Substitution (I am not afraid *from* (of) dogs).

(d)- Wrong ordering or permutation (He *last night* broke the window).

Conclusion

It seems that Standard English can not just be the language used in Britain or the one used in America. Instead, the English language used by the speakers of other languages based on the norms is also accepted. Each language represents and shows the real situation of its speakers and users. In this way, it is not right to say that the identity of international English can be identified with British or American English as the native languages or other kinds of English as non-native variations of the language. It means that English and its different variations as a native language, as a second language, and as a foreign language should be considered.

A true international English might put aside both current American and British English as a variety of English for international communication, leaving these as local dialects, or would rise from a merger of American and British English with a mixture of other varieties of English and would generally replace all these varieties of English. The real purpose of English as an international language and its different variations is in making bridges between people and bringing different communities close to each other. Therefore, it seems that in order to have a better understanding of English language as international English we should focus on the international norms of these different variations rather than the differences.

Charles Barber in his book, *The flux of language*, clearly states the point he when says: The English language is not the monopoly of the inhabitants of Britain: we have no sole proprietary rights in it, which would entitle us to dictate usage to the rest of English speaking world. Nor is it the monopoly of the Americans, or the Australians, or any other group: it belongs to us all. It would be reasonable to give parity of esteem to all educated forms of English speech, whatever country they have found in, and in whatever region of that country (1968, p. 35).

In the case of Iran, I may say that we should better understand the norms of English as an

international language and make our students aware of these norms to avoid the different errors they make in their speaking of English. Although two different variations of English are spoken and taught in Iran, there is no unique plan for directing them. Therefore the authorities or the private institutions should feel responsible for canalizing these variations so that the students do not feel that the American accent is better than the British one or vice versa.

If we have a better realization of English language as an international language and understand its different variations and the effect of the native languages on them, considering the changing nature of them and also considering them as the accepted forms of English language, then we can have a better plan for future consideration of the language and setting the standards for it. Therefore, it seems reasonable to plan and support the idea of a common or international standard that everyone in every country of the world can use and understand. For this purpose, literary scholars must join the language teachers in a common concern for setting the standards in English.

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