

Language teaching and assessment in the context of World Englishes

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Abstract

Today's English is no longer seen as a monolithic entity or a linguistic standard, rather it is distinct varieties. It is the product of 'multilingualism' and 'glocalization'. This change in the global status and usage of English leads to changing the traditional paradigm. There is, therefore, a pressing need to rethink new ways of teaching and assessing multilingual English. Theoretically, this paper gives an overview of WEs and the different issues in teaching and assessment. At the practical level, the study highlights my experience in teaching some of the varieties of English. The results of this study may have its pedagogic contributions. The lesson plan and the assessment activities can be used as a reference for a number of teachers to create a bridge between theory and practice.

Keywords: World Englishes, teaching pedagogy and assessment

World Englishes

World Englishes (WE) refers to the new varieties that emerged in local contexts. It is defined by Kirkpatrick (2007) as “indigenous, nativised varieties that have developed around the world and that reflect the cultural and pragmatic norms of their speakers” (p. 3). In describing WE, Rahal (2019a and b) presents the multifarious aspect of English arguing English has become a multilingual language.

Issues in teaching and assessing World Englishes

The present study raises two major issues related to teaching and assessment in the context of World Englishes. It is unrealistic to apply the monolingual approach in teaching local varieties. Galloway (2017, pp. 17- 21) listed the following issues in teaching WEs:

- persistent, exclusive exonormative orientation towards two main reference varieties of English (= BrE and AmE) in teaching and testing/assessment practices.
- Standard language ideology and native-speakerism in teacher education and teacher recruitment practices.
- Little research on if and how diversity of English is integrated into teacher training programs.

- Unawareness of linguistic variation among EFL teachers.
- Curricula provide only vague and underspecified descriptions as to language variation.
- Lack of practical teaching materials.

Jenkins (2006, p. 10) criticizes the traditional paradigms arguing that they “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”.

A need for global paradigm

There is a need “to invent the language we are supposed to teach” (Decke-Cornill, 2002, p. 59) and create new paradigms that aim to:

- Increasing exposure to World Englishes and ELF in language curricula
- Emphasising respect for multilingualism in ELT
- Raising awareness of Global Englishes in ELT
- Raising awareness of ELF strategies in language curricula
- Emphasising respect for diverse culture and identity in ELT (Rose and Galloway, 2019, p. 16).

Moreover, McNamara (2011) calls for a paradigm shift in language assessment that integrates the new philosophy of World Englishes and considers the new changes.

Lesson plan overview:

Lesson Plan Title: Teaching local varieties: Ghanaian English, and Cameroon English
Recommended Level(s): Intermediate and advanced students

Procedures

Pre-activity: Warm up Activity (5 Minutes)

- The teacher elicits a discussion about the different varieties of English and she asks her students whether they have been exposed or noticed the existence of new varieties of English apart from British and American English.
- The students start talking about their experience, stating the differences they noticed and expressing their feeling.

While-activity: Group work (15 minutes)

- The teacher uses the sentence betting activity. She divides the students into two groups and gives them cards of money designed for activities. Then, she writes sentences from different local varieties, namely British English, American English, Ghanaian English, and Cameroon English on other cards. She provides the students with three options.
- The students in each group discuss the activity. Each group has to bet a certain amount of money. The teacher gives the correct answer and the group, that wins, gets the money.

Small Group Discussion (10 Minutes)

In small groups, a student reads a sentence and gives cultural clues and the other student tries to guess the country.

Post-activity

Assessment activity: wrong one out activity (15 minutes)

The teacher writes on the board a number of words, expressions that belong to the studied varieties of English and she includes some examples that do not belong to any variety. Each student reads an example and tries to find the wrong one. This goes on until all students participate.

Assessment activity: Quizzes (15 minutes)

Test each other on the features of Ghanaian English, and Cameroon English at the level of vocabulary, going both ways: Say a word in the Ghanaian English, or Cameroon English South and see if your partner can identify the word in British or American English.

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