

Applying the ‘WE Enterprise’ to Expanding Circle ELT

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D’Angelo, J. (2017). Applying the ‘WE Enterprise’ to expanding circle ELT. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 17-4, 681–699. This paper outlines the major accomplishments of the pluricentric paradigms of world Englishes, EIL, and ELF, and their relevance to new, less-nativist critical approaches to English language pedagogy. More specifically, the paper recommends that for universities in the Kachruvian ‘Expanding Circle’—contexts which were never colonized by Britain or the United States—to compete in the field of global higher education, we must develop an approach to English teaching which goes beyond a traditional 4–skills mentality. We must begin to implement English as a medium of instruction (EMI) programs at our local institutions, in order to provide a platform for our students to interact with those from all over the world. This is not possible for all proficiency level of students. Hence, the paper recommends creating separate ‘normal’ and ‘honors’ tracks. Yet in both cases, the curriculum should be informed by important insights from the ‘WE Enterprise’.

Keywords: WE Enterprise, EIL, ELF, pluricentric paradigms, World Englishes

1. Introduction

Pluralistic approaches to English have become more widely known and researched since the emergence of the Kachruvian world Englishes (WE) model in the mid–1980s. WE paved the way to critically challenge a native–speakerist view of English, and subsequently, the paradigms of English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) have

shown concrete ways in which a more realistic view of the global use, and multilingual users, of English can inform pedagogy. The application of these theories goes beyond language study, to higher education in general. Especially important, in the growing field of ELF, is the view that university students in countries where English is not a native or official/second language, should be viewed as Users of English rather than Learners (Mauranen 2012). This argument is evidenced by the increasing globalization of universities worldwide, many of these in Expanding Circle contexts such as Austria, Finland, Italy, Korea, and Japan, where students are not studying English per se but are studying various academic disciplines in English, and lecturers from those contexts are conducting their classes in English. These universities still offer many courses in the local mother tongue, but have made a commitment to being part of the global competition to attract the best minds, and offer a broad range of coursework in the global lingua franca, English.

This paper will investigate the type of curriculum changes needed to both prepare expanding circle students to enter such globally-minded universities on exchange, and also how to meet the needs of exchange students who enter our universities, via offering strong content-oriented EMI programs. To achieve such a reframing of curricular policy, a critical assessment of the outdated but still dominant paradigms of ELT (EFL, native speakerism, the communicative method, etc.) is necessary to increase awareness of how to reform education in Asia and beyond to come into alignment with the reality of Global Englishes.

2. Background

The main focus here is not on details of English language education itself. Rather, it is on how the “WE Enterprise” (Bolton 2012, 2005, D’Angelo 2015b)—in which English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) are viewed as related paradigms under the WE ‘umbrella’—has helped us reframe views on the use of language in many contexts and domains, including higher education. To summarize the main contributions of the WE Enterprise (hereafter WEE), it is very helpful to look at Kachru’s ‘Six Myths’ regarding English (D’Angelo 2012: 291–292, Kachru 2005: 16–18):

Myth 1: The Native Speaker Idealization Myth: the native speaker (usually a white middle class American) is the only expert of the correct variety.

Myth 2: The Native vs. Non–Native Speaker Interaction Myth: that most Expanding Circle speakers learn English to interact with Inner Circle idealized native speakers.

Myth 3: The Culture Identity (or Monoculture) Myth: that English is closely connected to British or American Culture, and that those cultures must be studied as an integral part of learning English.

Myth 4: The Exocentric Norm Myth: that the model of “correctness” comes from an Inner Circle variety. It denies the rich creativity of Expanding Circle English in the process of adaptation to the local context (Y. Kachru 2003).

Myth 5: The Interlanguage Myth: that non Inner Circle varieties are somehow deficient/sub–standard varieties, falling short of Native Speaker proficiency.

Myth 6: The Cassandra Myth: that the “Balkanization” of English as it spread around the world, spells the impending doom of the language.

While Kachru's myths derive from the perspective of the WE paradigm, much of ELF and EIL research echoes the same potential fallacies in traditional NS-dominated approaches to ELT and SLA: what Canagarajah refers to as 'West-based' ELT (Canagarajah 2000). In the EMI-based international university, the majority of interlocutors will not be native speakers, a native model of English will not be stressed (Kalocsai 2014), and students and professors from many different non-native cultural backgrounds will be together using forms of 'Educated English' (Bamgbose 1982, D'Angelo 2015b, Kachru 2003). In such a global context, the depth of one's knowledge and preparedness in the field of study, as well as one's negotiation, accommodation, and meta-cultural competence skills (Sharifian 2009) will be much more important than native-like pronunciation and grammatical accuracy based on NS norms.

To further strengthen this argument, WE scholar S. N. Sridhar (D'Angelo 2011) eloquently lists off a dozen accomplishments of the WE paradigm (Sridhar 2010):

- WE looks at the sociolinguistic reality of English based on descriptive rather than prescriptive grammar.
- NNSs outnumber NSs, so NSs can no longer claim 'ownership' of 'standard English.'
- Where English has some official role in various domains of society: codifiable, endonormative local standards develop (see Schneider 2007).
- Because English is 'equidistant' from all other local languages, such as in India, it provides a neutral language for all groups.
- The well-documented Outer Circle varieties are now widely recognized as 'legitimate.'
- The L1 is seen as an asset, rather than a source of

'interference.' English-knowing bi-/multilinguals have a language 'repertoire' to draw on, and employ code-mixing and code-switching as a linguistic resource.

- The culture/ethos of IVEs is not Inner Circle, but shows coloring of the local context.
- 'Tower of Babel' or 'Cassandra' fears that speakers of different IVEs will not be mutually comprehensible are unproven. Acrolectal/mesolectal speakers of local varieties succeed in international interactions.
- The educated local variety becomes the classroom model.
- The 'Kachru ethos' (Bolton 2005) shows inclusivity/fellowship for all users of English.
- WE proves the value of systemic/functional grammar whereby language changes to fit its actual uses.
- WE has shown that via bi-/multilingualism English is not a 'killer language.'

As with Kachru's myths, Sridhar was outlining his claims with reference to post-colonial Outer Circle varieties: yet the reference to global sociolinguistic reality, NNSs outnumbering NSs, the value of L1 and other languages as an asset for plurilingual users, cultural relativity, the importance of an 'educated' English, the importance of a functional view of language, and the general attitude of 'inclusivity' towards all users of English are crucial points in an EIL or ELF-informed view of language. The usefulness of the 'WEE' concept in which these paradigms are viewed as closely related and supportive of one another, is clear. While Kachru himself stressed to S. Mufwene that, "WE is not dependent on English being a global language' (D'Angelo 2004: 31), in today's increasingly globalized world, English may in fact claim global status.

In the next section I will investigate the endeavors made in

the Department of World Englishes (DWE) at Chukyo University in Nagoya, Japan to prepare our students to deal with and succeed in a global context.

3. Preparing 'Globalized' Students

Here, various features of the curriculum of the DWE will be outlined, and looked at from a realistic perspective: demonstrating the successes and failures we have experienced, as well as the difficulties of implementing a new curriculum. WE research prior to the reemergence of EIL and development of ELF rarely looked at higher education¹, since in Outer Circle contexts such as Singapore, India, East Africa, the Philippines, etc. it is assumed that all higher education takes place in English. There were few WE studies which looked at how to prepare Expanding Circle students to succeed in the context of greater mobility in higher education fostered by the ease of border crossing in the E.U., as well as the overall globalization of higher education. Thanks especially to work in ELF, many new insights can be gained into this phenomenon today (Bjorkman 2013, Jenkins 2014, Mauranen 2012, Vettorel 2014).

3.1 The Department of World Englishes

The DWE was founded in 2002, replacing the former Department of English Language and Literature. Dean Sanzo Sakai had participated in several summer programs at the East/West Center in Hawaii that were offered to Japanese and other Asian academics in the 1970s and 1980s under the direction of Larry E. Smith. Smith's early work on English as

¹ Some exceptions were Malaysia and Hong Kong, which have more complicated language policy issues.

an International Language and his collaboration with B. Kachru in the development of the World Englishes paradigm was of considerable influence in Japan.

In that same year, world Englishes scholar and phonologist Paroo Nihalani, formerly of National University of Singapore², spent one year with us as visiting scholar, and through his influence, we hosted a Workshop in 2003 in which Braj and Yamuna Kachru gave papers, along with Takao Suzuki (Suzuki 1978), N. Honna (Honna 2008) and other leading figures³. Through the liaison with these important EIL/WEs scholars, our faculty became aware of the shortcomings of Native Speaker-ism, and the weakness of the dominant Eikaiwa (English conversation) model: based on Western influenced TESOL. Thanks to this input, we were able to envision EMI-based coursework as the path to develop a more practical/desirable ELT. Rather than native-like proficiency/'fluency', our goal became to develop 'Educated Japanese English': English that would be more effective in international business and academic settings. We developed a content-based stream which included classes such as Workshop, 2nd and 3rd year seminars in English, 'Language and Culture', 'Language Variation', 'New Management Trends' and 'Global Economic Trends'.

The program includes 4-skills classes such as Oral Communication, Presentation, Communicative Writing, and Reading, but our overall focus is different. One of the fundamental differences is to place less emphasis on

² Where he was a colleague of Kachruvian scholar Edwin Thumboo, the poet laureate.

³ In subsequent years, we were able to bring on Philippine scholar Danilo Dayag from De La Salle University for the 2006 academic year, and Indian scholar Anamika Sharma for the 2009/2010 academic years, further exposing our students to educated English users from Kachru's Outer Circle.

grammatical accuracy and error correction, and more emphasis on developing students communication strategies, negotiation and accommodation skills, familiarity with English varieties, and ability to discuss wider topics with some degree of intellectual depth. We attempt to do this in as many classes as possible, although in actuality, many of the part-time non-Japanese faculty do not have adequate training in the pedagogical implications of WEE (D'Angelo 2012, 2015b).

There is also a certain lack of critical thinking capabilities and intellectual curiosity in Japanese students from those tiers of universities below the very top ranks (D'Angelo 2002, McVeigh 2002). This is however a complex issue, since the part-time teachers who prepare students are in the majority of cases not active researchers, and hence are not inclined to help the students structure their writing or presentations with use of good academic sources and referencing, a literature review, or methodology and data analysis.

3.2 Specifics of the DWE

Within the context of WEE, it is important for an Expanding Circle context to consider the overall needs of one's institution and students. At DWE, the majority of our students wish to use English in their careers, and Chukyo itself wishes to expand its number of international students. Planning for this requires an enlightened faculty who see the benefits of content-based coursework. Even within the DWE, there are faculty members who are resistant to overemphasizing English, since many students will also be required to be very proficient in Japanese in their future. As a result, of the 124 credits needed to graduate, 44 must be taken within the School of Liberal Arts, whose offerings are exclusively in Japanese (D'Angelo 2012).

For our DWE majors, the following classes are offered in English:

- 21 required 1-credit classes in English skills
- The required Singapore Seminar and 15-day study tour
- Introduction to World Englishes class (with some Japanese language support)
- 2nd year seminars on England, the USA, the Philippines, France or Zambia
- Classes in New Management Trends, Global Economic Trends, Language and Culture, Language Variation

DWE students make significant progress in their TOEIC scores between the first and third year, with average scores rising from 540 to 620 in the second year, and to 695 in the third year. Usually several students are over 900, and as many as 20 of the 96 students per class-year exceed 800. Unfortunately, there are also a significant number of lower level students who remain mired in the 500s. Of special concern is the low level of reading scores. One possible cause may be that the reading curriculum currently stresses the concept of 'Extensive Reading', a very popular method among NS practitioners, which may promote fluency and automaticity, but does not prepare students for doing academic work overseas. A DWE student who went on one-year overseas study in Finland, in content classes in management and intercultural studies, expressed that the reading program had left him sorely underprepared for the lectures/reading materials he encountered there. He requested in an e-mail that the reading and first year seminar programs be more heavily laden with content-based work from the humanities (Nishii 2015).

For one-year overseas study, where the TOEFL is the measuring stick, in 2015 48 students at Chukyo scored over

500 on the paper-based TOEFL. While not all our students wish to spend a year overseas, the data reveals that roughly one-third of DWE students have it within their reach to do a content-based year abroad. If semester abroad students are factored in, in this upcoming Fall 2017, since our recent reorganization into 3 majors, for the 'World Englishes Career Major', a remarkable 35 out of 62 2nd year students will be going on semester or one-year study abroad!

While not all students are capable of competing in an overseas EMI program, the numbers indicate that a large percentage of them are. More and more Japanese students may be reaching such a level in coming years. Yet it is mainly those majoring in English who can do this, whereas in a European university, those majoring in Management, Computer Science, or Environmental Sciences would also be able to do so (Kalocsai 2014).

In my 3rd year seminar class in 2016, there were eleven American exchange students, and ten Japanese students. The Japanese students were stunned by the degree to which the Americans openly debated one another, and actually began laughing at how outspoken they were. Murata and Iino (2014) support this observation at Waseda University's School of International Liberal Studies (SILS). The Japanese students—who are among the most highly proficient students in Japan—also are shocked at the outspokenness of their international classmates. The Japanese, very confident upon being accepted to the program, go through a period of culture shock, and gravitate towards the fringes of the classrooms, rarely speaking out. Only after they return from the mandatory sophomore year overseas, do they begin to feel comfortable expressing themselves in class. For Japanese students in general, this is a hurdle which must be overcome if they are truly to participate in international discussions.

4. Attracting High Level International Students

At Chukyo, the lack of true EMI classes can pose problems for developing a high level of academic English, and also limits the number of EMI offerings to students from overseas. In terms of the coursework available to international students, the contents are mainly in the area of cultural studies. A program such as the Waseda SILS would have much more extensive offerings in EMI.

There are only approximately 20 international exchange students in attendance at Chukyo each semester. This does not include the 120 Chinese students who are also at Chukyo enrolled in normal degree programs in departments such as Economics, Law and Sports Science. The majority of the 20 international students are majoring in Japanese or have Japanese as a minor. Of these 20 international students, only a handful have the level of Japanese proficiency to take content lectures from other faculties in Japanese. Many of the EMI classes are taught by foreign part-time teachers who hold only a masters' degree. In addition, the Japanese students in these elective classes are of mixed proficiency, so the teacher is unable to use difficult reading materials. Whereas for a humanities class in the inner or outer circle, it would be common to have to read 20 to 40 pages of several textbooks per week, in Japan, the reading might consist of only two pages. Even at this reduced level, the lower half of the Japanese students in the DWE would complain that it is 'way over their head' in terms of academic vocabulary and sentence structure. For this reason, in my own doctoral work (D'Angelo 2015b), I recommended that a special 'honors' track be created within the DWE, and that only those students be allowed to register for classes with international students. Through such a measure, the international students would have a higher rate of

satisfaction.

A crucial limit to the number of content classes offered in English is the lack of willingness by tenured Japanese professors to teach in English. This tendency was confirmed in a comprehensive study of the faculty at the University of Hiroshima, which is part of the Japanese Ministry of Education's "Global 30" program (Sponseller 2015). Although the professors were much more comfortable writing papers in English for international journals, and in presenting their work at international conferences, they hesitated to use EMI in their classes.

If however, Chukyo were to attract 50 or 100 international students expecting to study various disciplines in English, it would be necessary to offer a broader range of coursework. To do this, a strong figure at the top, such as the university President, would need to commit each department to providing a certain range of classwork in English. Chukyo currently has 12 departments, with each department broken into 2 or 3 sub-majors. If a commitment could be gotten from each sub major to offer 3 classes in English, one could add as many as 100 new content-based classes. The Japanese professors could be shown relevant data, such as from Holland, which demonstrates that although some international students do complain about the intelligibility of their professors, for the majority of students the professors' content knowledge is more important than the accuracy or pronunciation of their English (Lehtonen et al. 1999).

S. K. Gill (2004) outlined the importance of this issue. She stressed that if Malaysian universities are to compete, they must consider the challenge from places such as the Netherlands, where the majority of higher education is conducted in English. Quoting Wachter et al 2008, she mentioned that, "A university may lose out on attractiveness, if

not endanger its existence, if the students opt to stay away as a reaction to an internationalization deficit.”

According to Gill, at the University of Maastricht (also in Holland) as much as 50% of their student body is made up of international students. While this is the case at one or two specialized programs in Japan, for a second-tier level university such as Chukyo—currently ranked 113th out of 710 universities, it would not be a reality (UniRank). On a smaller scale, in certain classes advertised to international students, there could be a significant percentage of them in class. In such a case, the Japanese students would be challenged to put themselves forward in classroom discussions, and would have to handle a larger amount of academic reading. To be able to create this kind of setting in Japan, a two-track program is suggested (see D'Angelo 2015b). For those students who do study in content programs overseas, the minimum standard is 500 on the paper-based TOEFL test, and in many cases is as high as 550. For the local context, this standard could be slightly relaxed, to 470 on the TOEFL, or 720 on the TOEIC test. By creating an honors program, students who have the potential and interest would be pushed harder to become effective ELF 'users', and the international students would be more satisfied. One very intelligent exchange student from the USA was overheard to say to a newly arrived exchange student, “Whatever class you take here will be an ESL class.” He was alluding to the essential fact that even for content-based classes, they by necessity take on a CLIL quality (Coyle 2010), due to their being open to the full range of DWE 2nd and 3rd year students.

To develop effective ELF users among Japanese university students, they need to be mixed in with highly proficient peers from other countries. A good example of this would be my own Language and Culture class, in which there were 40

Japanese students, mixed in with five American undergraduates, two French students, and two Italian masters students. While one of the American undergraduate students was quite dominating in discussions, it was the two Italians who demonstrated a more sophisticated knowledge of the field and depth of analysis. By listening to their modest intelligent comments, and their clear but quite Italian pronunciation, the DWE students had an opportunity to see that not all international students behave like Americans

The idea of becoming effective ELF users is not limited to the higher level students. While higher level students may benefit most from entering EMI programs overseas, many of our mid to lower level students, those who can achieve at least the modest TOEIC level of 500, go overseas on "semester" programs. These programs are more ESL/Skills Oriented, but the students—even those who go to the USA or Canada—end up mainly with friends from other Expanding Circle contexts such as Korea, China, Turkey, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Thailand, etc. They are in fact learning to become effective ELF users with other non-native speakers, although at a more conversational, less academic level.

5. Practical Suggestions for Developing Effective ELF Users

This section includes practical recommendations for ELT curricular reform in Japan—and is pertinent to other Expanding Circle contexts (particularly outside of the Northern European context) as well. It also specifies below whether the recommendation applies to the higher level 'honors' type students, or to all students.

1. Raise students' awareness of the global use of English, where NNSs outnumber NSs, as well as the rich variation of world Englishes. Make them aware that their L1 is an asset, rather than a source of 'interference'. (All students)
2. Expose students to a wide range of English through YouTube and other resources, stressing the plurilingualism of NNS users, and their impressive language 'repertoire'. (All students)
3. Prioritize negotiation/accommodation skills, and communication strategies (in cases of breakdown, repair strategies, etc.), over grammatical accuracy and native-like pronunciation. (All students)
4. Raise awareness that rather than knowing British or American culture, students should develop 'meta-cultural competence' (Sharifian 2009) and appreciate cultural diversity (All students)
5. Create opportunities to have more meaningful, 'high stakes' interaction with international students from around the globe, beginning with other Expanding Circle contexts, via formalized Skype-based activities.
6. Develop more academic reading skills, as well as increasing the amount of CLIL offerings as in Bayyurt and Sifakis 2013. (higher level students)
7. Encourage well-established international scholars among the local faculty to teach in English. (for honors track and international students)
8. In spite of their reticence (King 2013), create a safe environment for local students to put themselves forward to take part in group discussions. (crucial for higher level students)
9. Strengthen the writing component within EMI-based coursework, to teach students to do the documented research work that would be expected at the global university (All

- students, but more for higher level students)
10. Hire part-time staffers who are active researchers (and if possible, already somewhat WEE-aware) and who are able to train students in how to do presentation/essay work which is more well-documented academically-oriented. (Particularly for higher level students)
 11. Develop teacher-training and awareness-raising programs for part- and full-time faculty which makes them aware of the advantages of a WEE-informed outlook; provides examples of classroom practices which focus on developing English 'users' rather than 'learners'.
 12. Strengthen overseas study programs, particularly among other Expanding Circle partner institutions with strong EMI programs. (For higher level students)

6. Conclusion

It is clear from the example of Chukyo University that WEE — the World Englishes Enterprise — can provide key insights to enhance curriculum to better prepare our students for success overseas. By having a less native-speakerist (Houghton 2012), less mainstream ELT/EFL-informed focus, and setting goals for our students which will help them function as effective ELF users in their future professions, we can develop students who are much better equipped for what they will encounter in the real world. Such a critical posture is which questions the usefulness of outdated, deeply entrenched nativist approaches to English is essential.

Major obstacles need to be cleared, and it will require ongoing effort by WEE-aware scholars to help make this a reality. At the same time, universities which desire to compete globally must make a substantial effort to increase their

content-based EMI coursework, and to prepare their own 'honors' students participate actively in such classes. By observing the successes and failures of our own efforts, and collaborating with colleagues in other Expanding Circle contexts who adopt a similar critical perspective, progress can be made. We must also act quickly, since in the global race for the best students, Japan or Korea may currently lag behind many of our European and other Asian competitors, and risk losing out in the long run. I hope this paper may help broaden the circle of scholars and teachers who better understand the reality of Global Englishes.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Tertiary

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