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**Teaching World Englishes in Pakistan -  
A Global Criterion**

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**Abstract**

There has been a great deal of discussion about the history and traditional ways of teaching English in Pakistan. However, this paper departs from tradition and argues for teaching of different varieties of global lingua franca (English) of post-modern era. Pakistani nation is facing a worst tsunami of economy and we suggest that a possible way to deal with this issue is the learning and teaching of global language and education, where English with different varieties is a must.

We don't underestimate the importance of English speaking countries but at the same time we urge for giving due respect to the rest of the world which includes Europe, Africa and many Asian countries.

Hence, global as well as local varieties of the language should be incorporated in learning and teaching of English to develop a better understanding of uses of English across different socio-cultural settings. Mostly, English is discussed in political scenario but we advocate for the economic benefits of teaching World Englishes.

**Keywords:** World Englishes, International English, ELT, Language Ownership.

**Introduction**

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The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of the imagination; it is the property of the language itself. (Derek Walcott, 1986)

No doubt, information technology has caused a big change in modern age; however, another phenomenon that has equally contributed to this progress is the global spread of English. English serves a multitude of different purposes now, for unprecedented numbers of different "owners" of it (Gilsdorf, 2002). She further writes, "Paradoxically, it is owned by other cultures, by us, by everyone, and by no one". Scholars use different terms like English as an international language (e.g. Kirkpatrick 2007; Jenkins, 2000), World Englishes, (e.g. Kachru, 1998a; Kingsley 2004), English as a global language (e.g. Graddol 2006, 2010; Crystal 2003), English as a world language (e.g. Mair 2003) and English as a Lingua Franca (e.g. Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2005). However, the fact remains that English has become the working language of the world. At least for next half century (in most cases if not all) no real progress is possible without being fully aware of the role of English language across the globe. For our purpose, we will use the term World Englishes (WE) to refer to different varieties of English or global English.

### **Status of English Language in Pakistan**

Many have discussed the status of English language in Pakistan; however, most studies (Rahman, 1999; Mahboob, 2002; Shamim, 2008) have focused on the descriptive outlook of English language teaching without really looking at it from an international perspective. Therefore, this paper discusses the role of global English for Pakistani university students. We will focus on why students need to focus on WE and how the teachers should contribute to this learning process. We argue for the following suggestions in the language learning and teaching of WE: 1) present socio-economic situation in Pakistan necessitates that students learn global English 2) teachers have to incorporate both local as well as global issues (WE) in teaching of English; and 3) classroom and research have to pay special attention to different varieties of English and awareness should be developed regarding the facts and issues about WE.

### **Justification for World Englishes**

It's now almost half a century when scholars (Halliday et al. 1964; Kachru, 1965; Crystal, 1969) started to feel about the importance and role of different varieties of English in the world. According to Widdowson (1994), native speakers are no longer the only owners of English but newly arrived non-native speakers are also affecting the language a great deal. English has been performing as a cross-cultural mediator (Richards et.al., 1985). This makes it indispensable for Pakistani students to learn the WE. The world has become a global village and a new post-industrial economic order (Warschauer, 2000) is taking place. Students should recognize the power of English language in fields like international economics, politics, and education (Kubota & Ward, 2000).

In addition, being a part of global society Pakistani students have to learn the global language and WE. Rapid changes in every field of life are posing serious threats to the nations of the

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world, especially developing countries like Pakistan, as they are not able to cope with the quick transformations. The world is facing challenges like rising unemployment, pollution, commoditisation of education, greater uncertainty and risk at jobs and the ever growing gap between the developed and developing countries (Hsieh & Tseng, 2002; Stiglitz 2002).

At the same time globalization helps people to connect with each other throughout the world. As a result, our lives are not only affected by people living around us but also public of the world (Pike & Selby, 1988). Everybody else is affecting everybody else, directly or indirectly. Globalization has made us globally interdependent (Becker, 1979). Pakistan, without doubt, is a part of global world and lives of the people are being affected by the world. We should be cognizant of the situation and take part in global society by learning the different varieties of English. Equipped with WE, we can move forward to face many social and economic problems.

Pakistani students have to learn English because it has already gained the status of intra-national and inter-national means of communication in the world (Crystal, 1997; Jenkins, 2003; Halliday, 2008). As Graddol (2006) puts it: "Rather, it has become a new baseline: without English, you are not even in the race". Graddol (2010) further suggests that it is now considered a basic skill rather than treated as a foreign language. It has the status of official language in Pakistan and is a working language of courts, administration, official letters, and a medium of instruction in the Higher Education of Pakistan. A number of Pakistani students go abroad for studies every year and they cannot really get the best out of it if they are not good at WE. There are more than 7 million Pakistanis living and working abroad which constitutes almost 4 percent of the total population (Eteraz, 2009). Therefore, they cannot survive in the global challenges without being equipped with the tools to meet them. English language has gained the status of working language for Pakistanis with the people of the world. If we really want to progress and prosper, our students and researchers have to work this with the help of tools like WE.

### **Futuristic Plans**

Educationists are futurists as they have the power to foresee the changes in world. They learn, judge and plan for the times unknown. From centuries, especially in the modern knowledge-based age, the destinies of the nations are shaped in the classrooms. And, in this process, universities play a pivotal role. Universities should be aware of their role in the society and they should be fully aware of where, when, how and for what purposes education is delivered within communal and higher education communities (Hanna, 1998).

We are near the bottom compared to the development of countries of the world. "Education indicators in Pakistan are the worst in South Asia and amongst the very worst in the world" (Coleman, 2010).

Similarly, the report of Competitive Support Fund (CSF) of 2010-11 makes it quite clear that Pakistan is having serious concerns with economy. As CSF reports our higher education is

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now facing serious challenges as we fell from 118<sup>th</sup> to 123<sup>rd</sup> place among 139 countries. Only 12 % are below us.

We argue that reasons for this, at least in part, lie in the fact that our students and teachers are not conscious of the varieties of global language. We are losing the competition with our immediate competitors in the region like India, China, Indonesia, and even Bangladesh. We need a strong and versatile language policy in this situation. English has become the global lingua franca (Graddol, 2010). However, we should know that what English we need and for what purposes. Instead of simply mimicking the native speakers (the term Native itself being debated among scholars), we should have the abilities to use language creatively and subversively (Seidlhofer, 2009).

### **Teaching World Englishes**

Here, we would like to suggest some ideas related to the issues involved in teaching of WE. WE can be used to encourage and motivate students to learn about the global issues in the field of education and language studies. We can develop an international understanding among our students with the help of WE. The purpose of the teachers should be to administrate elements in their students that will result in an increased understanding of the global language (English) and global community. In the present socio-economic conditions, Pakistan badly needs a change and the universities (students and teachers) have to come forward to lead the nation to a desired goal and attain its dignity in the world.

### **The Role of Universities**

The universities have to take practical steps to develop perspective consciousness in students and to widen other dimensions that will contribute to the enhancement of a global perspective. All of us do have opinions but they are not enough. To contribute something to the society, we have to realize that we have a perspective about everything and especially about education, language policy, and research in the universities. Again, simple awareness of the perspectives is not enough; we have to put that realization into practice.

The statistics of recent times show that we can do nothing at a global level without English. Therefore, we have to change our attitude toward English. We should not consider English language as a liability or colonial gift; rather we should accept it as a source of progress internationally in the fields of education and economics. We have to twist this linguistic blade in our favor and use it as a tool to carve our comfortable place in the global community.

The problem with Pakistanis and most outer and expanding circle learners is that they study English language as a separate identity from the world in which they live; they think that it does not belong to them. But how could we do that with a language spoken and understood by many in the society. We have to own the language, at least in important fields, to get the maximum out of it in our real life situations.

### **The Need to Change Our Language Policy**

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Hence, we have to change our language policy and we have to change our traditions of English language teaching. Currently, most of our universities teach language through literature. The curriculum of the first author's M.A. degree named as M.A. English Language and Literature had 90% literature syllabus and the same is true for many other universities. Again, there were 56 authors selected for course with more than fifty from USA and UK alone.

We need to change this approach. We have to teach different perspectives to our students. This will be helpful for the students to look into the matter from various points of view and then they can really make a clear judgment about the varieties of English in the world. We have to teach our generation about the different opinions existing about any one particular issue. They should be informed and then they should be given the power to choose their own perspective. Materials from all parts of the world should be part of the syllabus and not simply from UK and USA. We need to be aware of the different varieties within their specific socio-cultural settings.

### **The Whole and the Parts**

We cannot understand a language in simply holistic view. We need to be fully aware of the parts as well as the whole to get the maxim out of it. In this way, students will be able to see different varieties of language and then they would be able to differentiate among various existing varieties. They would be able to see the points of similarities and differences between other Englishes and Pakistani English. They would be able to perceive unique features of Pakistani English. For example, distinctively organized words (e.g., evening and morning for evening and morning) have been witnessed by Baumgardner (1987) in Pakistani Newspaper English. Mahboob (2003, 2011) also talks about the semantically extended use of the Urdu word "purdah" in the use of English language in media. He further comments about the ownership of English language as an Islamic Language (2009).

The materials from different parts of the world would enable students to develop a sense of consciousness about the existing varieties of English in the world across different cultural settings.

### **Considering Regional Varieties**

Language is a dynamic system, which is always in the flux. Any given language affects and gets being affected by the other languages in the society. English is no exception. So, whenever we talk and teach about the history of English language, WE cannot be overlooked. If we want to talk about the history of English language, we have to consider different regional varieties of English. The history will be incomplete without explaining the varieties of English in UK, USA, Australia, Canada, India, Pakistan, France, Singapore, China, Nigeria to name only a few.

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Students would not be able to make a clear understanding if we provide them information in bits and pieces. They have to be fully aware of the past and present status of English language, which would be useful to perceive the future of English in the world.

More than two third communications in English (Sharifian, 2011) across world take place between so-called non-native speakers. These communications allow insights into how speakers assert their multilingual identities and their joint ownership of the lingua franca they are using – and in using it, they are shaping and developing it (Seidlhofer, 2009). Thus, in the teaching of English, we have to teach the WE for a real understanding of the true nature of language and its characteristics.

Only discussing the Inner Circle varieties or even Inner and Outer Circle varieties would not do justice to the topic. Therefore, we should offer a clear and full picture of the scenario to our students, which will enable them to be better able to develop them in the right direction to meet the challenges of the world.

### **Requirements for Pakistani Students**

Pakistani students have to develop their understanding about the different perspectives and issues regarding the worldwide use of English. The teachers should provide a deep insight to the students about the thematic understanding of the issues presented by Y. Kachru (2005). She classifies the research interests in WE as:

- i. the spread of English in history;
- ii. the linguistic processes that marks the characteristics of different varieties;
- iii. the use of English in socio-cultural contexts;
- iv. intelligibility for both local and global varieties;
- v. effects of English on local languages and at the same time the effects of local languages on English;
- vi. issues of bilingualism and multilingualism;
- vii. literary creativity of English in various settings;
- viii. the functional application of varieties in different communities;
- ix. the demands of the multiple kinds of users;
- x. the teaching and learning of English in the outer and expanding circles; and
- xi. many other issues like linguistic imperialism or linguistic divide, etc.

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By discussing and comprehending these issues in the global scenario, students would be able to understand the potential inconveniences that might be caused due to the lack of proficiency in English language. They would be better able to realize the demands of the market and prepare themselves accordingly.

### **Need to Incorporate Different Varieties**

Another important thing in the teaching of WE is incorporating many different varieties in the process. Students should be given access to spoken materials from different cultural and regional settings. If possible, international speakers (not necessarily from English speaking countries) should be invited to share their own cultures and experiences. Recordings of different varieties of English should be given to the students and then they should be asked to judge after some time of experience.

Teachers and scholars with international experience should be utilized to share their experiences of the world. Such an approach will help students understand that how many different varieties of the language exist in the world. Again, students will be able to perceive the qualities of WE. Cultural and linguistic differences of various societies would become clear to the students and they can use their knowledge for the development of the nation in particular and global society in general. They will come to realize that they are both actors and participants in the ongoing development of world. They have to grasp the true nature of “think globally, act locally”.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, as the literature suggests that now people don't learn English to communicate with so-called native speakers but as an international (and in many cases like Singapore as a national as well) lingua franca for many more uses in variety of contexts and purposes. The learning of English now should be focused on local and the global. Context is very much important as the uses of language changes frequently across functional contexts. For example, Chinese learners of English would use “I will go to your room” instead of “I will come to your room” compared to Pakistani learners when intended to visit someone (Personal observation).

Thus, we propose that this is the best time for us to invest in WE as two third of our population is young below thirty. They need this tool to communicate and compete with their counterparts around the world. They need to learn, judge and decide what is good for the local as well as global masses in this post-modern society of 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Whatever decision we make about the teaching and learning of English in Pakistan, it will depend on what we want our future to be” (Talaat, 2002). We need to make English our own language as Jaitly (2011) asserts that English has become a ‘biological language’ in India. We should realize as Mufwene (2010) puts it: English has “ spread world-wise but [has] not only become ‘global’ but also indigenized, both adapted to new communicative habits and subjected to local norms.”

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