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Where are WEs Heading to?

An Introduction to the Inaugural Volume of *Bloomsbury Advances in World Englishes*

Alexander Onysko

1. World Englishes and Varieties of English

Research in World Englishes¹ (WEs) has come a long way since its beginnings in the 1980s when the conceptual ground was laid for addressing the plurality of Englishes, with the aim of moving away from a monolithic conception of English and its ideological and attitudinal implications expressed in terms such as Standard vs. Non-Standard Englishes. Early work in the field (e.g., Strevens 1978) emphasized a common source English that diversified across the world into different varieties as part of the British Empire's colonial extensions and trade. This "varieties of the same language" point of view is also upheld in other early models of Englishes such as Görlach's (1988) Circle Model of English and McArthur's (1987) Circle of World English (note the singular in each of the names).

At the same time, Braj Kachru, who was the major founding figure of the World Englishes paradigm, introduced the conceptual leap of pluralizing English to emphasize an egalitarian approach towards Englishes as fully emancipated and appropriated codes in their diverse social and geographical localities around the world. He modelled this plurality in the Three Circles Model (1985), which, despite relevant criticism (e.g., Bruthiaux 2003; also cf., Deshors 2018 for a recent overview), still remains a firm reference point for many studies in the field today.

In line with these two conceptualizations of English/es as plurality within (i.e., varieties of English) vs. plurality among separate entities (i.e., world Englishes), a rich body of research developed supported by findings in both strands. The two-tiered perspective is also evident in the names of the two leading journals in the field, *English World-Wide* (Benjamins) and *World Englishes* (Wiley-Blackwell), which published their first issues in 1980 and 1981, respectively. Despite this conceptually different approach to the notion of English/es, work on varieties of English and Englishes has often been driven by similar concerns and some scholars in the field have been operating on both tiers as a look at the editorial and advisory boards of both journals

and at the editorships of major handbooks in the field shows. Yet a slight tendency can be discerned in that research on varieties of English has tended to focus on feature-based analyses of Englishes, which is grounded in traditions of dialectology, language typology, and variationist sociolinguistics. This is exemplified in major works such as the *Handbook of Varieties of English* (vol.1/2, Kortmann and Schneider 2004) and in the two volumes on “Lesser-Known Varieties of English” (Schreier et al. 2010; Williams et al. 2015). By contrast, research in the framework of World Englishes has traditionally been concerned more with the larger socio-political and ideological implications of Englishes co-existing and influencing other languages, as well as with the application of diverse linguistic frameworks in the analysis of Englishes as exemplified in the *Handbook of World Englishes* (B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, Nelson 2006). In one of his contributions to this handbook, Bolton (2006) highlights the various sub-disciplines within linguistics that inform research into world Englishes such as applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, English studies, lexicography, and critical linguistics.

When considering more recent major publications in the field, there are signs that the Varieties of English and World Englishes strands have been converging more strongly and that the pluralized conception of Englishes has become foregrounded, at least as a label for research in the field. Thus, the *Routledge Handbook of World Englishes* (Kirkpatrick 2010, second edition fthc. in 2021), the *Oxford Handbook of World Englishes* (Filppula, Klemola and Sharma 2017), and the *Cambridge Handbook of World Englishes* (Schreier, Hundt and Schneider 2020), all adopt “World Englishes” as a name while altogether providing a mixture of articles that address historical issues, reflect on the relation of linguistic approaches to the study of world Englishes and provide areal overviews and case studies of individual Englishes. The three-volume set on *World Englishes* by Hopkins, Decker and McKenny (2017) is the most pronounced example of a handbook type of publication that provides close descriptions of varieties of English using the label of World Englishes. The forthcoming three volumes on *World Englishes* (Saraceni et al.) entitled *Paradigms* (vol. 1), *Ideologies* (vol. 2) and *Pedagogies* (vol. 3), on the other hand, tackle current issues in the use of Englishes around the world by means of exploring recent linguistic approaches to world Englishes such as translanguaging, by reflecting on various ideological ramifications, and by critically discussing the roles of Englishes in educational contexts.

Further signs of convergence between World Englishes and Varieties of English can be gleaned from the titles of the longstanding book series *Varieties of English Around the World* (Benjamins). While the series started publishing in 1979, the term “World Englishes” appeared for the first time in the title of an edited volume in 2009, but now four among the seven most recent books of the series state “World Englishes” in their titles.

Other book series that provide focused outlets for studies on Englishes are *Dialects of English* (De Gruyter), which specializes in giving accessible descriptions of varieties of English following the tradition of feature-based phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical characterizations of individual Englishes in their socio-historical contexts, and the fairly recent *Routledge Studies in World Englishes*. With the first volume published in 2015, this series has so far exhibited a focus on Englishes in Asia and is more strongly couched in the World Englishes tradition (cf., the volume by Low and Pakir 2017) even

though one of the latest titles, *The Shetland Dialect*, falls in line with a varieties of English approach to the documentation of Englishes (Sundkvist 2020).

Judging from the publications and major outlets of research on Englishes discussed here, which merely scratches the surface of a rich, vibrant, and evolving field of study (cf., e.g., *English Today* and *Asian Englishes* as further dedicated journals), it appears that the terminological and by extension conceptual pendulum is moving towards the World Englishes end, also in the sense that research which is situated in a Varieties of English framework tends to become labelled as World Englishes. The same holds true for studies on English as an international language or lingua franca. While investigating the use of English as an international medium of communication has given rise to an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) strand which is manifest in a separate journal and book series, outlets on World Englishes have also continued to incorporate studies on the function of English as a lingua franca (cf., Meierkord 2012 and see contributions in the *Oxford and Routledge Handbook of World Englishes* as well as Saraceni et al., fthc., vol. 3 to name just a few). The inclusion of ELF among the uses and instantiations of Englishes across the world also follows from a theoretical perspective when adopting language contact as an underlying criterion of describing world Englishes (Onysko 2016).

Besides some more recent convergence between the two rooted perspectives on the plurality of Englishes, the field of World Englishes (in an inclusive sense as being concerned with all uses and manifestations of English around the world), has been shaped by the world's social, political, economic, and technological developments, in particular from the beginning of the new millennium onwards. Captured in keywords such as globalization, superdiversity, and digitalization, researchers have started to highlight the role of increasing mobility and interconnectedness, leading to changing communicative habits, and moving away from geolinguistic conceptions of languages towards codes based on fluid and truncated, often multilingual repertoires (e.g., Blommaert 2010). Similarly, Pennycook's (2007) observation on global Englishes, i.e., the use of English as part of globalization processes, critically contests the idea of Englishes as nation states or geographically confined entities:

Thus, while drawing on the useful pluralization strategy of world Englishes, I prefer to locate these Englishes within a more complex vision of globalization. This view seeks to understand the role of English both critically—in terms of new forms of power, control and destruction—and in its complexity—in terms of new forms of resistance, change, appropriation and identity. It suggests that we need to move beyond arguments about homogeneity or heterogeneity, or imperialism and nation states, and instead focus on translocal and transcultural flows. English is a translocal language, a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations. English is bound up with transcultural flows, a language of imagined communities and refashioning identities.

Pennycook 2007: 5–6

In line with that and similar views, the relation between Englishes and globalization has raised continued interest (e.g., Saxena and Omoniyi 2010) and has fostered the

emergence of studies focusing on phenomena such as translanguaging (e.g., J. W. Lee 2018; contributions in Jenks and J. W. Lee 2020), metrolingualism (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015) and a concern with studying the use of English in digital spaces (e.g., contributions in J. S. Lee 2020; Mair 2020) as well as in linguistic landscapes (e.g., contributions in Bolton 2012). Apart from Pennycook's and Blommaert's paradigm shifts in sociolinguistics, Benor's notion of the ethnolinguistic repertoire as a "fluid set of resources that members of an ethnic group may use variably to index their ethnic identities" (2010: 160), is a sign that the domain of variationist sociolinguistics is also drifting away from essentialist categorizations of speaker groups by variety type (cf., D'Arcy 2020 for recent discussion).

Considering the historically rooted approaches to researching world Englishes in contrast to the more recent developments that defy the reification of codes as Englishes, one can arrive at the conclusion that research on Englishes around the world has reached an "impasse" as Saraceni (2015: 3) aptly observes. Ultimately grounded in our human conceptual system and the ability to shift our perceptual attention, this impasse or dilemma can actually be conceived as being two-fold. On the one hand, if we zoom in on individual uses of Englishes, we can gain a detailed view of the complex interactions of codes in a speaker's repertoire and the multiple external and internal factors that influence linguistic output in context. However, this kind of zooming in limits the ability to generate knowledge via categorizing perceived similarities and patterns across speaker communities. On the other hand, if we zoom out, i.e., if we abstract away from individual language use towards the level of communities, we are able to establish similarities and patterns shared across speakers. At the same time, however, this makes us prone to run into the essentialist trap of reifying codes according to external criteria (e.g., ethnicity, social class, gender, geographical areas or socio-political entities such as nation states). Reflecting this back onto research on Englishes in the world, the dilemma can be portrayed as a tug of war between our cognitive capacities of focusing our attention on details at a moment in time (i.e., processing rich perceptual input) and of categorizing our perceptual input via the conception of similarities over repeated input. While the latter bears the danger of overgeneralization and the construction of essentialist categories of Englishes that do not (or only to a very limited extent) portray realities of English use, the former is not sufficient to build up knowledge (i.e., categories) that persist and generate larger insight in the field. If researchers are aware of that, the dilemma can actually turn into a strength and a way forward for research on world Englishes (in the inclusive sense). Thus, it will be the task of future research to strike the right balance between the two forces and, being conscious of the inherent limitations and strengths of each capacity, generate informed insights into the complexities of Englishes in their different contexts of use and on their diverse instantiations in (groups of) speakers and localities (be they areal or virtual).

2. Ways Forward for WEs

If investigations are conducted coherent with these different perspectival affordances, there are many ways in which research on world Englishes can move forward in the

future. The question then is not so much which approach, paradigm, or model to follow or to discover, but rather how to use or develop ideas so that novel insights can be generated which are cogent with the situation that is studied. For that, it is also crucial that researchers remain critically conscious about the scope of their findings and interpretations. Just as the uses of Englishes in the world are highly versatile, diverse approaches to this complex subject area will lead to more insights and synergic knowledge in the field.

When looking at the plethora of research dealing with Englishes in some form or other, certain areas of concern can be identified that have been driving world Englishes research forward, drawing on methods and approaches of diverse linguistic disciplines. These concerns can be captured in a range of questions that address different aspects of the role, status and uses of Englishes in the world:

- How can the complexities of Englishes in the world be understood and theoretically modelled?
- By which means can the existence of Englishes be determined in relation to their users and what are the limits of approaches that try to label Englishes according to shared features across user groups?
- What are the social and psychological effects that Englishes have on speakers that also master other, particularly smaller languages?
- How do Englishes influence other codes and how do they interact with other codes in the multilingual repertoires of their speakers?
- What is the role of Englishes in globalizing processes?
- In which ways do Englishes function as purveyors of culturally grounded ideas, interactional modes and knowledge in different cultural contexts?
- How can the diversity of ideas and concepts in the word stocks of Englishes be documented?
- Why do we continue to teach certain standard varieties of English when the world is speaking and using Englishes differently?
- How do Englishes function in international communication?
- In which ways are the representations of Englishes shaped by different modes and media?

These questions address both some of the ongoing but longstanding and some of the more recent concerns in the field such as finding adequate theoretical models of Englishes, the feature-based, sociolinguistic description and labelling of Englishes, the relation of Englishes to speaker attitudes and identities, the relationship of Englishes and local cultures, Englishes in the new media, standard varieties and the teaching of Englishes, language policy and planning involving Englishes, the lexicographical description of Englishes, and Englishes in relation to globalization, multilingualism, translanguaging and language contact.

It is the intention of the book series to provide a platform for innovative research in all these areas. Adopting an inclusive understanding of Englishes as all manifestations and uses of (forms of) Englishes around the world and in line with the belief that new knowledge can be generated from theoretical pluralism and cross-disciplinary

perspectives, the series encourages research that breaks new ground and pushes knowledge in the field forward.

3. Research Developments in World Englishes

The inaugural volume offers a first contribution to this endeavor by showcasing twelve chapters that explore various issues in line with the central questions posed above. Written by renowned and up and coming scholars in the field, the chapters provide a critical reflection on the research paradigm of World Englishes, postulate a novel and comprehensive model of understanding Englishes, investigate so far neglected localities of Englishes, delve into various multilingual ecologies where Englishes play an important part, take a close look at variation and contact between Englishes, give insight into the impact of English cultural conceptualizations on other cultures and the expression of cultural frames in the use of English, provide a perspective on how to avoid the stalemate of teaching world Englishes and English as a lingua franca, and propose ways of documenting the cultural meanings that characterize different Englishes across the globe.

In detail, the volume starts with a wake-up call for scholars working in the research paradigm of World Englishes. In “Decolonizing (World) Englishes,” Mario Saraceni and Camille Jacob highlight the fact that while the World Englishes paradigm was from its very beginnings propelled by the notion of decolonization in the sense of approaching all Englishes as equal, that kind of equality has been reserved for an elite of intellectuals, writers and professionals using English but not for the diverse users of Englishes in their different cultural and social circumstances. To be true to the aspiration of equality, the authors outline a strategic framework of decolonization for future research on world Englishes, which aims at de-mythologizing, de-silencing, and de-colonizing Englishes.

An appropriate and comprehensive way of theorizing Englishes from a functional linguistic perspective, which—even if not explicitly intended—would work in a truly egalitarian framework as it steers clear of contextual factors, is proposed by Allan James in the next chapter. His tricodal/trimodal model of Englishes as social practice zooms in on the usage events of Englishes and provides a convincing matrix that captures the social events (in the sense of Fairclough 2006) of English in a threefold typology of social meaning (“identification,” “representation,” and “action” as modes) which is mapped onto three layers of linguistic substance (the lexicophonological, the lexicosemantic and the lexicogrammatical as codes). This model is a considerable step forward in the field as its focus on Englishes as social practice and events does not rely on notions of reified Englishes.

In chapter 4, “Extending the Scope of World Englishes: Interactions across Englishes in Post-Protectorates and at the Grassroots,” Christiane Meierkord emphasizes that, nowadays, Englishes are to a large extent used in communication among speakers for whom English is one language among others. While this interactional perspective has been investigated to a good extent in research on English as lingua franca, Meierkord breaks new ground as she explores new interactional contexts in former protectorates, League of Nations mandates and United Nations trust territories. Taking the examples

of the Maldives and Uganda, she discusses the status of English in these territories with a particular focus on Englishes at the grassroots, i.e., non-elitist uses and forms of Englishes. This is an important pathway for future research.

The interaction of Englishes with other languages in speaker's multilingual repertoires and in multilingual societies is at the center of the next three chapters. In "Contact, Asia, and the Rethinking of Englishes in Multilingual Ecologies" Lisa Lim and Umberto Ansaldo offer a rich and detailed account that traces the contact history of Englishes in several Asian non-settler exploitation colonies. The authors unveil new historical dynamics in the shaping of these Englishes, and they illustrate the important role of language typology in explaining substratal influences in Asian Englishes. This is convincingly discussed with the examples of the Sinitic language features of tone and particle use.

Peter Siemund, Ahmad Al-Issa, Sharareh Rahbari, and Jakob R. E. Leimgruber investigate the role of English in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from a macro-sociolinguistic perspective and compare that to the situation of Englishes in Singapore and Hong Kong. Their contribution creates an insightful picture of the societal status of English in the UAE, which is supported by a large survey on speakers' multilingual repertoires and language attitudes. Comparable data on Singapore and Hong Kong allow the authors to carve out similarities and differences between the three multilingual localities where Englishes are widely used.

Language attitudes in a multilingual ecology are also at the core of Bertus Van Rooy and Susan Coetzee-Van Rooy's contribution. In contrast to the previous chapter, the authors take a look back into the history of language attitudes towards English, Afrikaans and other languages in South Africa. A fine analysis of historical documents in the corpus of Black South African English uncovers that the factors of political freedom, economic success and access to quality education outweigh the relevance of language attitudes in nineteenth-century South Africa.

The article by Rebecca Lurie Starr adds a crucial variationist sociolinguistic view for understanding internal variation within Englishes and dialect contact among Englishes, which bears the potential of triggering change in the use of Englishes. With the support of many examples, she makes the convincing case for how specific language features can index diverse social meanings. In addition, she discusses institutional exonormativity, transnational mobility, and media consumption as important sources of dialect contact.

In "I Don't Get It': Researching the Cultural Lexicon of Global Englishes," David Crystal provides a refreshing take on the question of how we can understand and document the ever-more diversifying vocabularies of Englishes around the world. He puts forward an encyclopedic taxonomical approach which would result in a comprehensive and comparative record of culturally grounded terms across different Englishes. Recognizing the problem of metaphors for the taxonomical structuring of English lexica, David Crystal discusses the issue of metaphorical adaptations that occur as part of the evolving idiomatic use of Englishes in their diverse cultural contexts.

Metaphors and cultural conceptualizations are also central to Frank Polzenhagen, Anna Finzel, and Hans-Georg Wolf's study, which is an example of the still emerging strand of research in world Englishes that applies cognitive sociolinguistics, conceptual

metaphor theory and cultural conceptualizations. The authors conduct a thorough investigation into how the British colonizers made sense of the socio-cultural realities in the colonies through their western conceptual lenses. Focusing on texts of the colonial history in India and Sub-Saharan Africa, the authors show the way in which “disturbing” social practices in the colonies were conceptualized by the colonizers and how their western interpretations led to interference in the colonial societies which has left lasting marks up to the present day.

The function of Englishes to express local cultural conventions is lucidly described in the chapter “Individual Lives in Collectivist Faces: On Social Norms in a Radio Show.” Taking the case of Cameroon English, Eric Anchimbe applies the framework of postcolonial pragmatics to analyze exchanges between a radio host and young mothers which are put on air in a weekend prime time broadcast. His findings show how the collectivist cultural framing prevalent in Cameroonian society is instantiated on the discourse level and used to evaluate the different situations of the young mothers.

The chapter by Andy Kirkpatrick shifts the focus on another nagging question in the field of world Englishes: how can the prevalent practice of adhering to just a few standard varieties in the teaching of English world-wide be turned around and become aligned with the global reality of Englishes and the diverse needs for local and international communication across different Englishes-speaking communities? Starting with a reconsideration of Kachru’s six fallacies in this regard, Andy Kirkpatrick provides a succinct account of the academic discourse that developed on this topic up to the present day, culminating in a compelling conclusion that provides a way forward for future efforts to put into practice the teaching of world Englishes and English as a *lingua franca*.

The volume closes with a detailed look at the most recent lexicographical developments concerning the major reference work of the English lexicon (note the singular conception here): the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Danica Salazar offers engaging insight into the latest developments of this dynamically evolving dictionary project, which, crucially, has recently set out to focus much more extensively on recording words from Englishes around the world. From a world Englishes point of view, this is certainly a much-needed evolution in line with the reality of Englishes used around the world. If this lexicographical acknowledgment of plurality is based on a true conceptual shift, we will in a few years’ time perhaps speak of the *Oxford Dictionary of Englishes*.

As a whole, the different topics and perspectives covered in the inaugural volume of *Bloomsbury Advances in World Englishes* intend to hint at the manifold concerns and the diverse current developments in the field. This will hopefully be inspiring for future research on the complexities of Englishes around the world and bring to the fore many more informed voices that will propel our critical understanding and offer insights couched in a spirit of plurality and diversity.

Notes

- 1 Please note that the volume adopts the spelling convention of capitalizing “World Englishes” when reference is made to the academic discipline and field of research. The spelling “world Englishes” refers to individual Englishes as such.

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