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ABSTRACT

Globalization has brought about a phenomenal spread of English. This spread has led to the emergence of the newborn varieties which has created serious challenges to language teaching pedagogy and language education policy. Bangbose (2003) has clearly pointed to this issue, stating “as researchers in world Englishes, we cannot consider our job done if we turn a blind eye to the problems of educational failure or unfavorable language policy outcomes” (as cited in the Council of Europe, 2007, p. 31). It seems that there is a mismatch between the advances that happened in the field of applied linguistics and language education policy. This paper focuses on language education policy in the context of global English because it is considered one of the influential factors in the gap between English lingua franca reality and English as a native language. First, it gives a brief overview of the recent situation with regard to English and shows the recent reality of multilingual English and its multifarious aspect (Rahal, 2018 & 2019). It also discusses the conceptual gap in language education policy. It points to the conceptual gap between the sociolinguistic reality of English and the language education policy that is still oriented towards English as a native language. Then, the paper points to the need for a language policy that includes linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Global English, language policy, gap, and multilingual policy.

Introduction

The diversification of the varieties of English opens a debate in the field of linguistics and raises crucial questions about the status of English in its varieties. As the development of these varieties is increasing, policymakers need to rethink and revise language education policies and value linguistic diversity. In this context, world Englishes has started to receive much attention by teachers, researchers in the field. Despite the development of this field of research, literature shows that there are areas of world Englishes that remain unexplored. Literature in this field admits that research on issues pertaining to varieties of English mainly focus on the different varieties of English (Kachru, 1985; Tunde-Awe, 2014; Safotso, 2012; Mbufong, 2013). Another trend of researchers studies the pedagogic problems in world Englishes (Jenkins, 2012;

Mackay, 2002; Rose and Galloway, 2019). Other researchers investigate intelligibility and world Englishes (Jenkins, 2006). The main aim of this paper is to address language education policy in the context of multilingual English; it is an opportunity to point to the issue of the lack of clear language education policies that tolerate diversity and then present some recommendations for rethinking language policies.

The Sociolinguistic Reality of English

Recently, English has been used in a plethora of contexts. As shown in the following figure, English is the native language of some nations such as the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia. It is the official language of other nations, including South Africa, New Zealand, India, Nigeria, etc. and it is considered a lingua franca in many other countries. English is no longer seen as monolingual but rather a multilingual language. Rahal (2018, 2019) argues for the multilingual aspect of English, stating that English has become plural due to the emergence of local varieties.

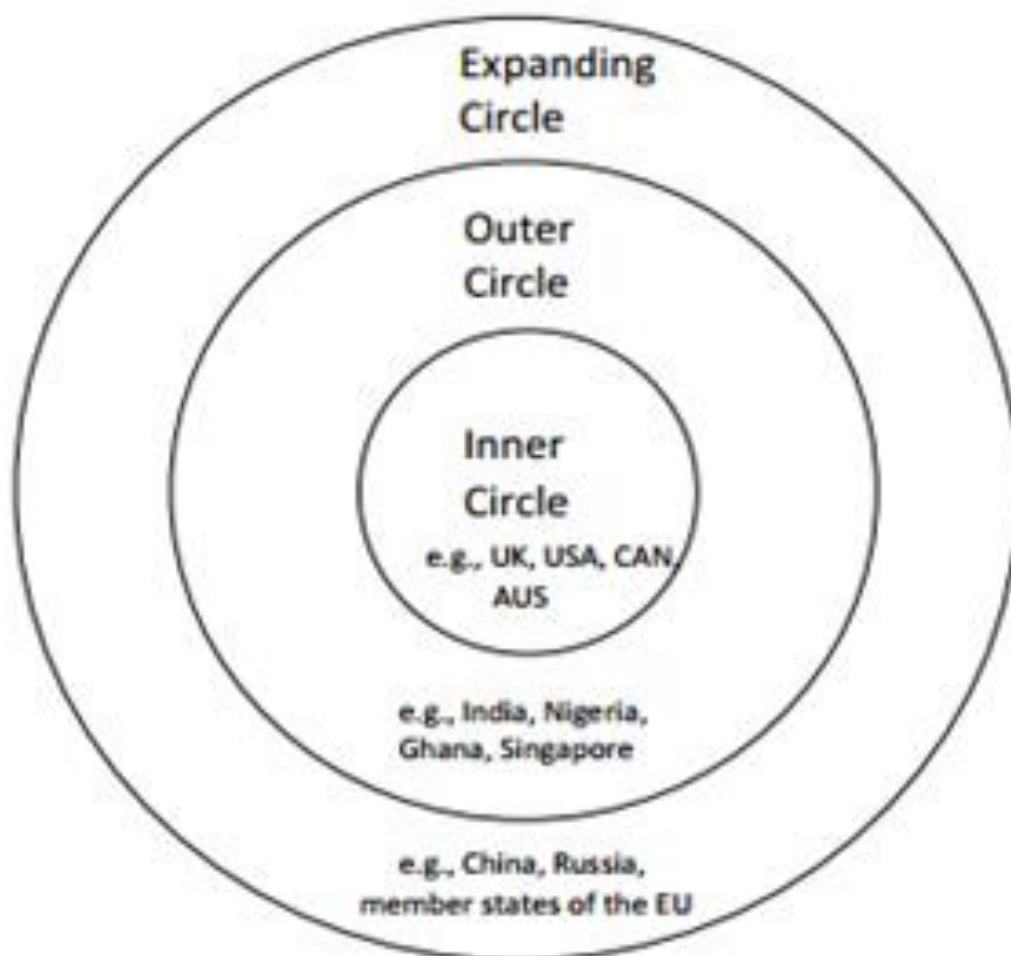


Figure 1: Kachru's three circle Model (Kachru, 1985).

English is an element in “grassroots multilingualism” (Blommaert, 2008). This change in the global status and usage of English leads to changing the traditional paradigm, including language education policies.

Definition of key Concepts

Global English

Global English is defined by Crystal (2003) as a language that has developed “a special role that is recognized in every country” (p. 3). There are also other different names referring to today’s English; it is called “New Englishes” (Graddol, 1997, p.11), “English as a lingua franca” and “English as an international language”. It “belongs to all people who speak it, whether native or non-native, whether ESL or EFL, whether standard or non-standard” (Norton, 1997, p. 427).

Language Policy

Language Policy (LP) is defined as a “set of principles regarding language behaviour” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 49). Ager (2001, pp.5-6) refers to LP as an “official planning, carried out by those in political authority, and has clear similarities with all other forms of public policy. As such, LP represents the exercise of political power, and like any other policy, may be successful or not in achieving its aims”. Language education policy in particular refers to the rules and regulations regarding the status of language(s).

Multilingualism

According to the Council of Europe (2007), multilingualism refers to “the knowledge of a number of languages or the co-existence of different languages in a given society” (p. 4). It is also defined by Cook (2005, p. 2) as “the knowledge of two languages in the same mind” and the “use of three or more languages” (Bhatia and Ritchie, 2013, p. xxii).

The Conceptual Gap in Language Policy

The conceptual gap in language education policies can be summarized in the following points:

- Language education policies are still oriented towards English as a native language.
- Language education policies are based on the monolingual ideology which neglects local varieties.

- There is a mismatch between the reality of English and regulations.
- Diversity, plurilingualism are still not recognized and encouraged.

Recommendations for Bridging the Gap

Language education policies should move beyond the monolingual perspective and include multilingualism and diversity. There is also a need for a language in education policy that includes linguistic diversity. Therefore, language policies should “tolerate [...] linguistic diversity as necessary for communication or social harmony” (Council of Europe, 2007, p.21).

Language policy should be inclusive and diverse. It should:

- encourage the use of innovative, inclusive and multilingual pedagogies.
- develop and maintain the linguistic repertoire of multilingualism.
- prepare learners to use the languages they already know.
- Prepare learners to multicultural communication.
- develop learners’ multi-competence and meta-linguistic awareness.
- train learners to use the cultural knowledge and skills they have developed.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the expanding pluricentricity of English that needs to be reflected in language education policies which currently lean on either American or British English. Language education policies need to take into account the unprecedented growth of variation in the norms of international communication, maintain inclusive language education policies and develop a new perspective based on multilingualism and linguistic diversity. In this regard, ‘teaching English should be conceived so as to stimulate speakers’ plurilingualism and not block its later development in the name of a monolingual ideology’ (Council of Europe, 2007, p.22).

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