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## GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING FOR GLOBAL ENGLISH

Conferences need slogans - and in the first announcement to this one, there were several powerful and plausible statements. 'English Belongs to the World'. 'Teach Local, Think Global'. 'Discover the World through English'. The conference title itself is also powerful: "Global English for Global Understanding". But all slogans are dangerous. They express succinctly a vision of the world, and when we try to expand that succinctness and operationalise that vision we can encounter unsuspected difficulties. In the present case, I find a conceptual tension between the statement that 'English Belongs to the World', which I firmly agree with, and the injunction to 'Discover the World through English', which I also acknowledge. As a result of exploring this tension, I have ended up, as you see, reversing the word order of the conference title, and thus adding a further ingredient to the slogan soup.

What do we mean, exactly, when we say that English belongs to the world? I have said it myself on many occasions: 'Nobody owns English now'. The statement identifies the reality of what has happened as English has spread around the globe and become the world's first choice of lingua franca. Whereas once upon a time it would have been possible to say that England 'owned' English, and later that the US 'owned' English, insofar as the notion of ownership relates to matters of historical power and numbers of speakers, the present-day reality is that the centre of gravity of the language has shifted from these localities. As you know, there is a sentence in sociolinguistics which tries to relate languages and nationalities: 'If I speak X, then I am Y'. 'If I speak Welsh, then I am Welsh', is probably true for virtually all Welsh speakers. 'If I speak Finnish, then I am Finnish' must also be very largely true. 'If I speak Russian, then I am Russian' is much less true, but still predominantly so. But 'If I speak English, then I am...' well, it proves impossible to give the sentence a sensible conclusion. You could be from anywhere.

People have been predicting the emergence of English as a global language for at least two centuries (see Bailey, 1991: Ch. 4), but in a genuine sense of 'global' the phenomenon is in fact relatively recent. A language achieves a truly global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. The notion of 'special role' is critical. It is obviously present when large numbers of the people in a country speak English as a first language, as happens in the USA, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and

a scattering of other territories. It is also present when it is made the official language of a country, or is given joint-official or special-regional status (the terms vary in different dispensations), and comes to be used as the primary medium of communication in such domains as government, the law courts, broadcasting, the press, and the educational system. English now has some kind of special administrative status in over 70 countries, such as Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, Singapore, and Vanuatu. Then, in a different way, English achieves a special role when it is made a priority in a country's foreign-language teaching policy; it has no official status, but it is nonetheless the language which children are most likely to encounter when they arrive in school, and the one most available to adults in further education. Over 100 countries treat English as just a foreign language (chiefly in Europe, Asia, North Africa, and Latin America), and in most of these it is now recognized as the chief foreign language being taught in schools, or the one which a country would most like to introduce (if only more trained staff and teaching resources were available).

The term 'global English' thus has a genuine application in the year 2001. But translating daily experience into reliable linguistic statistics is virtually impossible, given the absence of routine data-gathering procedures about language use in the population censuses of the world. And when it comes to global statistics, we are in the business of informed guesswork. Still, international organizations, linguistic surveys, and individual authors, using various criteria, have come up with some figures, and as they are the only ones available, we must use them, cautiously, as guidelines for thinking. Each category has an inbuilt uncertainty, the nature of which needs to be appreciated before the totals can be used with any cogency.

The first-language totals cited in the 1990s were swinging between 350 and 450 million, a considerable range - probably because of differences of opinion as to what should be included under this heading. The chief factor must be the status of pidgins and Creoles historically derived from English. If these are considered now to be "varieties of English", then their speakers will be included, and we will move towards accepting the higher total; on the other hand, if they are thought to be separate languages, whether on grounds of mutual unintelligibility or sociopolitical identity or both, then their numbers will be excluded, and the lower total will be more acceptable. As they are not a coherent group, linguistically, many possible decisions could be made; but significant numbers of people are involved. There are over 30 such entities (Crystal, 1995: 346), which in the 1999 *Encyclopedia Britannica* language survey are represented by some 66 million speakers (50 million of which are said to be in Nigeria).

The second- and foreign-language totals, often considered together, are even more difficult to be sure about, for the obvious reason that

fluency is a continuum, and commentators differ in their view about how much competence in English a person needs before being allowed to join the community of world English users. A criterion of native-speaker-like fluency would clearly produce a relatively small figure; including every beginner would produce a relatively large one. A widely circulated British Council estimate - more informed than most, as it was based on reports of numbers attending courses and taking examinations, as well as on market intelligence provided by its English 2000 project - has referred to a billion (i.e. thousand million) people engaged in learning English (British Council, 1997). That figure needs to be interpreted cautiously, because it includes all learners, from beginners to advanced. If we take, as a criterion, a medium level of conversational competence in handling domestic subject-matter, then one might expect between half and two-thirds of this total to be counted as 'speakers of English as a foreign language'. However, there need to be only small variations in percentage estimations in the more populous countries (chiefly, India and China) to produce a large effect on the figures. In India, for example, estimates of the numbers of English speakers have varied between 3% (Kachru, 1986: 54) and 19% (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1999: 772) - producing such totals in real terms as 30 million and 187 million. A recent *India Today* survey suggests 33% (Kachru, 2001), which would be nearly 400 million.

Faced with such notable variations, in which people with particular political agendas can argue for English being stronger or weaker, a cautious temperament will use averages of the most recent estimates - a grand total of c. 1500 million speakers from all sources. This figure permits a convenient summary, given that world population passed the six billion mark during late 1999. It suggests that approximately one in four of the world's population are now capable of communicating to a useful level in English. Equally, it indicates a major shift taking place in the centre of gravity of the language. From a time (in the 1960s) when the majority of speakers were thought to be first-language speakers, we now have a situation where there are as many people speaking it as a second language, and many more speaking it as a foreign language. Combining these two latter groups, and the ratio of native to non-native is around 1:3. Moreover, the population growth in areas where English is a second or foreign language is about 2.5 times that in areas where it is a first language, so that this differential is steadily increasing. Native speakers are steadily becoming a smaller proportion of the world total (Graddol, 2000).

Although it has been possible to suggest answers to the question of why English has become a global language (Crystal, 1997), the recency of the phenomenon means that we are still some distance from understanding what happens to it when it develops this role. The most noticeable consequence has been that, as English has come to be adopted by new localities, so it has come to be adapted by them to

suit their needs. The result has been a proliferation of non-standard Englishes and the emergence of varieties which have achieved varying levels of standardization, at least in those parts of the world where English has been long established - North America, Australia and New Zealand, and South Africa. However, historical experience is no real guide to the kinds of adaptation that are currently taking place. Several of the "new Englishes" of the past have been well studied - notably British, American, and Australian English - but the way the language has evolved in settings where it has been introduced as a first language is likely to be very different from the way it will evolve in settings where the majority are non-native speakers. There are already signs of this happening, though it is difficult to make reliable generalizations given the social, ethnic, and linguistic complexity within the countries where these developments are taking place, and the considerable differences between countries. However, it is possible to identify several types of change which are taking place, and to gain a sense of their extent, from the case studies which have been carried out.

Within any 'new English', most adaptation relates to vocabulary, in the form of new words (borrowings), word-formations, word-meanings, collocations, and idiomatic phrases. There are many cultural domains likely to motivate new words when English comes to be used in such places as West Africa, Singapore, India, or South Africa, and speakers find themselves adapting the language to meet fresh communicative needs. To briefly review some of the variables. A country's biogeographical uniqueness will generate potentially large numbers of words for animals, fish, birds, insects, plants, trees, rocks, rivers, and so on - as well as all the issues to do with land management and interpretation, which is an especially important feature of the lifestyle of many indigenous peoples. There will be words for foodstuffs, drinks, medicines, drugs, and the practices associated with eating, health-care, disease, and death. The country's mythology and religion, and practices in astronomy and astrology, will bring forth new names for personalities, beliefs, and rituals. The country's oral and perhaps also written literature will give rise to distinctive names in sagas, poems, oratory, and folktales. There will be a body of local laws and customs, with their own terminology. The culture will have its own technology which, regardless of its primitiveness by Western standards, will have its technical terms - such as for vehicles, house-building, weapons, clothing, ornaments, and musical instruments. The whole world of leisure and the arts will have a linguistic dimension - names of dances, musical styles, games, sports - as will distinctiveness in body appearance (such as hair styles, tattoos, decoration). Virtually any aspect of social structure can generate complex naming systems - local government, family relationships, clubs and societies, and so on. Nobody has ever worked out just how much of a culture is community-specific in this way; but it must be a very significant

amount - I would say 75%. So, when a community adopts a new language, and starts to use it in relation to all areas of life, there is inevitably going to be a great deal of lexical creation.

It does not take long before new words enter a language, once it arrives in a fresh location. Borrowings from indigenous languages are especially noticeable. For example, the first permanent English settlement in North America was in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607; and loan words from Indian languages were introduced into contemporary writing virtually immediately. Captain John Smith, writing in 1608, describes a *racoon*; *totem* is found in 1609; *caribou* and *opossum* are mentioned in 1610 (Mencken, 1945: 169). However, the long-term role of borrowings, in relation to the distinctive identity of a "new English", is unclear. In the case of American English, relatively few of the Amerindian loan words which are recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries became a permanent part of the standard language. Mencken refers to one list of 132 Algonquian loans in which only 36 are still in standard American English, the others having become obsolete or surviving only in local dialects (e.g. *squantersquash*, *cockarouse*, *cantico*). Australia would also demonstrate a similar paucity of indigenous words. On the other hand, the amount of borrowing from an indigenous language is extremely sensitive to sociopolitical pressures, as is evident in contemporary New Zealand, where loans from Maori are increasing (for example, some 700 out of the 6000 headwords, in Orsman's *Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997) are of Maori origin).

The amount of borrowing is also influenced by the number of cultures which co-exist, and the status which their languages have achieved. In a highly multilingual country, such as South Africa, Malaysia, or Nigeria, where issues of identity are critical, we might expect a much greater use of loanwords. There is already evidence of this in the range of words collected in the *Dictionary of South African English*, for example (Branford and Branford, 1978/1991). In some sections of this book, depending on the initial letter-preferences of the contributing languages, there are long sequences of loanwords - *aandag*, *aandblom*, *aap*, *aar*, *aardpyp*, *aardvark*, *aardwolf*, *aas*, and *aasvoel* (all from Afrikaans) are immediately followed by *abadala*, *abafazi*, *abakhaya*, *abakwetha*, *abantu*, *abaphansi*, *abathagathi*, and *abelungu* (all from Nguni languages). Only on the next page of the dictionary do we encounter items from British English such as *administrator* and *advocate*. The influence of local languages is also apparent in the form of loan-translations, such as *afterclap* and *after-ox* (from Afrikaans *agter* + *klap* 'flap' and *agteros*, respectively) and in hybrid forms where a foreign root is given an English affix, as in *Afrikanerdom* and *Afrikanerism*, or where two languages are involved in a blend, as in *Anglikaans*. There was already a salient loanword presence in South African English, even before the 1994 constitution recognized eleven languages as official (including English). We might

therefore expect the status of these languages to be reflected in due course by a further significant growth in the number of loan words into South African English; but the linguistic outcome will depend on such factors as the extent to which the newfound status of these languages is supported by economic and political realities, and the extent to which the lexical character of these languages itself changes as a result of Anglicization. Some cultural domains are likely to manifest this growth sooner than others - such as restaurant menus (e.g. Awonusi (1990), who lists *agidi, gari, eba, iyan, edikagong, suya, dodo, foofoo, moinmoin, efo elegusi*, and other items found in a menu written in - Nigerian English).

All the standard processes of lexical creation are encountered when analysing the linguistic distinctiveness of new Englishes (Bauer, 1983: Ch. 7). Several studies of Pakistani English, for example, have shown the important role played by the various kinds of word-formation (Baumgardner, 1993, 1998). Compounding from English elements is found in such items as *wheelcup* ('hub-cap') and *side-hero* ('supporting actor'), with some elements proving to be especially productive: *-lifter* (cf. *shoplifter*) has generated many new words (e.g. *car lifter, luggage lifter, book lifter*), as has *wallah/walla* 'one who does something' (e.g. *exam-centre-walla, coachwalla*). Hybrid compounds, using Urdu and English elements, in either order, are also notable: *khas deposit* 'special deposit', *double roti* 'bread'. Distinctive, prefixation is found, as in *anti-mullah* and *deconfirm*, and there is a wide range of distinctive suffixation, using both English and Urdu bases: compare *endeavourance, ruinification, cronydom, abscondee, wheatish, scapegoatism, oftenly, upliftment*, alongside *begumocracy, sahibism, sifarashee* (sifarash 'favour'), *babuize* (babu 'clerk'). Word-class conversion is illustrated by such verbs as *to aircraft, to slogan, to tantamount* and by such noun forms as *the injureds, the deads*. Various process of abbreviation, clipping, and blending, are in evidence: *d/o* ('daughter of'), *r/o* ('resident of'), *admit card, by-polls*. Baumgardner (1998) also illustrates distinctive collocations, both English only (e.g. *discuss threadbare, have a soft corner*) and English/Urdu combinations (e.g. *commit zina* ('adultery'), *recite kalam* ('verse')).

It is also important to illustrate the many examples in which a word or phrase from a well-established variety is adopted by a New English and given a new meaning or use, without undergoing any structural change. In Jamaican English, for example, we find such meaning changes as *cockpit* 'type of valley' and *beverage* in the restricted sense of 'lemonade' (Cassidy and Le Page, 1967). In Ghana, we find *heavy* in the sense of 'gorgeous' and *brutal* in the sense of 'very nice' (Ahulu, 1995b). In parts of South Africa, *lounge* has come to be applied to certain types of restaurant and places of entertainment - one might see the name of an Indian restaurant such as *Bhagat's Vegetarian Lounge*, or a phrase such as *beer lounge* (Branford

and Branford, 1978/1991). There are also many words which keep the same meaning, but display a different frequency of use compared with British or American English, such as the greater frequency of Jamaican *bawl* 'shout', 'weep'.

Lists of lexical examples of this kind, which can be found in many sources, all suffer from similar problems. Because the investigator has focused on an individual country, it is often unclear whether a particular word is restricted to that country or whether it is also used in nearby countries. This is a special problem in South Asia and West Africa, where the linguistic identity of several adjacent countries is in question, but it is a problem which can be encountered anywhere. It is also unclear, especially in historical studies with limited source material, just how much of the lexicon proposed as regionally distinctive is in fact personally idiosyncratic - a nonce usage, perhaps, or a piece of lexical play - or no longer in use. Authors sometimes express their doubts in the description: for example, Cassidy and Le Page add, after their inclusion of *comer* meaning 'variation' (as in 'It no have no more comer', said of a song), 'perhaps an individualism'. To say that Pakistani, Indian, Nigerian, and other lexical norms are emerging is probably true, but we need to be very careful about the items used to substantiate such claims.

When local vocabulary from all sources is collected, a regional dictionary can quickly grow to several thousand items. There are over 3,000 items recorded in the first edition of the *Dictionary of South African English* (Branford and Branford, 1978), and later editions and collections show the number to be steadily growing (there are a further 2,500 entries already added in Silva (1996)). South African Indian English alone has 1,400 (Mesthrie, 1992). *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* (Orsman, 1997) has 6,000 entries. *The Concise Australian National Dictionary* (Hughes, 1989) has 10,000. There are over 15,000 entries in the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (Cassidy and Le Page, 1967) and 20,000 in the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (Allsopp, 1996). Trinidad and Tobago alone produced some 8,000 (Winer, 1989). Gortlach (1995) provides a lexicographic review. It should be noted that totals of this kind tend to be of individual lexical items only. The lists may contain a fair sprinkling of idioms; but collocational distinctiveness is on the whole not represented. Collocations, however, are likely to prove one of the most distinctive domains of varietal differentiation, adding greatly to the richness and colour of the language. For example, in Pakistan we encounter *observe a death anniversary, raise slogans against something, and take out a procession*. In Nigeria we find *take light* (= 'cut power supply'), *senior sister* (= 'elder sister'), *wash mouth* (= 'brush teeth'), *next tomorrow* (= 'day after tomorrow'), *morning meal* (= 'breakfast'), *baby lawyer* (= 'young lawyer'), and *hear French* (= 'understand'). Idioms include, from Nigeria, *declare a surplus* (= 'throw a party'), *recite off-*

*head* (= 'speak spontaneously'), *take in* (= 'become pregnant'), *put sand in one's gari* (= 'interfere with one's good luck'), and from Ghana *give me chance/way* (= 'let me pass') and *I'm not financial* (= 'I have no money').

Even in countries where the number of localized words is relatively small, their effect on the character of the local English can be great, for two reasons. The new words are likely to be frequently used within the local community, precisely because they relate to distinctive notions there. And these words tend not to occur in isolation: if a conversation is about, say, local politics, then the names of several political parties, slogans, and other allusions are likely to come into the same discourse, making it increasingly impenetrable. 'Blairite MP in New Labour Sleaze Trap, say Tones' might be a British newspaper example - six words with British political meanings or overtones used in quick succession. Exactly the same kind of piling up of foreign expressions can be heard, and often read, in areas where new Englishes are emerging. In this example from the South African *Sunday Times*, all the local words are Afrikaans in origin (Branford and Branford, 1991, at SAP):

It is interesting to recall that some *verkramp* Nationalists, who pose now as super Afrikaners, were once *bittereinder* *bloedsappe*.

[*verkramp*: 'bigoted'; *bittereinder* 'die-hard of the Anglo-Boer war'; *bloedsappe* 'staunch member of the United Party'].

There is of course nothing intrinsically new about all this. English has always been a vacuum-cleaner of a language, sucking in words from whichever other languages it has come into contact with. There are over 350 living languages given as vocabulary sources in the files of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Several of these languages have provided English with tens of thousands of words. French alone provided thousands in the early Middle Ages. There are *already* over 250 words with Malay as part of their etymology in the *OED*. So the foundation is already laid. The contact-language words of the future will of course include more alternative rather than supplementary expressions - localized words for everyday notions, such as tables and chairs, rather than for regionally restricted notions, such as fauna and flora - but the notion of a lexical mosaic as such is not new. It has been in English for centuries. Most of us already actively make use of this mosaic. The more educated you are, the more you are able to switch between lexical registers, as circumstances warrant it. I can talk about *kingly*, *royal*, and *regal* things, words coming from Anglo-Saxon, French, and Latin, respectively, or *fire*, *flame*, and *conflagration*, or *ask*, *question*, and *interrogate*. There are many such triplets, and whole styles are identifiable based on whether they make copious use of the first, second, or third type of vocabulary. English has these contrasts already within its boundaries. So it will not be surprising to see these boundaries steadily extend.

Language is an immensely democratising institution. To have learned a language is immediately to have rights in it. You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it, as you will. And it is just as likely that the course of the English language is going to be influenced by those who speak it as a second or foreign language as by those who speak it as a mother-tongue. Fashions count, in language, as anywhere else. And fashions are a function of numbers. As we have seen, the total number of mother-tongue speakers in the world is steadily falling, as a proportion of world English users. It is perfectly possible (as the example of rapping suggests) for a linguistic fashion to be started by a group of second- or foreign-language learners, or by those who speak a Creole or pidgin variety, which then catches on among other speakers. And as numbers grow, and second/foreign-language speakers gain in national and international prestige, usages which were previously criticised as "foreign" can become part of the standard educated speech of a locality, and may eventually appear in writing.

What power and prestige is associated with these new varieties of English? It is all happening so quickly that it is difficult to be sure; there have been so few studies. But impressionistically, we can see several of these new linguistic features achieving an increasingly public profile, in their respective countries. Words become used less self-consciously in the national press - no longer being put in inverted commas, for example, or given a gloss. They come to be adopted, often at first with some effort, then more naturally, by first-language speakers of English in the locality. Indeed, the canons of local political correctness, in the best sense of that phrase, may foster a local usage, giving it more prestige than it could ever have dreamed of - a good example is the contemporary popularity in New Zealand English of Maori words. And, above all, the local words begin to be used at the senior or most fashionable levels of society - by politicians, religious leaders, socialites, pop musicians, and others. Using local words is then no longer to be seen as slovenly or ignorant, within a country; it is respectable; it may even be 'cool'.

The next step is the move from national to international levels. These people who are important in their own communities - whether politicians or pop stars - start travelling abroad. The rest of the world looks up to them, either because it wants what they have, or because it wants to sell them something. And the result is the typical present-day scenario - an international gathering (political, educational, economic, artistic...) during which senior visitors use, deliberately or unselfconsciously, a word or phrase from their own country which would not be found in the traditional standards of British or American English. Once upon a time, the reaction would have been to condemn the usage as ignorance. Today, it is becoming increasingly difficult to say this, or even to think it, if the visitors have more degrees

than the visited, or own a bigger company, or are social equals in every way. In such circumstances, one has to learn to live with the new usage, as a feature of increasing diversity in English. It can take a generation or two, but it does happen. It happened within 50 years between Britain and America: by 1842, Charles Dickens (in his *American Notes*, revised in 1868) made some observations about American linguistic usage - such as (in Chapter 9) his amazement at the many ways that Americans use the verb *fix* - all expressed in tones of delight, not dismay. But, whatever your attitude towards new usages - and there will always be people who sneer at diversity - there is no getting away from the fact that, these days, regional national varieties of English are increasingly being used with prestige on the international scene. They are, moreover, being encountered with increasing frequency, because of the unprecedented rapidity of language change introduced by Internet technology.

Discover the world through English? These examples have already begun to illustrate this slogan in practice. Do we not learn something about the Pakistani, Nigerian, South African, and Ghanaian worlds through the above usages? But let us now reflect: just how much of these worlds have we really discovered in these examples? Has this encounter with global English led to a genuine increase in global understanding? We may have discovered what the words mean - we have understood the words, semantically - but in what way has this increased our understanding, pragmatically or culturally? That there can be a difference between these three senses of understanding' is well known. It can be briefly illustrated by an example. Semantics first: if I say, *it's raining cats and dogs*, the idiom requires a level of semantic understanding if it is to be grasped: 'it is raining heavily'. Pragmatics: it is a commonplace of British English that one talks often about the weather, so that it would be appropriate to say these words by way of conversation even to strangers, say, at a bus-stop. To know that one may do this is pragmatic understanding. And cultural understanding? I recall a conversation with a friend from Singapore once, who was visiting me in Wales, and when I said 'It's raining cats and dogs' he looked at the rain and said 'You don't know what cats and dogs are like until you've been to Singapore'. Some years later I went, and understood, culturally, what he meant.

The term *understanding* can itself be approached in the same way. If I say 'I understand English', it means I understand the semantic meaning of the words. If somebody says 'I understand what you're saying', it means that although they have understood the semantic meaning, there are some pragmatic problems about acting on it. Recently, for example, in a negotiation between two parties, a financial offer was made by Mr X to Mr Y, to which Mr Y responded with 'I understand what you're saying' (also, 'I hear what you're saying'). There was a semantic understanding, but not yet a financial under-

standing - in the sense of an agreement. And if someone says - perhaps as a result of something Mr Bush has just said - 'I shall never understand Americans', then a deeper sense of cultural understanding is involved. I have interpreted our conference title in this last sense. 'Global understanding' to me expresses the hope that, via global English, we shall end up understanding each other better, and that English teachers and students will play a small part in fostering a more peaceful world. The problem with this eminently desirable scenario is that there is an enormous gap between semantic and cultural understanding. Through our teaching, we end up understanding the words, but we may have little or no idea about what their cultural value really is.

To illustrate this, let me go back to the South African political example: 'It is interesting to recall that some verkrampte Nationalists, who pose now as super Afrikaners, were once bittereinder bloedsappe'. If we replace the unfamiliar words by glosses we get an intelligible sentence: 'It is interesting to recall that some bigoted Nationalists, who pose now as super Afrikaners, were once die-hard members of the United Party'. You now understand the semantics of the sentence, but you do not yet know anything about its pragmatic or cultural sense. At a pragmatic level, just how forceful are such words as *verkrampte* and *bittereinder*? I have no idea if these are emotionally neutral or extremely rude. If I met such a person and called him *a bittereinder bloedsappe*, would he be delighted or angry? Can the words be used for both men and women? I have no sense of the pragmatic force of these words. Nor do I have a cultural sense, because I do not know what the United Party was, in its politics then or now. Does it still exist? Whereabouts on the political spectrum is it? How does it relate to the names of other political parties? Here, the encounter with global English does not automatically mean global understanding: rather, it shows us just how much we do not understand.

How would we get to understand the full implications of this sentence? There is only one way: to find out about the South African situation, its history and politics. That means we need to engage in its study, in an encyclopedic (as opposed to a linguistic) sense. A few weeks in South Africa, or routine discussion with South Africans, or regular exploration via the Internet, would soon sharpen our sense of the pragmatic and cultural force behind such sentences. Only then, once we have understood the culture, will we know how to use such sentences as the above and truly appreciate the meaning of the words. So, rather than a grasp of South African English leading to South African understanding, it appears to be the other way round: South African understanding leads to a grasp of South African English. In actual fact, it is a combination of both directions which is used: unfamiliar words can alert the learner to the existence of a distinctive situation,

and exposure to the situation will help sharpen the sense of the new words. But the basic point is plain: language alone is not enough. It points you in the direction of global understanding, but leaves you well short of that goal.

Just how short requires that we develop a model of the way in which cultural differences are realized through language. They are not all of the same kind, and they make different demands on the learner - which in the case of global English diversity means all of us. From a pragmatic or cultural perspective, there is no difference, in principle, between the demands being made upon me (as a native speaker of British English) as I encounter South African English, and upon you (as second language learners). I am just as lost as you are. Indeed, I may be more lost than you, especially if your country is one which has had close ties with South Africa. Doubtless speakers of Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe, for example, have a closer intuitive understanding of South African political language in English than I do; and the point is even stronger if we consider mother-tongue speakers of Xhosa or Zulu within South Africa itself. When it comes to global English and global understanding, we are all ultimately in the same boat - first, second, and foreign language speakers alike.

A model of linguistically mediated cultural difference would have to recognise several types of context, each of which makes a different kind of demand on the English learner. I shall restrict the examples to vocabulary - though the points apply also to other language levels. The model would need, firstly, to make a distinction between (a) language which relates to categories of the real world and (b) language which relates to categories of the imaginary world. In the first domain, it is the world which creates the language; in the second domain, it is the language which creates the world. The English vocabulary of tennis is an example of the first domain: we can experience a game of tennis, and in the course of doing so learn the associated terminology. The English vocabulary quidditch is an example of the second domain: only by reading about this imaginary game in the Harry Potter books can we have any experience of it. But in both of these examples, we are talking about phenomena which are found throughout the English-speaking world. New Englishes have no impact here: the terminology of tennis or quidditch is the same in England, the USA, South Africa, Singapore, or wherever the games are played.

The problems come to light when we encounter activities which are either (i) found throughout the English-speaking world, but with different vocabulary associated with them in different places; or (ii) found only in certain parts of the English-speaking world, and thus presenting unfamiliar vocabulary to anyone from outside those areas. An example of (i) from the real world is the lexicon of eggs, which took me aback when I first visited the USA (*once over easy, sunny*

*side up*, etc), as this vocabulary was not routinely used in the UK. Another example is the lexicon of weather-forecasting on British vs American (etc.) television. An example of (ii) from the real world is the vocabulary of baseball (opaque in the UK) and cricket (opaque in the USA) - areas, note, where the vocabulary is also used outside of the immediate context of the games (as with *He played that with a straight bat* or US *That was out in left field* meaning 'unexpected'). These are both contemporary examples. There is an additional dimension where the examples refer to previous periods - referring to historical events of the past, famous dead people, old cultural practices, and products that are no longer manufactured.

A similar breakdown is relevant for the imaginary, creative world - of literature, cinema, folklore, advertising, and so on. Here too there are activities which, as above, are either (i) found throughout the English-speaking world, but with different vocabulary associated with them in different places; or (ii) found only in certain parts of the English-speaking world, and thus presenting unfamiliar vocabulary to anyone from outside those areas. In this world, under (i) we find the distinctive language (vocabulary, slogans, catch-phrases) associated with a particular internationally known product. Milk, for example, is doubtless advertised everywhere; but the television slogan *Drink a pinta milk a day* became a catch-phrase in the UK only, and led to the item pinta in British English. The Heineken lager slogan, *Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach* is another example (Crystal, 1995: 389). Under (ii) we have the vocabulary associated with any local product or project, such as a television series which did not travel outside its country of origin, and which yielded catch phrases known only within that country (such as the exasperated 'I don't believe it' said by the curmudgeonly Victor Meldrew in the series *One Foot in the Grave*). Here too the distinction between present and past time is relevant, but especially so in the case of literature, where the need to interpret the past local culture of a text is routinely accepted procedure in, for example, work on a Shakespeare play. Once again, of course, the distinction between first, second, and foreign learner does not apply. Mother-tongue readers of Shakespeare, as well as those from other backgrounds, have to be taught explicitly about the features of Elizabethan England reflected in those plays.

There must be tens of thousands of pragmatic or cultural linguistic features, but very few have been collated in reference works, and those which have always display a bias towards British and American English. The *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (Summers, 1992) is a brave attempt at opening up the area, but this is a dictionary of the language as a whole into which '15000 encyclopedic and culturally significant words' have been incorporated; it is not a book which focuses on culturally mediated linguistic difference. Thus it includes the names of countries and cities, for example,

which are of encyclopedic relevance but not (usually) culturally variable. Russia is Russia in all parts of the English-speaking world. On the other hand, it does contain many examples which are distinctive in their local resonance, such as localities with additional meaning (the political associations of *Whitehall*, *White House*), shops and streets (the fashionable associations of *Macy's* or *Harrods*; *Oxford Street* in London vs. *Oxford Street* in Sydney, *Soho* in London vs. *Soho* in New York), names of newspapers and magazines (what is the resonance of *The Sun* in the UK? of *The National Enquirer* in the USA?), institutions and organizations, companies and products, fairy tales and nursery rhymes, radio and television programmes, historical notions, and so on. To illustrate the range, I take from the beginning of letter J the following items involving the word *jack* which are culturally restricted. (I should add that I do not know just how restricted: I do not know how widely known they are around the English-speaking world.)

Quite widely used (but not everywhere) are the nursery rhymes *Jack and Jill* and *Jack Sprat*, the folktale *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and the name for frost. *Jack Frost*; UK-restricted is the former UK television programme for children, *Jackanory*; the British girl's magazine, *Jackie*; in North America we find the fast-food restaurant chain, *Jack in the Box*, and the North American hare, *jack rabbit*; also UK, though of course known elsewhere, is the English murderer, *Jack the Ripper*, and the name of the flag, *Union Jack*.

But a quick look at the same word in the *OED* shows that there are dozens more culturally (SH restricted) usages. A small selection includes: in North America *jack* can be a lumberjack; in the USA a game of cards (*California jack*); in Newfoundland a type of schooner; in parts of S and SE Asia a type of breadfruit; in South Africa a type of bird (*idle jack*); in Australia a laughing jackass, or a slang word for being bored; in New Zealand, to *jack up* is to arrange or organize; in the UK, *I'm all right Jack* is the trademark expression of the self-complacent worker.

As I have said, when a country adopts a language, it adapts it. The interesting question is: just how much adaptation takes place? My examples suggest that there is much more than we might expect, and that it is increasing as time goes by. Moreover, as English comes to establish itself in different parts of the world, the range as well as the depth of differential usage is increasing. And we ain't seen nothing yet, for the creative literatures in most parts of the English-speaking world are in their infancy, and it is in the poems, novels, and plays of the future that we will see much of this vocabulary reflected (as the comonwealth literature already available has shown). My examples, moreover, have been only from vocabulary. When discourse as a whole is included in the equation, a new dimension of adaptation

manifests itself, complicated this time by the influence of the languages and cultures with which English is in contact. The issue, for example, of forms of address (should one use first name, title, and so on) will develop additional complexity as English comes to be influenced by the conventions of the countries in which it is used. A single worldwide naming practice is highly unlikely. For example, the German practice of using both *Professor* and *Doctor* in front of an academic's name has not changed in those letters in English that I receive from my German colleagues. And when I reply to them, I use *Prof Dr* too. The same point applies to many other domains of behaviour, such as whether one gives a toast after or during a meal (and if so, for how long and on what range of topics?), the subjects which may or may not be used as phatic communion (weather, health, personal appearance, quality of clothing, the cost of house furnishing, the amount of one's income, etc.). So many things - as the idiom goes - 'don't travel'. Humour doesn't. Many television programmes don't. Adverts don't.

All of this gives the lie to the simple-minded notion that English imposes its cultural background on the minds of its learners. Cultural imperialism there may well be; a capital M in Moscow seems to stand as much for Macdonalds rather than Metro now; but the notion of linguistic imperialism remains as naive now as it ever was. All the evidence points in the other direction - that as English spreads it finds itself being rapidly adapted to the cultural mindsets of the peoples who have chosen to use it. And it is this perspective, of routine and diverse adaptation, which allows us relate the three conference slogans which I identified at the beginning of my paper. 'English Belongs to the World'? Yes, indeed, as long as we realize that the consequences are immediate and far-reaching adaptation. 'Teach Local, Think Global'. Yes, indeed, as long as we incorporate a perspective into our teaching which allows students an encounter with global diversity, at least with reference to listening and reading comprehension. And 'Discover the World through English'? Yes indeed, as long as we realize that the learning of a variety of English (such as British English) does not provide an automatic means of linguistic access everywhere. A culturally neutral standard English does exist - it is of relevance in relation to science and technology, in particular - but it is not as universal as is commonly thought.

I conclude that, yes, Global English can lead to Global Understanding - but there is a gap that needs to be bridged, both in theory and in practice. At present, the ball is in the court of the theoreticians, the descriptive linguists, the lexicographers, and others. They - we? - are the ones who must provide the bridge, by developing a culturally grounded linguistics, incorporating a much more centrally located pragmatics. This conference, I hope, will provide a much-needed step in the right direction.



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