

Surveying the Degree of Implementation of English as a Lingua Franca in Greek State School English Classrooms

Bill Batziakas

Institute of Education, University of London

In order to understand better the paradigm of English as Lingua Franca, it is my contention that we should first identify those factors which led to its birth in the first place and which have been sustaining and advancing it thereafter. Essentially, I would say that these factors came from three directions. The first one is the exploration of sociology in general (eg Bourdieu 1992; Bernstein 1996) and globalisation in particular (eg Giddens 1991, Bauman 1992, Held et al 1999), which acted as a catalyst for a reconsideration of various human practices not only in their own right but as they are realised in their social or even global milieu. As second I would name the fact that the English language undoubtedly became the most widely used language worldwide (eg Strevens 1980; Brumfit 1982; Crystal 1997). The fusion of the above considerations brought about a rich treatment of the English language, albeit from different perspectives.

Notably, some authors adopted a rather neoliberal approach to the spread of English (eg Crystal 1997, 2004; McArthur 1998). Others considered the unprecedented reconfiguration of English from a rather Marxist approach castigating the imperialistic way in which they argued that English is currently being spread (eg Pullum 1987; Phillipson 1988, 1992a, b; Pennycook 1994, 1998; Canagarajah 1999). Taking this on board, some scholars presented their views in favour of linguistic pluralism (eg Egginton and Wren 1997; Edwards 2004). Many authors also treated the status of English from the perspective of what happens in specific countries, such as China (Bolton 2003), Japan (Seargeant 2005), Cambodia (Clayton 2006), Cape Town (Kapp 2006) or in wider geographical regions, such as East Asia (Warren 1995) and Africa (Rabagumya 2004). This in line with a further discussion of various English language planning and policy issues (eg Coulmas 1991; Tollefson 1991; Cenoz and Jessner 2000; Fishman 2001; Wright 2004). Also, voices were raised as regards the future status of English (Graddol 1996, 1997, 1999, 2006). All the while, a very prolific area seemed to be the one which came to be known as World or New Englishes (eg Kachru 1990, 1992; Kirkpatrick 2007).

However, all the above approaches to the English language kept on viewing English as a homogeneously disseminated linguistic model or as a concretely appropriated and objectified linguistic variety (cf Pennycook 2007a,b). And the nomenclature regarding this kind of English was indicative of the above: English as a global language (e.g. Crystal 1997, 2004), as a world language (e.g. Brutt-Griffler 2002), or as an international language (e.g. McKay 2002), to name but a few. As such, these treatments were falling short to make justice to these particular characteristics which differentiate English not only from any other language in the world nowadays, but also from any other previous international languages: the fact that no other international language had ever been spread so widely along countries and used so extensively among people, and that English is currently being used by more non-natives than natives (eg Widdowson 1994, 1997).

These were for the first time addressed and encapsulated in the term 'English as a Lingua Franca' in the seminal work of Jenkins (2000: 11). In short, ELF is the epitomical

consideration of those innovative features of the English language which emerge when English is used in lingua franca contexts and which do not hamper intelligibility however (ibid.). Gradually, the studies on this paradigm rather followed two strands. The one is with regard to the European Union (eg Jenkins, Modiano and Seidlhofer 2001) or with regard to issues, such as language pedagogy (eg Jenkins 2002) and attitudes and identity positions (eg Jenkins 2005, 2007). The other is the innovative linguistic features themselves. As regards phonology, Jenkins (2000) talks of the core features, such as restrictions on consonant deletion etc. As regards lexicogrammar, other researchers working with ELF corpora (most notably the VOICE and the ELFA corpus) have written about various structures (eg Seidlhofer 2004, 2005; Mauranen 2003, 2005) or a single one, such as the third person -s (Breiteneder 2004) and the present continuous -ing (Ranta 2006). Upon these findings further light is shed from the perspective of how innovation is catalysed by pragmatic motives (Cogo and Dewey 2006) and how it is interconnected with the transformational nature of globalisation (Dewey 2007).

Interestingly enough, in one of the latest set of guidelines for the Greek state school classes of English issued by the Greek Pedagogic Institute¹ (2006a: 133, 2006b: 142), explicit reference is made to the English which is to be promoted: The new syllabus envisages the teaching and learning of English as a lingua franca. To my knowledge and to date this is unique worldwide. But is the afore-mentioned vision congruent with the rest of the educational laws and guidelines regarding the Greek state school English teaching and learning? Is it supported by the textbooks and the other materials used in the classrooms? Are the teachers aware of what this construct calls for, and are they willing to take it on board? Does it serve the students' school and social needs? To answer these research questions, I conducted a cross-sectional qualitative research with semi-structured interviews with both Greek school teachers and students of all the educational levels. The interviews were automatically digitalized with the *Adobe Audition 1.5* software, they were translated with the *Systran 6* software, and analysed with the *NVivo 7* software. The limited space here does not allow me to include all the interview excerpts and their emerging themes which seemed to answer the research questions, nor to discuss them thoroughly. But just to give a flavour of that, I will provide only two excerpts of the interviews and will then discuss them very briefly.

[1] Look, I know it's crazy, but I want to have the best marks in class. In maths, in technology, and in English, too. The problem is that for all the subjects we are tested against a fake standard that the teacher or the school sets and not against the actual contexts where we're supposed to deploy what we've learnt from these subjects... Our English teacher has a thing for the accent. We spend hours over hours learning how to pronounce the sightseeings and events of London, 'Albert Hall', 'Gherkin', 'Trooping the Colour', you name it. The best accents get the best marks. So, we have to obey... But, in one the break, in our ipods, we were listening to the R' n B' songs 'In da club' and 'Gangsta's paradise', and we asked him why these words are pronounced and even written this way... He didn't know what to say, but then the bell rang and he was saved by the bell!
[Student A, 3rd grade lower high school]

[2] English? What is English? Or rather what's perfect English? Or more to

¹ The Pedagogic Institute of the Ministry of Education of Greece is equivalent to the English DfES. It is responsible for the educational laws and guidelines, such as the curriculum development, syllabus design, materials selection etc.

the point why do we need perfect English? Take me, for example. In Summers, I work at my parents' hotel on Crete [a Greek island]... Nothing special, I answer some phones and emails, I confirm some bookings, I welcome the tourists when they arrive, I organise some parties by the pool at nights etc... Or I go out with some of the boys and girls, if they are at my age and they seem to be up for some fun... To manage all these, do I have to drop the 'r' when I say 'sir', like the British, or do I have to use the words 'dude' and 'pal' when I greet someone, like the Americans? No! But do I have to make myself understood and to put forward my meaning, notwithstanding the infelicities of my accent, grammar and vocabulary? Yes!
[Student B, 3rd grade upper high school]

Before anything else, it is interesting to note that student A [1] referred not only to the RP issues such as the rhotic [r] but also to particular lexical choices like 'pal' and 'chap' which are highly indexical of particular people and in turn of particular English varieties too. In a sense, we could say all these meta-issues also constitute a departure from the native model, for perhaps we could also hypothesise that they could pave the way for ELF or serve as catalysts for ELF in formal teaching and learning environments. For the time being though, as it was transpired for the other excerpts too, the official guidelines mainly put forward native grammatical structures and set as target native pronunciation norms. This is perpetuated by the lack of ELF on behalf of the teachers, who rather follow wholesale the norms which exist in the textbooks, with the result of the marks to be awarded according to an imaginatively homogenous native model, as student A [1] complaint. These attitudes seem to be evident of the still prevailing preference even of non-native speakers for the native language norms over the non-native ones (eg Porter and Garvin 1989; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltonboeck and Smit 1997), all the more so when it comes to testing (eg Lowenberg 1992, 1993).

Having said that, at least it was good to see that ELF was divested of the negative connotations in the minds of both the young students A [1] and B [2]. That innovative phonological realisations are even transcribed as they are heard was clear in the song titles of student A [1], contrary to what she used to hear in the artificial environment of her classroom. And the acceptance of the latter student [2] by his foreign peers notwithstanding his being a non-native did not seem to support the 'accent bar' (Abercrombie 1951: 13; Kachru 1992: 67) or a wider language bar. Not any other prejudices which sometimes occur in such cases (Kirkpatrick 2007). Of course, these language experiences were taking place in real life, but I would say that students also bear them in their classrooms too. As such, these students were very sceptical towards the externally imposed and unrealistic native norms, and were rather embracing the English which they themselves experienced without thinking that it is problematic, in so far as they saw that it can actually cause or potentially could cause no problem at all. Indeed, 'the notion of purity was as mythical then as it is now' (Crystal 2004:19).

All in all then, what could be said with regards to the answer of the overarching question which guided this essay, namely the degree of implementation of ELF in the Greek state school English classrooms? On the one hand, indeed ELF has not been fully implemented in Greece state school classes yet. On the other hand, I think that this 'yet' makes a whole world of difference. For towards the continually ground gaining English language around the world and the variation and innovation issues which come into play subsequently none can feign indifference. And the mere fact that the call for English as a Lingua Franca has found its way into the official pronouncements for the Greece state school classes of

English teaching and learning is both an important issue in its own right and can be considered as the first step towards the further advancement of ELF in the future in Greece too.

REFERENCES

- Abercrombie, D.** 1951. RP and local accent. In D. Abercrombie (ed.) 1965: *Studies in Linguistics and Phonetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, Z.** 1992. *Intimations on Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Bernstein, B.** 1996. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Bolton, K.** 2003. *Chinese Englishes - A Sociolinguistic History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P.** 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Breiteneder, A.** 2005. The naturalness of English as a European lingua franca: the case of the 'third person -s'. *Vienna English Working Papers* 5/2: 3-26.
- Brumfit, C.J.** (ed.) 1982. *English for International Communication*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Brutt-Griffler, J.** 2002. *World English. A Study of its Development*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Canagarajah, S.A.** 1999. *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cenoz, J. and Jessner, U.** 2000. *English in Europe: The Acquisition of a Third Language*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Clayton, T.** 2006. *Language Choice in a Nation under Transition: English Language Spread in Cambodia*. New York: Springer.
- Cogo, A. and Dewey, M.** 2006. *Efficiency in ELF Communication: from pragmatic motives to lexico-grammatical innovation*. *Vienna English Working Papers* 5/2: 59-93.
- Coulmas, F.** 1991. *A Language Policy for the European Community: Prospects and Quandaries*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Crystal, D.** 1997. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ____ 2004^{2nd ed.} *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalton-Puffer, C., Kaltonboeck, G., and Smit, U.** 1997. Learner attitudes and L2 pronunciation in Austria. *World Englishes* 16/1: 115-21.
- Dewey, M.** 2007. English as a lingua franca and globalisation: an interconnected perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 17/3: 332-54.
- Edwards, V.** 2004. *Multilingualism in the English-speaking World: Pedigree of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Egginton, W., and Wren, H.** 1997. *Language policy: Dominant English, Pluralist Challenges*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Fishman, J.A.** 2001. *Can Threatened Languages be Saved?: Reversing Language Shift, Revisited: A 21st Century Perspective*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Giddens, A.** 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Graddol, D.** 1996. Global English, global culture? In S. Goodman and D. Graddol (eds) *Redesigning English: new texts, new identities*. London: Routledge, 181-239.
- ____ 1997. *The Future of English?: A Guide to Forecasting the Popularity of the English Language in the 21st Century*. London: The British Council.
- ____ 1999. *English in a Changing World = L' Anglais dans un Monde Changeant*. Oxford: Catchline on behalf of AILA.

- _____. 2006. *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of 'English as a Foreign Language'*. London: British Council.
- Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., Perraton, J.** 1999. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jenkins, J.** 2000. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2002. What standard for English as an International Language? In E.L. Low and S.C. Teng (eds) *The Teaching and Use of Standard English*. Singapore: Singapore Association of Applied Linguistics, 25-32.
- _____. 2005. Misinterpretation, bias, and resistance to change: the case of the Lingua Franca Core. In K. Dziubalska-Kolaczyk and J. Przedlacka (eds) *English Pronunciation Models: A Changing Scene*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 199-210.
- Jenkins, J., Modiano, M. and Seidlhofer, B.** 2001. Euro-English: An emerging lingua franca of mainland Europe. *English Today* 17/4. 13-19.
- Kachru, B.B.** 1990. World Englishes and applied linguistics. *World Englishes* 9/1: 3-20.
- _____. 1992a. World Englishes: approaches, issues and resources. *Language Teaching* 25: 1-14.
- _____. 1992b. Models for non-native Englishes. In B. B. Kachru (ed.) 1992^{2nd ed.} *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Kapp, R.** 2006. Discourses of English and literacy in a western Cape township school. In L. Thesen and E. van Pletzen (eds) *Academic Literacy and the Languages of Change*. London: Continuum.
- Kirkpatrick, A.** 2007. *World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lowenberg, P.** 1992. Testing English as a world language: issues in assessing non-native proficiency. In B. B. Kachru (ed.) 1992^{2nd ed.} *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- _____. 1993. Issues of validity in tests of English as a world language: whose standards? *World Englishes* 12/1: 95-106.
- Mauranen, A.** 2003. The corpus of English as lingua franca in academic settings. *TESOL Quarterly* 37/3: 513-27.
- _____. 2005. English as Lingua Franca: An Unknown Language? in G. Cortese, and A. Duszak (eds) *Identity, Community, Discourse. English in Intercultural Settings*. Bern: Peter Lang, 269-93.
- McArthur, T.** 1998. *The English Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McKay, S.** 2002. *Teaching English as an International Language: Rethinking Goals and Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pedagogic Institute [of Greece].** 2006a. Genika stoixeia gia to neo programma spoudon tis Agglikis glossas [General issues of the new syllabus of the English language]. In Pedagogic Institute (ed.) *Epimorphosi Scholikon Symvoulon kai Ekpaideftikon Protovathmias kai Proscholikas Ekpaidefsis sta DEPPS kai ta APS [Training of School Counsellors and Teachers of Primary and Pre-school Education in CTICC and the SSs]*. Athens: Pedagogic Institute, 133-42.
- _____. 2006b. Agglikia [English]. In Pedagogic Instituted (ed.) *Tefxos Epimorphotikou Ylikou [Training Material Issue]*. Athens: Pedagogic Institute, 142-9.
- Pennycook, A.** 1994. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London; New York: Longman.
- _____. 1998. *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*. London; New York: Routledge.
- _____. 2007a. *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*. London: Routledge.
- _____. 2007b. The myth of English as an international language. In S. Makoni and A. Pennycook (eds) *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 90-115.

- Phillipson, R.** 1988. Linguicism: Structures and Ideologies in Linguistic Imperialism. In J. Cummings and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (eds) *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*. Clavedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 339-58.
- ____ 1992a. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ____ 1992b. Globalising English: are linguistic human rights an alternative to linguistic imperialism? *Language Sciences* 20/1: 101-12.
- Porter, D. and Garvin, S.** 1989. Attitudes to pronunciation in EFL. *Speak Out!* 5: 8-15.
- Pullum, G.K.** 1987. Here come the linguistic fascists. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 5: 603-9.
- Rabagumya, C.M.** 2004. English in Africa and the emergence of Afro-Saxons: globalization or marginalisation? In M. Baynham, A. Deignan and G. White (eds) *Applied Linguistics at the Interface*. London: BAAL in association with Equinox Publishing Ltd, 133-44.
- Ranta, E.** 2006. The 'Attractive' Progressive – Why use the *-ing* form in English as a Lingua Franca? *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 5/2: 95-116.
- Seargeant, P.** 2005. Globalisation and reconfigured English in Japan. *World Englishes* 24/3: 309-19.
- Seidlhofer, B.** 2004. Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24: 200-239.
- ____ 2005. English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal*. 59/4: 339-41.
- Stevens, P.** 1980. *Teaching English as an International Language*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Tollefson, J.W.** 1991. *Planning Language, Planning Inequality: Language Policy in the Community*. London; New York: Longman.
- Warren, S.** 1995. *Language and politics in Southeast Asia: views on the spread and development of English and ELT*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Institute of Education: University of London.
- Widdowson H.G.** 1994. The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly* 28/2: 377-89.
- ____ 1997. EIL, ESL, EFL: global issues and local interests. *World Englishes* 16/1: 146-53.
- Wright, S.** 2004. *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalization*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.