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English Around the World

AN INTRODUCTION

Edgar W. Schneider

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English Around the World

The global spread of English has had widespread linguistic, social, and cultural implications, affecting the lives of millions of people around the world. This textbook provides a lively and accessible introduction to world Englishes, describing varieties used in countries as broad-ranging as America, Jamaica, Australia, Africa, and Asia, and setting them within their historical and social contexts. Students are guided through the material with chapter previews and summaries, maps, timelines, lists of key terms, discussion questions and exercises, and a comprehensive glossary, helping them to understand, analyze, and compare different varieties of English, and apply descriptive terminology. The book is accompanied by a useful website, containing textual and audio examples of the varieties introduced in the text, and links to related sources of interest. Providing essential knowledge and skills for those embarking on the study of world Englishes, this is set to become the leading introduction to the subject.

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English Around the World

An Introduction

Edgar W. Schneider



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A note on using this book

You are about to read and perhaps work with a book on the global spread of English. This is a topic with a number of different and interesting facets:

- the **reasons** why this has happened;
- the **processes** by which it has come about;
- the **results**, in terms of where around the globe you find English nowadays, and in which forms, with which functions;
- the **properties** which these forms of English have, as something like new dialects of the language; and
- the **consequences** of this process – what people think about these so-called “New Englishes” in many countries, how their presence affects their lives, how policy-makers have reacted and attempted to influence this process, and so on.

Personally, I find this a fascinating topic. It is a process which has come to be incredibly vibrant for the last few decades in particular, and it has transformed, or at least affected, many cultures and countries and the lives of many individuals all around the world, for better or for worse. And I hope I'll be able to share some of this excitement with you.

This **preface** is meant to highlight some of the specific features of this book, especially as a textbook – the features which I have consistently used to give you easier, and a more hands-on, access to the topic. Identifying these features beforehand should help you to use the book more effectively, and possibly to select those components which suit your needs and interests best. Take it as something like an instruction manual – I know many people avoid reading them, but using a gadget, or a book in this case, is easier and more effective if you do. And I promise it's short and not complicated.

Who is this book meant for? Well, it's not really restricted, but there is a most likely **target audience**. I suppose most of you reading this will be students, primarily but not exclusively undergraduates, and you may be enrolled in a class on “World Englishes,” “Varieties of English,” or such like. That's fine, and the exciting thing for me, writing this, is you are really likely to be sitting almost anywhere in this world, given the publisher's global outreach. (Drop me a line if you feel like it – I'd certainly be interested in

learning who I can reach with this text.) It probably also means that your class is run and organized by a competent academic teacher who may give you further instructions, select materials, work with exercises or features of this text or the accompanying website, and so on – at this point I'll step back and leave you in the hands of your mentor.

The book is divided into nine **chapters**. Each of them covers a specific topic and is thus designed to serve as basic reading for one course **module** or course session. In fact, some chapters, notably the regional and the bigger ones (**Chapters 4–8** in particular, I'd say) might actually be split up between several sessions, depending on how deeply your instructor and you wish to go into details, to look at individual samples, to work out the exercises, and so on.

Note, however, that none of the above applications are mandatory. I hope that the text as such is accessible and attractive to “the interested **lay reader**” outside of a class or even university context as well. It is certainly also possible to just read it cover-to-cover, or to pick select chapters in which for whatever reason you are particularly interested. There is no reason why you should not read this as a **standalone** text and work through all of this material on your own. I have done my best not to make it too technical (even if one purpose clearly is also to teach you some linguistic terms and concepts in passing).

The **contents** of this book, and its individual chapters, will be detailed further in the first chapter, the Introduction, but for a start, you should be prepared to deal with the following topics and components:

History, culture, society, in specific countries, regions, or continents: obviously, this constitutes the backbone and the necessary background of all the following discussions. Naturally, even if this is a book about varieties of English, language always and only works in social contexts, has been forged by them, and can be explained only in that perspective.

Linguistics: yes, sure – that's the discipline which describes and studies how language works, so we will need some of the terms and notions which linguists have developed for that purpose. I am not presupposing any substantial familiarity with linguistics and will do my best to introduce technical terms and concepts in an accessible fashion. I suppose you can sidestep this component if you are really not interested in it. But some technical knowledge and terminology simply gives you a much more solid grasp of the phenomena under discussion, and I suppose many of you will be expected to master some of this.

Text (audio) samples: I am convinced that talking about global forms of English makes sense and is fun only if you get some direct exposure to the object of discussion, i.e. to text and audio samples from the respective regions. In fact, this is one of the features that make this book quite different from many others on similar subjects, frequently with “World

Englishes” as part of their titles. Usually you get many general statements and a few short selected examples. Here I am providing authentic language samples representing a wide range of different regions, styles, and text types, to give you a hands-on feel for what we are talking about. Most of the samples you can also listen to – there are audio files (in mp3 format, mostly) of the texts transcribed in the book available on the website that accompanies it. And I am not only asking you to read or listen to these dialect samples – I will also be directing your attention to what is special about them, what to focus on in identifying regional characteristics. Each text is followed by extensive discussions of its noteworthy properties, usually looking at features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Of course, this is also where some unavoidable linguistics sneaks in, because in these descriptive sections I will introduce and use some technical, descriptive terminology, customarily used in linguistic analyses. Don’t worry if you do not understand each and every term. In the long run, however, such descriptions will build a network of connections, similarities between and comparisons with other texts. In principle, this is an open-ended activity – you can search and start analyzing further regional text samples, and some guidance to that is provided in some of the exercises at the end of each chapter.

A couple of **features** have been employed consistently to help you digest the material presented and to make this book more effective as a **textbook**. Features which you will find in each chapter include the following:

- a **chapter preview**, entitled “In this chapter . . .,” which is supposed to signpost the material coming up in the chapter, and thus to guide your attention;
- a listing of the chapter’s **sections**, which structure the material by sub-topics;
- a **Chapter summary** which briefly revises what you have learned and puts things in perspective;
- an “**Exercises and activities**” section, meant to activate you – the best way of learning things! Some of the exercises are reflective in nature, asking you to think about or discuss some of the issues raised, and to bring in your own experiences and attitudes. Others are more practical and analytical, in several cases asking you to investigate further text samples, some of which are also provided on the website;
- “**Key terms** discussed in this chapter” at the end: the terms and notions which you should understand and be able to apply properly in your own discussions and analyses, especially if you are a language student;
- a “**Further reading**” section which guides you to additional sources on the chapter contents which I find recommendable, usually of an introductory or at least not overly technical nature, in case you are interested in pursuing this further.

In addition, some features are found in certain chapters only, depending on the nature of the material covered. In fact, you will find that there are essentially two slightly different **chapter types**:

- chapters focusing on general **subjects, concepts, and issues** (i.e., [Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 8](#), in particular); and
- chapters focusing on **regions** and countries, and on their linguistic settings and regional varieties of English, respectively (i.e., [Chapters 4–6](#)).

Only the regional chapters provide you with materials which relate to specific areas, namely

- **maps** which, unless you know anyhow, show you the countries and locations under discussion, usually in a wider context;
- **timelines** which chronologically identify major events in the historical evolution of the region under discussion; and, of course,
- the **text samples** referred to above.

Finally, at the end of the book you'll find some sections which will also support your understanding of the text and your ability to access specific parts of it or to deepen your familiarity with the subject matter:

- an **appendix** which presents and illustrates the **phonological symbols** employed, for readers who have little or no familiarity with phonetic transcription;
- a second **appendix** summarizing guiding questions which can be asked on the status and properties of English in any region;
- a **glossary** which explains and illustrates technical terms in an understandable fashion (well, at least so I hope);
- the **references** list which provides the documentation which I owe to the colleagues and writers on whose work I have built, and which might guide you to further sources in case you are interested; and, finally,
- the **index** which should help you to spot pages where specific subjects are dealt with more extensively.

As has been implied above, however, that is not all. There is a website which accompanies this book; you find it at www.cambridge.org/edgarschneider. It provides

- the **audio files** for the text samples transcribed in the book, and further samples referred to in the exercises; and
- **links** to further interesting materials, especially other language-related websites.

So – (I hope you'll) enjoy!