THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH AS AN ASEAN LINGUA FRANCA AND ITS IMPACT ON ENGLISH TEACHING IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

As English becomes an established lingua franca in the ASEAN region, what should be the pedagogical approach to oral skills and pronunciation teaching in the region? Should teachers target common features and patterns developing in ASEAN English or target more "Western" pronunciation? This study strives to balance the discussion of the importance of phonological differences within lingua francas with the importance of mutual intelligibility, especially for political and educational entities. Empowering multilingual national teachers is crucial and should be accomplished without negating the assistance of visiting EFL teachers within the ASEAN context. Current teaching theory surrounding English as a lingua franca is largely lacking any congruency with current practice within the ASEAN region. English teaching in Vietnam is specifically explored, within the question of whether current lingua franca theory can be applied within the context in a pragmatic way.

Keywords*:* lingua franca, mutual intelligibility, phonological features, pronunciation

Introduction

English as a lingua franca (ELF), is now being used widely throughout Asia as the communicative language of choice for business, medicine, and political communication. When English develops as a lingua franca in a specific area it often develops specific patterns of production that are mutually intelligible in that speech community, but may in fact hinder mutual intelligibility with outside communities. Common pronunciation patterns that mirror ASEAN languages are beginning to be cemented or fossilized within these speech groups. Why is there pressure to refer to language interference errors in a speech community as normal patterns of a lingua franca? What then should the pragmatic goal be for the teacher? To what extent should teaching focus on bringing students to a production level that mirrors what is represented in the Asian lingua franca context? Or, should native-speaker like pronunciation be taught so that students will be more able to communicate with individuals from all English speech communities, including those of the inner, outer, and expanding circles? Many of these questions do not have easy answers. In this study, the focus will be on three major areas; defining English as an ASEAN lingua

franca, cultural and pragmatic issues and the influence of these issues on English teaching in Vietnam.

The status of English

Any generalisations about the English language need to acknowledge the diversity hidden by those two words and also the debates about changing perceptions of how the status of English should be described. Is it a second or a foreign or an international language? When is it a lingua franca? The term "lingua franca" describes languages "used as a means of communication among people who do not speak the native languages of their communication partners" (Gramley, 2012, p. 174). In outlining the language's history Gramley (2012) makes reference to varieties such as African English, New Zealand English and, closer to the geographical area of our discussion, to Singlish (Singapore English) and Hong Kong English.

English has been described as spreading for largely pragmatic reasons in East Asia today. In other words, it is "what makes communication possible" across the region (Kam & Wong, 2003, p. 3). In Vietnam, English is recognized as "an international language and … the language for business, commerce, computer science and efficient use of the Internet" (Vang, 2003, p. 455). Thus, all discussion of how English should be taught in South East Asia, should originate from the needs and goals of those learning the language.

The teaching of English

Issues relating to the teaching of English as an international language include practical matters and questions of wider philosophical concern. As an example of the former, in speaking about the teaching of English in Vietnam, Kam and Wong (2003) mention three shortages: of teachers, of textbooks and of other teaching resources "especially in remote areas" (p. 18). In response to these needs the support of "international organisations and donors" (Vang, 2003, p. 461) was welcomed. These practical concerns must intersect with current research and theory into the study of English as an international language.

Wider concerns have been addressed for some time by both native and non-native speakers of English. Holliday (2005), for instance, is concerned with perceptions held by TESOL expatriates. Speaking of "culturism in TESOL" (p. 24), he illustrates his point with examples from an audience he addresses at a conference for "English speaking Western teachers" working in an East Asian country he chose not to name. In summary he noted a strong "them and us" thread running through the audience.

Another, related concern is which variety of English should be taught. Once the distinction was worded as British versus American, but the debate became more complicated when countries like Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa entered the arena. Then came forms of English which developed

within the region, such as Singapore English. So, which English should be taught in Vietnam?

English in Vietnam

Unlike many ASEAN countries where English has been taught for more than 50 years, Vietnam's countrywide exposure to English began after 1986. From the period of 1954 to 1975, Russian was the main foreign language studied. However, this varied in the different regions of Vietnam. Hoang (2013), a professor in Vietnam, brings out this point:

> In South Vietnam, English was the dominant foreign language; it was studied for direct interactions with the USA. In North Vietnam, in contrast, although four foreign languages (Russian, Chinese, French, and English) were recognized nationally, Russian topped the list in the formal educational system; and like English in the South, Russian in the North was studied for direct interactions with the former Soviet Union (p. 2).

It was only after 1986 when Vietnam started its "open door" policy that the study of English became expanded. English is now a required subject beginning in primary school (beginning in grade 3) all the way up to upper secondary school (Hoang, 2013, p. 2)

Vietnam has yet to have a World English or the development of a generally established register. Because of this, English in Vietnam is at the beginning of its development. Does this change how we should interact with error correction to pave the way for a more mutually intelligible future? In addition, Vietnamese are less interested in using English as a means of expressing their identity and more interested in making money and establishing a bright future for themselves within the international community. French is the language that is most associated with colonialism in Vietnam. Thus, English, has more of a clean slate as it is being used in the country.

Vietnam desires to use English as a way of showing its new level of development. In 2009, the U.S. Department of State and MOET, the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, worked on a project to create a plan to upgrade education in the country. One aspect of this goal, centered on making English an advantage for Vietnamese people. This would allow Vietnamese to interact actively with both the growing regional economy and the international economy. This would enhance the competitiveness of Vietnam within the next 10 years. As the study reports, "This would mean that Vietnam goes from last place in [the Asian] seven-country comparison of English language skills to a place of prominence and high achievement". This would mean that in achieving high levels of progress in English language ability, Vietnam would have an advantage over neighboring countries in the region within the next 10-15 years (DOS, p. 49).

Why is English the language of choice for ASEAN?

This paper will focus on the more measurable characteristics of English as a lingua franca for ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. English is an important part of education in all of these countries, although the educational scene looks different in all of them as they wrestle with the politics of bilingual education and how it affects society. ASEAN has been communicating cross-culturally in the Asian sub-region in English for more than forty years. It is quite clear that understanding the language and vision of ASEAN is important in determining education goals in Vietnam, as the two are interlinked.

A lingua franca in a country or region is often chosen because of its neutral nature. So the question comes to the surface, does English pose a threat? In South East Asia, Mandarin would be a difficult language for ASEAN to communicate in because it culturally seems to pose a threat to other smaller countries. In the Philippines, Tagalog is seen as a dominant language and there is resistance to widespread learning of the language. English, however, is met with little to no resistance due to its relative political neutrality in the region. However, because English is an unrelated language with no native speaker representation in the area, it is in a sense a non-threatening language to be used for the ASEAN community. To give one nation's language within ASEAN the privilege of being the lingua franca would again give a more dominant nation even more power. Kirkpatrick talks about how in Indonesia it was Malay that was chosen to unite the multilingual country, because it posed no major threat. Javanese was the most dominant and populous language group and was therefore considered a threat. Thus, "the adoption of Javanese as the national lingua franca would privilege an already powerful group" (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 213). It is because English does not present a modern political threat to any entity in the ASEAN or wider Asian context, that it has become the language of choice.

Why is ASEAN English a lingua franca and not a World English?

It becomes confusing to discuss this subject without drawing clarifications between the existence of a "World English" and a lingua franca in any context. Countries such as India, Nigeria, and Singapore would be considered to have a World English. Many of the variations in these nations have been produced for many years and are quite fossilized within the speech community. Thus, lingua franca can be defined as "a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication" (Firth 1996, p. 240) as quoted in (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 213). Therefore, ASEAN English is not a World English as it applies to the entire sub-region of Southeast Asia, because this would encompass more than just one background culture, lan-

guage, and country. Instead, the variety of English used for ASEAN's purposes mirrors the above definition, and is then a lingua franca.

In addition, Kirkpatrick (2011) points out that English for ASEAN purposes is not a world English because there is no code mixing. People who share a common language in addition to English will always naturally add words into the mix of the English they are speaking. This is not present in lingua francas. World Englishes are concerned about identity and culture, while lingua francas are concerned with communication (p. 219). Certainly the English spoken in the ASEAN context is one used primarily used for pragmatic purposes. These include the furthering of business and trade, rather than the purpose of cultural expression. There are of course times when cultural interaction is a characteristic of ASEAN events, but this does not dominate the main purpose of English within ASEAN.

Cultural similarities among the countries of ASEAN

There are cultural norms among the countries involved in ASEAN that would not be considered norms for the West. These can be present in English as a lingua franca for the ASEAN community without it being a "World English". Kirkpatrick (2011) lists some of these cultural norms in relation to the development of English as a lingua franca for ASEAN. One of these pragmatic norms is deflecting rather than accepting compliments. In Asian countries this is a cultural norm that can be seen across the spectrum of ASEAN countries. The second, is that Asian speakers often give the reason for a request before stating the request itself. Speakers are generally allowed to finish their turn without interruption. In relation to this concept, Kirkpatrick (2011) continues,

> Far from suggesting that speakers of English as a lingua franca in ASEAN settings should adopt native-speaker norms, therefore, they should be encouraged to retain their own pragmatic norms when using English as a regional lingua franca, as these norms are more likely to be shared by the people with whom they are interacting. This also means that the goal of language learning needs to be significantly re-shaped in contexts where the major role of English is as a lingua franca. (p. 220)

ASEAN members should be encouraged and allowed to use English to serve their own cultural pragmatic norms. That is the very definition of using English as an international language. So how unified is English in the context of ASEAN? How will this cultural similarity and diversity affect the incorporation of new idioms and words developed for cultural expressions?

Phonologically similar features in ASEAN English

Kirkpatrick (2011) talks about how English as an ASEAN English lingua franca has shared phonological features. The first feature is a reduction of con-

sonant clusters. For example this can be seen in the dropping of voiceless final consonant clusters, “first-firs”. In addition, the dental fricative /θ/ is often produced as a plosive, such as in Kirkpatrick's example, “many thing [tɪŋ]”. The merging of long and short vowel sounds is also an example in the research as a shared phonological feature. An example of this is the morphing of /iy/ to /ɪ/. Speakers of English as an ASEAN lingua franca also seem to share a reduction of initial aspiration of voiceless consonants, such as “they will teach [diytʃ]”. Other similarities are the lack of reduced vowels and stressed pronouns that should not be stressed, “HE has been in Singapore”, as well as heavy end-stress, “the incidental WAY” (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 218).

Kirkpatrick suggests that these shared features are caused by physiological difficulty or by the influence from the speaker's first languages. Of course, these two concepts are inter-related with the physiological difficulty being originated in the fact that their first language does not incorporate these sounds (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 218). All of my Vietnamese students share every one of the above features. Yet in class, when I encounter these features in my pronunciation lessons, I see these “features” as interlanguage errors that impede mutual comprehensibility. There is explicit interlanguage interference going on, which is even supported by the words of Kirkpatrick, who later condemns the idea of correction. The top three pronunciation difficulties that my students encounter are final consonant production, lax vs. tense vowels, and stress, both word and sentence level. Most Asian languages exhibit syllable stress, which includes Vietnamese. Therefore, extreme difficulty with stress production and producing English in a mono-tone syllable stress pattern, can and should be labeled errors of interlanguage interference.

Mutual intelligibility

Some of the biggest hurtles for Vietnamese students in reaching mutual intelligibility are the production of final consonants, syllable and sentence stress, the /iy/ to /ɪ/ vowel contrast, and reduced vowel forms. These hurtles almost exactly mirror what Kirkpatrick describes as “features”. These errors in pronunciation are indeed contrastive and interfere in comprehension and intelligibility. For example, in English “bee”, “beat”, “bead”, and “beast” are all contrastive words. The production of final consonants and consonant clusters then must be seen as generally contrastive. By producing sentence stress incorrectly, ASEAN participants run the risk of highlighting a word in an inappropriate way, with a meaning that is unintended. In English, this can create a tone of impatience, impoliteness, and can even be contrastive in meaning.

The /iy/ to /ɪ/ vowel contrast also presents word forms that are contrastive. Although some of the meanings of these forms could be determined by context, many of them are very similar in meaning. For example, “did” and “deed”, “fill” and “feel” could be used in similar contexts and mean something quite different. I am not convinced that these set of “features” are uninvolved with problems of mutual intelligibility. This brings up the question, “To what

extent can a lingua franca develop non-standard phonological and grammatical forms and still retain mutual intelligibility?"

Kirkpatrick argues that the phonological patterns are varieties that should be taught rather than native-speaker norms. However, in the research of Jenkins (2000), there is a phonological core that needs to be preserved in the production of English as a lingua franca in order to preserve mutual intelligibility. The most important areas listed by Jenkins were, "1, Most consonant sounds, 2, Appropriate consonant cluster simplification, 3, Vowel length distinctions, and 4, Nuclear stress" (p. 132). Final consonants both voiced and voiceless, as well as final consonant clusters, were considered by Jenkins as important for phonological intelligibility. Vowel length, specifically pronunciation differences between tense and lax vowels, such as /ɪ/ and /iy/ are also important for intelligibility, especially in minimal pairs. Finally, as Jenkins states, "Nuclear stress is crucial for intelligibility in ILT" (p. 153). Nuclear stress entails problems with misplaced stress, particularly contrastive or emphatic stress, as detailed above. Thus we can surmise that the "variations" of ASEAN English as described by Kirkpatrick, in fact encompass the lingua franca core that do impact mutual intelligibility as described by Jenkins.

In addition, there are times when errors that are seen as phonological "norms" or "features" are stigmatizing errors. In interaction with other Asian, Western or even African countries, these errors might result in stigmatizing political and social interaction. Vietnam and other countries also interact with a global community of countries politically. ASEAN is increasingly involved with Australia, the EU, the UN, and the USA. A lingua franca merely for ASEAN operations may require using English as more than an Asian lingua franca, but as in international one.

Defining goals

So what should our goals be in teaching Vietnamese students or any student in an ASEAN country? Should we aim to promote the pronunciation features of English as an ASEAN lingua franca? Should teachers restrict themselves from correcting pronunciation patterns that they see as errors if they represent part of the "linga franca core" ? Kirkpatrick (2011) has a strong view in relation to this question. He argues that students should be taught English later in school. He argues that the main reason language teaching is started so early is because native-like pronunciation is desired. With the goal being English as a language for inter-ASEAN purposes only, this desire is no longer as important (p. 222).

Whatever happened to the concept of shooting high? High being defined in this context as the ability to communicate with the largest group of people in the world as possible. Is it not also probable that people in the ASEAN context will also need English to do business with people from other Asian countries, Europe, Australia, the UK, India, Africa and the US? By allowing these six main problems to be continued without remediation in the lingua franca of Asia we are resigning it to the process of continually decreasing mutual intel-

ligibility. As Englishes are allowed to grow apart without checks or balances, their mutual intelligibility will gradually decrease. Possibly in the future a new lingua franca will be necessary. By delaying English until secondary school, students lose an important step-ahead for their future.

Comments similar to those of Kirkpatrick's must be placed in the present realistic situation that is found in most of the countries under the ASEAN umbrella. A report of the US Department of State (2009) states:

> According to a 2003 comparison of English language education in seven Asian Pacific Countries (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam), Vietnam lagged significantly behind in terms of frequency of instruction and the grade level at which English is introduced as a compulsory subject. Although there is a growing awareness in Vietnam of the need for communicative English language skills, the prevailing practice appears to be a grammar, reading, and memorization approach in public schools. (DOS, p. 48)

Hence, is the theoretical idea of instructing students in ASEAN English pronunciation valid? And if this is pushed, will this kind of pronunciation indeed result in communicative competency? Vietnam is already far behind other more developed countries in the region and wants to use English education as a means to encourage and sustain future development. Vietnam wants to use every educational opportunity to get ahead as best they can. ELF theories that are based in creating and protecting cultural identity, might in fact be seen as impractical and undesirable by the actual students and educational entities involved.

Jenkins (2009) disagrees with Kirkpatrick's pedagogical approach to ELF. Instead she states:

> The second proviso is that even if and when ELF features have been definitively identified and perhaps eventually codified, ELF researchers do not claim that these features should necessarily be taught to English learners. In other words, they do not believe either that pedagogic decision about language teaching should follow on automatically from language descriptions. (p. 202)

Just because we are investigating the aspects shared within a specific lingua franca, this does not entail that those aspects should be taught pedagogically.

Tran Thi Lan, a member of the faculty at the Hanoi University of Foreign Studies has excellent insight into the topic of pedagogy. She questions how practical it is to have translator's training only in variations of English from the Inner Circle. Often graduates do not have clients who are native speakers (Tran, 2000, p. 4). I agree with Tran that it is important to be informed about English in use from countries all around the world. Yet, just because inner-

circle English is being taught does not mean that the learners acquire an inner-circle English pronunciation.

The question generally becomes, what is the outcome and what is the goal? In general, ASEAN English is the product of people aiming towards an English that would be equivalent to native-speaker English, however, interlanguage interference has caused the general patterns and forms. So, with a goal of inner-circle English, it is very possible that the outcome will be an English that still has very elements of the L1 present. It is very difficult for a learner to develop native-like pronunciation and proficiency. Therefore, the question that is not being asked is, what will be the outcome, if the goal is less strict? What will be the outcome if the patterns of interlanguage interference in ASEAN English are the goal? Just because individuals become proficient in English as an ASEAN lingua franca does not entail that they will be able to understand English speakers from Asian countries like Japan, Korea, or China, which are not members of the ASEAN community.

An important part of the discussion remains in defining the specific goals of Vietnamese students. What are their future vocational goals? How do they desire to use English in the future? Hoang (2013) states that most Vietnamese students at the university level fall into three main categories. First, some students view English as the means to get more lucrative employment in the future. Second, a small percentage need English to move forward as students by enrolling in study programs in other English-speaking countries. Finally, the majority of them learn English in order to simply pass the examinations (p. 13). Jobs that involve English are growing at a fast rate of speed. Often students are unsure of what they want to do, yet they believe that English is the key to success. Students that desire to study abroad generally are considering Australia and Korea as their most likely options with the U.S. encouraging more students to apply to graduate programs as well. Many students simply want to pass their exams to obtain a college degree, so that many more opportunities will be available for them, whether or not they involve using English.

In defining our goals for teaching we must consider, "What does Vietnam want us to teach?" MOET stated its goals for the Institute for Educational strategies and Curriculum Development as cited in Hoang:

> To attain a certain level of understanding of English and American cultures, to become aware of cross-cultural differences in order to be better overall communicators, to better inform the world of the Vietnamese people, their history and culture, and to take pride in Vietnam, its language and culture. (Hoang, 2013, p. 17)

By learning English, Vietnam has the goal of entertaining more cross-cultural dialogue and the progression of more modern knowledge about the Vietnamese people and their culture. English will be the language in which to educate the world about the Vietnam of today.

Cultural implications

When considering English as an Asian language, many opportunities arise for cultural education, as well as tension. Kirkpatrick (2000) writes about the concept of English as an Asian language, in an article in the UK publication, the Guardian:

> But what variety of English will serve as the region's lingua franca? I suggest a variety, which reflects local cultural conventions and pragmatic norms is developing to serve this role. I further suggest that it is this regional variety that will be taught in schools, rather than an external 'native speaker' variety. (p. 1)

Kirkpatrick seems to take a very hard stance on the idea of English being untouched by Western Culture as it is taught in Asia. Yet, when he talks about "pragmatic norms", some of these pragmatic uses might be with and among Western speakers of English. Intercultural communication with Western cultures should still be viewed as viable intercultural communication. Students in Vietnam want to learn about other cultures and ways of behaving. This should not be singled down to the UK and the US, however, the UK and the US should not be vilified. Countries with many World Englishes should be explored and discovered.

Kirkpatrick (2000) goes on to discuss the idea that "English is being used by non-native speakers with other non-native speakers. The English that they use need not therefore reflect any "Anglo" cultural values" (p. 1). In response to this idea, I fully agree that there is a great need for mutual intelligibility between non-native speakers and non-native speakers. However, this does not mutually disregard the need for continued conversation between non-native speakers and native speakers. It is not necessary that speakers display "Anglo" cultural values, however, it is not hurtful for non-native speakers to understand how to interact with those from "Anglo" backgrounds as well as non-native speakers from other Asian cultural backgrounds. Kirkpatrick seems to overgeneralize the idea that Asian cultures are so innately similar that they must of course understand each other. It is true that Anglo culture should not be so imbedded in the practice of English teaching that learners cannot separate it from the language itself. However, Western cultures in and of themselves, are still cultures with value that deserve to be taught in balance with the teaching of other World English cultures.

Nguyen Thi Cam Le gives a helpful and intrinsically Vietnamese perspective to this discussion:

> It is my viewpoint that materials do not need to be totally representative of the local culture and that a balance should be maintained between foreign and local cultural concepts and images. This provides a rich opportunity for teachers to explain non-native cultural items, in addition to using localized content. However, it is very important for teachers to be aware of what the

> materials contain, so they can identify where to best represent local culture and where to explain nonnative elements... Explaining cultural differences is helpful because it gives teachers the opportunity to use English to analyze the differences between cultures. (2005, p. 3)

English should be used to describe and educate in reference to both foreign and local cultures.

It is important for any discussion of ASEAN to contain very clear respect for the differing cultural characteristics of all of the nations. The English language in this context is certainly less streamlined than Kirkpatrick makes it out to be. This raises the question of the importance of intercultural interaction. In some developing countries there seems to be an aversion to any discussion that links English to the culture of the West. Yet, any other culture is embraced with open arms. Proponents of these views argue that teaching must be neutral, yet in their description of the exclusion of Western culture they are lacking neutrality. By only concentrating on regional cultures we lose the opportunity for intercultural discussion. In the ASEAN context is it pragmatic that countries will be studying each other's cultures, using English as a base. Why is American or British culture completely excluded? Teaching culture should be based on inclusive awareness, not categorizing cultures in terms of superior and inferior. By reacting strongly against Western culture's inclusion in instruction, some scholars are committing the error of excluding Western culture based on underlying emotion. We must remember that when discussing cultural issues at a theoretical level, we are dealing with the whole of a country or a culture. Yet, practically, at the individual level, intercultural communication is happening whenever people of any culture interact.

The imperialism debate

There are strong voices within the sphere of ELF (English as a lingua franca), which refer to the teaching of native speaker pronunciation and culture as only imperialistic. However, the driving force behind English being a lingua franca is economic and communicative equality. The world wants to make money and to tell their story. In this sense, imperialism would be to not teach the lingua franca. Information is a means of independence and empowerment. Most NGOs and governmental organizations send native-speaking teachers in order to assist the development of other countries and establish healthy relations with them. Of course, many teachers of English come to Asia for purely economic gain. Yet, in much of the developing parts of Asia, teaching by native-speakers is done as a means of friendship and partnership. This concept is largely ignored in some scholarly circles.

Kirkpatrick cites Gordon Wu, "English is no longer some colonial language. It is the means [by which] we in Asia communicate with the world and one another" (Kirkpatrick, 2000, p. 1). Wu is reacting against the idea of being forced to speak "Anglo" English, because of it being tainted with the past

colonial overtones of the language. It is important to remember that linguistically, by saying one uses English to communicate with the world, they are saying that you will need to use English as a lingua franca, not just with Asia, but with other countries as well. If Asia develops an English lingua franca that has patterns that correlate with patterns of Asian interlanguage interference, these patterns will not be replicated with speakers of a European or African lingua franca.

By reacting against a "colonial" origin language, scholars are losing sight of the idea that "origin" should be weighed in a linguistically neutral way. Many scholars believe that languages as a whole originated from one origin language. Elements that many languages share are thought to have come from this origin language. There are no claims of superiority, but merely research being done within linguistic science. English came from somewhere. The language itself not a product of colonialism, but rather a language that should be valued in a strictly empirical sense. And as Krachu (1998) states, "But these constructs refer to the use of the medium. Such flaws are not intrinsic in the language" (p. 104). Cultural and scholarly neutrality is crucial in the discussion of an international lingua franca.

As an analogy, in the game "telephone", an original message is read to one person, then orally passed around to players in a circle. The fun is in the difference between the original message and the final understanding. Without introducing original messages, in this case by vilifying a language origin, there is a linguistic inevitability that English will separate to a point of excluding mutual intelligibility as a possibility. Another language as a lingua franca or a re-clarifying of an intelligible "standard" of English will be necessary at this point.

Should native English teachers be replaced?

Among ELF scholars, there are some that believe native-speaking teachers should be replaced to make way for multi-lingual teachers. Two of these scholars are House (2002) and Kirkpatrick (2011). These scholars make very broad statements about how native English speakers should be replaced entirely by multilingual English teachers. "... that is to say, multilingual English teachers (METs) replace native English teachers (NETs) as the source of linguistic 'norms' for the students...the second language speaker should be measured against the successful bilingual or multilingual speaker (House, 2002) cited in Kirkpatrick (2011, p. 221). Empowering multilingual English teachers should be a very important goal for all language teachers. And while it is very encouraging to see successful models for non-native speakers, how practical is it in Vietnam and in the other countries of ASEAN to completely remove native English teachers at this present time? Could it not be necessary in a country like Vietnam where English is fairly new to have native speakers involved in the training and empowerment of successfully multilingual teachers.

Kirkpatrick (2011) goes on to make his own comment on this subject:

> In the context of ASEAN, this means that successful multilinguals from the ten countries can provide the linguistic benchmarks against which learners are measured. The regional multilingual English language teacher provides a more appropriate linguistic model than the native English teacher. By recognizing that more appropriate linguistic model, we should be able to validate the countless multilingual teachers who have hitherto taught under the shadow of being viewed as somehow inferior to the native speaker (p. 221).

On a personal level, native-speaking teachers can work side-by-side with Vietnamese colleagues, establishing a level of equality and trust. Instead of creating feelings of inferiority, native English teachers should work to empower and promote their Vietnamese colleagues.

The most important question in this discussion is, "How practical is it that enough qualified multi-lingual professionals exist in developing countries like Vietnam?" Hoang describes the major problems experienced in teaching English in Vietnam, "First, there is a disproportionate demand-supply. With a population of over 85 million, of whom a sizeable proportion have a strong desire to learn English, the demand for English language teaching far outstrips the supply of native speaker and competent non-native speaker teachers" (p. 15). Thus, if Kirkpatrick wishes are carried out, at this point there will be even less teachers to be able to meet the demand in Vietnam. This is certainly not desirable by ASEAN or Vietnam itself.

Vietnam is also a developing country with a developing education system. Hoang (2013) points out that many teachers who teach at the primary and lower secondary levels are not fully qualified for the position (p. 16). Hoang also states that most teachers, even at the undergraduate university level, have never had a chance to study in an English-speaking country. He continues that most of them do not normally communicate or teach in English, and often fail to be able to teach in situations that require, "communicative interactions" (p. 16). If all countries were to follow Kirkpatrick's advice and ask all native-speaking teachers to leave, it is unlikely there would not be enough remaining multilingual teachers to adequately encourage communicative competence in Vietnam. If all Vietnamese individuals that had a high communicative ability in English decided to join the teaching profession in Vietnam, it might be possible to have enough multi-lingual teachers. However, with the current low salary of teachers in Vietnam at all levels, many highly proficient English speakers join other vocational fields to obtain a higher salary.

Practical implications for classroom error correction

Many scholars in ELF desire regional varieties of English to be taught, so that their community identity can be retained. While, this may be desirable in some cases, it is certainly true that many individuals in various contexts have instrumental motivation to learn a variety that is not regional in order to have

better job opportunities. This statement also begs the question, should fossilized errors and interlanguage interference errors be viewed as a positive development of a "regional variety of English"? When I talk to students about the existence of some of these errors, and how stigmatizing it would be if these words were used across cultures, they are shocked that they had not been told sooner. Some of this variety would cause embarrassment not just across "Anglo" and Asian cultural barriers, but also across Asian-to-Asian barriers of communication. For example, most Vietnamese students habitually refer to their boyfriend or girlfriend as their "lover". In many cultures, this kind of word is reserved for talking about relationships of a sexual nature. Should this kind of culturally stigmitizing language pattern be corrected or maintained as a cultural distinct language feature?

Jenkins (2009) deals with this topic in her discussion on English as a lingua franca:

> Two further provisos need stating in relation to ELF research. Firstly, ELF distinguishes between difference (i.e. from ENL) and deficiency (i.e. interlanguage or 'learner language'), and does not assume that an item that differs from ENL is by definition an error. It may instead by a legitimate ELF variant...At present it is still to some extent an empirical question as to which items are ELF variants and which ELF errors, and depends on factors such as systematicity, frequency, and communicative effectiveness (p. 202).

While Jenkin's comments are helpful, they still do not define exactly what "frequency and communicative effectiveness" is.

As an example of this dilemma, Vietnamese students use a small assortment of adjectives to describe many aspects of their life. The three most commonly used adjectives are "interesting", "comfortable", and "suitable". In Vietnamese, the world "hai" defined in English as "interesting" is able to describe a multitude of things. Songs, people, events, and objects, can all be "hai". When students use this word in English, there are often errors in the usage. If you call a person "interesting", this can often cause a misinterpretation of meaning. Not to mention the fact that the small variety in adjectives will inevitably result in a low oral TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC score, which most oral classes are designed to prepare students for. If one were to strictly follow the views of Kirkpatrick and others, it would be important to allow these "variations" to continue. Yet, these community wide variations may be a danger to the future success of Vietnamese students. TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS are important considerations for students, future teachers, and present teachers alike. Current teachers are being required to pass the IELTS exam with a score of 7 or above to continue teaching. This means that some teachers of English and those of French, Chinese, and Russian, may need to return to school for further English instruction.

The question of identity

Language often represents an important emotion of belonging and of personal and community identity. Yano (2009) writes, "The language belongs to all those who learn and use it, and for non-native speakers, in addition to providing access to the wider world, it is an additional means of expressing themselves, their identities, their societies, and their cultures" (p. 254). Lan agrees with Yano in that language should not be only limited to Westerners:

> It is reasonable to claim that when a language becomes international in character, it cannot be bound to any one culture. An Indonesian does not need to sound like a Briton or an American in order to communicate effectively in English with a Vietnamese at an ASEAN meeting. A Japanese does not need an appreciation of an Australian lifestyle in order to use English in her business dealings with a Filipino or a Malaysian (Lan, 2000, p. 4).

English should be taught in an international way. However, is the argument that English should be taught in a regional way to allow individuals to express their identity overstated at a practical level? Holliday (2005) explores this in her research. Some local teachers do comment that the "ownership of English" is sometimes overstated as something that is meaningful to every non-native speaker of English. For many teachers this kind of theoretical idea is far from their mind in their practical context. Holliday quotes Sullivan (2000),

> I agree that the ownership of English is changing, but I don't see this perspective from most of the local teachers I deal with. I think this is an issue that is seen as more important by native speakers than by non-native speakers. The concept of "ownership" is a new idea to most local teachers that I bring it up with. And they don't seem too interested. ... I just don't think that "ownership" is a concept that is very relevant to local teachers. They see English as necessary for economic, social, and political reasons, and use it as they need it. It's a pragmatic decision (Holliday, 2005, p. 165).

Most Vietnamese educators and students are most concerned with what makes sense pragmatically.

In response to identity in using English, Krachu (1998) has made some famously emotive statements at the end of his paper, "English as an Asian Language." He writes:

> The architects of each tradition, each strand, have moulded, reshaped, acculturated, redesigned, and, by doing so, enriched what was a Western medium. The result of a liberated English which contains vitality, innovation, linguistic mix, and cultural identity. And, it is not the creativity of the mon-

> olingual and monocultural; this creativity has rejuvenated the medium from exhaustion and has liberated it in many ways. (p. 106)

Intercultural interaction and communication is truly a beautiful medium, however, this statement makes some very wide linguistic assumptions. Almost all languages begin as being monocultural. Also, why is the culture of the West not enriching? Other languages that have a small user base and no intercultural dialogue, are they not rich and enriched in and of themselves? Did the language itself as a communication medium, not contain vitality? Linguistic mix sounds good on paper, but can cause difficulty when communication is the goal.

Conclusion: A balanced approach

Our goal should be one of balance. This must begin with awareness. Supporting awareness of World Englishes and English as an International lingua franca among Vietnamese students is crucial. I agree with Lan (2000) that it is important that students in Vietnam have an accurate picture of what is happening in the world. Many students are obsessed with having a native speaker accent to an extreme level. Rather than completely displacing the goal of native speaker like proficiency, the goal should be one of informed learning and mutual intelligibility. We should introduce a variety of Englishes into our classrooms. Nguyen (2005) states, "Therefore, it is time that we stopped the idealization of British, American, or Australian English. We should recognize the importance of being effective English speakers rather than sounding native-like" (p. 8). The goal should be mutual intelligibility and effective speaking, not idolization of native accents.

Yet, in acquiring this intelligibility, it should not be required that native-speakers be excluded from teaching or ignore the pronunciation of core phonological patterns that are within the lingua franca core (Jenkins, 2000). We should aim at the pronunciation pattern that will result in intelligibility not just in Asian lingua franca, but in International lingua franca. In the International lingua franca, of which the origin was British or Western English, there are core features in different world-wide lingua francas that originate from the origin contact language. Thus, in a logical way, the study of native speaker patterns should not be so denigrated. Nguyen (2005) words this kind of practical application as such, "English from BANA (Britain, Australia, North America) countries is important to study for purposes of intelligibility, as there is no doubt that certain norms are shaped by native use of English; however, we should also expose students to English varieties used by nonnative speakers and should use materials that include a variety of Englishes" (p. 9). There should be a balance of teaching core lingua franca elements from native-like pronunciation with the understanding of current World Englishes and lingua francas worldwide. Thus neither native nor non-native speakers should be subordinated.

Languages that come in contact with one another will always be continually interacting. This is a beautiful characteristic of a lingua franca. This contact will continue as English collides with Asian language use. English being used to explore Asian contexts and culture is an excellent and beautiful thing. It is exciting to see new analogies and pictures being painted and incorporated into English. However, this must be balanced with continued error correction in respect to interlanguage interference. In addition, "... English standards for international or intercultural communications should be based on intelligibility, grammatical acceptability, and social appropriateness" (Lan, 2000). There is also much to be could be said on the balancing of traditional teaching methods used in SEA countries with the newer methods being explored within TESOL methodology and being applied to the SEA classroom, but this goes beyond the scope and word space of the present article.

Finally, there are many aspects to consider as we weigh the importance of the development of English as a lingua franca in Asia. In the end, all cultures and languages must be approached with respect. The feelings and emotions of learners and cultures in contact must be considered. Voices that approach any culture or language in negative a way should be questioned. Awareness should be raised among students about the use of English with other non-native speakers in business and education. Students need to stop the idealization of native-accent and focus instead on developing fluid, intelligible, and effective speech. Theory must not be so removed from practicality that it is difficult to know how to apply it. As educators we must be both practical and focused on our context while looking ahead at ideological concerns. A balance between the two must be carefully achieved.

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