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The inclusivity of world Englishes

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Maayong buntag! Komusta! Good morning, and greetings to friends old and new! It is both a pleasure and an honor to welcome you to our Fifteenth Annual Conference, hosted by the Linguistic Society of the Philippines in Cebu City, Philippines.

I would like to thank the President, Professor Danilo Dayag, the Officers and Board of Directors, and the members of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines for their hospitality this week. Their careful planning and hard work has created an opportunity for us to conduct our academic meeting in an environment which exemplifies precisely what we are trying to understand and to describe: the interaction of the English language with other languages in a changing linguistic ecology.

The theme of the conference, ‘Connecting cultures through world Englishes: Convergence and diversity in language, literature, and pedagogy’, promises to engage our intellects in a series of valuable discussions worthy of past IAWE conferences. I look forward to seeing and hearing you at plenary sessions, papers, and informal meetings throughout the conference.

There could be no better place for this undertaking than Cebu City, with its historical traditions of cultural contact in a country famous for its linguistic complexity. Please join me and the IAWE Officers in expressing our gratitude to the people of the Philippines, in particular the representatives and residents of Cebu City, for their hospitality as well. Thank you!

Today I would like to talk about a specific ‘property of world Englishes, known by the term *inclusivity*. *Inclusivity* is formed from the adjective *inclusive*, itself from the verb *include* ‘to enclose, to close in, to take in’. I take it to mean, ‘a property of including, of counting in, of welcoming’. One can see the word in opposition to the words *exclusivity*, *exclusive*, and *exclude*, all etymologically related to the same Latin verb *claudio*, *claudere*, *clausi*, *clausus* ‘to close’. *Exclusivity*, of course, means ‘a property of keeping out’. That is enough of an etymological approach to meaning: Noah Webster states that, ‘the current meaning of a word depends on its use in a nation’ (Webster as cited in Crowley 1991: 89–90), and in my usage, *inclusivity* has a positive if vague connotation, and *exclusivity* sounds somewhat negative, if also connoting ‘high value’, as in ‘an exclusive offer’, ‘an exclusive country club’. This observation is accompanied by the uneasy feeling that my own usage has excluded me from an imaginary club.

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Inclusivity, for its part, is not entirely positive. Like its antonym it reminds one of legal language, where an inclusion or exclusion is a specific statement including or excluding a provision. And yet, I think it is suitable that my words following are essentially a celebration of a principle by which our association, the International Association of World Englishes, IAWE, [jəweɪ] or [ɑwəweɪ], has achieved its success. Nevertheless, they contain a hint of reminder or admonition: Inclusivity, like any other good thing, is something to be worked at.

What does inclusivity mean, as a linguistic principle? By this word I am trying to identify something that I have encountered in my experiences of varieties of English on the one hand, and of IAWE on the other. By *inclusivity* I intend to characterize the point of view of the world Englishes approach. *Inclusivity* could be defined as a tendency to go beyond what is known, definite, and comfortable; to take into account different cultural and theoretical backgrounds, different points of view, different and even opposing values and arguments. In contrast to the *in-* prefix contained in the word, it could involve breaking *out* of, or suspending, our language ideologies in order to recognize their character and effect; it could be questioning assumptions and tentative conclusions on the basis of including new data. Inclusivity as a principle is based on something we do as linguists and more importantly as language users and language makers.

Bolton uses the term *inclusivity* in several places, including his analysis and review of approaches to world Englishes:

The Kachruvian approach has been characterized by an underlying philosophy that has argued for the importance of *inclusivity* and *pluricentricity* in approaches to the linguistics of English worldwide, and involves not merely the description of national and regional varieties, but many other related topics as well, *including* contact linguistics, creative writing, critical linguistics, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, lexicography, pedagogy, pidgin and creole studies, and the sociology of language [italics added] (2006: 240).

What we see here is an illustration of topic inclusivity, which can be defined as a willingness to include topics or sub-fields within a particular treatment, argument, or analysis. In the discussion that follows I will pursue this notion of subject-related or topical inclusivity of approaches, and explore its relationship to other meanings of the term *inclusivity* that are important in the theorization and linguistic practice found within the study of world Englishes.

In the first place, topical inclusivity can be reduced to the list of topics considered relevant in a particular linguistic field or sub-field. As can be seen in the Bolton quotation, the linguistic fields relevant to the study of world Englishes is both broad and stimulating. Potentially any level of linguistic analysis, from phonetics to pragmatics, and any sociolinguistic manifestation of language, from contact linguistics to bi- or multilingual creativity, comes within the orbit of world Englishes. Bolton and Davis (2006) take up this question, examining the diversity of topics in the papers published in the journal *World Englishes* from 1985 to 2004. Two points strike me as interesting in this content analysis: First, the balance between the study of specific features of specific varieties on the one hand, and the consideration of topics of broader sociolinguistic import (including questions of history, politics, and sociology of language), and second, the balance between linguistic theorization and applications, with the majority of papers falling between these two extremes to rest in the medium of a theoretically informed, empirically based establishment of sociolinguistic fact with relevance to applied linguistic issues. I attribute this balance to

two factors: First, the tastes, attitudes, and philosophy of the founding editors, Braj Kachru and Larry Smith, who as editors from 1985 through 2005 made the journal what it is, and who continue to direct and inspire its point of view. Second, there is something about the theoretical underpinnings of world Englishes as a subject that requires this inclusivity (and thus lends itself to the vision of the founding editors). I now turn to the work of Braj Kachru to examine the sociolinguistic basis of world Englishes' inclusivity.

Kachru (1985 [1981]: 128) directs us toward a sociolinguistic conception of the term *inclusivity*:

The *all-embracing* concept of the English-using speech community entails a strong generalization, since this speech community *includes* a number of subcommunities which may be divided in various ways.

Here Kachru makes the point that our concept of this community needs to take into account the differences between subcommunities. In other words, the familiar concept of a language community, 'all those who speak a particular language', is questioned in terms of empirical differences between a host of English-speaking subcommunities, 'included' within that community. If they are to be 'included', they must first be recognized empirically, and following this, they may be categorized in a number of ways (ideally on empirical grounds as well).

In order to understand empirical inclusivity in world Englishes we need to spend a little bit of time on the work of the other Kachru (the linguist, not the physicist). Yamuna Kachru's recent discussion of corpus linguistics, grammar, and applied linguistics illustrates the significance of inclusivity in the descriptive method. The author surveys pragmatics, grammar, and lexicological usage, and in each case identifies a difference between the behaviour as described by grammars, to behaviour as acquired by learners, to behaviour as reflected in corpora. Rather than adopting any one of these points of view, Yamuna Kachru compares and contrasts all three, not to discredit any one of them, but to suggest that there is scope (room) for further semantic and pragmatic interpretation of the corpus data in question, and then for sensitive application of corpus data to problems of grammatical description and those of applied linguistics. Corpus linguistics, she suggests, is central to an empirical validation of theoretical constructs, 'the linguistic universals which formal linguists propose have to be evaluated against data from natural languages' (Kachru 2008: 1). By way of illustration, her point about prepositional modifiers versus relative clauses strikes home: Should grammatical descriptions and learner's textbooks of English devote so much more attention and space to the relative clause construction as opposed to the prepositional modifiers? (see Kachru 2008: 3) She uses the example:

- (1) I have left the books on the *table which is in the hallway*.

She sets this against the example:

- (2) I have left the books on *the table in the hallway*.

I was struck by this example, particularly as I had recently completed a work using relative clauses as a shorthand for other grammatical discussion (Davis 2006). In other words, my practice directly reflected the obsessions of grammatical description, and unwittingly passed over precisely the grammatical construction that Kachru identifies. Furthermore, the significant role played by prepositions in different world Englishes will not escape this audience, many of whom have experienced and described variation in the selection of

prepositions in Philippine varieties of English in particular. In another example, Kachru identifies a gap between the observation of the Quirk grammar (1985: 225) that the epistemic modal verb *must* does not appear in the negative, and the data of Collins (1991), which shows that, in an Australian English corpus, *mustn't* appears with the same frequency as epistemic *can't*. Kachru's (2008) overall point is that carefully interpreted data from linguistic corpora need to be included in language theorization, description, and applied linguistics. Her discussion, however, illustrates the empirical sense of inclusivity upon which our method resides: The evolving English language exemplifies variation which must be included as an empirical test of our linguistic assumptions, hypotheses, and generalizations.

Turning back to Braj Kachru's theorization of world Englishes, in another chapter of *The Alchemy of English* (1985), Kachru defines this sociolinguistic reality in systemic functionalist terms, calling to mind the work of Halliday and Firth before him:

A functionalist, then, views an institutionalized second language as a living and changing system, naturally acquiring new identities in new sociocultural contexts. *The context provides 'meaning'*, and as the cultural and linguistic contexts change the language *acquires* new meanings (Kachru 1985: 30).

In this one can see a very clear identification of the inherently changeable nature of systematicity, if language is seen as a system set within a cultural context and bearing meanings that arise in that particular cultural context. The point is that neither the system (nor those describing it accurately) can exclude newness, whether from gradual or rapid change. Inclusivity is thus extended from purely linguistic data to the area of sociolinguistic function.

The importance of sociolinguistic function as the means to pry open the door for the recognition and description of world Englishes is given elegant and compelling form in the next quotation:

One has to accept the fact that humans have a way of *blending* the language with its functions, and thereby creating a new *linguistic ecology*. English has been going through this process since at least the seventeenth century. The reassurance of the British linguist J.R. Firth is still, therefore, very relevant and meaningful. He specifically address the question of international uses of English (Kachru 1985: 31).

I draw your attention to Kachru's words *blending* and *linguistic ecology*. What we are seeing in this quotation is further clarification of the removal of the boundary between language and other forms of lived experience. Language, in this view, may be distinguished from but nevertheless included within life, and conversely, any adequate account of language must include reference to the part it plays in life. Kachru then quotes Firth:

Is so vast that it must be further *circumscribed* to make it at all manageable. *To begin with*, English is an international language in the Commonwealth, the Colonies and in America. International in the sense that English serves the American *way of life* and might be called American, it serves the Indian way of life and has recently been declared an Indian language within the framework of the federal constitution. In another sense, it is international not only in Europe but in Asia and Africa, and serves various African ways of life and is increasingly the all-Asian language of politics. *Secondly, and I say 'secondly' advisedly*, English is the key to what is described in a common cliché as 'the British way of life' (Firth [1956] as cited in Kachru 1985: 31).

Firth's position, which Kachru identifies accurately, is perhaps less clearly signalled in comparison with Kachru's own words immediately preceding, but *To begin with* and the advised use of *secondly* suggest that the 'international' (and multi-national) functions of English serving different ways of life leave no doubt that Firth takes non-British forms of English seriously, and places the historic English of Britain in second place on the world stage (and, I must add, not second place to the United States and its particular form of English, but second to varieties across several continents). A warning note is sounded in the word *circumscribed* (if the study of English was vast then, what would Firth make of it now?) but perhaps this can be taken with the following sentence as an early 'counter-core' argument: If something must be cut out, do not under any circumstances cut out the 'international' functions of English in favour of the 'British' or 'Anglo-American' traditions of English. Kachru concludes this passage with the following words:

These words are worthy of attention at a time when the interplay of language attitudes, especially concerning English, demands *pragmatism* and *linguistic realism* (Kachru 1985: 31).

I cannot improve on this observation. Just as Kachru found Firth's words worthy of attention 29 years after they were published so too they are still worthy of attention 24 years after he quoted them. Realism can be taken to mean including data related to these ways of life (arguably a kind of empiricism). Pragmatism asks us to view these ways of life from a vantage point unclouded by ideology (in so far as this is possible).

It is necessary to make one remark concerning the theoretical framework drawn up by Kachru. In taking up the 'context of situation' suggested by Firth and implemented by Halliday, and then adapting it to the problem of world Englishes, Kachru has created within linguistics the possibility to see world Englishes for what they are, and to describe them in all their complexity of history, structure, and function. However, the fluidity of context of situation requires that linguists in their description and analysis leave a great deal of room for things to be otherwise. This is not a brand of philosophical scepticism, or linguistic agnosticism, so much as a pragmatic and forgiving awareness that our descriptions and analyses are and will always be chasing and not capturing numerous contexts of situation. Kachru states:

The global spread of English and its various functions in the sociolinguistic context of each English-speaking country make generalizations about the language almost impossible. Because each regional variety of English has its distinct historical, acquisitional, and cultural context, the genesis of each variety must be seen within that perspective. The generalizations from one localized variety are as deceptive as the blind man's description of the elephant. At the same time, each description contributes to our understanding of the Englishness of world Englishes, and their specific sociolinguistic contexts (Kachru 1985 [1983]: 83).

I hope that listeners and readers will forgive a description of this problem as the *lapu lapu* factor in the context of situation, named for a word which in Cebu (and the Philippines more generally) carries two meanings: First, the proper noun identifying the warrior who defeated Magellan, and second, a fish of warlike propensity (the grouper or garoupa). To take the second comparison first, the context of situation always expands or changes beyond our ability to describe it adequately, and is like the fish that got away (bigger and more mysterious than any we have caught). To take the first comparison last, the context of situation actively resists description and generalization, like the warrior resisting foreign

cultural aggression. Regardless of one's cultural point of view, the moment afforded by Lapu Lapu, or the Welsh prince Owain Glyndŵr, causes us to question the universality claimed by our linguistic generalizations. Perhaps this is the legacy that world Englishes has inherited from the experience of colonization and imperialism: not guilt (as Kachru points out elsewhere), not hegemonic, imperial or economic 'progress' (as so many popular commentators imagine), but awareness of the Other that exists within the context of situation and which survives to elude and therefore limit description. We need to be inclusive in world Englishes in memory of that unconquered and even undescribed Other which may again be seen to emerge from context.

The alert listener or reader could turn this argument on its head, claiming that Kachru here *excludes* those generalizations which cover all varieties of the language. However, he is including sociolinguistic context, though this demands particularity, and he accepts that this will develop academic understanding of what holds Englishes together. The point is not to deny the value of describing, but to recognize the limitations of any one description.

A final point I wish to make about inclusivity is that it is not simply a meta-theoretical term. It is not just a word describing approaches to world Englishes, be they descriptive, historical, sociolinguistic, or some other. A further argument could be made that, subsequent to linguistic resistance (which, after all, involves at least one type of exclusion, that of keeping out an undesired influence), various cultures throughout the world have adopted and re-invented English. This adoption, through duress or desire, requires a kind of inclusivity or acceptance as its first step. This could be termed 'communicational inclusivity', and without question must be related to issues of intelligibility discussed by Larry Smith and others. I do not have time or space right now to explore this last point, but feel that it must be said. Philosophical inclusivity in linguistic description is not the only way in which the history of world Englishes may influence our present practice as linguists. It may be that inclusivity exists in language use at a more fundamental level, when pragmatic needs outweigh ideology sufficiently to give speakers the courage to take trans-lingual and trans-varietal communicational risks and the compassion to hear and create understanding from these attempts. This behaviour returns us to Firth's context of situation, and is found in many places throughout Cebu City and the Philippines today. I hope that my remarks have not strayed too far afield, or taken too many communicational risks, and I ask for the most compassionate interpretation you can provide. Thank you, and *Daghang salamat!*

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