World Englishes in the ESL Context, Eh

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"*How's she goin', bye? Judas, that Jarome Iginla's on fire…buddy godda Gordie Howe hat trick last night…dja see im' deke Brewer out a his jock*?"

And so went the telephone conversation with my hockeyloving father, a native of Cape Breton, who lives in Regina (temporarily for 27 years). I responded with an Alberta blurb, "*Yeah, he can dipsy-doodle. I guess we'll hafta root for the Flames cuz the Oilers choked big time.*"

Sure, we speak English, but just whose English do we speak? If Singapore and India can have their own hybrids of so-called *World Englishes*, how about my father? Can Russell from Glace Bay be the spokesperson for *Cape Breton English*? As an ESL instructor in Canada, should I teach my students more than *standard Canadian English*? Better yet, should I acknowledge that my many of advanced-level students *already* speak one kind of English--a *World English*? The world is changing - my job is changing - again.

The importance of recognizing World Englishes is increasing throughout language learning research and related EFL literature; however, is this trend being reflected in ESL contexts? Is there even a need for raising the issue of World Englishes in ESL course curricula, materials development, and pedagogy? In my experience using ESL resources, I have found that the topic of global English, is quite prevalent. However, the issue of the spread of English and the accompanying effects on communication throughout the world is hardly surprising to ESL learners who, more often than not, have already had firsthand experience in an environment in which English is creeping, or stomping.

Although having students discuss the worldwide *spread* of English can be done relatively easily, perhaps we ESL instructors could make better use of our time by introducing the varieties of English *within* our own country (e.g., Canadian dialects and slang as described in the video, *Talking Canadian*) This could be followed by encouraging the students to explain how English is *used* in their native countries, thereby addressing the topic of separate *World Englishes* rather than a singular *global* English. ESL instructors must be careful; looking at a language as an unstoppable entity demonstrates a simplistic view of the dynamic change that is taking place in the world: English is no longer owned by anyone.

While Graddol (1997) argues that, in this century, those who speak English alongside other languages will outnumber first-language speakers and, increasingly, will decide the global future of the language, Kachru and Nelson (2001) stress the importance of raising teacher awareness of the status and functions of Englishes in the world today. The circles model of the global situation of English (Kachru & Nelson, 2001) has become the standard framework of World Englishes studies. This model divides English speakers into three groups: the *inner circle*, where they speak English as a first (native) language (ENL); the *outer circle* where they speak it

as a second or additional language (ESL); and the *expanding circle*, where they use it as a foreign language (EFL) (Yano, 2001). Although the circles appear to attach well to the ENL, ESL and EFL labels, Kachru (1992) emphasizes that all speakers of World Englishes be recognized according to the concept of *WE-ness* and not be trapped in the dichotomy of *us* (ENL) and *them* (ESL/EFL).

Students should be encouraged to consider themselves within the concept of WE-ness as speakers of English--giving them a sense of identification with a personalized variety of English. Incorporating World Englishes into lessons will undoubtedly add to the responsibilities of already busy educators; nevertheless, English language teachers, as lifelong learners, can benefit from listening to presentations and reading essays about how English is used as both an international and an intranational means of communication. Indeed, in many countries English is used mostly as a means of communication between speakers of different mother tongues, none of which is English. By validating students' linguistic repertoires, we can all develop deeper knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of World Englishes. Furthermore, if we can instill a deeper sense of confidence in learners, especially young international students, then perhaps they will be better able to actively communicate in a second language that, until now, they have probably believed to be a *thing* owned by others. English is something *we* speak; it is not something*they* own.

In response to my opening questions: Yes, I should teach my students more than *standard Canadian English*—a little regional slang and a few more Canadian idioms can spice things up a bit; and, yes, I should acknowledge that many of my advanced-level students *already* speak one kind of English: a World English. I think I'll call my father back and ask him to get off his chesterfield, grab his toque and come out for a visit. He knows it's a dry cold, and at least we're close enough to Calgary to imagine a chinook coming. I'll tell him I've got a few Big Rocks in the fridge, to boot. If my students think that they speak unique versions of World Englishes, Lord Thunderin' Jesus, wait'll they get a load of Russ from Cape Breton (and Regina), eh.

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