Chapter One

English in the world in the 21st Century: spread, statuses and functions

Introduction

As the title suggests, this first chapter of the work gives some necessary preliminary information on English in the world today in the era of globalisation. In it, the author discusses the way English spread its tentacles from its traditional bases to the four corners of the planet earth, the different statuses that the language has acquired and finally the major functions that it serves in the new ecologies where the language has been transplanted.

There is no denying that English in the 21st century has become the world popular lingua franca with non-native speakers of the language outnumbering its native speakers. In fact, in the recent years, the English language, which was once considered as a mother tongue to a few nations, has spread its tentacles to different parts of the world and today it enjoys a very prestigious status as a global language. Quirk et al (1972:3) remark that it is "the most widely used language." It is now used in all spheres of life and it serves different purposes. It is the language of science and technology, advertisement, the privilege language of diplomatic relations, education, sport, and an important tool for social integration and cohesion. English is now a prerequisite for participation in a vast number of activities. The global village is being constructed in the English language, as are the information highways. Access to findings in science and technology is made through English, and scientists who want to partake in the discussions which are currently taking place internationally must have a command of the tongue. Moreover, the

entertainment field, as well as the arts, are moving steadily toward a realm where English is a requirement for participation. In industrial, financial, and diplomatic arenas, English is also making gains. Graddol (2007) asserts that the advent of post modernity and advanced technology saw the recognition of English as the *de facto* language of globalisation. According to him, this period, which is also considered as the global era, has witnessed a reawakening of economics, politics, as well as academics, especially among citizens of the third world who rush madly to the English language as the gateway to the global market. Individuals who desire or need to participate in the international movement will be rendered incapable of doing so without learning English. English is the world lingua franca; the preferred code for social interactions in the international platform by speakers from different linguistic, ecological and cultural backgrounds. Reporting on the unprecedented spread of English (which has become the world number one language), Crystal (1997) points out that the language is definitely used in all the seven continents of the entire world and that it has a semi-official status in over seventy countries. This is re-echoed in Yoshuda (2007) who reports that English has emerged as the de facto natural common language. Recent statistics prove that there are approximately seventy-five territories where English is spoken either as a first language or as an official or institutionalized second language in domains such as government, education and law. Today, it is becoming more and more difficult to operate effectively on the international scene without a minimal knowledge of the English language and most so-called non-native speakers now outnumber traditional native speakers are diligently going for it. Most of them have understood as Broughton et al. (1980:6) rightly observed, that "...[clearly] a good command of English in a

second/foreign language situation is the passport to social and economic advancement and the successful user of the appropriate variety of English identifies himself as a successful integrated member of that community".

This unprecedented spread of English, a world lingua franca par excellence, across cultures, has ipso facto led to the emergence of new varieties of the language which phonologically, syntactically, morphologically and lexically deviate markedly from the native norms (Atechi 2006). Thus, the English language, which was once considered as a monolith by purists like Prator (1968), Buckmaster and Chevillet (1993), has led to the advent of new forms that have developed quasi-autonomy and therefore have a mark of Cain regional coloration. Each of these variant languages has its peculiarities that better suit it's socio-political, economic and linguistic contexts. Thus, the spread of English has definitely, as Rajadurai (2006) rightly puts it "resulted in a new demographic distribution of the language as well as in new uses and users." This is also in line with Jingxia's (2008) view that "Once English [is] adapted in a new region whether for science, technology, literature, prestige, elitism or modernization, it [goes] through reincarnation process which is unique to another culture." To support this argument, Mbangwana (2008) and Schneider (2007) asserts that,

> *given that colonial languages, such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese have not only gained admission into the linguistic spectrum of postcolonial nations, but most of these languages have been adopted, adapted and appropriated according to local needs and are now 'cooperating' with indigenous languages to express the culture, cosmic vision and identity of the different postcolonial contexts where they are used.*

Each variety or sub-variety of English has its own specificities and must be accommodated to the cultures and needs of people who are supposed to use it for their purposes. In clear, English has implanted its roots very deeply in postcolonial settings (see Kachru 1986, Mufwene 2001, Schneider 2007 and Ngefac 2008, 2010). In these postcolonial contexts, the language has "grown local roots" (Schneider 2007:2) according to their ecological and sociocultural realities (Kachru 1986 and Mufwene 2001).

I-   THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH IN THE WORLD AND THE EMERGENCE OF WORLD ENGLISHES

In this section, the author discusses the spread of English in the world and the different taxonomical models proposed by scholars in order to capture that global spread. Equally, the emergence of new varieties of English as a result of the unprecedented spread of English as well as the different statuses and functions of English in the new ecologies where the language has been transplanted are discussed. Finally, some polemics related to the spread of English will be quickly overviewed.

1.   English: From traditional bases to the entire world

As we had hinted above earlier, English has spread its tentacles from the British Isles to different horizons of the entire universe and it is used to an ever-increasing degree all over the world. This spread of English from the British Isles to the entire world took place sequentially. For the sake of convenience, in our study we distinguish two broad phases: the domestic spread of English and the spread of English to exploitation areas.

1.1   The spread of English to settlement areas

The spread of English to settlement areas involves relatively large-scale migrations of an important mother- tongue English speakers (around 25,000) from the British isles (Scotland, Ireland, Wales), predominantly to (North) America, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. From there, English will continue to spread its tentacles. What is striking here is that in each of the above-mentioned countries, the spread of English took a different form. In Ireland for example, English was spread with the might of the sword, in Australia, it was spread with the deportation of prisoners and in America English was spread with puritans and heretics from England." Over time, their own English dialects developed into modern American, South African and Australasia Englishes. In this connection, in contrast to the English of Great Britain, the varieties spoken in modern North America, South Africa and Australia have been modified in response to the changed and changing socio-linguistic contexts of the migrations.

1.2   From settlement areas to exploitation areas

The spread of English to exploitation areas is the second phase of the spread of English in the world. This ipso facto came back as a result of colonisation. Indeed, some relevant historical facts reveal that Britain colonised a great number of territories in Africa and Asia and the colonisation of these countries entailed the transportation of English to these countries.

In colonial Africa, the history of English is distinct between West and East Africa. History has it that English in West Africa began due to the slave trade. Soon after, English gained official status in Gambia, Sierra Leone,

Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon, and some of the pidgin and creoles which developed from English contact.

As for East Africa, extensive British settlements were establish in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where English became a crucial language in all the walks of life including the government, education and the law. One main thing to note here is that, inasmuch as from the 1960s, the above-mentioned six countries definitely achieve independence in succession, English was vividly implanted and therefore remained the official language and more interestingly it had a large number of second language speakers in Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

In Cameroon which was partly colonized by Britain, the other colonizer being France, the origin of English can be traced back to the 18th century but its solid implementation was not easy at all. Thus as Mbassi-Manga (1973) remarks, it was only in 1919 after the Versailles Treaty that English was finally implanted in Cameroon. The situation was reinforced fifty three (53) years after by the adoption of English and French as official language of the country, following the 1972 referendum which made Cameroon a Unitary State.

English was formally introduced to the sub-continent of South Asia during the second half of the eighteenth century in countries like: India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. And just like in Africa the process of implementation of English there was not easy. It had to follow some steps. In India for instance, English was given status through the implementation of Macaulay 'Minute' of 1835, which proposed the introduction of an English educational system in India. Over time, the process of 'indianisation' led to the development of a distinctive national character of English in India.

British influence in South East Asia and the South Pacific began in the late eighteenth century. At the very beginning, some restrictive territories where involved namely Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. But nowadays, as English has become the language where the sun never sets, it is also learnt in other neighbouring areas, most notably in Taiwan, Korea and Japan, with the latter two having begun to consider the possibility of making English their official second language.

The above analysis clearly shows that English today is used worldwide. Statistics show that almost 80% of the world's population use English for different purposes. However, English does not have the same status in the different territories where it is actually used. There are countries where it appears to be the first and most important language, the primary language of the majority population of the country. In some others, it is a second language that is to say an additional language for intranational as well as international communications in communities that are multilingual. Yet in others, it is totally a foreign language, used almost exclusively for international communication.

2.   Some taxonomical models of Englishes in the world

There have been a number of attempts to describe the spread of English in the world. Whatever system we use to classify the speakers and the spread of English, all scholars agree that there are speakers with different accents and dialects.

2.1 Strevens's world map of English

The oldest map of the spread of English is Strevens' world map of English. His world map showed that since American English became a separate variety from British English, all subsequent Englishes have had affinities with either one or the other.
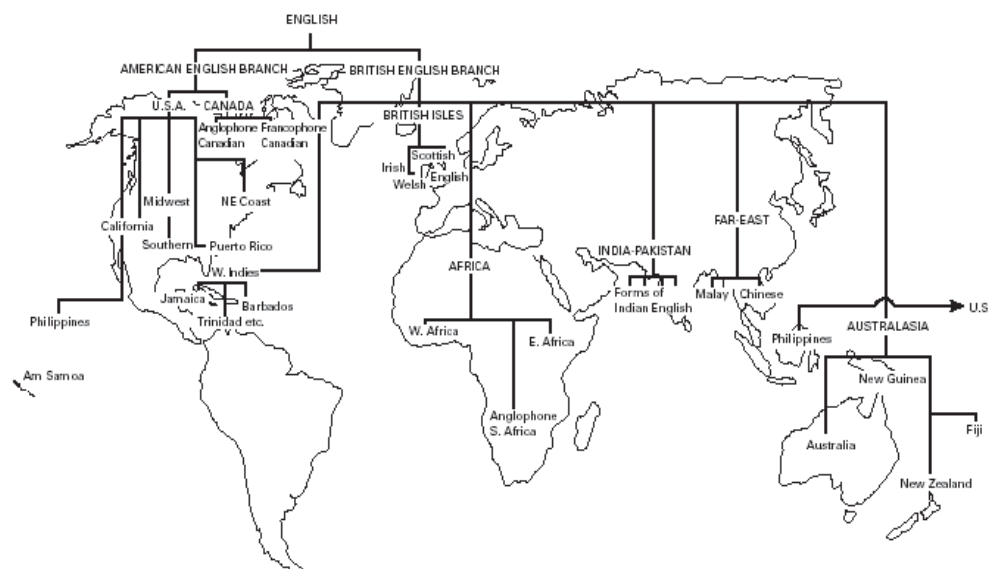

Figure 1: Peter Strevens' Model of English in the World (1980)

In Strevens's figure, we can see a family tree of English, which has two main branches, American and British, along which the other varieties have developed. Foreign language speakers cannot be seen in this figure, but in terms of the present study, it demonstrates nicely how English speakers are located around the world. Another influential model of the spread of English (see Figure 2) has been developed by Braj Kachru (1985: 12), and his terms, introduced below, will be used in the present study.

2.2 Kachru's three circles of English

Kachru's model is the most influential one to describe speakers of English (Jenkins 2003a: 15). For over two decades, Braj Kachru's (1985) *Three Circles Model* has been the dominant model in the study of World Englishes. Kachru's stated goal in the creation of his model is to illustrate the unprecedented diversity in the spread of English, and to challenge the 'traditional notions of codification, standardisation, models and methods' as well as the native speaker's 'prerogative to control its standardisation' (Kachru: 1985). And as part of a wider Kachruvian paradigm (Canagarajah, 1999:180) that has shaped the agenda for the treatment of the variation and pluricentricity that exists in the Englishes found worldwide, the Three Circles Model sets out to illustrate the typology of varieties that have arisen with the spread of English.

Kachru's intention in portraying his concentric circles was to pull English users' attention towards the existence of "multilinguistic identities, multiplicity of norms, both endocentric and exocentric, and distinct sociolinguistic histories" (Kachru, 1996, p. 135). In the 3CM, Kachru describes how the various communities where English had spread to may be represented in a diagrammatic form by three circles, as seen in the Figure below. The first of these circles would be the *Inner Circle* (IC), which consists of the traditional English speaking regions, where English had spread demographically through the immigration of English-speaking peoples to these lands, and where English is the primary language of its current populace. Thus, in be the *Inner Circle*, emphasis is laid on the traditional historical and sociolinguistic bases of English such as the United Kingdom, the United State of America, Australia, Newzeland, Ireland, Malta, Anglophone Canada, South

Africa and some Caribbean territories. In this context, English is acquired effortlessly from childhood. It is used natively as a mother tongue of its speakers. What is worth pointing out here is that as Kouega (1991) rightly puts it, in ENL context, English does not have "a homogenous form in all these countries. In each of them, a linguistically distinctive variety has evolved but the similarities between them are greater than the differences".

The next circle would be the *Outer Circle* (OC), which consists of the regions that had undergone an extended period of colonization by some member or members of the IC, and English was introduced to the indigenous linguistic repertoire of the local population by the colonial experience, with the result that English, in demographic terms, is one additional language available to those others that were already available to the local populations, has achieved an important, institutionalized, status in the linguistic landscape of these populations, and is intrinsically tied to the colonial experience and any cultural and political baggage that may entail. For members of the OC, English functions in contexts of situation that are traditionally non-English, has achieved a certain relevance in a wide range of domains in the linguistic landscape of these contexts to members of the populations who may have differing levels of competence in the language, and has developed nativized traditions of local cultural production. Here, as Kouega (ibid) re-echoed in Ubanako (2010) remarks, "the language is the principal medium through which official, social, economic and educational activities are carried out". Some of such countries include India, Nigeria, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tanzania, Kenya, Malaysia, non-Anglophone South Africa just to name the few. Thus, as can be observed countries involved here are former British and American colonies.

The last of the circles would be the *Expanding Circle* (EC). It comprises nations where English is spoken as a foreign language and which do not have a history of colonization by the speakers of the inner circle. In the *Expanding Circle,* English is an important foreign language, and the performance varieties in use by these populations provide them with a means of international communication. Here, English plays no historical or governmental role. This includes much of the rest of the world's population not categorized above: France, Spain, Japan, China, Russia, most of Europe, Korea, Egypt, and Indonesia. According to Crystal's (2003) estimate, the inner circle has 320-380 million speakers, and the outer circle 300-500 million speakers, whereas the total number of speakers in the expanding circle is now 500-1000 million and is increasing constantly (2003: 107). Note that the term *non-native accent* is used to refer to outer and expanding circle accents in this work, even if there are some native speakers in the outer circle countries as well.
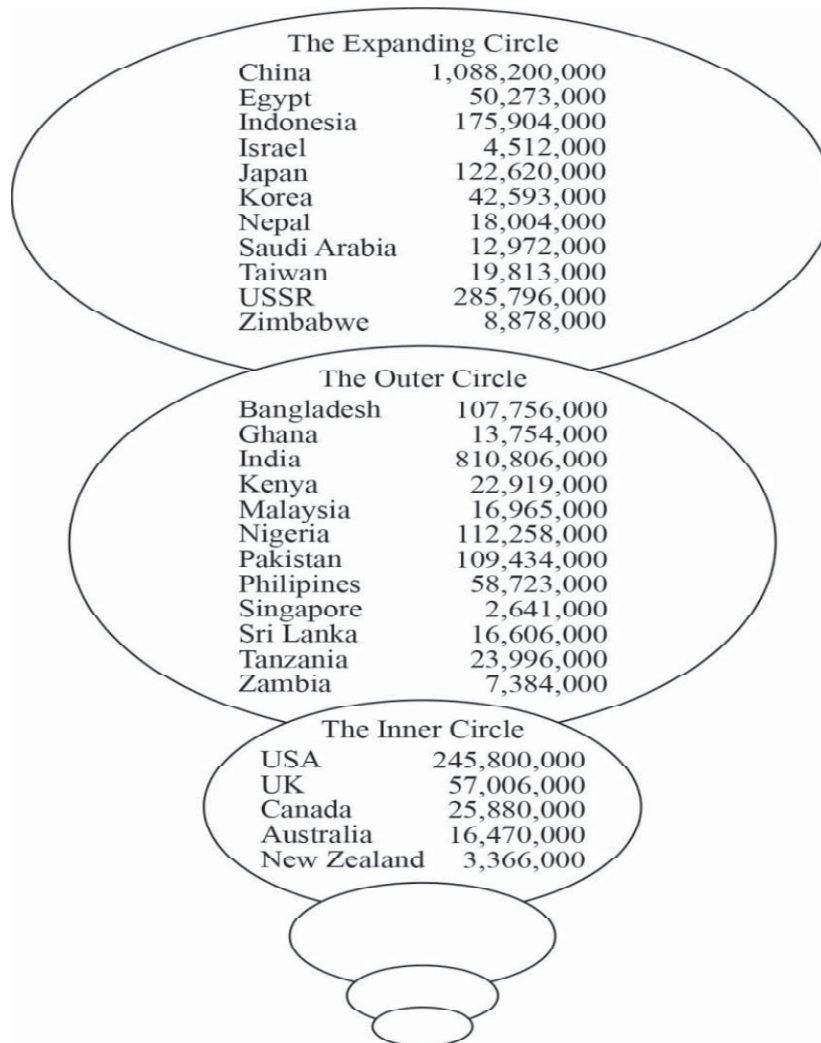
Figure 2: Three Circles Model of World Englishes (Adapted from Kachru, 1990)

Kachru's model is the most influential one to describe speakers of English (Jenkins 2003a: 15). There are, however, some problems in it. Kachru himself points out that it is sometimes unclear whether a country has English as second or foreign language, because the language policies of such countries change constantly (Kachru 1985: 14). Today, approximately twenty countries (for example Denmark) are in transition from English as a foreign language

(EFL) to English as a second language (ESL) status (Graddol 1997: 11). On the other hand, some English speakers in the outer circle, for example in Singapore, actually use English as their first and only language. One further weakness in the model is that the term "inner circle", which implies that the native countries are central and superior. The model also fails to tell us the truth about speakers' actual language proficiency; native speakers may have limited language skills, while non-native speakers may be very competent in English (Jenkins 2003a). Further criticisms have been made by Jenkins (2003a) and Bruthiaux (2003). They are discussed in great details in the section below.

It is worth mentioning that the Kachru's model has seriously been critiqued regarding the effectiveness of the model in its description of the situation of English as it exists in the world. With the ideas suggested by the 3CM in mind, this section moves on to look at the critique of the 3CM5 in Jenkins (2003a) and Bruthiaux (2003). Jenkins acknowledges the great influence of the 3CM to the understanding of the situation of English in the world but cites eight problems that affect the model (Jenkins, 2003a), enumerated in Table 2.1. Bruthiaux also recognizes the influence of the 3CM but suggests certain limitations to the model (Bruthiaux, 2003), and these are listed in the table below. Kachru, on his part, answered Jenkins" critiques in a section within Kachru (2005).

From these two critiques, five salient points may be concluded, namely, that (1) varieties in the 3CM are based on politico-historical rather than sociolinguistic definitions, (2) there is a seeming centrality of the IC within the model, (3) variation within varieties is not expressed, (4) proficiency of

speakers is not taken into account, and (5) there is an inability of the model to account for language situations of other *languages of wider communication* (LWCs). One point from Jenkins (2003a:17) that is not included in this condensation of critiques is that of the inability of the model to account for *English for Special Purposes* (ESP). Bruthiaux addresses the issue of ESPs specifically *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF), by stating that the domains for use and the number of users of such language are limited and thus do not constitute what he calls 'varietal-creating conditions' (Bruthiaux, 2003:168). Kachru likewise questions the degree of similarity amongst users of each particular ESP across cultural and sociolinguistic contexts, believing that ESPs operate on the basis of shared 'context of situation' existing within a shared 'context of culture' rather than that of shared proficiency across sociocultural backgrounds of the speakers (Kachru, 2005:216). This may be taken as Kachru's view towards ESP and why he did not seek for the 3CM to cover ESPs.

According to *Jenkins* (2003a:17-18*)*, the Three Circles Model:

1- is based on geography and genetics rather than on the way speakers identify with and use English.

2- There is... a grey area between the Inner and Outer Circles.

3- There is... an increasingly grey area between the Outer and Expanding Circles.

4- Many World English speakers grow up bilingual or multilingual, using different languages to fulfil different functions in their daily lives.

5- There is a difficulty in using the model to define speakers in terms of their proficiency in English.

6- The model cannot account for English for Special Purposes.

7- The model implies that the situation is uniform for all countries within a particular circle whereas this is not so.

8- The term „Inner Circle" implies that speakers from the ENL countries are central to the effort, whereas their world-wide influence is in fact in decline.

According to *Bruthiaux (2003:161-171)* three Circles Model:

1- does not take into account dialectal variation each variety.

2- does not take into account varieties that meet criteria for Inner Circle membership except for the fact that it is spoken by a minority within a country.

3- does not give any indication of the proficiency of speakers.

4- focuses on politico-historical categorization and this obscures sociolinguistic patterns within each circle.

5- there is no clear definition of what constitutes an Expanding Circle variety.

6- is unable to function as a model for other languages of wider communication.

The first salient point deals with the constituents of each circle. Jenkins (2003a) and Bruthiaux (2003) suggest two issues, firstly, that the 3CM bases its categorisation of varieties on politico-historically defined populations rather than sociolinguistically defined ones, and, secondly, that the demarcation between the circles are not clear-cut. In his reply regarding the first issue, Kachru agrees that the varieties are geopolitically and historically defined and necessarily so as the model illustrates the historical spread of English (Kachru, 2005). This of course begs the point, which Bruthiaux (2003) brings up, that sociolinguistic situations, in terms of the number of languages in use in a particular grouping, the cultural complexity, and other