



### Revisiting the Concept of English Varieties: A Narrative Approach to Space

Creation by a Thai Writer in the English Academy

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#### Abstract

This paper aims to exemplify the significance of performativity and space creation through a non-conventional process of literature review. This paper essentially addresses a World Englishes concept through narrative writing. By reflecting her voice upon literature review related to the World Englishes framework, the author was gradually able to learn the constructed meaning of a World Englishes user. Ultimately, a personal writing approach allowed this ESL writer to see herself as a World Englishes writer. Despite the fact that the notion of World Englishes has become central in English learning and teaching, it is far from practical for English teachers, especially for those in EFL/ESL contexts, to address all aspects of the concept to their students in classrooms. In this sense, the paper suggests that allowing students an opportunity to gain

direct experiences of being World Englishes users will be more sensible for them to better understand the essence of the notion.

*Key words:* World Englishes, narrative, ESL writer, literature review

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To cast the greatest light on the history, the significance, and the ramifications of World Englishes concept, I undertake my writing as a method of inquiry in order to understand and readdress the recent phenomenon of this notion. I write this paper from the position of a second language (L2) writer, who has been trying to foster understanding about the field and who has just started to see herself as a World Englishes writer. Taking up this stance, I orient my experiences and worldviews along with reviewing relevant contemporary literature. While attempting to describe how World Englishes has been transforming, I, at the same time, will reflect on how my understanding toward myself as a World Englishes apprentice has been morphing as well.

Living in the crisis of representation paradigm, I choose to embrace experimental, experiential, and reflexive approaches in presenting this paper. Employing narratives might make the paper carry a personal tone; yet the intent

is far from personal. Canagarajah (2006b) argued that we are moving from the direction of achieving correctness to negotiating reconstituting it pertaining to different genres and contexts while developing higher language awareness. In light of this, I will be able to paint colors on conventional texts by reflecting subjective aspects through storytelling into the review of literatures. In this way, this experiment with narratives thus provides me room to design a textual and pedagogical space in a formal genre for my own variety of English. I consider this personal freedom to reconstitute, to narrate, and to reflect a discourse of understanding about the discipline the essence of being a World Englishes writer. In essence, this practice is not to leave my cultural values behind but to use them to heat up a cold place, the academic world (Pagnucci, 2004).

The paper then will address the notion of World Englishes by building on the following episodes of 1) terms and concepts; 2) the old paradigm: world fugitives in the linguistic Alcatraz; 3) leaving the fixity paradigm; 4) revisiting the paradigm shifts; and 5) World Englishes premises.

### Terms and Concepts

#### *The Boom of World Englishes*

Theoretically, my memory and relationship with the notion of World Englishes are fresh and young. In reality, dating to 1965, the concept of World Englishes is now almost forty years old. The emergence of the theoretical concept of World Englishes and its application, however, had not gained currency in

sociolinguistics and applied linguistics until the mid 1980s (Bolton, 2006; Bolton & Kachru, 2006). The key scholars who were engaged in research and theory building in this concept are Braj Kachru, Larry Smith and Peter Strevens. In the following decades, World Englishes flourished. Historical reviews and research on the World Englishes paradigm were widely informed and reinforced. These include B.B Kachru (1996, 1997a, 1997b), B.B Kachru, Y. Kachru and Nelson (2006), Jenkins (2006), Melchers & Shaw (2003), Bhatt (2001b), Bolton (2004), and Bolton & Kachru (2006). The last two decades have witnessed publication of numerous articles in international academic journals, namely *English Today*; *English World-Wide*, and *World Englishes*.

In light of its history, World Englishes has walked slowly yet confidently on the path of teaching and learning English. However, I first came across the term World Englishes at the dawn of my dissertation. It was not until spring 2007 when I received an email from my dissertation advisor suggesting that I review an article in a journal on World Englishes. Interestingly enough, that was the very first time I saved the new term into my applied linguistic bank, without a true understanding of what the expression really meant. At that time, I wondered how many people besides myself were unaware to the field. Trying to understand the growing field of World Englishes, I am no different from a toddler striving to make sense of the chaotic universe. Long gone are the days in which I lived my life as a blank slate of awareness while the English empire swiftly expanded to diverse corners of the world.

*Multiple Englishes: Multiple Identities*

At first, I did not pay close attention to the unusual spelling of “Englishes”. In fact, I recognized a plural form but simply took it for granted. Later on, after I had delved into researching its contemporary literatures, it dawned on me that the term reflected a philosophically significant agenda. Embedded in the plural form, the term World Englishes communicates a deep meaning of its theoretical and functional concept and research areas. Kachru and Smith (1985) spelled out the meaning of the term:

“Englishes” symbolizes the functional and formal variation in the language, and its international acculturation, ... The language now belongs to those who use it as their first language, and to those who use it as an additional language, whether in its standard form or in its localized forms. The recognition of this functional diversity is so important that we have indicated it in the subtitle of World Englishes. (p. 210)

Historically, as the English language has been transformed, through both linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1988, 1992) and linguistic pragmatism (Brutt-Griffler, 1998), to non-English sociocultural settings, English has shown linguistic diversification (Bhatt, 2001a, 2001b). English, thus, has been transformed into pluricentric or Englishes. To put it into perspective, English is

one medium but constitutes multifaceted cultures, reflects manifold voices, and represents a multiplicity of canons (Pakir, 2001). The “-es”, according to Canagarajah (2002b), allows voices of English communities in periphery to be heard. Clearly, the term World Englishes, which reflects a hidden philosophical intent, welcomes multiple interpretations.

Historically, the term World Englishes originated in the two conferences on English as a world language that took place in 1978 at the East-West Center in Hawaii and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Braj Kachru and Larry Smith took a leadership role in both conferences (Bolton, 2006). The earlier conceptualization of World Englishes refers to the recognition of a unique linguistic phenomenon and particularly to the changing landscape of the post 1940s (B.B Kachru, 1997b). However, in its more contemporary situation, “a pluralist vision of Englishes” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 18) carries a postmodern discourse of localization, contextualization, and democratization of language use. The discourse of English in worldwide contexts represents linguistic, cultural, and ideological diversity (Bhatt, 2001b). This pluralist framework celebrates global variations in vocabulary, grammar, phonology and pragmatics of English around the world (Melchers & Shaw, 2003). It basically encourages global English users to opt for their own tongues, tastes, and styles. Under a World Englishes lens, language users are contextually allowed more space to play with the language.

Kachru (1988) defined the characteristics of the World Englishes paradigm into three key elements. First, the English language belongs to whoever uses it. Second, the localized innovations have pragmatic-based ownership. Third, there is a repertoire of models for English. In this sense, the 'Englishes' language has carried repertoires of sociocultural identities. According to Kachru's (2006a), these multicultural identities involve linguistic interactions of three types of participants: native speakers and native speakers; native speakers and nonnative speakers; and, nonnative speakers and nonnative speakers. Kachru further argued that English used in a global context reflects two faces. One represents Westernness; the other reflects local identities.

Now there are several labels used interchangeably with the term World Englishes. These include global English (es), international English (es), new English (es), varieties of English, English as an international language, English as a global language, and so on. These terms have been used almost interchangeably, with minimal varying connotations (Bolton, 2005; Schneider, 2003). In this paper, the term is associated with the Kachruvian studies which have been characterized by the importance of inclusivity and pluricentricity in approaches to language use worldwide (Bolton, 2004). This approach offers a balance between the pragmatic recognition of the proliferation of English and the critical examination of native speaker ideologies. The underpinning endorses a

pluricentric approach to World Englishes by focusing on both the sociolinguistic realities and bilingual creativity of ESL and EFL contexts. Moreover, the approach emphasizes both the description of national and regional varieties and other related topics, for instance, language contact, creative writing, critical applied linguistics, and discourse analysis.

### The Old Paradigm: World Fugitives in the Linguistic Alcatraz

#### *Grass outside a Window is Always Greener*

##### *Alcatraz room 1*

Aya: What do you think about a Japanese accent?

Tamako: *I hate it. It's not cool. It's disappointing.*

Yuki: It's hard to get rid of, unless you have a foreign teacher.

Aya: But you'd rather not have it?

Yuki: Of course I'd rather not have it!

Aya: Then, how about English with a German accent?

Yuki: That's cool. *It's a lot better than Japanese (accent).* (Matsuda, 2003, p. 492 my emphasis)

##### *Alcatraz room 2*



Shinji: In the train, bad English...in English that is obviously spoken by a Japanese ... they say something like “Next stop is ...” (with Japanese accent)—I don’t know, but it’s like, “Is this really Ok?”

Aya: what do you think about that “English that is obviously spoken by a Japanese”?

Shinji: *I don’t want to speak like that.* (Matsuda, 2003, p. 493 my emphasis)

Attempting to further understand the ownership of English and to argue for the importance of empowering English as an international language, Matsuda (2003) reported that although participant students perceived English as an international language in the sense that it is being used internationally, they nonetheless doubted whether it belonged internationally. In other words, students perceived the Japanese variety of English as either Japanese or incorrect or weak forms of English that deviated from the ‘real’ English of native speakers. From their perspective the Japanese accent in particular is positioned negatively as an incorrect form of English. Hence, this study points out that meta-instruction for English learners and teachers is necessary in order to endorse a pluralistic view of English and to encourage students’ roles and responsibilities as World Englishes users. Other related literature (Matsuda, 2002) found striking results that the participating students strongly held Western-centered views of the world. Both studies not only reflected the dominant role of Standard English but also

captured the absence of a critical orientation in learning English in Japanese high school contexts.

The dialogues between Matsuda and her informants—Yuki, Tamako, and Shinji—flashed my memory back to an online conversation I recently had with one of my students, Sirin, who is working as a sales representative in an American company located in a Bangkok's Wall Street area.

*Alcatraz room 3*

Ajarn Gob: How is your working life in Bangkok? Have fun?

Sirin: Yes, *ajarn*, a lot. *Snook mak kha*. But difficult. *My English is not well*. But I need to use English everyday.

Ajarn Gob: Great, well, I think your English is good *naja*.

Sirin: No, no *ajarn*. *My English is not well*. It's not. I don't speak a lot.

Ajarn Gob: What do you use English for?

Sirin: Write email, send fax. I think *if my English is well*, I'll have power.

Ajarn Gob: You think so?

Sirin: Yes, yes. I will have more salary. I can go abroad. Go conference. *But my English is not well*. It's bad *ajarn*.

Ajarn Gob: Well, . . . well, if you get a chance to visit or come here for training, give me a call, ok?

Siri: thank you *kha*. Impossible *ajarn*. I think it's hard *kha*. *My English is not well*.

Ajarn Gob: No, no problem at all. It's fine. I understand you everything.

The above dialogues echo shared underlying ELT situations worldwide. Yuki, Tamako, Shinji, and Sirin lived the reality of English users from the Expanding Circle countries (B.B Kachru, 1985), Japan and Thailand respectively, where they have been desperately trapped in a colonial construction of the mind. The conviction toward their English is held in very low esteem by the dominant English construct. Their voices inherently illustrate the existence of colonial legacy reflected in colonized views of the world (Pennycook, 1998). Longing for that world, these English users reflected a deep-seated view that English provides an absolute magical power, like the fabled Aladdin's lamp (B.B Kachru, 1985). Put most simply, English connoted wonderful things beyond simple linguistic gates to the greater access of international business, technology, science, and travel. These dreamers fantasized that English could magically transform them to new wonderlands deeply embedded in their minds which would never exist. As Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) claimed, "most learners of English around the world use English to dream of better worlds. ELT nomenclature is part of that dream"(p. 200). By the same token, now world English teenage users including those in Thailand who have taken pride in American life style, Hollywood and pop culture through a predominantly American tongue are increasing. Before

these users realize how valuable their own cultures are, the dream of the never-lands has perhaps overshadowed their minds, pride, and dignity already. Needless to say, English has historically journeyed to the complex intersection of cultures, powers, and identities. Up to this point, English has had political repercussions for world communities. Tsuda (1997) concluded that the most serious effect of the hegemony of English is the colonization of the mind. To put this into perspective, Tsuda explained, “You glorify English and its culture while stigmatizing and devaluing your own language and culture. It may sound a bit too extreme, but you are enslaved to English and its culture” (p. 24-5).

Despite the lack of direct colonial experiences, these four English learners, living in two entirely divergent cultures, still, coincidentally mirrored the underlying reciprocal phenomenon of English-using speech communities worldwide. Sadly, I could not find a sound explanation of these colonial episodes to myself but expressed my deep understanding, sympathy, and hope. These people reminded me of my classmates from Japan, Taiwan, China, and Thailand. I remember seeing them sit in their silent worlds during class discussions just for fear of revealing their deviant accents, wrong grammars, and unstamped ideas. What a fruitful construct of native speakers! One of them, Suzuki, for example, could not hold her frustration every time she did a presentation regardless of her flawless English. Even the day she was preparing to return to her island, she was still sunk

in the shame of holding a nonnative English accent. I always wondered if she has now risen to appreciate her unique language gifts enriched by her culture.

The issue of an accent as a production of colonial discourse of English (Pennycook, 1998) was one of the hot issues debated among Thai fellows in the graduate program where I was a graduate student. A freshman doctorate, Tana revealed his fresh wounds: “Some of my students switched to *farang* teachers because of my Thai accent. It hurts. What can I do? When I ask them, they just talk back to me, Why not? I want to learn with native speakers.” Sadly, this student, who has invisibilized his local teacher, is going to leave classrooms to wear a new hat as an English teacher soon. Afraid that the wounds would be opened wider, one of us tried to heal Tana’s scar by showing him the other side of the coin. He reminded Tana that “there are a lot of Thai teachers who have something good. You know Dr ... and Dr? ... They speak English with an accent but their accent doesn’t mean anything to us, you know, because they’re quality teachers.”

Paradoxically, speaking about having an accent, even now although I am writing about this issue by attempting to address the equal rights of World Englishes users, I still cannot completely free myself from the colonized ideology deeply ingrained in my realm of thought. Those who never learn a foreign language cannot imagine how miserable it is for us to speak and to spell a word-A-B-C at

the same time in order to keep our conversation partners along and to survive in communication. What makes Yuki, Tamako, Shinji, Sirin and Tana's student trapped deeper and deeper in those Disney-like worlds? How could my friends and I change Thai students, teachers as well as educators, who are Thai "in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect"? (Bamgbose, 1991, p. 4). When and how can we—as nonnative speakers—get out of the native speakers' laws—the linguistic prison? Who has locked us together in this Alcatraz academy for this long?

#### SLA Fallacy and the Spread of English

The above scenarios by and large invoke the notion that learning the English language is never apolitical but always involved in global inequality (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). For a decade, Pennycook and Phillipson have been influential in establishing this agenda by inviting a series of political discussions about World Englishes. Particularly, Phillipson's (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism* and Pennycook's (1994) *The Cultural politics of English as an International Language* have contributed to a milestone debate about the politics of English worldwide. Pennycook (2000a, 2000b) and Tollefson (2000) argue that the global proliferation of English not only has ideological effects on people, but it also has enormous and complex political implications. Specifically, it contributes to "significant social, political, and economic inequalities" (Tollefson, 2000, p.

8). The negative and low self-perception of their Englishes that the Japanese and Thai users reflected in those conversations definitely brought the notion to light. The repeated melancholy melody toward her English, “*My English is not well,*” which I could sense during the conversation with Sirin, undoubtedly could not take place in a pedagogic vacuum. Yet Sirin’s self-marginalization toward her English is historically grounded in English classrooms, politically embedded in language policy, and indirectly influenced by business powerhouses such as textbook publishers, Standardized tests, and pop culture. After all, this process of marginalization makes peripheral learners such as Yuki and Sirin in this case surrender their voices and visions to the center (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a).

One of those major milestone institutional structures is a second language acquisition (SLA) philosophical construct. For decades, the mainstream SLA perspective has had political consequences on building the intellectual imperialism model (Bhatt, 2001b). The past three decades reflect research which has critically examined theoretical and methodological frameworks based on monolingual ideology. This mainstream construct has exerted critical effects on linguistic unity, homogenization, and centralization of language use through careful and conscious exclusion of language variation. Recent critical applied linguistic studies have conceptualized how the dominant standard views of English language grammar and use are reproduced in both native and nonnative milieus. These studies reported that the monolithic lens has mystified existing

power relations and socio-economic constructs (Canagarajah, 1999a, 1999b; Lippi-Green, 1997; Pennycook, 2001, 2006; Phillipson, 1992; Ricento, 2000; Tollefson, 1995). Having said that, the monolingual-based ideology has fundamentally portrayed non-native varieties of English as “fossil-ridden examples of interlanguages, as inferior examples of incorrect speech” (Brown, 1993, p. 60). Besides, the stereotypical images of L2 learners under the linguistic homogenization paradigm are those of transplanted learners (Sridhar, 1994), life-long apprentices (Bolton, 2005), handicaps (Davies, 1991), or failed native speakers (Cook, 1999; Kramsch, 1998). These portraits have been widely seated in the ELT community of practice.

However, in the past two decades, the supremacy of English, interlanguage theory, and myth about native speakers as absolute experts have been questioned and challenged (Tollefson, 2000). For example, Cook (1999, 2002b) and Firth & Wagner (1997) critiqued the native speaker goal of traditional SLA and TESOL. Grounded in four case studies, Brutt-Griffler & Samimy’s (2001) study suggested that nativeness constituted a “non-elective socially constructed identity rather than a linguistic category” (p. 100). Particularly, Kachru (1997c) addressed two central issues in relation to native speaker fallacy. First, an assumption that non-native users of English learn English to communicate with Inner Circle or native users of the language is erroneous. In actual fact, many learners will be using the language primarily for intranational purposes and many



will be communicating as frequently with individuals from Outer and Expanding circle countries as they will with Inner circle speakers. Second, it is another fallacy to believe that the Inner Circle provides leadership roles. Hence, Kachru pointed out that focusing on functional nativeness would be more useful than focusing on genetic nativeness.

In this wave of suspicion toward mainstream ideology, research has shifted focus to study positive sides of being nonnative speakers. Pennycook (2006), Kramsch (1997), Kramsch & Lam (1999), Cook (1992, 1999, 2002a, 2002b) and Llurda (2004) and have contributed tremendously to the field. Hitherto, even though underlying discourse supporting monolingualism was, as Canagarajah (2006c) described, “alive and kicking” (p. 12), those major literatures have not only generated a healthier approach, but also have posed questions about the earlier constructs of the status and the roles of native speakers in learning and teaching English as a second and foreign language.

Leaving the Fixity Paradigm

*Many Languages Are Absurd*

The old paradigm historically allows people to believe that they “were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental” (Said, 1994, p. 136). Hence, for second language users such as the Japanese and Thais whose

cases I previously presented, it is hard for them to break free from the homogeneous mental custody of Western communities. This is because the belief that multilingualism or linguistic diversity is associated with a number of problems (Bamgbose, 1991; Graddol, 1999) is deeply rooted. To stand against the tide, these people need a certain audacity to talk back to native speakers. In doing so, it is necessary to plant the seed of the view that one language, not many, is absurd. This is mainly because “no one today is purely one thing” (Said, 1994, p. 136). In contrast, in this prescriptive-thinking paradigm, culture has become fixed instead of celebrating the notion of difference (Pennycook, 1998). This tendency to ascribe fixed and often negative characteristics is called by Pennycook as the colonial construction of the Other. In response to this phenomenon, Skutnabb-Kangas metaphorically described monolingualism as a curable disease that patients do not know they are suffering from (Phillipson, 2000). This stereotypical dichotomy construct is the most paradoxical consequence of the old paradigm (Said, 1994). As such, in the context of the changing new world, those old constructs need to be critically examined.

Global landscapes have changed so rapidly that there comes a call for a radical paradigm and professional discourse revisions. Most specifically, in the course of a fundamental shift, it is a critical turn to seriously revisit the fixed-thinking ideology. In this period, metanarratives or grand theories bring doubt in providing “unifying and totalizing explanations for social and intellectual

developments” (Canagarajah, 2006c, p. 9). Rather, they lead to new ideological direction which is plural, hybrid, fluid, uncertain, and contested (Benhabib, 2002). In essence, this multicultural philosophical construct devalues unity but values differences (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). It largely operates on the inclusive scale of a network relationship of two binaries: us and them, you and me (Pattanayak, 2000). The principle of We-ness rejects the dichotomy between us and them, between the native expert and non-native consumers (B.B Kachru, 2006a). Interestingly, these signs of sociopolitical changes have emerged amidst a fast-paced shifting reality.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has departed from the rigid paradigm that witnesses the political agenda that “if you don’t speak English, you’re illiterate” (Friedman, 2000, p. 393). Rapidly, the new century has been heading to the looser position which celebrates the notion that “English is not enough”. Despite the growing presence of English in a number of domains worldwide, the status and power of English has shifted and been shared by other world languages. For instance, Warschauer (2000) critically studied the relationship between technologies, especially the Internet, and the spread of English. His study concluded that in this capitalism era the demand of English worldwide is still growing tremendously along with new foreign languages such as Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese. Warchauer (2000) also asserted that the goal of the English language is to be used as a language of additional communication rather than as “a foreign language

controlled by the others” (p. 515). Consequently, in approaching this new paradigm, language learners held hostage to a perception of native speakers and target culture ( Kramsch, 1995) are set free to embrace their roots—local conventions, dialects, and language beliefs in their communities—into their own Englishes

### Revisiting the Paradigm Shifts

#### *Every Englishes Is Privileged*

The flattening and shrinking world, called globalization 3.0 by Tom Friedman (2006), has been traveling with a fast pace to the moment when going viral has become a new phenomenon, mainly due to the power of cell phones, digital technology, and the Internet network, especially You-Tube. In the so-called postmodern globalization paradigm (Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 1996), the individual is super-empowered (Friedman, 2000), citizenship is flexible (Ong, 2008), and places in the conventional sense have become non-places (Auge, 1992). Meanwhile, identities existing in conventional places have been slippery in non-places. The concepts of multilingualism, cultural hybridity, and linguistic flexibility are gaining recognition as central to the forging of a cosmopolitan identity and life-style choice. These realms of the emerging postmodern flow facilitated by the “shifting finance-, techno-, ideo-, media- and ethnoscares”

(Appadurai, 1993, as cited in Rassool, 2000, p. 58) have a significant impact on the character and the status of the English language, making it more dynamic, context-sensitive, and pluralistic.

In the circumstance of this shrinking space, time, and border, not only language users but English *per se* are needed by their users to be adjusted in perception and role to fit in the messier paradigm. As such, while multilingualism becomes the hallmark of the postcolonial condition, multiplicity of English is also the sign of a new linguistic world. In this respect, English is characterized by multicultural and multilinguistic norms (Alatis & Strachle, 1997). The new paradigm has pedagogically, attitudinally, and ideologically addressed a new political agenda in English language learning and teaching. In order to cope with challenging trends, TESOL professions thus should realize that the mainstream one-size-fits-all approach is irrelevant. Most crucial to this shift in perspective is the shift to local contexts (Widdowson, 2004) and reverse colonization (Giddens, 2000). In light of these changes, there is a new understanding about five major philosophical, pedagogical, and attitudinal issues surrounding World Englishes which the TESOL and ELT enterprises should not overlook but revisit, relocate, and move forward for a more promising and fruitful future: native speakership, ownership, powershift, and lens shift..

### *Native Speakership*

As previously discussed, the *a priori* notion that the native speaker represents the ideal teacher has come to be criticized by many scholars as incorrect and unhelpful in teaching and studying the varieties and literatures in Englishes around the world (Ferguson, 1992; Singh, 1998; Widdowson, 1994). That discourse of native speakership is not primarily a matter of linguistics but is socially constructed (Widdowson, 1994). That is, when language users adopt a language, they adapt it to suit their needs. Hence, under the new paradigm, all forms are equal. No one is privileged. As a result, the discourse of expertise is nothing but a myth. Two decades ago, Smith (1983) provokingly raised this issue, asserting English as the means of cultural expression, not an imitation of the culture of the West or any other native English speaking country. Essentially, language usage under the postmodern pragmatic framework moves beyond the Eurocentric model. In light of the decline of the nativeness paradigm, Smith's statement below undeniably illustrates why the notion of nativespeakership has no relevance in the global fluid communicative community:

A Thai doesn't need to sound like an American in order to use English well with a Filipino at an ASEAN meeting. A Japanese doesn't need an appreciation of a British lifestyle in order to use English in his business dealings with a Malaysian ... It is clear that in these situations there is no attempt for the user to be like a native speaker of English. (Smith, 1983, p. 7)

Surprisingly, the above quote is 20-four years old now. Yet, its essence does not seem too old to reflect contemporary realities of English use worldwide.

### *Ownership*

In line with the constant debate about the native-nonnative dichotomy, the notion of English ownership, which holds the belief that the native speaker or the Inner Circle countries own or control the language used in the Outer Circle and Expanding circle countries has also been critically contested. Widdowson (1998) contends that the development of global English has nothing to do with native speakers of England. In the tidal wave of changes that the new paradigm brings, English has been fractured to splintered Englishes. Consequently, English must “necessarily lose its domestic L1 status” (Widdowson, 2001, p. 14). English cannot be promoted as the monolingual property of its native speakers because an “international language means that no nation can have custody over it” (Widdowson, 1998, p. 244-5). Alatis and Straehle (1997) observe that English is now no longer tied to any particular ethnic culture, nation or groups of English speakers. Similarly, Ferguson (1992) argues that English is less and less being regarded as a purely Western language. Its development is less and less determined by the usage of its native speakers. For this reason, Widdowson (1993) concludes, “both Standard and emergent periphery Englishes have their proper place in the scheme of things and both are of crucial concern in English

education.” In short, although the sense of ownership is beyond a dream of nonnative learners, they need to understand it in order to gradually shift their attitude.

### *Power Shift*

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is witnessing a growing presence of nonstandard English varieties used as both a second and a first language. With the rise of postcolonial diverse communities, a radical shift has emerged not only in the form and functions of the English language, but also in the power and ownership of the language from native speakers to nonnative speakers (Crystal, 2004a, 2004b; Graddol, 2006). Crystal (2004a) asserted that native speakers of English are no longer in charge of language trends. Instead, he observes that the center of English power is shifting from the native speaker to the non-native speaker. This global language has married with other local languages: living in new houses, wearing new clothes, eating exotic foods.

In Britain, for example, the English language is now a minority dialect of World Englishes. In India, there are now more speakers of English than in the whole of Britain and the USA combined. In Asia alone, there will be 350 million English speakers, which is almost equivalent to the total populations of the United States, the U.K. and Canada combined (B.B Kachru, 1986b). Interestingly, the majority



of people in the world are those who use English as a second or foreign language with three non-native speakers for every one native-speaker (Crystal, 1997). Morrow (2004) reported that more and more users of English today are either bilingual or multilingual. In such contexts, English will be used as a second language or an additional language for communication mostly between non-native speakers (Canagarajah, 2005b; Crystal, 2004a; Graddol, 1999; Smith, 1983; Widdowson, 1994). Graddol (2006) projects the decreasing numbers of native speakers of English and the fast growing usage of other languages such as Spanish, Hindi, and Arabic within a decade or so. In short, this shift thus needs to be addressed in order to come to a better understanding and a more contextualized teaching and learning approach..

### *Lens Shift*

Graddol (2006) predicted that people on the move is the current demographic trend. These people include refugees, migrant laborers, tourists, business workers, activists, students, troops, and emergency aid workers (Appadurai, 1996; Graddol, 2006). The growth of this phenomenon undoubtedly contributes to the demographic expansion and social extension of English. Along with this trend, “English is on the go” can be best described as the picture of the present World Englishes landscape. In this drastic transition, not only mainstream Englishes such as British English and American English but also local Englishes

such as Japanese English, Indonesian English, and Thai English are now traveling through the Internet and pop cultures. Certainly, these devices have become the meeting point where diverse Englishes from English backgrounds (L1) meet those from “un-English” (L2) contexts. In this respect, Kramsch (1997) proposed the perspective of linguistic travel and migration as a healthy approach of World Englishes to critically respond to the issue of native and nonnative dichotomy. She states that under these lenses, everyone will be more or less a nonnative speaker. In her opinion, that position is a privilege. Changing all of the views that one has held for a long time sounds ideal. Nevertheless, adjusting lenses step by step can be the first practical place where anyone can start within his or her comfort zone.

### Conclusion

Prior to writing this paper, my knowledge about World Englishes was shallow, my understanding of the field of English studies was slightly superficial, and my position toward my own English was incredibly shaky. Writing this paper has tremendously shaped me to grow my own voice. Starting with a small step, I have manifested English with greater confidence. I let my writing dance; my inner voice sing; my passion blossom. No longer do I worry if my Thai English is wrong as long as my feeling is right. I have pursuit in the beauty of writing, although its genre does not allow room for me to do much. Also, I find aesthetic freedom in addition to the pleasure of writing agency. Nor am I discouraged

when I cannot write English British-ly or American-ly (Baxter, 2006). My English smells Thai-ly since I am thinking in Thai but writing in English. This experience illustrates the notion that using English Thai-ly “goes beyond strictly linguistic elements: it is the means by which I can say, “I’m an English speaker” (Baxter, 2006, p. 15). Following this principle thus brings the concept of World Englishes to light. I now truly understand what World Englishes means through an act of writing. Like Hip-hop or rap music, the writing performativity (Pennycook, 2006) of this literature review writing sets me free from conventional writing rule. Writing in my own English eventually heals my soul which was devalued with a red pen in college writing class two decades ago. After all, I understand that English is not the language of the others anymore; yet it can be mine and, of course, whoever uses it with her own will.

This manifestation of writing is, in fact, an indirect process of decolonization of my mind. In light of this, it has broadened my horizon of how the philosophy of World Englishes helps other L2 learners exercise their will in the language and their ability to maintain linguistic health (Phillipson, 2000). In this case, Bhatt (2002) viewed Yuki, Sirin, and other characters previously described as needing the reinforcement, by postmodern English curricula, textbooks, and resource materials that contain local relevance. In addition, the pedagogical resources need to more widely used as a global language, it will be expected that speakers will foster in students the belief that being unable to speak like a native-speaker

accent will not be a sign of poor competence (Graddol, 2006). Along similar lines, learners should also view themselves not as speakers of “broken English” but as speakers of a recognized variety of English (Morrow, 2004). In this world of growing inequality, it is hard to deny that a crowd of people choose English to serve their needs as international communicators. Warschauer’s (2000) stated that most people employ a local variety of English rather than following the colonial standardized norms to project their identity and values. For example, the Singaporean who was proud of his roots illustrated how much *Singlish* enriched his identity:

When one is abroad, in a bus or train or an aeroplane and when one overhears someone speaking, one can immediately say that this is someone from Malaysia or Singapore. And I should hope that when I’m speaking abroad my countrymen will have no problem recognizing that I am a Singaporean. (Tongue, 1974, p. iv). The voice from the Singapore writer surely represented other voices of English learners, including me.

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