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Current Trends in ELT

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Abstract

Owing to the use of English as a global lingua franca, the trends in English teaching could probably be well perceived by considering the language's inseparability from globalization. First of all, since globalization has affected almost the whole aspects of life in the world, English, which is used as the main means of communication in those sectors, is also closely connected to them. Consequently, any consideration of the teaching of English should be linked to them. Secondly, its multiple forms or uses in some specific locations has emerged the phenomena of Englishes and been challenged as the only type to be learned. Finally, the massive use of ICT has also contributed to the many new possibilities of using technology for teaching English.

Keywords: globalization, Englishes, English language teaching, ICT

Introduction

The use of English as the first international language makes it impossible to discuss issues related to the language without relating it to globalization. Its massive use in almost all sectors of life throughout the world; the intensive efforts of public and private schools to enable learners to master it; its dominant role in the global media, international forums, business, politics, finance, diplomacy, entertainment and sports; indicate that English is not only the main global language but also an integral part of the whole process of globalization. As a result, all things related to English, including its teaching trends, are fundamentally very complex topics, and might be commenced by discussing the nature of globalization.

As a starting point in this paper, discussion on globalization is focused on three features which have significant implications to English. First, globalization is not only about economic processes, but political, technological and cultural processes as well. Second, the stream of globalization does not only flow from the developed countries (U.S. or Western World) to the rests of the world, but also—vice versa—from developing countries to developed ones. Third, information and communication technology (ICT) has been intensively and extensively used not only as a medium for communication in English but also as the medium for English teaching.

In the following sections, discussions about the recent trends in English teaching will be presented in relation to the implications of the three features of globalization to English.

English Teaching Boom

Since globalization is closely related to the global economic, political, technological and cultural processes, it transforms contemporary social life in all its dimensions. And due to the fact that English is used as the main means of communication in the processes, the necessity to be proficient in the language dramatically increases. The growth of opportunity for transnational companies to invest in many different countries and the shifting pattern of trade and new working practices (like the raising prevalence of screen based labor) make the number of people using and learning English considerably increase. According to Cooke (as cited in Pennycook, 2001), English even serves as the main gate to get a better job, especially in multinational companies. In most international forums, English is the main means of communication. Crystal (as cited in Graddol, 2000, p. 8) estimates that 85% of international organizations now use English as their working language. English is also the most commonly used language in the sciences. In 1997, the Science Citation Index reported that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries (Wikipedia, 2006).

To meet the increasing need of English mastery by individuals who do not want to cut out of the international society, more and more English teachers and language teaching facilities are required. As a consequence, English teaching is and will be one of the most prospective fields throughout the world. According to the Guardian (2004), the field of English teaching is and will continue to boom for a half the world population would use English in 2005. Two billion people will learn English in the period of 2010-2015. The 'boom' will proceed up to 2050, since when English learners is estimated to decrease from 2 billion to 500 million people.

Diversity of English Teaching

If we observe our daily life, it will be obvious that globalization is not only going in one direction—from the developed countries (U.S. or Western World) to the rests of the world—but also—vice versa—from developing countries to developed ones. Pennycook (as cited in Maybin & Swan, 2010) emphasizes that "... to suggest that globalization is *only* a process of US or Western domination of the world is to take a narrow and ultimately unproductive view of global relations" (p. 114). To illustrate, let's see these examples. Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonalds, and Levis do spread from the U.S. to the other parts of the world. However, Toyota, Sony, and Hanamasa from Japan, kung-fu from China, Keroncong (music) from Indonesia, and tango (dance) from Argentina also spread to America, Western World, and the other parts of the world. In relation to English teaching, it is clear that on one side English and English teaching affect the whole languages and their teachings in the world. On the other hand, each language (and teaching) in the world also has the potential to affect English and its teaching. According to Baumgardner & Brown (2003), while English is taught outside of its native regions, the local context must be involved. This encourages the varieties of the English language, be they in the aspects of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (McKay, 2002, pp. 53-55). English used in Hong Kong is unique, and so is the English in India, the Philippines, Australia, South Africa, and other places. That's why some experts suggest that English language should no longer be written as "English", but "Englishes".

The diversity of the English language has actually been reflected by the grouping of English speakers, which is divided by Kachru (as cited in Graddol, 2000, p. 10) into three circles: "inner circle", "outer circle", and "expanding circle." The inner-circle belongs to users of English as mother tongue (first language), which was estimated by Crystal (1997) to reach 375 million speakers. Speakers in this group include those who use English since they were born in Canada, America, Britain, Australia, and several other countries. The outer-circle covers the users of English as a second language, which reached about 375 million people. Speakers belong to this group include users who use

English since they were born in Nigeria, Singapore, Philippines, and various other countries.

Different from the speakers in the inner circle, speakers in the outer circle tend to add a local element into English and creating its own variety of English as a result of code-switching. In general, speakers in this group are adept at using a range of international English language when dealing with people from outside the group. But when dealing with speakers of their own group, they tend to use their own English.

The third group, expanding-circle, covers the users of English as a foreign language. According to Crystal (1997) the number of English speakers in this group ranges from 100 million to 1 billion speakers. Different from members of an outer circle, speakers included in an expanding-circle use English only in specific environments (classroom, office). The language is not used within their community (family, country). Expanding-circle groups could be found in Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, and various other countries.

The speakers in an expanding-circle world usually have no local model of English. However, their English accents and patterns of error may reflect characteristics of their mother tongue (Graddol, 2010, p. 11). As a consequence, the phenomenon of the formation of a unique variety of English called 'creole' also takes place in this third group. The creole is usually formed from a pidgin, or a variety of language that was developed by a group of speakers who do not fully master the language.

Since the population number of each groups keeps on changing (by birth), the composition of the number of English speakers in each group continues to change. The following comparison of the estimated number of speakers between the 1990's (Crystal, 1997) and 2000 (Graddol, 2000) shows this very clearly.

Table 1: Number of English Speakers by Group

Group	1990s	2000
"inner-circle"	320-380 million	375 million
"outer-circle"	150-300 million	375 million
"expanding-circle"	100-1000 million	750 million

Population growth due to births in the group of countries belong to the expanding-circle, provides a special challenge and opportunity as well to the field of English teaching. The high need for English mastery has driven many countries to lower the age at which the language is taught in schools. Since 1982 South Korea started teaching English since primary school (Lee, 2001). Indonesia began to teaching English since elementary school in 1994. The Taiwanese government has officially allowed the teaching of English in

primary school since 2002 (Wang, 2008). Such policies and practices have emerged a new sub-section of English teaching called Teaching English to Young Learners (henceforward TEYL).

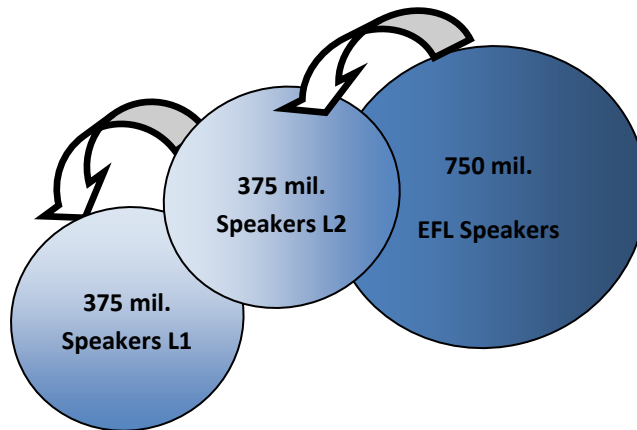
TEYL has actually been a new sub-section of English teaching. Its emergence was due to the fact that children learn a new language in very different ways from adults or adolescents. These differences could be easily seen through the fact that children are often more passionate and lively learners than adults. They often seem less embarrassed than adults at using a new language, and their lack of inhibition is an advantage for them to get a more native-like accent. On the other hand, children tend to lose interest more quickly and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find difficult. They also find it difficult to talk about the language they are learning.

These differences are basically generalizations necessary to be unpacked in order to find out the detail of what lies underneath as characteristic of children as language learners. A deep understanding on this matter will hopefully help us teach a new language to children effectively. To achieve this, the field of TEYL needs to be studied by considering the linguistic, psychological and social development of the learners. Cameron (2005) emphasizes:

“The field of teaching young learners, particularly in teaching English, has expanded enormously in the last 10 years but is only just beginning to be researched. We need therefore to draw on work from beyond language classrooms: in child development, in learning theory, in first language development, and in the development of a second language in bilingual contexts. (p. 2)

In addition to the birth factors, changes in the composition of the number of English speakers is also caused by the speakers' migration from one group to another, i.e. from an expanding-circle to an outer-circle or from an outer-circle to inner-circle caused by the increasing intensity of communication between peoples and migration. This phenomenon is expressed by Graddol (2000, p. 10) through the model in Figure 1 below. This model shows that the number of English speakers in the 21st century will most likely be dominated by users of English as a Second Language (ESL) for many speakers of EFL change their status to be ESL speakers. This status change is due to the tendency for EFL speakers' children to use English as ESL since their childhood. As a result, the varieties of English will keep on increasing.

Figure 1:
Transfer among groups of English speakers



Based on the discussions above, we can see two contrastive but equally developed sides of the English. On one hand, the language has established itself as the main lingua-franca of the international community. On the other hand, it is also the means of communication of a particular community in a smaller scale, which uses it as a second or foreign language. Thus, English is no longer recognized as an exclusive property of certain groups of speakers only. It has become the possession of speakers around the world.

The status of English as the possession of speakers around the world, especially in the context of ESL and EFL, emerges at least three key issues in English teaching and English. First, which English grammar will be taught as a standard of to students? Second, which pronunciation should be taught? Third, should native cultural elements be included in the curriculum? The issue of a standardized English grammar (which usually refers to the one belongs to native English speakers) to be taught is still often debated. However, since English has no central authority for guarding its purity, the emphasis on Standard English seems not very relevant. Kachru (1985) argues that even native English speakers no longer have the exclusive privilege to control English standardization (p. 30). The best solution for this is probably to conduct linguistic and teaching researches by using new paradigms and perspectives to find the right teaching strategies in such multicultural and multilingual situations. Maybin and Swann (2010) reveal that the core elements of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar of English as the global lingua franca has been tried to be set based negotiations between the actual uses of non-native English speakers (p. 119).

The key implication of this phenomenon to the teaching of English in the ESL/EFL context is the need for conducting classroom action research (CAR) which can give insight to teachers about their own beliefs, mood and

perceptions of students, and the weaknesses to improve and solve. In other words, English teachers in the ESL and EFL contexts are highly recommended to carry out CAR. In addition, learning goals based on student needs must also be prioritized. If the objective of an Indonesian student to learn English is for obtaining a high TOEFL score, he should be taught the American standard grammar. If his goal is to communicate in English with various nations in the world, he should be taught the elements of English as an international language.

Until the end of the 20th century, the teaching of English still emphasized the importance of mastering native-like pronunciation. However, the existence of a local variety of English (especially in ESL contexts) that have been institutionalized, such as “Singlish” (Singaporean English), “Chinglish” (Chinese English) and Filipino English eradicated the emphasis. In EFL settings, learners are usually given the freedom to decide what native-like pronunciation (American, British, or Australian) they would like to study. It is not “fair” to force all students to adopt American or British English if they are learning the language for communicating with other speakers of ESL/EFL. Jenkins (2000) claims: “Received pronunciation (RP) is an unattainable and an unnecessary target for second-language Learners.” He suggests that the syllabus of English pronunciation practice must retain basic distinctive sounds, which by Maybin and Swann (2010) refer to as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) pronunciation, but need not be directed to produce speech which is identical to native speakers’ (p. 119). As long as the speech is clear and easy to catch by listeners, it is adequate.

The issue of the essence of integrating cultural matters of the native speakers into the teaching of English is highly dependent on the objective of learning the language. In this context, teachers should re-conceptualize language and culture interrelationship and adapt it to the students’ needs. If the students learn English to enable themselves to live in the land of native speakers, the curriculum must include the native cultural elements. In such a situation, the teachers need and must have a good understanding of American, English, or Australian literature and culture. However, if the program is intended to enable students to communicate with others from different countries, integrating elements of native culture is no longer relevant. What is needed is intercultural awareness—derived from an adequate understanding of cultural diversity among nations around the world. In such a situation, teachers do not have to be experts in the culture of English native speakers.

ICT and English Teaching

The third dimension of globalization which is inseparable from the trend of English teaching is the development and highly intensified use of information and communication technology (ICT). The rapidly growing ICT is both a contributor and the results of economic and social development of the

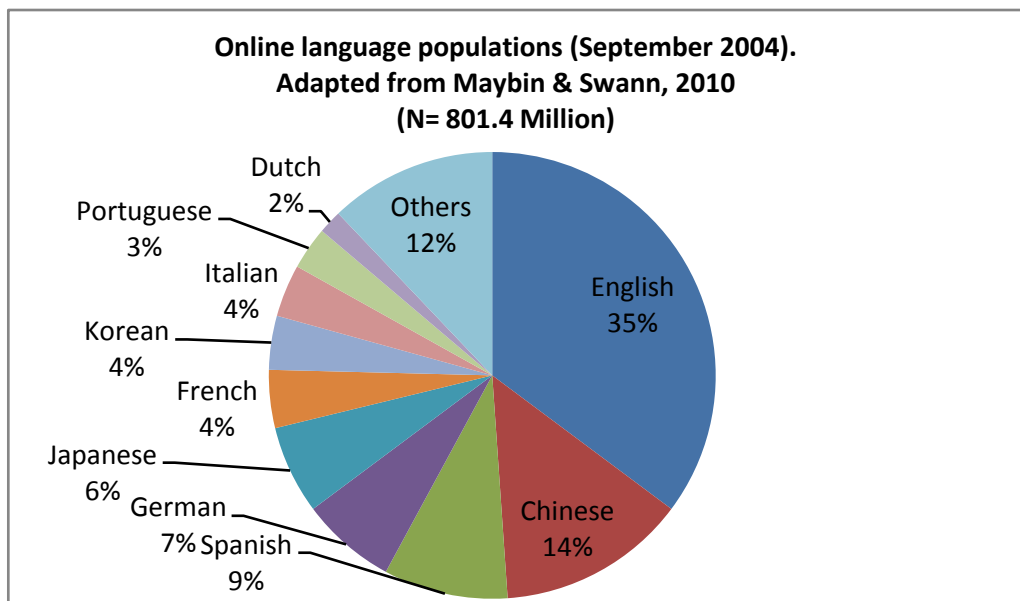
world society. ICT has deeply pervaded and greatly affected the field of English teaching. The following is a brief discussion about ICT and its role in English teaching.

Many people regard the Internet as the main armada of global English. The high growth of computer and the Internet use has made information, which is 80% written in English (Mc-Crum R. et al., 1986), very easy to access. The accelerated growth of the Internet can be seen in the data that in the United States alone 3.4 trillion e-mail messages were sent during 1998. This means that on average each person the United States sent more than 10,000 emails in 1998 (eMarketer, 1999). American Management Association International's (1998) study revealed that e-mail has overcome the amount of face-to-face and via telephone business communication. More than 95% of students in US used the Internet to conduct research, search for work, or contact friends (Diederich, 1998). Although US has long been the main users of the Internet in the world, industrialized countries now begin to catch up. In 2010, the number of the Internet users in China is expected to be more than in the U.S. (NUA The Internet Surveys, 1999).

At the initial appearance of the Internet, English teacher regarded it only as one of the alternative media to teach language (Warschauer, 1995). But at present the Internet has become the fourth revolution in human cultural development revolution—after the discovery of language, writing, and printing technology. Unlike the three previous revolutions, the revolution triggered by the Internet took place very quickly. As a result of this revolution, many activities in the field of language use and teaching could be carried out quickly and accurately. The followings are some ICT-assisted language use and teaching activities.

Computer-Mediated English

English is undoubtedly the lingua-franca of the Internet due to several reasons: the political hegemony of the US, English domination in the fields of science, business and diplomacy, and the Internet technology was invented in 1960s to 1970s in US (Hafner and Lyon, as cited in Maybin & Swann, 2010, p. 147). Along with the spread and development of the Internet technology, the number of language used in it is also increases. According to the *Almanac, 2007* (as cited in Maybin & Swann, 2010, p. 147), among the 1.2 billion users—equals to one sixth of world population— of the Internet in 2006, hundreds of millions communicated in other languages than English or in ESL and EFL. In the fall of 2004, native speakers of English who used the Internet were only 1/3 of total users around the world (see chart below)



The computer-mediated English uses some different discourses and linguistic elements which are different from 'conventional' English. To illustrate, look at the following examples. The use of acronyms, such as ASAP (as soon as possible), TTYL (talk to you later), lol (laugh out loudly), bf (boy friend), WYATB (wish you all the best) and BRB (be right back); spellings eccentric or non-standard such as "Type back SEARCH !!!!"; capital letters for all words, like "MAKE SURE YOU DO IT !!!!"; lowercase for all words, like "she is coming home this summer "; asterisk for emphasis, eg "She's * really * angry with you "; writing literally laughter, for example, "he ... he ... he ...; and emoticons, like :-) for 'smile', ;-) for 'wink', and :-(to 'frown'. Realizing its usefulness as a means of global-computer-mediated-communications, the linguistic elements and discourse of computer-mediated English also needs to get serious attention in English teaching.

Web-based Learning

English can now be learnt not only in the traditional (or face-to-face) classes but also in "cyberspace" or web-based classes. At present, one can attend a "language class" in the Internet just in seconds in anytime and from anywhere. Web-based learning—sometimes also called technology based or distance learning, online education, and e-learning—is one of the fastest growing areas in education. It is widely accepted that advances in information technology and new developments in learning science provide opportunities to create well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, affordable, efficient, flexible e-learning environments (Khan, 2005). For this reason, it is clear that web-

based learning provide various new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and learners. Therefore, going through the Internet is probably the most promising alternative way to study English.

In web-based classes, students can easily ask for lessons or exercises which accord with their language level. Thousands of English web-based classes offer trainings for a variety of basic language skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading). These skills can be put on the web and made interactive in a variety of ways. One of these ways is the Internet communication tools such as m-learning, email, blogs, chat. These tools provide integrated environment for teachers and students. Many web-based classes also facilitate the study of vocabulary, pronunciation and all branches of linguistics. This is made possible by ICT that can hold and present vast amounts of real language data in a compact audio-visual.

To see how web-based classes facilitate English teaching effectively and interestingly as well, let's see some most common technologies we can use in education.

E-mail

E-mail is possibly most commonly used and easiest to use the Internet application we can apply in language learning. By getting a single e-mail account, teachers and students can integrate e-mail based activities into their curriculum (LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997). If they have the necessary access, equipment, and foreign contacts, students can also correspond with native speakers of the target language. Another profit teachers and students can get by learning using e-mail is possibly the fact that creating a personal email account (G-mail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.) is free. In practice, for instance, a teacher can create a topic to write and send it to students via e-mail. Receiving the e-mail, the students start to write and send it back to the teacher. Receiving the composition, the teacher can comment and provide feedback for each work and send it back to the students to rewrite.

Blogs

A blog is a web-based space for writing where all the writing and editing of information is managed through a web browser and is immediately and publicly available on the Internet (Godwin, 2003). On the Internet, a blog is a personal or professional journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. The essential characteristics of the blog are its journal form, typically a new entry each day, and its informal style. Many blogs include photo, audio, and video information. These features, particularly since they normally enable uploading and linking of files, make blogs very well suited to serve as on-line personal journals for students. Language learners

could use a personal blog, linked to a course, as an electronic portfolio, showing development over time.

By publishing the blog on the Internet, the student has the possibility of writing for their classmates. Pinkman (2005) indicates that blogging becomes communicative and interactive when participants assume multiple roles in the writing process, as writers who write and post, as readers/reviewers who respond to other writers' posts, and as writer-readers who, returning to their own posts, react to criticism of their own posts. Readers in turn can comment on what they read, although blogs can be placed in secured environments as well.

Skype

Nowadays every the Internet messenger services have audio functions, and technological equipments such as laptop computers, also have cameras on them. So students can talk with their instructors and peers far away. In the same way, they can also speak with native speakers of language and compare their pronunciation with a native speaker. Speaking skills can be developed by using this application. In addition, students and teachers do not have to pay for this; they just pay for the Internet access.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are probably the most familiar communication technology we can use in English teaching. With mobile phones learners can surf on the web and they can at least learn vocabulary from the dictionary that cell phone include. Learners can search for new words or exercises in English. Learners can also send Short Message Service (SMS) to ask questions to their friends or teachers. Teachers can give feedback by using their cell phones to their students. Recent mobile phones use wireless the Internet to exchange voice messages, e-mails, and small web pages. This enables learners to use their mobile phones to learn English vocabulary, and do exercises. Moreover, recording facility provided in cell phones makes it possible for students to record their voice and the voice of a native speaker. Playing the voices, the students compare their pronunciations with that of the native speaker.

IPods

IPods are one of the mobile media devices which enable users to produce, organize, deliver, and use texts, images, audio and video. This technology makes it possible to develop all skills of English. For instance, teachers can send text messages and students read and answer the message. Students also can record their voices so that they can do listening and speaking exercises at the same time. In addition, students can read or listen to authentic materials such as English songs, short stories, poems, news, or vocabulary. In

short, iPods provide a variety of possibilities for language learners to enhance their listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and writing.

Conclusion

The use of English as the main international language provides great opportunity and challenge as well to the field of English teaching. On the one hand, the number of people who are and will be learning English is so great that this field will 'boom'. On the other hand, the variety of the learners' characteristics, age, objective, location, and culture and the accelerated changes taking place in the world community make English teaching very complex and dynamic as well. The emergence and use of information and communication technology also contributes to new possibilities in English teaching. The consequence of all these phenomena are: for decades to come, the field of teaching English would be very prospective. However, such a huge opportunity will be in vain if English teachers do not continue to develop themselves in order to meet all the challenges that always go along with the opportunities.

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