

A Critical Assessment of the Explanatory Power of Kachru's Concentric Circles of World Englishes Model

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I Introduction

1. World Englishes

World English is both a shorthand for English as a world language and a superior term for American English, British English, Australian English, etc. Because English has become the "international English, global lingua franca," Quirk argues that "Standard English" should be measured in terms of British English or General American English (Quirk, 2003), but the ownership of English should belong to all English speakers around the world, that is, it should be a collective claim to be used as a personal language, not just by "native speakers". For example, according to Widdowson(1994), Native Speakers are no longer the sole owners of English. Widdowson chastises native speakers for worrying about the diversity and variety of English, which is influenced by both native and non-native speakers.

However, the cornerstone of the worldwide spread of English, the Dartmouth Conference, was in place in 1966 before the birth of Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model (in the mid-1980s). There is no doubt that the global boom in English teaching is also deeply influenced by the globalization of English, which also prompts teachers to rethink some traditional English teaching objectives.

2. Kachru's Three Concentric Circles

With so many people speaking English, the variety of English is increasing, but actually British English and American English are just two of World Englishes. Braj Kachru's seminal models (1985, 1992, 2005) represent the development and spread of English throughout the world. This ubiquitous language is endlessly fascinating to researchers in the field of applied linguistics. According to Kachru (1985, 1992), "World English" should be divided into three categories according to the current sociolinguistic overview of English (Figure 1&2) :

(1) Inner Circle represents the countries where English is the main language and is used in daily life and government institutions, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the traditional culture and language foundation of English.

(2) The Outer Circle includes countries that have colonial relations with Britain and widely use English in social life or government departments, that is, use English as an additional institutionalized official language, but not the mother tongue -- these countries include India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa. Most of the countries that belong to this group are former colonies of the British Empire, and people from these countries are fluent in English for almost any type of communication.

(3) Expanding Circle represents countries that are introducing English as a foreign language in education, mainly China, South Korea, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.

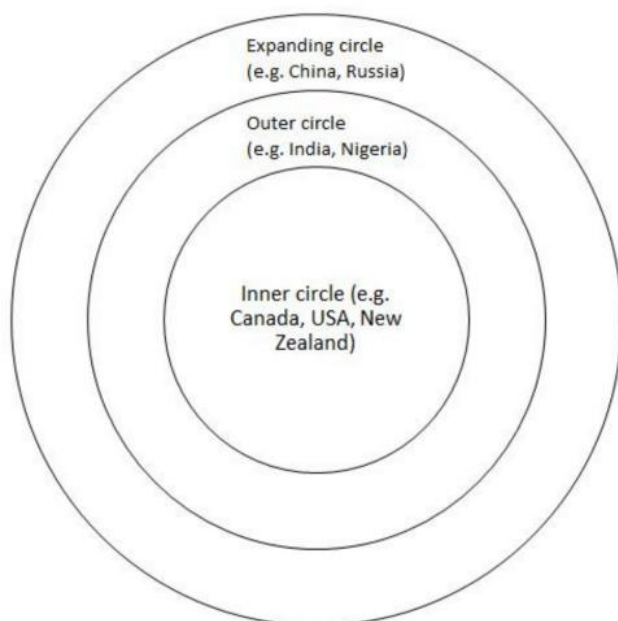


Figure 1. Kachru' s Three Concentric Circles Model (1985).

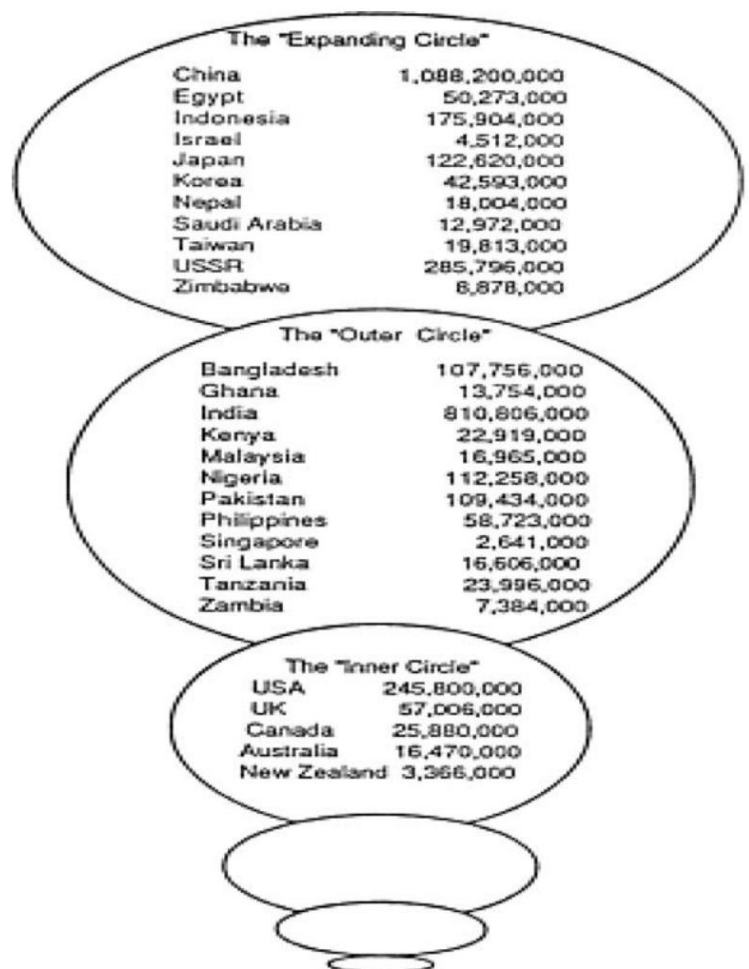


Figure 2. Kachru' s Three Concentric Circles Model (1992).

Circles represent the spread, acquisition patterns and function allocation of English in different cultural contexts. There is no doubt that speakers from these three circles will "act" in English in different ways depending on the context in which English is used (John Robert Schmitz. 2014). Kachru's model also offers the possibility of exploring new ways of spreading the English language around the world.

II The Explanatory Power

1. Contributions of Kachru's Model

Kachru's Three Concentric Circles model has made a valuable contribution to English for world language researchers and has become an important heuristic method to understand the multi-centrality of English as a global language. Kachru's model contributes to the idea that the world is multilingual, multilingualism is the rule, and monolingualism is the exception, by putting it center stage. At the same time, the model also makes the English language a symbol of "national unity".

2. Limitations of Kachru's Model

The model cannot reveal the myriad scenarios in which English can be used as L1(mother tongue), L2 (second language), or FL(foreign language) in nearly 200 countries, because it is artificially constructed. However, researchers often seem to expect too much from models. To be sure, no complex or precise model can perfectly explain every turning point in linguistic plots. Therefore, it has also been criticized by many people. For example,Graddol believes that the location of inner circle countries represents a shortcoming of the model, because it regards inner circle countries as the best place for language correctness (Graddol, 1999). Modiano holds the same view, arguing that linking the ownership of languages to inner circle countries is an unsuccessful result of the model and represents a kind of linguistic imperialism that Kachru seeks to avoid (Modiano, 1999). For Modiano, in other words, it "re-establishes the idea that language is the property of a particular group of people, and that correct usage is determined by reputable experts who speak it".

Tajeddin Zia's findings show that references to the three circles and cultural elements in textbooks are mostly American English documents for middle circle countries. In addition, references to the diversity and cultural elements of the outer circle and the extended circle are relatively more evident in the Interchanges and English achievement series. However, all three textbook series primarily represent

inner circle accents. (Tajeddin Zia.2020). The three concentric circles do provide a useful classification of English in the world, but fail to show the emergence of circles of English as a lingua franca among users of the outer and extended circles.

Pung (2009) proposed his three-circle Model of "going beyond", namely the Conical Model of English(CME). Because Kachru's model erases and ignores what happened in the past in terms of language, history and culture before the advent of English, in the space in the inner, outer and extended circles that the language currently occupies. The Kachru' model studiously ignores the past and tends to obliterate history. In the literature on the existence of English, there is little documentation of what inner circle space (Australia, Canada, etc.) was like.

Pung (2009) also mentions Bruthiaux's (2003) criticism that the model on the one hand fails to account for the differences between different dialects of English, and on the other hand the Kachruvian structure is not a guide for other world languages such as French or Spanish, which is also a complex work.

Bruthiaux (2003) argues that Kachru's model of three concentric circles is too limiting because it is "a largely country-based model that draws on specific historical events and is poorly relevant to current sociolinguistic data". And it hides huge differences between countries within the same circle. The English "inner circle" used to extend to Australia and New Zealand, and even Canada and the United States. Moreover, it is hard to argue that the "inner circle" has not expanded, say, in terms of population. The model of growth and stagnation of circles is not consistent enough. It will be noted that in Kachru's concentric circle scheme, the "outer circle" inexplicably sits in the middle (Prayag, 1998).

Bonfiglio questions the racial overtones of the term "native speakers" and prefers to refer to these users as English speaking L1 users. L1 is a diverse group with different species and different levels of formal education (Bonfiglio,2010). If a language is not subject to ownership, but is to be learned and used, then the ownership of English has a global character. They can decide to keep it or pass it on to others, it's not the monopoly of native speakers. Jenkins firmly believes that as a lingua franca user, some deviations from native language norms in English should be reinterpreted as signs of creativity (Jenkins, 2006).

3. Easily Produced Fallacies of Kachru's Model

Due to the establishment of the Kachru model, some fallacies are obvious. For example, the

essence of English learners in outer circle and extended circle is to communicate with people in the inner circle (Betsy Hu Xiaogiong, 2011). Learning English in Outer and Expanding Circles between Koreans and Japanese, Chinese and Thais, etc., is making the use of English among them a major tool for interaction among non-native speakers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. At the moment, outsiders are not necessarily learning English to go to English-speaking countries.

Another fallacy is that the native speaker model is the only model for all English learners. This claim has no empirical validity. English has a complex and multifaceted history in India. It was introduced by the British during colonial rule and later became an important language of education, government and business. According to Kachru's concentric circle model, India would be classified as an outer circle country, with English primarily used for these purposes and having developed its own unique variant, Hinglish. In fact, India has established its own English language models and norms, which are accepted and recognized by mainstream English-speaking countries." English is an important language of education and government in India. It is also used as a mark of social status and prestige, and is often seen as a means of upward mobility. This creates a complex power dynamic, with those who are proficient in English often enjoying greater opportunity and social mobility. The concept of "native speaker" is not always a valid standard for global use of English (Christopherson,1988). The three concentric circles show that English has now become an international language. Therefore, English can no longer only be linked to Inner Circle culture, but must adapt to both Outer Circle and Expanding Circle culture.

III Conclusion

Although there has been some fierce criticism of Kachru's model's simplistic approach to categorizing and classifying English speakers into circles that lack a clear rationale, researchers and educators still consider Kachru's model of three concentric circles a valuable contribution to the spread and development of English worldwide(A1-Mutairi, Mohammad A. 2019.) It seems that the inner circle countries are increasingly similar to the outer circle and the extended circle. The Kachru' model prides the "inner" circle on status and emphasizes the status of the "native speaker" and the mystique surrounding the native language. First, Kachru's model seems to classify the ownership of English by establishing strict boundaries between speakers of the language. Second,Kachru's model tends to take the fluency of native speakers as international English, even if it is not a model of international English

communication. When it comes to the way in which Kachru's Inner Circle defines native language competence as a panacea for native speaker fluency, tolerance of linguistic diversity and a polycentric approach need to be advocated. (Jenkins, 2006)

Overall, Kachru's concentric circle model provides a useful framework for understanding the global spread and development of English. However, it has several limitations that should be taken into account when assessing its explanatory power. In a detailed analysis of the model, the following five points need to be considered:

1. Historical and Cultural context: Although the model considers the historical and cultural context of English use, it oversimplifies the complexity of this context and does not adequately capture the diversity and fluidity of English language practices in different regions.

2. Linguistic diversity: The model divides the world into three categories based on English language proficiency, but does not adequately consider linguistic diversity within and between these categories. For example, there are many different breeds that use English within the inner ring, and the model does not recognize the unique characteristics of these breeds.

3. Power dynamics: The concentric circle model strengthens the hierarchical concept of English language use, and the inner circle is regarded as superior to the outer circle and the extended circle. This risks perpetuating inequalities in language education and access, and fails to adequately address the power dynamics in which English plays a role in its global spread.

4. Agency of speakers: The model treats English as a holistic entity imposed on non-native speakers, rather than recognizing the agency of speakers in shaping and negotiating their linguistic practices. This ignores the role that speakers play in shaping the development of English in different regions, and how they use English to maintain their own identities and cultural practices.

5. Complexity and mobility: The concentric circle model presents a static and oversimplified view of English language use and development, which fails to adequately reflect the complexity and mobility of language practices in different regions. It fails to explain how English has evolved and been shaped by the different contexts in which it is used.

While Kachru's concentric circle model provides a useful framework for understanding the global spread of English, it is important to recognize its limitations and acknowledge the complexity and diversity of English language use around the world.

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