

English as a World Language

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“[English is] a language – *the* language – on which the sun does not set, whose users never sleep.”
(Quirk, 1985, 1)

Starting with the establishment of English-speaking colonies in Americas and Asia, through the colonial expansion in Africa and South Pacific, up to the present day adoption as the official and semi-official language by many independent countries, that is the movement of English around the world. The result of this movement can be seen in the dominance of the English language in over 70 countries all over the world. The dominant status is according to Crystal (2003a, 106) the consequence of two major factors, namely the historical and economic one, in other words the legacy of British colonial power with its peak by the end of the 19th century and the postcolonial impact of economic power of the United States and the process of globalisation through the 20th and 21st centuries.

The colonial experience as the early factor has no general structure of development because of peculiar political, social and linguistic background of each colonised territory. Nevertheless, Dick Leith (1996) proposes in the chapter on *English – Colonial to postcolonial* a description of sequences of events leading to the establishment of English as a main language in the British colonies. Firstly, the initial stage is designated as an original settlement by English speaker, the second stage is incorporation, mostly political one (the formation of the 'British empire' in the nineteenth century), and finally, “a nationalistic reaction which sometimes, but not always, led to independence” (Graddol, 1996, 181). The nationalistic reaction provoked the emergence of movements for cultural and political independence in Asia and Africa during the twentieth century. According to linguists the initial stage maintains an important position in the spread of English and within it, there can be identified three different types of establishments of the colonies that ensure three different patterns of colonies' development with their own linguistic outcomes.

The first type is characterised by replacement of the pre-colonial settlement by the colonial one – by the first-language speaker of English (e.g. North America, Australia) and this replacement is eminently parallel to the development of Old English because the settlers had little interest in the languages of original inhabitants. The colonists' communication was limited to other colonial languages such as French in Canada or Dutch, thus nearly no linguistic contact was created (Knowles, 2005, 140).

In the second case, the colonial settlement forms the minority of population; nevertheless it maintained the power in the territory and allowed the native population to learn English as the second language in places such as India, China, Nigeria and other countries of Asia and Africa (Graddol, 1996, 181). From the beginning, the English traders recognised ancient civilization they colonised as the advanced one in comparison to their own and consequently showed interest in studying them (e.g. Sir William Jones reconstructed Indo-European language family in the 1780s). However, by the end of the century, the feeling of dominance of English destroyed the prior thoughtfulness to the original languages and, for

example in India, in 1813, the official education policy started to proclaim English as a superior means of communication (Knowles, 2005, 141).

Whereas English in the two cases mentioned above is basically identical to that spoken in the UK, the final third type represents a different situation which developed in West Africa. Pidgins or the languages of trade in the course of the eighteenth century made up of elements of Portuguese, African and English language were transported with slaves to the Caribbean islands where they were adopted as a native language, called creole (Graddol, 1996, 181-182).

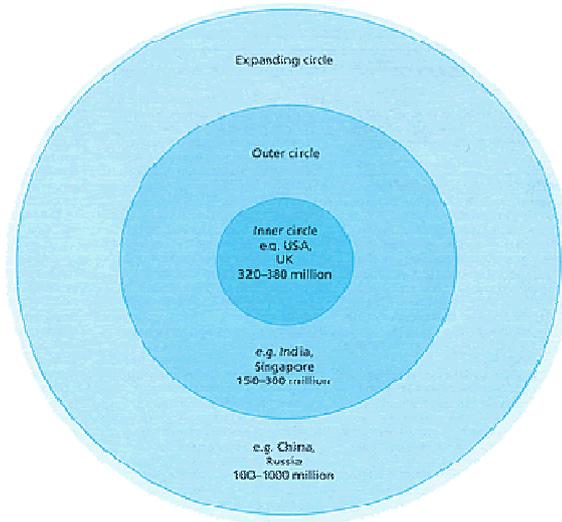
Moreover, another factor that ensures the leading position of English worldwide is the economic power of the United States and the process of globalisation over recent years. Definitions of globalisation differ from one domain to another (e.g. economics, sociology or anthropology) but generally they have in common the phenomenon of connection between nations, corporations and individuals (Vaish, 2008, 30). For instance, Held et al. (1999, 27) and Pieterse (2004, V) agree that globalisation is worldwide or global interconnectedness in all aspects of life. The connection is in these days “guaranteed” predominately by the technological progress; technology is under the dominance of the US and it makes as well English a global language known worldwide. Apart from technology, political, social and economic events encourage English to be used throughout the world as a lingua franca. Naturally the process of globalisation is accompanied by the positive as well as negative attitudes. Pennycook (2001, 49-53) purveys great amount of advantages (e.g. easier travelling, international communication, economic opportunities) and disadvantages (e.g. English as a threat to the survival of less known languages) of English as a lingua franca. All in all, it is evident that the global spread of English led to the development of copious varieties of English and subsequently to the World Standard English.

Besides the two factors mentioned above, it is important to mention that sociolinguistic literatures concerning the topic of English as a world language (e.g. Bhatt (2001); Crystal (2003a); Graddol (1997); Krishnaswamy & Krishnaswamy (2006); Jenkins (2009) etc.) propose other logical reasons for such an intensive spread of the English language. They are classed as follows:

- *Historical reason* in form of the legacy of British or American imperialism when country's main institutions carry out their proceedings in English (government, civil service, schools, religion...)
- *Internal political reasons* due to which English is a neutral means of communication between the country's different ethnic groups (local variation of it as a symbol of national unity)
- *External economic reasons* by which English is understood as a language of international business and trade, tourist and advertising industries (organisations and companies are English dependent)
- *Practical reasons* of international air traffic control, maritime, policing and emergency services that are in English
- *Intellectual reasons* – English is a language of scientific, technological and academic information (85% of all information stored in electronic system, also access to philosophical, cultural, religious and literary history of Western Europe)
- *Entertainment reasons* – English is a language of popular culture and advertising (also main language of satellite broadcasting, home computers, video games, as well as illegal activities)
- *Wrong reasons* – specifically linguistic features, beauty of the language, easy pronunciation, simple grammar, nevertheless the last category is the least important for the spread of English as a world language.

However, in discussing the global spread of English, linguistic experts typically refer to B. B. Kachru's *Three Concentric Circles of English* (1986) as the model that includes historical, sociolinguistic and literary elements (Caine, 2008, 2). As it can be seen from Figure 1, the model is predominately organised into three circles according to the phases of the spread of English:

Figure 1: Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English



The initial stage of the spread of English started in the 16th century within the British Isles and was immediately followed by the second one whose territories were North America, Australia and New Zealand where English-speaking population migrated. The greatest importance is, according to Kachru, put on the third phase because of its significant sociolinguistic power to English. South Asia, Southeast Asia, South, West, and East Africa were the countries where English-speaking population did not exist before. Its emergence resulted in the rise of “the changed profile of English as a pluricentric language” (ibid, 2-3), in other words the development of regional varieties of English rooted from the contact with diverse languages in these dissimilar sociocultural contexts (Bhatt, 2001, 529).

Moreover, these three stages are represented by Kachru as the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanded Circle that “represent three distinct types of speech fellowship of English, phases of the spread of the language, and particular characteristics of the uses of the language and of its acquisition and linguistic innovations” (Kachru, 1986, 122). The Inner Circle includes the areas where English is the primary, first or native language (L1) such as the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Outer or Extended Circle refers to English with second or additional language role (L2) in countries where English has been spread in non-native setting and has become part of their institutions that has encouraged the establishment of multilingual setting. This circle is exemplified by India, Singapore, the Philippines, Malawi, Rwanda and Algeria (official status given in 1996 (Crystal, 2003b, 4-5)) and over 50 other territories. The third, Expanding Circle is represented by China, Korea, Japan, Greece, Poland, Norway and the increasing number of other areas, where English fulfills the role of a foreign language (EFL). The countries acknowledge the importance of English as an international language, nevertheless without any previous historical connection to English as in the first case (the Inner Circle) or the special status of English in their institutions as in the second case (the Outer Circle).

Since the borders between the circles are not clear-cut, consequently the problems with the classification of some countries emerge. For instance David Crystal in his *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* portrays three main 'mixtures' of circles. South Africa or Malaysia display the mixture of second and foreign language features and this makes the

difficulty to classify them properly. After independence of some countries, the consequent changes of language policy have caused another problem in the classification at hand, for example English in Tanzania and Kenya has no longer the official status in their institutions than it had before. And finally, Nigeria or Papua New Guinea use varieties of English that have an uncertain status of the first or foreign language at all (Crystal, 2003a, 107).

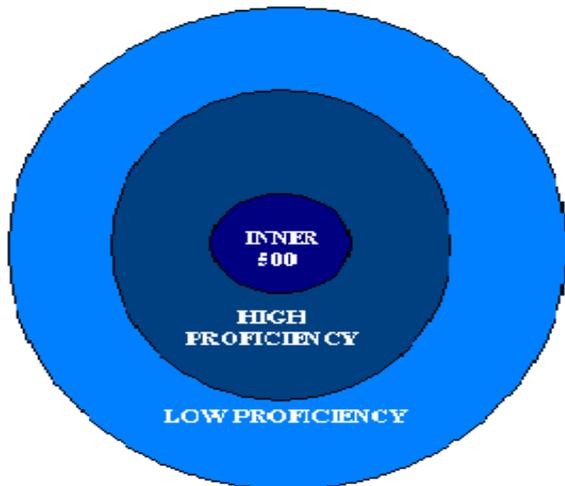
Albeit the majority of linguists permanently refer to Kachru's model of Englishes, over the course of the latest two decades several scholars have pointed out its limitations predominately concerning the recent changes in the use of English and "any attempt at a three-way categorisation of English uses and users" (Jenkins, 2009, 20).

Consequently, more up-to-date models of the spread of English have been composed. For instance, by the end of the twentieth century, Modiano proposed the first of his two models, i.e. *The Centripetal Circles of International English*, which takes a mutual comprehension of the majority of proficient speakers (native as well as non-native) as a basis for the classification of English as an international language (EIL). The core of his first model is made up of speakers who are proficient in international English, be they native or non-native. The next circle comprises speakers of English as a native or foreign language (ENL/EFL) rather than an international language. The third circle includes learners of English who are not yet proficient in English and finally, outside the circles, there are people who do not know English at all.

A few months after publishing the centripetal circles of English, Modiano reshaped this model and proposed the second one employing for a basis common features of all varieties of English. Thus, the centre is represented by EIL, in other words a set of features which is comprehensible to almost all native and proficient non-native speakers of English. The next circle comprises features whether internationally common or obscure. Ultimately, its outer sphere is made up of five groups, i.e. British English, American English, other major varieties (Canadian English, Australian English, New Zealand English and South African English), local varieties and foreign varieties of the English language. The final five groups share features that are distinctive to them and improbable to be comprehended by the majority of the other four groups (ibid, 21-23).

Furthermore, one of the latest models of the spread of English is proposed by David Graddol who argues that an ambiguity in terminology has emerged with the global spread of the English language, e.g. the difference between "native speaker", "second language speaker" and "foreign language speaker" has become unclear. Moreover, he points out a limitation of Kachru's model by way of illustration of a situation in Europe, where "foreign language learners in some countries [of Europe] were becoming more like second language users" (Graddol, 2006, 110) and that "second language user" as a linguistic term does not make sense currently. Therefore, he revises Kachru's model and takes "functional nativeness" and speakers' linguistic proficiency as a basis for his one (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Graddol's Model of English Speakers



In terms of numbers, the statistics collected by David Crystal in his work *English as a Global Language* suggest that in the early 2000s about a quarter of the world's population (around 1.5 billion people) is already fluent or competent on English. This figure has surpassed even Chinese language which is known to “only” some 1.1 billion (Crystal, 2003b, 6). Over 380 million speak English as a mother tongue, consequently the rest users of English language have to be ranked to the Outer and Expanded Circles (who speak English as a second or foreign language). However, there exist only estimates because it is difficult to find out how many people have learnt English and what the standard they should have known is. According to a few statistics available, the Outer Circle includes from 150 to 300 million English speakers. The greatest contribution is made by India where about 5-10 % (50-100 million) of the population use “a very high level of educated fluency” of English and one third (over 300 million) of the population have some competence in English according to *India Today* survey in 2000 (Crystal, 2002, 4). Even more complicated is the situation of the Extended Circle, there are the statistics much vaguer, in many cases it is pure guessing, therefore the estimates move from 100 to 1000 million users of English as a foreign language (ibid, 6). Within the Extended Circle, the peculiar position is maintained by overpopulated China because of its growing interest in English. Hence India and China conspicuously account for over half a billion users and learners of English that makes Asia the prominent user of English in the world (McArthur, 2002, 4).

All in all, as it can be seen from the article, the global spread of English is an enchanting story made up by a combination of the historical, political, social, cultural and linguistic elements. Starting with the British colonial power from the 1500s up to the present globalisation, the English language has progressively developed towards a position of a world language. Despite the fact that the number of speakers of particular language does not assure the status of a global language, in this case, it corresponds to the reality of English (Crystal, 2003b, 57). Moreover, the consequences of being the global language with such a number of its users are plentiful, for instance the emergence of multitudinous varieties of English, i.e. “New Englishes” spread worldwide or the discussion on English as a lingua franca (ELF). These consequences are, however, beyond the scope of this article for now.

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Abstrakt

Autorka článku o angličtine ako svetovom jazyku poskytuje náhľad na zrod a začiatky globálneho statusu anglického jazyka, historické, sociálne a kultúrne aspekty jeho globálneho vývoja až na súčasný proces globalizácie. Vlastnosť anglického jazyka ako „svetového“ zdôrazňuje prezentáciou troch najdôležitejších modelov angličtiny, ktoré dopĺňa kvantitatívnou informáciou o počte jeho užívateľov. V závere sa navyše črtajú konsekvencie angličtiny ako svetového jazyka, a to vznik variet a mnohé diskusie o angličtine ako lingua franca, ktoré však presahujú rámec tohto príspevku, sú ale významným podnetom pre ďalší výskum.