

Language Abilities in Language Education: A Study in BrajKachru's "World Englishes" vs Randolph Quirk's "English in Use"

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Abstract

This research will seek to determine the root cause of Thailand's difficulties with English proficiency in general. In 2016 Thailand was ranked 56 out of 72 countries in the world and for the 6 time was branded very low in English proficiency. By looking into theories of Randolph Quirk and BrajKachru, this research will look at the correlation between the acceptance of varieties and the acceptance of a dynamic language. Quirk being the defender of traditional English as the goal in English education and Kachru being the supporter of a language evolution. This research finds that although both are never mentioned in corporation of English education, in order to meet the guidelines, set forth by the ASEAN community for English proficiency (Asien, 2016), Thailand has to accept at least a varied version of Kachru's theory of World Englishes. Thailand has struggled with proficiency for more than 75 years and the heavy reliant on the Quirkvian theory has by default failed. This research will show that the mainstream idea of Thailand not having been a colony does not equal an excuse for the low ranking, as countries like Denmark and Holland, which were never colonies, are still at the very top of the ranking. Even the correlation between income and level does not include Thailand. This research will

recommend thorough look at the policies that determine demands for teachers in Thailand and a change that focuses on skill over nationality.

Introduction

Globalization is no longer a new topic, since the end of World War II, globalization has meant closer integration of national economies and the pace of globalization has increased over the past 25 years, resulting in extraordinary levels of economic integration and interdependence in the world through trade and financial flows as well as cross-border migration of people (UNCTAD, 2012). Students and teachers all over the world are using the term “globalization” in everyday speech and it seems as a majority of young adults in our society are embracing it as a possibility to venture into working life with new possibilities and new challenges. One important challenge for young adults is; that with globalization comes language requirements, as the ability to communicate across borders is essential for globalization to be a success and English proficiency has therefore become essential for trade and business across the world.

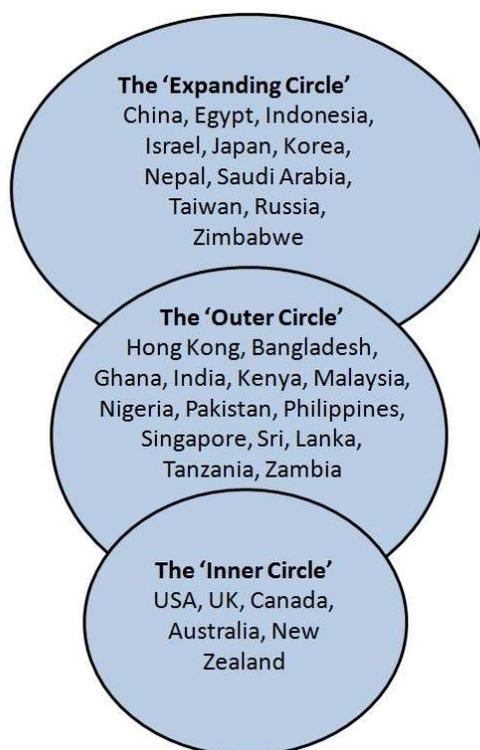
With the demand for English proficiency on the increase educational institutes worldwide, are struggling to meet expectations of students and industries. As of 2015 approximately 1.7 billion were learning and using English worldwide but this will rise to 2 billion by 2020 (ITA, 2015). Governments are increasing expectations in curriculums and demanding higher outcomes for the students in order to keep up with the global demands (UNCTAD, 2012). In Japan, English, language instruction has become a required subject in primary education and millions of Japanese adults take English classes every year (ITA, 2015). Educational institutions are being forced to produce outcomes that have marked relevance and to higher the proficiency of English among students. To do this the educational world are looking into methodology and skilled English teachers. As student centered learning, are winning

influence in the classrooms, who are the best to carry out the lessons? The question is not a simple one, institutions are looking at cuts in educational spending and they must weigh the option of hiring less teachers or hiring teachers without the proper qualifications. Asia has opted to focus their efforts in the English classroom on the teacher, and ads for Native English Speakers (from here on referred to as ENL) are common on forums like ajarn.com and other Asian job sites that offer teaching positions. Thailand is one of the countries who have aimed their efforts for higher proficiency by selecting the ENL teacher as preferred in the classroom. This research will aim to explore why this effort has failed (EF EPI, 2016) and if the aim of Thai schools to pinpoint ENL speakers as qualified teachers because they are ENL speakers is the right choice for Thailand. In 2011 Thailand was ranked 42 out of 72 countries in the English Proficiency Index but has dropped to 56 in 2016 (EF EPI, 2016), although an improvement from 2015 (60 out of 72) it still indicates a very low proficiency amongst Thai students. Considering Thailand has had its emphases on improving English proficiency for 75 years it is concerning that, it still ranges in the bottom of the Index. The question is if Thailand has had higher emphases on ENL than qualifications and if this has failed consequently. This research will take into account Kachru's debate about the status of English in its varieties, commonly known as WEs and the opposing ideas presented by Quirk.

Method

In this research, the aim is to outline the arguments and present other views regarding World Englishes and Applied Linguistics. It will go over Kachru's three circles, as a definition of World Englishes and the meaning of World Englishes, it is essential that the term World Englishes will be used, as Jenkins (2006) a way to describe new Englishes in Asia with emphases

on Thailand, which is considered as Expanding Circle by Kachru(Kachru1997) (Figure-1) to divide English-using world.



**Figure 1. Kachru*

**Image from <https://alchetron.com/Braj-Kachru-657238-W>*

Theories

Randolph Quirk

In an article in the Independent (1993) Randolph Quirk makes it clear than in his opinion the necessity of keeping English “proper” and to focus on the language as spoken by ENL speakers:

***“All rather deja vu, actually. In English in Use, which I co-authored in 1990 with Gabriele Stein, we stressed just what was standard about Standard English and the overwhelming importance of its vast and rich word-stock - the vocabulary we depend on to*

shape and express our thoughts. It is at school that we have to learn how to learn words and meanings because we shall have to go on learning new ones throughout our lives. It is not a matter of ignoring the framework in which we must use words just of putting things in perspective”.

Quirk's theory aims at isolating the spread of English into a common denominator rather than letting it be influenced by outside language development also known as code-switching (Leimgruber, 2013) and as a consequence accept variety. According to Quirk a typical way of describing a 'variety' of English is to make a brief sketch of the community where the variety is used, followed by a list of local expressions found within the variety (Leimgruber, 2013). Quirk in, *The Use of English* (Quirk, 1962), was part of the first group of linguistics to discuss "varieties" of English. In his book "The use of English" from 1962, Quirk argues that English is not the "possession" of the English people and acknowledging this must involve the questioning and the argument of claiming that the English is more correct in one area than the English of another. He continues: "*Certainly, we must realize that there is no single "correct" English, and no single standard of correctness*" (Quirk, 1962) (Bolton, 2004). Quirk accepts varieties but rejects language evolution and argues that English education is hegemonic in nature as varieties according to Quirk are language developments created in ENL countries. (Quirk, 1992)

*** Quote from <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/more-than-just-talking-proper-randolph-quirk-argues-standard-english-is-about-words-and-meanings-not-1456061.html>*

BajrKachru

Kachru's theory of World English is frequently discussed in linguistic circles. In "World Englishes and applied Linguistics" Kachru explains the necessity of knowledge in the areas by drawing an example from the 1950s, where there was intense activity within the linguistic areas

within analysis and description two different usages of English language that being American and British English (Kachru, 1990). Kachru suggested that such data banks were to be used for development in Asia and Africa (Kachru, 1990). Kachru stated that the largest number of applied linguists in different places of the world were working in ESL/EFL areas and that this development has had impact within the Englishes used. Kachru acclaims English as the language of the last 4 decades and underlines the importance of the language by announcing, “*English has acquired unprecedented sociological and ideological dimensions*” (Kachru, 1990). It is therefore claimed, not only by Kachru but also by other renowned linguistics like Tom McArthur, that the development of the three circles (See figure 1) has created several Englishes, and that we cannot limit ourselves to just British and American. This is evident in countries like India, Nigeria and Singapore where English has been adopted into the native languages and has so to say started a life of its own (Kilickaya, 2009).

The overall debate

Although Quirk's and Kachru's theories seem similar, the main debating point is, what is English. Quirk is all for varieties as long as the varieties are grounded in accents of already ENL speaking countries. The variety Quirk means are accents like Texan, Scottish or Australian, a variety according to Quirk does not include Singlish, Hokkie or Hong Kong English. Kachru on the other hand sees language as a living organism that lives and changes according to the condition it is under (Kilickaya, 2009). To accept Kachru is to accept a new link in the English language evolution, which traditionally consists of, Old English, Middle English and Modern English. Quirk on the other hand does not support this and argues that English must keep and

preserve its grammatical foundation. Thailand, maybe not as a country, but with its hiring politics have chosen Quirks theory as means of improving English proficiency.

Assessments and Measures

According to the EF English Proficiency Index, Thailand ranks 56 out of 72 countries. In comparison to other ASEAN countries (see table 1 below):

Table 1 (EF EPI, 2016)

Country	Ranking
Singapore	6
Malaysia	12
Philippines	13
Vietnam	31
Indonesia	32
Thailand	56
Cambodia	69
Laos	70
Myanmar	No info
Brunei	No info

Thailand has advanced from 60 out of 72 in 2015 to 56 but is still in the very low category, and only accompanied by Laos and Cambodia. If we look a bit closer at the EPI we can see that there is a correlation between high earning countries and their proficiency, but again Thailand does not fit this category:

Table 2 (<http://checkinprice.com/minimum-salaries-in-southeast-asia/>)

Country	Minimum monthly Salary 2016 in USD
Singapore	747
Philippines	318
Malaysia	238
Thailand	189
Indonesia	145
Cambodia	140
Vietnam	131
Laos	110
Myanmar	61.6
Brunei	None

The reason for Thailand's poor proficiency results are not rooted in financial reasoning and claims of not ever having been a colony does not add up with results from other non-colonized countries and cannot be verified in this research. We must therefore look at other parameters to find the reason. As Thailand's educational institutes have embraced a Quirkvian model to their education of English, could this be the reason for the poor proficiency in Thailand.

Discussion

To blame a theory as the root cause of a proficiency problem might seem exaggerated but it must be concluded that the cause for the low proficiency in Thailand starts with its education policy. In order to reach levels of Singapore and other ASEAN countries, Thailand has to come

to terms with its own language evolution and adapt a more progressive way at looking at their language proficiency requirements. To fully embrace the Kachruvian theory might not be the answer but to have it implemented might not be as harmful as expected.

Conclusion

Thailand need to find a solution to their problems with the English language in order to meet the demands for the 2018 agreement set forth by the ASEAN community (Asien, 2016). That must include developing a framework where English teacher in Thailand have proficiency and the basic pedagogical skills that are required to teach. To relay on teachers from ENL countries without the needed skills to teach will not help the country to excel further with its English proficiency.

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