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WE, ELF and ELT: Perspectives on English and applied linguistics

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Abstract

In a paper which originally set the scene for WE study, Braj Kachu argued that the 'global diffusion of English' called for a new paradigm of enquiry which recognized the independent status of varieties of English used by communities other than those of Inner Circle native speakers. Since extensively studied varieties of English in Inner Circle communities already exist, this prompts the question of what warrants the assigning of distinctive WE status to Outer Circle varieties. Furthermore, although WE varieties are one manifestation of the diffusion of English, much more globally diffuse is the expedient use of English as a lingua franca, where users need to negotiate their meanings without reliance on the shared knowledge of language variety conventions. This paper then goes on to argue that ELF, therefore, has a direct relevance, as WE does not, to both applied linguistics in general and English language teaching in particular.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980s, I was asked as Chairman of the British Council's English Teaching Advisory Committee to take on the planning of an international conference to mark the Council's 50th anniversary. It was at this conference that Braj Kachru gave the since oft-cited paper which presented his model of 'Three concentric circles of World Englishes (WE)' (Kachru, 1985, p. 12). Subsequently published in the edited conference proceedings entitled 'English in the World' (Quirk & Widdowson, 1985), this paper was seminal in the true sense of that much-misused term in that from it grew and flourished WE as a major field of study, represented by the journal that bears its name. In the concluding paragraph of his paper, Braj Kachru observes that with 'the global diffusion of English':

> the native speakers of this language seem to have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardization; in fact if current statistics are any indication, they have become a minority. This sociolinguistic fact must be accepted and its implications recognized. What we need now are new paradigms and perspectives for linguistic and pedagogical research. (Kachru, 1985, p. 30)

Over the 40 years since then, the study of WE, inspired and promoted by Kachru himself, can be said to have extensively followed through on this injunction and amply addressed this need, in the process establishing WE as a mainstream field of disciplinary enquiry. This, defined by its proponents as a new paradigm, is indeed a remarkable achievement, and one suitably celebrated in Kingsley Bolton's contribution to *The Handbook of World Englishes* (Bolton, 2019).

In that contribution, the achievement is represented not only as the establishment of a new sub-discipline of linguistic enquiry but also as having brought about a radical change in the discipline of linguistics as a whole:

> Within linguistics generally, and English linguistics in particular, the world Englishes approach to English worldwide has succeeded in creating a major paradigm shift in academic English studies in the UK and North America, as well as the international academic community. (Bolton, 2019, p. 747)

The scope of research on WE is accordingly said to be defined not only narrowly in reference to 'schools of thought closely associated with the approach to the study of English worldwide pioneered by Braj B. Kachru and a tight-knit group of fellow scholars' but also more broadly to encompass 'many other approaches to the study of English worldwide' (Bolton, 2019, p. 744). A long list is provided of such other approaches, thus designated as applying the WE concept. These include corpus linguistics, the sociology of language, lexicography, critical linguistics, cultural linguistics, English as a lingua franca—indeed, just about every area of language study. Here, it would seem, the particular disciplinary enquiry of 'WE' is taken to be synonymous with the general 'study of English worldwide'.

But although one can readily accept that these various areas of study may well be referred to and drawn on in the description of English worldwide as a phenomenon, this cannot be said to involve them in adaptively shifting their paradigms to accord with that of WE as a disciplinary approach to research. It is not as if the principles of enquiry of the sociology of language, or corpus linguistics or critical linguistics—or any other area of enquiry on the list—have been re-conceptualized in-line with the WE paradigm, as they would need to do if the WE paradigm is to be credited with the kind of radical influence that Bolton claims for it. The annexation of these diverse areas of enquiry as approaches to WE research has the effect, it seems to me, not of enhancing but of diminishing the significance of this research, cancelling out what is distinctive about the paradigm that informs it.

2 | THE WE PARADIGM

So what is it that is distinctive about the WE paradigm? How is the term 'WE' to be 'narrowly' defined when applied to the pioneering study associated with Kachru and his fellow scholars'? What is new about it, and how far does it indeed provide for an understanding of 'the global diffusion of English' and so can be brought to bear on the problems this diffusion gives rise to—problems which are the central concern of applied linguistics? Adopting the role of Devil's Advocate, what I seek to do in this contribution is to address these basic questions. I should add the caveat that I do so from the perspective of a relative outsider, with limited knowledge of the extensive publications about WE, including, of course, the countless contributions in the 40-odd volumes of this journal. So it may well be that these questions have already been addressed in the WE literature and have given warrant to Bolton's inclusion of applied linguistics in his comprehensive list of existing approaches to research in WE.

Nevertheless, revisiting these questions from an outsider's perspective may raise issues that are worth critical consideration. Even so, I am aware that I am venturing on sensitive ground, and that raising them could be construed as 'an attempt to marginalize or misrepresent at least 50 years of scholarship in the WE field, not least that of Braj B. Kachru' (Bolton, 2019, p. 753). I should stress that this is in no way my intention. And I would add that during my own close personal and professional relationship with Braj Kachru over many years, although there were occasions when we disagreed, this entailed no disrespect for each other's point of view. Braj welcomed critical debate as crucial to any disciplinary enquiry and my contribution is in this respect intended as a tribute to his legacy.

On then to the matter in hand. What is it that defines the WE paradigm? The most obvious thing to note about the term 'WE' is its plurality. This gave verbal recognition to what was proposed as a new way of thinking about 'English worldwide', and the name of the journal *World Language English* was changed to *World Englishes* to herald in the new paradigm. As Bolton points out:

> At the time, the Kachruvian approach to WE was nothing less than revolutionary, not least through the pluralization of 'English', a designation now taken for granted, which was hotly disputed at the time. (Bolton, 2019, p. 754)

This designation represented English worldwide in terms of distinct varieties, but these were conceived not as subordinate **lectal** variants of the same language but as having superordinate **lingual** status as different kinds of language. What then, it seems reasonable to ask, is revolutionary about this designation, and what might be its significance for applied linguistics?

3 | LECTAL AND LINGUAL VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

In the statement of intent describing the scope of this special issue, it is said that WE, as 'the study of geographical varieties of the language [...] has highlighted the existence of multiple Englishes'. This raises the familiar and much-debated issue of what determines the assigning of distinct lingual status to lectal varieties. The existence of multiple varieties of English, as with any other named language, has, of course, always been recognized and there is an extensive literature devoted to their detailed description. So in this respect WE can be said to have followed the long-standing orthodox traditional study of dialectal variation. Where it breaks new ground is the assignment of separate independent lingual rather than lectal status to certain geographical varieties as plural Englishes in their own right (Widdowson, 2022). But then the question arises as to what motivates this assignment, and what it is that makes a WE essentially different from any other variety of English.

More than half a century ago, Labov published an article, also oft-cited, entitled 'The logic of non-Standard English' in which he makes the observation that:

> All linguists agree that nonstandard dialects are highly structured systems; they do not see these dialects as accumulations of errors caused by the failure of their speakers to master standard English. (Labov, 1969, p. 31)

But of course, as Labov makes clear, the problem is what variable non-conformities are to be recognized as worthy of dialectal status. This is not only something that linguists can determine but also crucially a matter of social attitude to the status of the community of the non-conformist speakers. Labov's article is directed against the assumption that the non-conformities of what was then referred to as Negro English, or Black English Vernacular (BEV), were indeed 'accumulations of errors' and evidence of verbal deprivation. It is this assumption that it is his central purpose to challenge.

> All linguists who work with nonstandard Negro English recognize that it is a separate system, closely related to standard English, but set apart from the surrounding white dialects by a number of persistent and systematic differences. (Labov, 1969, p. 31)

This recognition is not only a matter of identifying a linguistic variety but also of recognizing the distinctive communal identity of its speakers. The same is true of those who work with nonstandard varieties of WE. In this respect, the criteria for recognizing the independent status of BEV and that of, say, Indian English are the same. They are, however, generally taken to be different kinds of variety. For a variety to be assigned world English status, it must apparently be located in the Outer Circle and so represent its independence from colonial rule. BEV, on the other hand, is located in the Inner Circle and, as such, co-exists with 'surrounding white dialects' and has developed alongside other indigenous varieties of English. So one might say that in reference to the factors of geographical location and historical provenance, Inner Circle dialects and Outer Circle WE are indeed different kinds of variety.

But then the question arises as to the significance of these circumstantial factors. The history of the BEV community is, after all, no less one of subjugation than that imposed by colonization. More generally, there are communities located within the Inner Circle that have been, and still are, just as subjected to the imposition of servitude and the denial of human rights as those in the Outer Circle have been in the past. But it is only the variety used by the latter that is granted independent lingual equality as a world English. The former retains its subaltern lectal status.

It seems pertinent to ask why the varieties of Outer Circle communities should be so singled out as warranting this distinction. An obvious answer would be that these communities are defined in terms of membership of a nation state, and the assignment of WE status is designed to give symbolic support to their independent post-colonial identity. And here we can note another precedent. Tracing the link of the WE paradigm of variety description to Labov's account of BEV takes us back 50 years and more. The association of variety description with national identity takes us back to Noah Webster more than two centuries ago.

Just 13 years after the North American colonies declared independence from British rule, Webster published his *Dissertations on the English Language*. This, in effect, was his own declaration of the corresponding independence of the English language:

> *Now* is the time, and *this* the country … Let us then seize the present moment, and establish a national language, as well as a national government. […]

> As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain, whose children we are, and whose language we speak, should no longer be

our standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline. But if it were not so, she is at too great a distance to be our model, and to instruct us in the principles of our own tongue. (Webster, 1789, p. 21)

Of course, although Webster here takes an ideological position that accords with that of WE, there is the essential difference that whereas WE gives symbolic national significance to the description of existing varieties, Webster was engaged in prescriptive language engineering, intent on devising a variety to further the communal aspirations of a new nation. In this respect, his was the single-handed undertaking of the kind of institutionalized language planning project that nations have carried out as a matter of official policy, as, for example, in the case of the newly independent Indonesia (Heryanto, 1995). Webster's proposals for reform were, of course, far less radical, and much less likely to be adopted, than those officially sanctioned and promoted. Even so, although many of his lexical innovations did not take, his proposals for spelling reform certainly did and to this day remain a distinctive feature of American English. In this respect, Webster can be said to have achieved his purpose of changing the language to make it symbolically indicative of national identity.

Since Webster's day, English has naturally developed in the United States independently under its own communicative momentum without the intervention of prescriptive reform. It has become a world English variety, and like other WE varieties, its distinctive features bear the marks of other languages. As with the other varieties, some features may derive from the indigenous languages of the colonized communities, but, unlike the other varieties, many derive from the various languages imported by the large-scale immigration of Europeans, who were colonizers themselves. To meet the need for a common means of communication, the immigrants naturally made use of the resident minority language of English to serve expediently as a lingua franca. So American English became nationalized as an Inner Circle variety by communal and linguistic integration, as distinct from Outer Circle varieties of English, which separately co-exist with other national languages.

To return to the question that prompted this discussion in the first place, what is it then that warrants conceiving of a WE as different from any other English variety? As previously pointed out, it has long been recognized that non-standard uses of the language that are dismissed as deficient non-conformities of a non-standard norm can characterize varieties and represent a legitimate means of communal communication and identity. This recognition is accorded both to an Inner Circle variety like African American English/BEV and to an Outer Circle WE variety like Indian or Singaporean English. In this respect, they are alike. But they are not alike in that they are located in different Circles with only those in the Outer Circle qualified to be designated WE. So the question arises as to what bearing this difference has on how the varieties are conceived.

The communities in the Outer Circle are defined in reference to their nationality—Indian, Singaporean and so on, a general categorization that edits out the socio-cultural or ethnic diversity within them. But of course it is just such socio-cultural and ethnic factors that are taken into consideration in Labov's account of BEV. This way of conceiving of a variety and the community of its users is accordingly very different in degree of abstraction from that of a WE, where a variety of English is seen as an identity marker of a relatively stabilized community within the borders of the nation state. Each way of conceiving of variety has its validity, depending on what motivates the description of variety in the first place. The motivation of the WE movement would, as suggested earlier, appear to be essentially the same as that of Webster: to provide supportive linguistic evidence for the separate and independent identity of nations previously under colonial rule. A more particular fine-grained description of communal and linguistic diversity within national borders is surplus to requirement for this purpose and indeed is likely to detract from it. The level of description obviously has to be pitched at a very general level if it is to capture national commonalities. Of course, the description of any variety involves some disregard of variation. The question is what determines the kind and degree of variation that is disregarded. In the case of WE varieties, what is presumably disregarded is what does not count as representative of a nationally defined communal norm. This presupposes the existence of settled communities in stabilized nation states.

4 | WE, ELF AND THE GLOBAL DIFFUSION OF ENGLISH

But this state of affairs cannot be said to hold in the contemporary world in general. Here, on the contrary, it is instability that rules. Here what we so frequently find is internecine conflict within national borders, alongside the massive disruption and dispersion of established communities, with multitudes of migrants and refugees driven from their settled communal lives to seek to escape from poverty and persecution to more privileged lands—and with the communities in these privileged lands striving to keep them out as posing a threat to their own communal security. So although at a very general level, one can describe varieties of the language associated with national communities as WE, this can only be a very partial description of English in the world, which cannot be just pluralized as nationally named varieties confined within the Outer Circle. The reality is that 'the global diffusion of English' that Braj Kachru refers to as the 'sociolinguistic fact' that 'must be accepted and its implications recognized' is nowadays predominantly language used inter-nationally as a lingua franca resource for coping with the communal diffusion that globalization has brought about and its effects, both positive and negative, this has on people's lives all over the world.

WE are varieties in certain specific national locations in different parts of the world and can be said to be globally distributed. But they are not at all global as a means of communication. On the contrary, they are defined as the local normative conventions of usage within particular nationally defined communities. This is in marked contrast to the globally pervasive use of English as a lingua franca. The conceptualization of the 'E' in 'WE' is entirely different from how it is conceptualized in ELF study. The former is necessarily norm-focused in that it seeks to describe those features of conventional usage which define a variety. The latter is resource-focused in that it seeks to describe how the communicative potential of the language is exploited in expedient adaptive use. WE and ELF, then, are radically different ways of thinking about English. It is therefore particularly regrettable that it has become established practice, perhaps for promotional reasons, to misleadingly conflate them by including them under the general heading of 'Global Englishes' (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2015), implying that the plural term applies to both. (For further discussion see Widdowson & Seidlhofer, 2023). It is interesting to note that Bolton also objects to the inclusive use of this term but on the grounds that it misrepresents the concept of WE and constitutes 'a grave assault on decades of groundbreaking and innovative empirical research by numerous distinguished scholars' (Bolton, 2019, p. 753). But he is, of course, open to exactly the same charge of conflating and confusing different ways of thinking by including ELF study in his list of approaches to research on WE discussed earlier.

All of this is not at all to deny the socio-political significance of the WE movement as furthering the cause of national identity in countries in the Outer Circle, previously under colonial rule, by recognizing the legitimacy of their own norms of English, commensurate with other aspects of their institutional independence. Nor to deny that in the process, the movement has made significant descriptive contributions to variationist linguistics. The many volumes of this very journal bear eloquent testimony to this achievement.

5 | THE APPLIED LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

This present issue of this journal, however, has the explicit aim to explore the interface between WE and applied linguistics. The term 'applied linguistics' is, indeed always has been, attached as a convenient label to a very wide and indeterminate range of enquiry, which, as I have argued elsewhere, and often, has effectively emptied it of its conceptual significance (Widdowson, 2019, 2020, Ch. 3, 4). This is not the place to rehearse this argument—the mistaken definition of it as a discipline, the failure to distinguish applied linguistics from linguistics applied and so on. Suffice it to say that whatever else it is said to be, its essential distinguishing feature, its *raison d'étre*, which all studies in its name pay at least lip service to, is that it engages with problems that people experience with language in the real world. It would follow, in accordance with this definition, that of the manifold theoretical and descriptive problems that the expertise of linguists seeks to resolve, only those that can be demonstrated as relevant to the resolution

of these real-world problems come within the scope of applied linguistics. The problems are primary, the linguistics subservient.

It is just such a demonstration that Labov provides in his article referred to earlier: He focuses on exposing what he refers to as the 'myth of verbal deprivation' that informs the educational policy dominant at the time, according to which the non-standard language of the child is stigmatized as defective—a view which 'leads its sponsors inevitably to the hypothesis of the genetic inferiority of Negro children' (Labov, 1969, p. 2). This then is the social and educational problem of disadvantage and prejudice that he uses his subsequent linguistic analysis to address. His description of BEV as an integral variety in its own right is motivated by an applied linguistic purpose.

The question arises that if there is an interface of applied linguistics and WE, what kind of problems can the description of WE varieties bring to bear in engaging with them? One problem that comes immediately to mind is that of discriminational prejudice, which Labov was concerned with. WE has successfully challenged the stigma of non-standardized usage and in so doing, as already acknowledged, it can be said to have the political effect of externally symbolizing the independent status of the ex-colonized nation states of the Outer Circle. But this brings other potential problems in train. As pointed out earlier, the community that uses any Outer Circle variety is externally defined by nationality, but how far then does its use pose internal domestic problems for diverse communities within particular nation states? Is the use of this variety confined to certain communities or certain purposes? What role and status does it have in relation to indigenous languages? Are world English varieties institutionally recognized as legitimate media of education? In what degree such questions raise problematic issues is, of course, likely to vary greatly across different Outer Circle contexts. Consideration of them would follow the Labov line in exploring the interface between applied linguistics and world English varieties. It would indeed be of considerable interest to explore, for example, whether the relationship between an ex-colonial world English variety like Indian English and the indigenous Indian languages raises comparable problematic issues of status and privilege as does that between a local vernacular variety and Standard English, between BEV, for example, and 'surrounding white dialects'.

It may be, of course, that these applied linguistic issues have been addressed in the extensive WE literature, of which, as I confessed earlier, I have limited knowledge. But whatever internal domestic problems may arise in the use of these national English varieties, the question is how far they correspond with those that have to do with the international use of English as a lingua franca in the wider world. Here, as indicated earlier, the central issue is not how the language functions as a variety within a community, but exactly the opposite: how it functions as a means of communication when there are no shared communal conventions that its users can rely on. Unlike WE users, ELF users cannot count on common knowledge of a local variety of English, nor of their own vernacular languages, to communicate as they would normally do. In consequence, they may initially have to make expedient use of a restricted range of linguistic resource which is communicatively serviceable. Furthermore, they cannot, of course, assume that their own particular range of resource corresponds with those they communicate with.

ELF users, then, often have to make do with, and compensate for, a relatively limited range of linguistic resource that is immediately serviceable and extend it as need be in the actual communicative process. The kind of process they are engaged in is not in itself essentially different from that of the intra-communal communication they are familiar with in that it similarly involves the negotiation of convergence on common ground, the positioning of self in relation to the other and so on. The point is that ELF users have to somehow enact this process when estranged from the concomitant support of the enabling communal conventions they are familiar with by creating the conditions for this communicative enactment extemporarily as they go along (for further discussion, see Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2023).

In summary terms, then, it can be said that the problem that ELF users have to cope with is how to make expedient use of a particularly adaptive range of linguistic resources to communicate with strangers. How they manage to do this effectively is a question for pragmatics to explore; and what texts they produce in this discourse process can be linguistically described, as indeed they have been. But another question also arises, namely, why would ELF users want or need to take on this problematic process in the first place? Like everybody else, they only engage in communication if they are prompted to do so by some purpose or other, some outcome that they want or need to bring about. So the communicative problems of ELF users are imposed upon them by having to cope with the non-language problems they

have to confront. To do so, more often than not, they have no choice but to resort to the expedient use of whatever English resource they have at their disposal. These are the 'real-world problems in which language is a central issue', the investigation of which Brumfit refers to as the defining feature of applied linguistics (Brumfit, 1997, p. 86). But from the point of view of those who experience the problems, the ELF users themselves, it is not language that is the central issue: what really matters is what outcomes they can manage to achieve in using it.

In some situations, the problems that this poses are relatively trivial, where the outcomes are easy to achieve and of little consequence. Those that tourists have to deal with in service transactions, for example, are a case in point—they may cause some irritating inconvenience but nothing more. But there are many other situations, what Seidlhofer refers to as 'high-stakes encounters', where, in stark contrast, the problems are the very opposite of trivial (Seidlhofer, 2020a). These are problems on a massive scale that have to do with the instability I referred to earlier, the disruption and dispersion of settled communities—the negative effects of globalization brought about by economic exploitation, conflict and climate change. More often than not, ELF is the only feasible means available to people who have to cope with problems of oppression, displacement and deprivation: refugees seeking to escape from these effects, for example, or officials seeking to counter and alleviate them. The problems that ELF users have in communicating are inevitably bound up with these real-world problems they need to communicate about. It is no exaggeration to say that the future well-being and very survival of most people on the planet are often dependent on a capability to make effective lingua franca use of whatever English is available to them as communicative resource.

6 | ELF AND ELT

It would seem to be obvious that if this is the reality of the use of 'English worldwide' or 'world language English' then teaching the language should be so designed as to prepare learners to cope with this reality. It is, after all, the very purpose of education in general to make proactive provision for dealing with life in the real world. But this is what the current approach to ELT markedly fails to do. English as a curriculum subject taught in classrooms is even more globally widespread than its actual use outside them. It makes a routine appearance as a mandatory subject on well-nigh every school curriculum and does so in token recognition that English is an international language and in the belief that therefore including it automatically makes educational provision for its future use as such. But what is typically prescribed for teaching and testing is not international English at all. It is a normative variety of the language defined in reference to a national community in the Inner Circle, predominantly British or American. Orthodox English language teaching, ELT, is directed not at developing a capability in making use of the language as a communicative resource, but at getting learners to conform to the imaginary competence norm of native speakers. More often than not learners fall short of this prescribed objective, not surprisingly because it conflicts with the communicative experience of their own resourceful use of language (for further discussion, see Widdowson, 2020, Ch. 19). But the objective of orthodox ELT not only lacks pedagogic feasibility, it is invalid on educational grounds: it fails to make provision for learners' encounters with communicative problems in the real world.

This imposition of a competence norm, sustained by the institutional endorsement of such authorities as the Council of Europe and the publishing and testing industry, relates to the issue discussed earlier concerning the relationship between ELF and WE. As I suggested then, a primary motivation for describing WE varieties was to give recognition to their legitimate independent status as a means of communication and the expression of communal identity. As with Labov's recognition of BEV, this was a rejection of the dominance of a norm which authority had hitherto imposed, in the case of WE as a colonial authority. But as I have argued elsewhere, the global prescription of Inner Circle varieties of English as the only legitimate teaching objective can, and should, also be seen in the same way, as an authoritarian imposition:

> [A]n attempted colonization of other peoples' territory, in this case the global communicative territory of the users of English as an international lingua franca… in effect, an attempt to deny them their

freedom of speech, that is to say freedom to use language in their own way as appropriate to their own communicative needs and purposes. The imposition is all the more insidiously invasive because it is disguised as benevolent intervention that serves the cause of educational empowerment. So it is that normative Inner Circle English invades and occupies English language teaching in prescribed courses and supplementary teaching materials, in classrooms all over the world. And success in learning is assessed by how far learners conform to the norm, how far they submit to this colonial authority. (Widdowson, 2021, p. 495)

The study of WE and ELF has the common cause of liberating English from colonial rule. The difference is that with ELF there is a recognition that this colonization is not a thing of the past but, in various guises, is a continuing process in the present and globally pervasive in all Circles. The irony is that rather than making educational provision by developing a capability for coping with the problems that this creates, orthodox ELT, in its imposition of competence conformity, does the very opposite by practising its own form of colonialism. Far from offering a solution, it is part of the problem.

7 | CONCLUSION

Almost four decades after Braj Kachru argued the need for 'new paradigms and perspectives for linguistic and pedagogical research' to account for the 'sociolinguistic fact' of 'the global diffusion of English', Jan Blommaert wrote in similar vein of the need for the reappraisal of established sociolinguistic ways of thinking to engage with the reality of the contemporary world. But what Blommaert refers to is the need for such appraisal to take account of the all-encompassing reality of globalization that has taken over the world in the intervening years:

> Many of the traditional concepts of sociolinguistics will have to be sacrificed in favour of more open and flexible ones capable of capturing the unpredictability of sociolinguistic life in the age of globalization. (Blommaert, 2010, p. 196)

Kachru's focus was on the diffusion of English as realized by the emergence of different varieties of the language within national communities that represented their independent identity. This can be readily acknowledged as a necessary focus to take at the time, but it is not sufficient to account for this diffusion in today's age of globalization. Here and now, diffusion has taken on different dimensions and become vastly more widespread and significant as English is increasingly used as a lingua franca to cope with globalization and its consequences. As argued earlier, if we are to account for this reality, the very concept of community, on which the definition of a world English depends, no longer suffices: It is one of the traditional concepts Blommaert refers to which have to be 'sacrificed in favour of more open and flexible ones' (for further discussion, see Seidlhofer, 2020b). What is most obvious about the diffusion of English in the present-day world is that it is driven by the need to engage with the problems of communal disruption that, directly and indirectly, globalization has brought about. This has now become the reality which 'must be accepted and its implications recognized'. And as the world has, to use the words of WB Yeats, 'changed, changed utterly', the significance of English in the world has changed with it. And so accordingly has the need for 'new paradigms and perspectives for linguistic and pedagogical research'. Braj Kachru's injunction in 1985 retains its force, but the need now is to apply it more comprehensively to account for the very different realities of the globalized world.

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