

# Varieties of english: effects on teaching english



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## **The Varieties of English and Its Affects on Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

English is considered to be the most important language and has gained importance internationally. The English is treated as a means of communicating in the areas of the economy, technology, science, arts, tourism, and sports. English language can be described as a truly “ global language” that people all over the use more than any other language and it functions as an “ international” or “ world language” and it serves as ‘ lingua franca’ for facilitating communication between people who do not share the same first (or even second) language (Harmer, 2007). Since English is considered to be the most important tool for communication globally, the understanding of its varieties also becomes necessary.

To give clear view of the use of English in different countries, Kachru (1992) presents the three concentric circles of language. The inner circle represents the places where English is used as first or native language such as Britain, the USA, Australia etc. According to Crystal (2006), there are 400 million native speakers of English language. The outer circle includes the places, such as India, Nigeria, the Philippines, Singapore etc, where English is used as an official language or second language. Crystal (2006) states that there are 400 million speak English as a second language. The Expanding circle represents the countries where English plays no special status but widely used as a lingua franca or medium of international communication and studied as a foreign language, for example, Japan, Egypt, Mexico, Indonesia etc. There are around 600-700 million people use English as a foreign language around the world (Crystal, 2006). These circles clearly show the

high status of English language as it becomes an official or second language in more than 100 countries.

There are about 2 billion people, one third of the world population speak English all over the world. Varieties of world English include American English, British English, Singapore English (Singlish), Indian English, Australian English, Philippine English, Scottish English, Spanglish, Taglish etc. The existence of different varieties of English around world is because of the spread of English. The spread of English is the result of a number of historical and pragmatic factors (McCrum, 2010). The first factor is the expansion and the influence of British colonization to many parts of the world in the nineteenth century. The second factor is the great influence of United States in world economy and military and Harmer (2013) states that these influences make English to become one of the main language of international businesses. Thirdly, according to Crystal (2003), American technology takes a leading role in the world technology. Besides, the great deal of advertising, broadcasting, popular music and literature around the world use English to express the ideas around the world. Moreover, in education, the most of the academic discourse use English language and it can be one of the main reasons why many countries use English as the foreign language or medium of instruction in schools. Therefore, it is obvious that English becomes a global language as it is the most commonly used in many important fields such as business, education, media, science and technology.

According to Greenbaum and Quirk (1991), there are five reasons why varieties of English has evolved: regional, social group, field of discourse, medium and attitudes. The variation occurs in the distinctive features of <https://assignbuster.com/varieties-of-english-effects-on-teaching-english/>

English which include spelling, pronunciation, lexis, grammar and preferred usages. The varieties of English, as shown in the verbal structures, which express the variations in the aspects are commonly seen in all the varieties around the world. Pronunciation and morphology can be classified in accordance with the frequency of variation seen in the non-standard forms of the English language. The variation in vocabulary is restricted to two types. First, the presence of archaic words and second, the presence of flora and fauna words. The phonological, morphological and syntactical features are the three main features which show the variations in the English language as compared to be the standard form of the language.

Out of all the countries around the world, Britain and America are the two main countries that have used a standard form of English. In Britain, the standard form is called as received pronunciation (RP), and in America, the standard form is called by various names, but most common being- general American and network American. Maximum people in America, use General American while speaking. Whereas, a very few people in Britain, use Received Pronunciation while speaking. Other than these two standard forms of English are considered to be the varieties of English. The varieties of English (Fairclough, 2014) spoken out of Britain and America are called to be overseas or extraterritorial varieties.

English is considered to be an official and often native language. English fulfills the function of a lingua franca (ELF). Many countries, like Nigeria, have used English as a lingua franca (which means a general means of communication). More attention shall be given to the varieties in ELT from various perspectives like – grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary

(Pennycook. 2014). The variations are least at the level of grammar. Thus, are not to be addressed in the English language classroom in detail. But if we talk about pronunciation, the case is totally different. It requires to be studied in detail.

The role of varieties of English in ELT to some extent also depends on the teacher. It has been seen that the prospective teachers of ELT are not prepared properly for coping up with the variety-related problems that arise in the classroom. Due to lack of proper training, teachers hesitate to include varieties of English in ELT as they consider it a complex thing (Llurda, 2016). Also, varieties are not considered important by teachers as they usually are not important in exams.

The challenges of variation of English language in ELT context can be overcome by strengthening the regional and social varieties in the areas where English is used traditionally as the traditional language by the majority of the population, by growing the self-confidence of the native and non-native users of English to use the regional varieties in the English language without sticking to the norms of using the traditional language as standard as exposing students ' to as many varieties of English as possible would do more to ensure intelligibility than trying to impose a single standard on everyone' (D'Souza, 1999) and by adopting ELF in the ELT, due to globalization as English learners will most likely to communicate in English with other non-native ELF speakers in ELF interactions. Although it is impossible and unnecessary to teach all varieties of English in the classroom, students should be given proper training to be able to understand the speakers from different geographical and social differences which needs to

include more exposure to varieties and variety-related training in ELT to create awareness, for example, teaching listening skill with the recordings of different speakers with different accents.

To conclude, because of the spread of English in British colonization and the influence of USA in economic and military and a wide use of English language in different areas to share the ideas with the world such as media, technology, science and education can make English to become global language. As English become global language, there are many users of English around the world and this lead to different varieties of English. The existence of varieties of English influence in teaching English as the role of varieties in the ELT classroom has gained major importance and thus, can be said to be the most promising way to provide users of English an education which makes them highly competent in terms of communication globally.