13 World Englishes

Current trends and future directions

Kingsley Bolton

13.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to review current trends in World Englishes (WE) research and publications. It does so through by first presenting an overview of current research in the field of world Englishes. It then proceeds to look at the singular contribution of Professor Braj B. Kachru, followed by a discussion of recent challenges to the WE enterprise, before moving to a discussion of future directions for world Englishes. In the later sections of the chapter, there is a discussion of the importance of sociolinguistic theory for world Englishes, as well as suggestions concerning the ongoing relevance of WE perspectives to applied linguistics and language pedagogy.

13.2 Current research in world Englishes

The term ‘world Englishes’ may be understood as having both a narrower and wider application (Bolton, 2004; 2006). The narrower application of the term refers to schools of thought closely associated with the study of English worldwide pioneered by Braj B. Kachru and a group of closely related scholars. The wider application of the concept also subsumes a wide range of other approaches including those of English studies, corpus linguistics, the sociology of language, features-based and dialectological studies, pidgin and creole research, ‘Kachruvian’ linguistics, lexicographical approaches, popular accounts, critical linguistics, and futurological approaches (see Low and Pakir, this volume). In addition, we might now add current work on English as an international language (EIL), a recently emergent approach to English as an international language, which is now proving particularly popular in Europe (Bolton, 2011). These approaches are summarized in Table 13.1.

As early as the 1960s, the English studies approach was associated with such scholars as Randolph Quirk and others active at the Survey of English Usage at University College London, including David Crystal and Sidney Greenbaum. The work of such UK-based scholars was complemented by the research and publications of a number of German scholars including Manfred Görlach (1995) and Edgar Schneider (2007), as well as that of work in corpus linguistics, which

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<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tr>
<td>English studies</td>
<td>The analysis of varieties of English from a synchronic and historical perspective, against a tradition of English Studies (Anglistik), dating from the late 19th century, e.g. the work of Otto Jespersen, Daniel Jones, and Henry Sweet.</td>
<td>1960s-present</td>
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<tr>
<td>English corpus linguistics</td>
<td>The accurate and detailed linguistic descriptions of world Englishes from a features perspective.</td>
<td>1990–present</td>
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<td>‘Features-based’ approaches</td>
<td>The description of English through dialectological and variationist methodologies. Situated against the long tradition of British and European dialectology.</td>
<td>1980s–present</td>
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<td>The sociology of language</td>
<td>Research on English in relation to such issues as language maintenance/shift and ethnolinguistic identity.</td>
<td>1960s–present</td>
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<td>Kachruvian studies</td>
<td>The promotion of a pluricentric approach to world Englishes, highlighting both the ‘sociolinguistic realities’ and ‘bilingual creativity’ of Outer Circle (and Expanding Circle) societies.</td>
<td>1980s–present</td>
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<td>Pidgin and creole studies</td>
<td>The description and analysis of ‘mixed’ languages and the dynamics of linguistic hybridization in language contact settings.</td>
<td>1930s–present</td>
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<td>Applied linguistics</td>
<td>The exploration of the implications of world Englishes for language learning and teaching.</td>
<td>1960s–present</td>
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<td>Lexicography</td>
<td>The codification of vocabularies of English worldwide, linked to particular postcolonial societies and issues of linguistic autonomy.</td>
<td>1980s–present</td>
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<td>Popularisers</td>
<td>The publication of books on English worldwide aimed at a mass reading public.</td>
<td>1980s–1990s</td>
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<td>Critical linguistics</td>
<td>The expression of resistance to the linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony of English, in tandem with resistance to Anglo-American political power.</td>
<td>1990s–present</td>
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<td>Linguistic futurology</td>
<td>The discussion of future scenarios for the spread of English and English language teaching worldwide.</td>
<td>1997–present</td>
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<td>English as an international language (EIL)</td>
<td>The broad study of English as an international and/or auxiliary language. A term variously used to refer to the uses of English(es) in diverse contexts across/between/in the three circles worldwide.</td>
<td>1976–present</td>
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<td>English as a lingua franca (ELF)</td>
<td>An approach to English focusing on those contexts (e.g. universities and international businesses), where English is used as a common language by speakers of different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds.</td>
<td>Late 1990s–present</td>
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again is closely associated with an English studies approach, as in the work of Greenbaum (1996), Nelson, Wallis, and Aarts (2002), and others on the International Corpus of English (ICE) project (ICE, 2017). In addition to the ICE corpora worldwide, research teams have also begun to compile their own regional corpora of Englishes, including the important SAVE corpus of South Asian Varieties of English (Mukherjee, 2012).

The English studies approach and the work of corpus linguists overlap considerably with the ‘features-based approach’, which typically involves the linguist in identifying and marking statements about the distinctive features of varieties in terms of pronunciation or ‘accent’ (phonology), vocabulary (lexis), or grammar (morphology and syntax). One leading example of this approach is Trudgill and Hannah’s International English, which is now in its fifth edition (2013, first edition published 1982) which describes ‘standard varieties’ of English in Australia, India, Ireland, New Zealand, North America, Scotland, South Africa, Wales, West Africa, the West Indies, Singapore, and the Philippines. Another highly important work in this context is the two-volume Handbook of varieties of English published by Mouton de Gruyter (Schneider et al., 2004; Kortmann et al., 2004). The Handbook comprises two volumes, one on phonology and one on morphology and syntax, providing a features-based analysis of varieties of English in the British Isles, the Americas and the Caribbean, the Pacific and Australasia, and South Africa, Asia, South America, and Southeast Asia. The chapters in Volume 1 dealing with ‘Phonology’ include sections on phonological systems, phonetic realizations, prosodic features, and intonation patterns, while those in Volume 2, which deals with ‘Morphology and syntax’, cover such topics as tense, aspect and mood, auxiliaries, negation, relativization, complementation, subordination, agreement, noun phrase structure, pronominal systems, and word order. Comprising more than one hundred chapters, the Handbook has already established itself as an important reference work of benchmark significance.

The Co-Editor of the Handbook of varieties of English, Edgar W. Schneider, has made a contribution to the field in many other ways, not least through a number of highly influential publications, including his monograph, Postcolonial English: Varieties of English around the world (Schneider, 2007). Schneider’s major theoretical contribution here has been the theoretical formulation of an explanatory model which analyzes the dynamics of variety formation in the case of postcolonial varieties of English worldwide, and their evolution through such phases of development as foundation, exonormative stabilization, nativization, endonor­mative stabilization, and differentiation (Schneider, 2003, 2007). The ‘Dynamic Model’ of postcolonial Englishes has much to commend it, not least its application to both (in Kachruvian terms) Inner Circle and Outer Circle societies and its multi-layered explanation of sociopolitical background, identity construction, sociolinguistic conditions, and linguistic features and processes, and as such currently provides an innovative framework for research in the field. Sociolinguistic approaches to world Englishes have included (i) ‘the sociology of language’ (Fishman, Conrad, & Rubal-Lopez, 1996); (ii) the ‘linguistic features’ (and dialectological) approach (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, etc.); (iii) pidgin and creole studies; and (iv) ‘socially-realistic’ studies of world Englishes (B. Kachru, 1992).

By the mid-1980s, a number of popular works on English worldwide intended for a general reading audience began to appear, including most notably The story of English (McCrum, Gram, & MacNeil, 1986), which was later followed by similar publications from Crystal (1997, 2004), Bragg (2003), and others. At the same time, critical approaches were particularly stimulated by Phillipson’s landmark Linguistic imperialism (1992), which encouraged a strong interest in the politics of English, and has also informed the work of a generation of other critical scholars. The futurowlogy perspective is best represented in research reports from Graddol (1997, 2006).

From a much earlier point in time, another important approach in this field was that of English as an international language (EIL), initially pioneered by such linguists as Larry Smith (1976, 1981) and Peter Strevens (1980), the influence of which is felt to the current day (McKay, 2002; Sharifian, 2009; Low, 2015). Finally, from the late 1990s, linguists began to look at the increasing use of English within the Expanding Circle context of Europe, where English was quickly spreading as the common language of international university education and international business. It is in this context that EIL begins to be redefined as English as a lingua franca (ELF). Foundational work in this area includes Seidhoffer (2001), Jenkins (2007), and Mauranen and Ranta (2009), although theorists of ELF acknowledge that early EIL researchers may be seen as ‘precursors’ in the field of ELF (Ehrenreich & Pitzl, 2015).

13.3 Braj B. Kachru’s contribution to world Englishes

As was discussed in detail in the first chapter of this volume, the WE approach to English worldwide is most closely associated with the work of Braj B. Kachru (1932–2016). Indeed, the origin of the term itself has been traced back to two conferences in Hawai’i and Urbana-Champaign in 1978 (Low & Pakir, this volume). In terms of the intellectual genesis and development of Kachruvian linguistics, however, the starting point might be identified much earlier with the completion of Kachru’s PhD thesis on Indian English in 1962, under the supervision of Professor Michael A. K. Halliday at Edinburgh University. While at Edinburgh, Kachru (in the company of fellow graduate students Ayo Bamburg, Ruqaiya Hasan, and Rodney Huddleston) also took classes with such other linguists as David Abercrombie, J. C. Catford, M. A. K. Halliday, Peter Ladekofog, Angus McIntosh, Peter Strevens, as well as J. R. Firth, who was visiting professor during that time (Nelson, 2012). In 1963 Kachru took up a post at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and served in the Department of Linguistics full-time, until becoming professor emeritus in 2002. At Illinois, Professor Kachru played a major role in promoting linguistics through a wide range of research and publications covering such diverse fields as multilingualism and sociolinguistics, Kashmiri language and literature, Indian linguistics, and world Englishes, as well through his academic leadership as the Jubilee Professor of
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Liberal Arts and Sciences and Director of the Center for Advanced Study. It is no exaggeration to state that Kachru changed the history of English studies through his introduction of the WE paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s, as S. N. Sridhar explains:

Professor Braj B. Kachru successfully challenged the orthodoxies of the English Studies establishment on both sides of the Atlantic (the British Council, TESOL) which looked upon Indian English and other non-native varieties as erroneous approximations of standard or native speaker English. Through half a century of meticulous scholarship and energetic advocacy, he demonstrated their systematic structure, natural evolution, and functional vigor, earning them respect as vibrant expressions of distinct cultural identities.

(Sridhar, 2016, p. 489)

In his endeavours at the University of Illinois, from 1965 onwards, Braj B. Kachru was encouraged and supported by Professor Yamuna Kachru (1933–2013), an eminent linguist, whose publications spanned such areas as Hindi linguistics, Indian languages (including Bengali, Marathi, Urdu, Kashmiri), applied linguistics, discourse analysis, literacy analysis, Asian Englishes, and world Englishes. Her contribution to research on world Englishes went far beyond research and publications, and at Urbana-Champaign she was an influential and inspirational educator who supervised more than forty PhD students. In 2006, she was also the recipient of India’s Presidential Award for her research and publications on Hindi language studies (Bolton & Davis, 2015, pp. 3–4).

A third foundational figure in the history of world English is Professor Larry E. Smith (1941–2014), whose academic career at the East–West Center at the University of Hawai‘i ran parallel to and complemented that of the Prof. Kachru at Urbana-Champaign, and their early collaboration also involved the renaming of the World Englishes journal in 1985 (previously titled World Language English) and the establishment of the International Association for World Englishes (IAWE) in 1992. Any history of the discipline of world Englishes needs to acknowledge that Braj B. Kachru and Larry Smith played a decisive role in the early foundation and development of the field, not least through their insistence that their approach to the subject was pluralistic, as was deliberately and iconically captured in the title of their journal, as they explained in the editorial for the first issue:

The term ‘Englishes’ is significant in many ways. ‘Englishes’ symbolizes the functional and formal variation in the language, and its international acculturation, for example, in West Africa, in Southern Africa, in East Africa, in South Asia, in Southeast Asia, in the West Indies, in the Philippines, and in the traditional English-using countries: the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The language now belongs to those who use it as their first language, and to those who use it as an additional language, whether in its standard form or in its localized forms.

(Kachru & Smith, 1985, p. 210)

Arguing for a ‘new international perspective’ in English studies, the editorial added that ‘[t]his new perspective entails questioning the prevalent dichotomies and reevaluating the “sacred cows” in literature, language, and language teaching methodology’ (210–211). At the time, the Kachruvian approach to world Englishes was nothing less than revolutionary, not least through the pluralization of Englishes, a designation now taken for granted, which was hotly disputed at the time. In one conversation with Braj B. Kachru, he explained the background to this in detail, and recounted the strong opposition that he and Larry Smith had faced from managerial staff in the Pergamon publishing corporation (the journal’s first publishers) when they first proposed the title. It was only after the intervention of Christine Maxwell, the daughter of Robert Maxwell, the founder of Pergamon Press, that the management relented and permitted the editors to proceed with plural ‘Englishes’ inscribed in the title of the journal.

Despite the sad passing of Braj B. Kachru (and his two closest WE family members), Kachru’s foundational work continues to be of central and enduring importance to the world Englishes enterprise at numerous levels, and has had an immense impact across a range of sub-disciplines including applied linguistics, critical linguistics, descriptive linguistics, discourse analysis, and educational linguistics. Much more might be said about the Kachruvian approach here, but the major tenets of this approach are discussed in detail in Chapter 1 (Low & Pakir) and Chapter 3 (Buschfeld & Schneider) of this volume. However, one major point that might be highlighted here is that, at its core, much of Braj B. Kachru’s strongest theoretical work was generated from an explicitly sociolinguistic perspective, a key point that is further developed later in this chapter.

13.4 Current trends and challenges

Today, a pluricentric and pluralistic approach to the ‘Englishes’ or ‘English languages’ of the world has become so well established as to constitute something of an orthodoxy in contemporary English language studies and sociolinguistics. So much so, perhaps, that various linguists have begun to problematize various aspects of the WE approach, including the Kachruvian approach to WE.

One continuing source of debate in this area comes from scholars committed to the analysis of ‘linguistic imperialism’, an area of discussion of key concern to many concerned with the continuing spread of English, and its potential as a ‘killer language’ threatening cultural and linguistic diversity. The founding document in this arena, Robert Phillipson’s (1992) Linguistic imperialism, was a landmark publication which subsequently politicized the debate on world Englishes and related issues. At the centre of Phillipson’s theoretical approach to ‘linguistic imperialism’ are a series of arguments about the political relations between the ‘core English-speaking countries’ (Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, and New
Zealand) and the ‘periphery-English countries’ where English either has the status of a second language (e.g. Nigeria, India, Singapore), or is a foreign and ‘international link language’ (e.g. Scandinavia, Japan) (1992, p. 17). The nature of this relationship, Phillipson argues, is one of structural and systemic inequality, in which the political and economic hegemony of Western Anglophone powers is established or maintained over scores of developing nations, particularly those formerly colonies of European powers, contributing to a form of ‘English linguistic imperialism’, where ‘the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages’ (1992, p. 47, original emphasis).

Phillipson’s voice in the early 1990s was original and persuasive and has subsequently influenced the work of many others, including, to some extent, such applied linguists as Canagarajah (1999), Pennycook (1994, 2001), and many others. While Phillipson was supportive of the WE approach at first, he later became more critical. By 2009, Phillipson was maintaining that ‘global English was a ‘capitalist neo-imperial language that serves the interests of the corporate world and the governments that it influences’, and was asserting that, in this context, ‘[t]here are serious theoretical and empirical weaknesses in the way world Englishes are classified and analyzed’ (Phillipson, 2009, pp. 132, 164-165). In the same year, in an interview, Phillipson further commented that ‘[m]ost work on World Englishes in the Kachruvian sense is purely descriptive, and an over-simplification of the complexity of the sociolinguistics of English in multilingual settings’ (Phillipson, 2010). Other recent work in a similar critical vein has included Rupatapana and Bunce (2012) and Tupas (2015).

Somewhat different concerns about the WE approach have been penned by such linguists as Bruthiaux (2003) and Saraceni (2010). The criticisms of both these authors have largely focused on the ‘Three Circles’ model of the Kachruvian approach, with Bruthiaux describing this as ‘largely monolithic and standardized’, and also questioning the validity of the Expanding Circle concept, as ‘it is not always clear whether the concept is meant to cover countries, country-based varieties, speakers, or non- (or barely-) speaking learners’ (Bruthiaux, 2003, p. 167). Bruthiaux’s criticisms of the WE approach have been reiterated by a large number of other commentators, including Jenkins (2014), and Galloway and Rose (2015). The central thrust of Bruthiaux’s critique is that the Three Circles concept is a nation-based model that suffers from ‘an inherent lack of theoretical consistency’ (Bruthiaux, 2003, p. 172). In this context, a related critique is that the WE approach is mainly concerned with a ‘features-based’ approach to geographical varieties, with most studies focusing on the description of national varieties in terms of distinctive linguistic features. World Englishes are thus typically characterized by ‘grammatical shifts, new lexical items, and different pragmatic and phonological features’ in comparison with ‘core’ standardized varieties of English (Pennycook, 2007, p. 22). This focus on ‘features’ is thus seen as both misleading and reductive:

For too long, the focus on world Englishes has looked within languages — syntax, pronunciation, pragmatics — to find aspects of localization: a local English has emerged when it bears significant and regular differences from other varieties. Yet the discussion here raises other issues: language may become local by dint of background music or local themes. Localization may be as much about a language being in the world in particular ways as about changes to that language.

(Pennycook, 2007, p. 110)

Taken together, these two strands of criticisms seem to suggest that the Kachruvian approach to world Englishes is based largely on a geographical and linguistic features approach to varieties of English worldwide. This, I would argue, constitutes a serious misrepresentation of WE scholarship over the last three decades. In fact, an examination of WE publications in the World Englishes journal in its first twenty years, from 1985–2005, has shown that — during this period — only a minority of articles focused predominantly on either linguistic features (9.4%) or areal studies (11.4%). Instead, much more space in the journal has been given over to such topics as discourse analysis, applied linguistics, bilingual creativity, contact linguistics, critical linguistics, and the sociology of language (Bolton & Davis, 2006).

Very recently, Mario Saraceni published a thoughtful account of world Englishes scholarship, World Englishes: A Critical Analysis (2015), in which he identifies at least two new challenges to the WE enterprise. Here, he argues that, despite the obvious strengths of the Kachruvian approach and the evident success of the WE paradigm shift in English studies, world Englishes research has not kept pace with recent developments related to the effects of globalization, and the impact of these on linguistic ecologies worldwide. Thus he suggests:

[T]he World Englishes framework has been feeling ‘pressure’, as it were, from two separate fronts of scholars: on the one hand those who have been engaged with research aimed at providing insights into the forms and functions of English as a lingua franca (ELF) [. . .] on the other hand those who have concentrated their attention on phenomena related to globalization, such as ‘super-diversity’, language ‘hybridity’, ‘translanguaging’, ‘metrolinguism’ [. . .]. In some ways, it could be said that both ELF and the sociolinguistics of globalization have “eroded” some of the scope of World Englishes.

(Saraceni, 2015, p. 4)

Saraceni’s views are constructive in indicating how rapidly the effects of globalization have been felt in changing our perceptions of varietal differentiation on a global scale, and I would agree that what is new here (compared with WE in its earlier years of theorization) are the palpable effects of globalization, which are perhaps most dramatically visible in the European and Asian contexts, but that are doubtless discernible everywhere.

In the case of Europe, in the last three decades in particular, the effects of multiculturalism and multilingualism have been felt everywhere, as a result of the expansion of the European Union, and the movement of Europeans across
national boundaries, but also as the result of large-scale immigration into Europe from outside the EU (seen most dramatically in the recent waves of immigration from the war-torn Middle East). Given the relative openness of European colleges and universities, this has also had a major effect on academia, across the EU and even the UK. Whereas four decades ago the vast majority of students in European university classrooms would have been domestic students ‘native’ to particular European nations, today French, German, Scandinavian and British universities are peopled by substantial numbers of foreign students, and continental European universities have experienced increasing pressure to provide curricula for such students through English. It is hardly surprising therefore that early attempts to provide theorizations and descriptions of ‘European English’ soon gave way to a more considered attempt to describe the lingua franca English of multicultural students in European classrooms (Jenkins, 2013; Seidhöfer, 2011). It was these educational and sociological conditions, I have suggested elsewhere, that have provided the direct impetus for the emergence of ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF) as a distinct field of inquiry, and it may be further helpful here to understand ELF studies as (in the first instance) as a European phenomenon, or, at least, as a European response to the shifting demographics of the EU as well as European universities (Bolton, 2011).

With reference to the second challenge identified by Saraceni, that of ‘super-diversity’ studies, there can be little doubt that recent work by Blommaert (2010) on the sociolinguistics of globalization has the strong potential to expand our understanding of language contact and multilingualism in the contemporary world. Here again I would suggest that a major stimulus for such studies has again been the European response to the changing demographics of European cities and societies, as a direct result of immigration. To take one example from Scandinavia, until the 1970s, Sweden was very largely racially and linguistically homogeneous, but by the early 2000s, as a result of the country generously accepting large numbers of international refugees, over 150 different languages were recorded as ‘home languages’ for Stockholm schoolchildren (Jenkins, 2013; Seidhöfer, 2011). Blommaert has persuasively argued that ‘globalization forces sociolinguistics to unthink its classic distinctions and biases and to rethink itself as a sociolinguistics of mobile resources’, while further arguing that ‘[w]e need to replace it [traditional sociolinguistics] with a view of language as something intrinsically and perpetually mobile, through space as well as time, and made for mobility’ (Blommaert, 2010, pp. 1, xiv). Thus, whereas traditional sociolinguistics is concerned with the use of ‘languages’ or ‘varieties’ within or between stable ‘speech communities’, or with ‘code-switching’ or ‘code-mixing’, super-diversity studies have a focus on multilingualism in a globalizing world, where individuals engage in ‘polylinguaging’ and ‘translanguaging’. In Europe, this has now resulted in rethinking sociolinguistics in at least three areas of research: (i) face-to-face communication, as in recent studies of multicultural urban dialects in the UK; (ii) Internet-based communication, blogging, gaming, social media, YouTube, etc.; and (iii) linguistic landscape studies, concerned with displayed public languages, commercial signage, street signs, posters, shop names, etc. (Parkin & Arnaut, 2010).

The specific linguistic effects of globalization in Europe are not necessarily duplicated elsewhere, as the linguistic realities there have been shaped by the transnationalism of the European Union, high levels of immigration and the increasing awareness of multilingualism. In Asia, the sociolinguistics of many societies have been determined by rather different influences, not least the tension between ongoing national projects and the demands of globalization, resulting in a shift away from traditional linguistic diversity associated with regional and local varieties of languages towards a restricted combination of the standard national language, very often in combination with English. In the US similarly, it might be argued that such dynamics are again different from those in Europe, for a number of reasons.

First, as many discussions of ‘globalization’ concede, the driving force of many of those cultural, economic and social phenomena associated with globalization has had its wellspring in the US, particularly since the Second World War, after which America’s ‘irresistible Empire’ of consumer goods, global media, mass production, popular entertainment, and contemporary ‘modernity’ was spread worldwide (de Grazia, 2005). Second, it may be argued that, whereas many European societies appear to have enjoyed only limited success in integrating large numbers of recent immigrants into their societies, the power of the American dream seems as strong today as ever, at a time in the US when ‘ethnic’ minorities such as Asians and Hispanics are gaining ever-more economic and political clout in society. However speculative such comments may be, such factors may at least help explain why ELF studies have emerged and gained wide popularity in the European context, but have largely failed to gain traction in the US (although see Masmoto, 2011). Despite the huge influx of overseas students into US universities and colleges in recent years, the expectation is still strong that the vast majority of such students wish to acquire a command of a standardized (or standard-like) variety of US English as part of their educational experience, and to meet such demands, most universities have relatively well-established ESL and academic writing programs in place (Liou, 2012). In this context, as others, it may also be argued that power of the US variety of English continues to parallel the continuing economic, cultural, military, and political power of the US in many other spheres worldwide (Demont-Heinrich, 2010). To this, one may also add the powerful effects of Internet technology, a technology perceived as global, and yet one whose origins and key stakeholders have (to an astonishing degree) been strategically and compactly located in California’s Silicon Valley, home to such iconic digital brands as Adobe, Apple, Ebay, Facebook, Google, Intel, Netflix, Oracle, and many more (The Economist, 2015).

13.5 Future directions for world Englishes

Saraceni’s descriptions of the challenges facing world Englishes in this current era are well motivated, but here I would again argue that the WE paradigm is sufficiently robust and dynamic to meet such challenges. One major thread of
continuity throughout the development of world Englishes has been its inclusivity and pluricentricity, its inclusivity in terms of subject matter, and the coverage given to the essential pluricentricity of world languages. As the WE enterprise continues, it will be useful to both look back at the theoretical foundations of world Englishes, before looking towards future directions.

13.5.1 Looking back and moving forward

One important set of works that will serve to inform world Englishes research, publications, and pedagogy in future years was recently published by Bloomsbury Academic Publishers. These are the Collected Works of Braj Kachru, Volume 1–3 (Kachru, 2015a, b, c), which have been anthologized and edited by Jonathan Webster. Volume 1 of the collection includes essays on ‘Models of English for the Third World’, ‘The power and politics of English’, and ‘The spread of English and sacred linguistic cows’. Volume 2 covers such issues as ‘New Englishes’, ‘Transcultural creativity in world Englishes’, ‘The paradigms of marginality’, and ‘World Englishes and culture wars’, while Volume 3 includes chapters on ‘Code-mixing as a communicative strategy’, ‘Bilingualism’, and ‘Multilingualism and multiculturalism’. A reading or re-reading of such essays reminds one at once of the breadth of vision that helped shape Kachruvian linguistics as it developed in the 1980s and 1990s. Key elements of this vision included an acute awareness of the multilingual contexts of Englishes worldwide, and the repeated reminder to situate WE research in a sociolinguistic perspective. For example, some twenty years ago, Kachru (in a co-authored article with Nelson) wrote:

It is imperative that teachers and students be aware of the sort of presence that English has in the world today [. . . ] The concept of a monolithic English as an exponent of culture and communication in all English-using countries has been a convenient working fiction that is now becoming harder and harder to maintain. What we have now in reality is English languages and English literatures [. . . ] To understand the pluralism of English, it is therefore vital to see its spread, uses, and users in sociolinguistic contexts. (Kachru & Nelson, 1996, pp. 76–77)

The emphasis here on the ‘sociolinguistic contexts’ or ‘sociolinguistic realities’ of English(es) remains a key feature of world Englishes theorization for Kachru, and also helps explain the major and enduring impact his work has had on the field, and on the later work of other scholars whose work has focused on issues related to code-mixing, critical linguistics, linguistic imperialism, multilingualism, the politics of language, and much else. It is also salutary to consider that Kachru himself published an article entitled ‘English as lingua franca’ as early as 1996, some years before the recent interest in ‘ELF’ studies began to gather momentum (Kachru, 2015b). Since its inception, world Englishes has arguably drawn its strongest influences from, and had its greatest impact on, the twin fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, and its synergy with these two disciplines is likely to continue into the future.

13.5.2 Future trends for WE and sociolinguistics

As the quotation from Kachru and Nelson in the previous section reminds us, one important and very central dynamic in the development of the WE approach has always been the need to connect descriptive and analytical work on world Englishes to the sociolinguistic realities of the English language in diverse and varied contexts worldwide. The key sociolinguistic dynamic in world Englishes continues to be a driving force today, and research in the WE field has adapted to the changing conditions of the world in the 21st century, in order to reflect new issues and fresh challenges in the field of English studies, in relation to the changing dynamics of an interconnected world, crucially affected by such forces as globalization and mediatization (including the Internet and related digital communications). Such newer trends have also found expression in the World Englishes journal, where recurring topics in recent decades have included studies of contact linguistics (including code-switching and mixing), critical linguistics, language and religion, linguistic landscapes, multilingualism, popular culture, and ELF. While the journal still publishes articles of areal interest, many of the articles in the journal also resonate with the sociolinguistics of globalization, with special issues on such topics as ‘Perspectives on English as a lingua franca’, ‘Creativity and world Englishes’, ‘World Englishes and linguistic landscapes’, ‘World Englishes and international call centres’, ‘World Englishes in world religions’, and ‘World Englishes and language contact’.

The changing context of a world now dealing with the multiple effects of globalization, multiculturalism, and mounting populism in Europe and the US; the effects of localized wars, population displacement, and migration; as well as the increasingly ‘mediatized’ lives of individuals subscribing to and monitored by social media and the Internet, opens up new horizons for linguistic research, including not least research on the multiple and changing contexts of English worldwide. One major and important challenge here is the extent to which the sociolinguistic methodology and analysis of WE is informed by recent trends in sociolinguistic research, where there has been a major paradigm shift in recent years. The essential thrust of this paradigm shift has been to question many of those foundational tenets of sociolinguistics that were established in the decades between the 1960s and 1990s, including such constructs as ‘code-switching’, ‘dialects’, ‘diglossia’, ‘language repertoires’, and ‘speech community’. A key argument is that earlier versions of sociolinguistics theory and description were fatally tied to a ‘static’ view of language and society, a view subsequently undermined and, to a degree, undone by the forces of a ‘mobile’ globalization, as notably expressed in Blommaert’s description of the challenge of the new paradigm:

[Globalization forces sociolinguistics to unthink its classic distinctions and biases and to rethink itself as a sociolinguistics of mobile resources, framed in terms of trans-contextual networks, flows and movements [. . . ] sociolinguistics still bears many marks of its own peculiar history, as it has focused on static variation, on local distribution of varieties, on stratified language contact, and so on. [. . . ] We need to replace it [traditional sociolinguistics]
with a view of language as something intrinsically and perpetually mobile, through space as well as time, and made for mobility.

(Blommaert, 2010, pp. 1, xiv)

Elsewhere, Blommaert and Rampton earlier noted an ‘ongoing revision of fundamental ideas’ in sociolinguistics, as ‘[r]ather than working with homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication’ (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 3). The impact of this recent shift in sociolinguistic theory has been immense, and, in all likelihood, probably definitional as far as future sociolinguistic research is concerned (Blommaert, 2010; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Weber & Horner, 2012). Other important elements in this ‘new’ sociolinguistics, in addition to mobility, include the foregrounding of language ideologies, the reimagining of linguistic behavior in terms of wider semiotic spheres of engagement, and the recognition of the key role of indexicality in micro-sociolinguistic interactions (Blommaert, 2016; Silverstein, 2016).

The new sociolinguistics has also brought with it new terminology to describe a range of processes associated with a mobile sociolinguistics, including such notions as ‘superdiversity’, ‘translanguaging’, ‘translingual practice’, ‘transglossia’, ‘polylingual languaging’, and ‘metrolingualism’, the use of which have been recently critiqued by Pennycook (2016). In his review of these ‘post-Fishmanian’ reconceptualizations of sociolinguistic constructs, he queries ‘whether a new paradigm is likely to be ushered in by such a plethora of new terms’ but nevertheless argues that ‘we need at the same time to understand that terms such as “diversity”, “bilingualism”, and “multilingualism” have become burdened by their history of use both within academic texts and across social life more broadly’.

Finally, Pennycook argues that the paradigm shift in sociolinguistics appear to mark ‘a moment of disciplinary upheaval’, signalling that ‘communication occurs across what have been thought of as languages, that speakers draw on repertoires of semiotic resources, and that language is best understood in terms of social practices’ (Pennycook, 2016, p. 212).

Coupland (2016), in his review of recent theoretical changes, identifies five key themes in this recent paradigm shift, which he specifies as ‘markets’, ‘mobility’, ‘modalities’, ‘media’, and ‘metacomunication’. The justification for ‘markets’ in this context is clearly explicable with reference to the pervasive effects of ‘capital’; ‘mobility’, again, is at the core of globalization; ‘modalities’ looked to varieties of multimedia and non-verbal communication; ‘media’ is again the technology of our mediated lives; and in the new sociolinguistics, ‘metacomunication’ and ‘reflexivity’ is seen as a key feature of the ‘contemporary, globalized sociolinguistic world’ (Coupland, 2016, p. 449).

The relevance of sociolinguistic theory to world Englishes is central and profound, as sociolinguistics provided the wellspring for much of the early theorization of the WE field. In the 1980s and 1990s, the WE paradigm represented a fresh, innovative, and pluralistic vision of English studies, at a time when the English language was spreading through swathes of educational systems and postcolonial societies worldwide. At the same time, however, world Englishes was never solely concerned with English, but was also engaged at describing and analyzing how English connected with multilingual societies and cultures around the world, through processes of language contact, hybridization, and cultural negotiation. For Braj B. Kachru, the spread of English was never only a one-way process resulting in the nativization of English, but rather involved a twin-sided interplay of English with numerous African and Asian languages, thus contributing to the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic Englishization of local languages in such contexts (Kachru, 2005, p. 117). In many senses, Braj B. Kachru’s work on such issues prefigures and anticipates recent theorizations and descriptions of ‘translanguaging’ and ‘translingual practice’. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that such theorizations would have been formed without the earlier scaffolding of Kachru’s pioneer work on the sociolinguistic dynamics of multilingual societies. That aside, there is much that is genuinely innovative in the new sociolinguistics described above, and one anticipates that much of the new research within the WE paradigm will draw directly on the avowedly ‘mobile’ sociolinguistics of Blommaert and related scholars as we move forward. Given the diversity of topics represented in the World Englishes journal, I would certainly argue that the WE approach as it has developed has been intrinsically dynamic and open to debate and new perspectives in research, scholarship, and theorization, and that this flexibility, diversity, and openness remains a crucial element of the ‘ethos’ of world Englishes (Bolton, 2005). Elsewhere, I have also suggested that the theoretical and methodological challenges of globalization might also recognise the key role of world Englishes research in an expanded understanding of the changing and dynamic ‘language worlds’ of young people across the planet, where the ‘worlds of Englishes’ are ineluctably linked to the multilingual matrices of diverse and varied global communities (Bolton, 2013). In this light, the paradigmatic challenges of Blommaert’s post-Fishmanian sociolinguistics are both constructive and creative, ultimately reminding us of the core principle of Braj B. Kachru’s axiom that world Englishes should be centrally concerned with the ‘sociolinguistic realities’ of language use in multilingual societies worldwide (Kachru, 1992, p. 11).

13.5.3 Future trends for WE and applied linguistics

In addition to the impact of world Englishes on English studies and sociolinguistics, there is also the question of how applications and insights from world Englishes may best be incorporated into approaches to applied linguistics and language pedagogy. In practice, this may depend on a number of factors, including the geographical location of a particular school or university, as well as the disciplinary orientation of the department, division, or school where a particular educator holds a position, and whether that is in the UK, US, Europe, Africa, or Asia, or elsewhere. Despite this, there are perhaps some insights that are generalizable to a wide range of contexts across the world. First and foremost, WE
studies provide very clear evidence of the global reach of English, not primarily as the world’s first language, but most certainly as the world’s premier second language and link language, used, according to many estimates, by at least one and a half billion people worldwide. A second insight for education is that the vast majority of English teachers worldwide today at whatever level of education are multilingual users of the language who learnt English at some point in their education as a second rather than first language. In Outer Circle Asian societies such as Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines (as well as a host of African societies), such teachers operate in sociolinguistic contexts in which English has established de facto local norms, often at variance with the exonormative targets of traditional teaching materials. In situations such as these, the maintenance of traditional target norms of English proficiency may not only lack realism but may also contribute to the stigmatization of the norms of local users (including teachers and learners), contributing to a ‘culture of complaint’ rather than ‘a culture of confidence’ (Bolton, 2002).

The ‘nativization’ of English in many such societies has been also been accompanied by the ‘Englishization’ of indigenous languages, leading to complex patterns of contact linguistics, including lexical transfer, code-switching and code-mixing, and discoursal and syntactic change and accommodation. The interface of English with both local languages and national vernaculars throughout many parts of the world thus presents a series of challenges in educational contexts: linguistic (the description and analysis of language systems), sociolinguistic (providing adequate accounts of context and language use), and psycholinguistic (in assessing or reformulating extant models of first- and second-language acquisition). In this latter context, the notion of ‘native speaker’ has come under increasing scrutiny, not least because many children in Outer Circle and Expanding Circle societies grow up multilingually and develop a multilingual competence in English in tandem with other languages in their multilingual repertoires.

Kachru himself discussed these and related issues in a 1990 paper entitled ‘World Englishes and applied linguistics’ in which he noted the limitations of traditional perspectives on world Englishes, suggesting that these had been skewed by the ethnocentrism of Inner Circle practitioners, reliance on interlanguage and error analysis frameworks, and misconceptions concerning the sociolinguistic realities of multilingual Outer Circle societies (Kachru, 1990). A later paper by Kachru and Nelson (1996) went on to explore the ways in which the WE approach might be adopted within the language classroom, suggesting a number of imaginative strategies that might be employed in teaching English across a variety of educational settings, including multicultural education, the teaching of discourse pragmatics, and the teaching of new literatures in English. The issue of discourse pragmatics was also relevant to the work of Professor Yamuna Kachru, who distinguished herself in the field of discourse analysis and contrastive rhetoric, where a number of her writings in this field focused on cross-cultural speech act research, and ‘the role of style in conveying cultural meaning’, all of which continue to be productive fields of research (Y. Kachru, 1992, p. 342).

One suggestion from Saraceni (2015) on how to connect WE theory with the language education is to revisit Kachru’s suggestions for pedagogic practice, which include the following: (i) providing students with a clear sociolinguistic profile of English worldwide; (ii) exposing students to varieties of English; (iii) maintaining ‘attitudinal neutrality’ in the discussion of such varieties; (iv) exploring the range of uses of particular varieties; (v) creating an awareness of contrastive pragmatics; and (vi) promoting the awareness of the multi-dimensionality of functions, while considering linguistic variations in particular genres of use (Kachru, 1992). Here, Saraceni (2015, p. 178) notes that these points emphasize the importance of context, register, and ‘language as practice’, reminding students that ‘we mould language according to what we do, who we do it with and the role(s) that language plays in it’. Thus the educational potential for world Englishes is ultimately to assist students ‘to take part, actively and critically in the practices and discourses that (re)present, (re)construct and (re-)shape the global and local worlds we live in’, a formulation, one feels, that neatly and precisely expresses the Kachruvian ethos of creativity and intellectual challenge at the core of the world Englishes enterprise.

13.6 Conclusion

The survey of the field presented in this chapter has attempted to provide a guide to current trends and future directions in world Englishes. Here, I have suggested that, in its widest application, the field of world Englishes includes a number of overlapping approaches, from English studies, corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, etc. and a number of other branches of linguistics and language study. In a narrower sense, the term world Englishes also refers specifically to the pioneering work of Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, Larry Smith, and associated scholars, who not only founded the World Englishes journal, but also established the International Association for World Englishes (IAWE), both of which continue to have a major impact in this field. Research and teaching related to world Englishes is now well established at many universities worldwide, and at present this continues to be a dynamic and vibrant field of research and publications.

The continued impact and importance of world Englishes may be seen at a number of levels within English studies and linguistics. In contrast to the early 1980s, there is now a wide acceptance of a pluricentric view of Englishes within many if not most universities worldwide. The academic discourse on variation in English and varieties of English has shifted to adopt a lexicon that now makes default reference to the Outer and Expanding Circle, and associated concepts from Kachruvian linguistics. In this enterprise, the works of Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru and Larry E. Smith have provided the theoretical and methodological foundation for a wide range of adjacent studies, including corpus linguistics, critical linguistics, ELF, and studies of language and globalization, and has also influenced a wide range of contiguous studies in linguistic landscapes, multilingualism, sociolinguistics, and much else. As I have argued elsewhere (Bolton, 2005), the strength of the WE paradigm is derived from not only its inclusivity...
and its pluralism, but also from its ‘ethos’, its ‘character’, and ‘spirit’. The WE ethos has been immensely important over the past few decades, in its conferences and its journal, in supporting linguistic and racial diversity, gender equality, and support for equality of opportunity in education, as well as a concern with a transnational or global inclusivity. In the very first editorial statement for the World Englishes journal in 1985, Braj Kachru and Larry E. Smith declared that:

WE is intended for students, researchers and teachers of language, literature, and the methodology of English teaching [...] WE is [...] a vehicle which may be used to share the vast Western and non-Western expertise and experience for the benefit of all users of English. This mutual sharing of ideas, research and resources will be reflected in the contributions and reviews, and in the readership of WE. The acronym WE, therefore aptly symbolizes the underlying philosophy of the journal and the aspirations of the Editorial Board.

(Kachru & Smith, 1985, p. 210)

The inclusivity of the WE enterprise continues today, some thirty years later, and is expressed in a number of ways, including the World Englishes journal, as well as the IAWE conferences. The World Englishes journal welcomes articles from academics from diverse countries across the world, including submissions from Africa, South America, many parts of Asia, continental Europe, and even the Russian Federation. The IAWE conferences also instantiate the same ethos of internationalism and inclusivity, and over the past decades these have not only taken place in the US, but in a wide range of other locations as well, including Australia, Canada, mainland China, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Turkey, and South Africa. Few academics who have attended IAWE conferences have failed to be impressed by the inclusivity, internationalism, and openness of such events, which again continue to make strong and lasting contributions to the field of study.

From the 1980s to the present the WE project has contributed to a major theoretical shift in English studies worldwide, in large part through Braj B. Kachru’s foundational work, which from the outset argued for a paradigm shift of two types: (i) ‘a paradigm shift in research, teaching, and the application of sociolinguistic realities to the functions of English’, and (ii) ‘a shift from frameworks and theories which are essentially appropriate only to monolingual countries’, involving a pluralism which is ‘reflected in the approaches, both theoretical and applied, we adopt for understanding this unprecedented linguistic phenomenon’ (Kachru, 1997, p. 237; also 2015b, p. 175). At this point in its development, the WE enterprise may be regarded as having reached a point of maturity or even a point of stagnation.

Notes
2 Over the last five years (2010-2015), articles published in the journal have come from a total of some forty different countries worldwide.

References


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