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World Englishes: Changing the Paradigm of Linguistic Diversity in Global Academia

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Abstract

This paper discusses the ways that the publications of multilingual and non-native speakers of English are treated in academic publications. Using the World English theory as a framework, it attempts to enumerate which overt and hidden advantages native speakers may have over non-native speakers in academic writing communities, and how these can be deconstructed. It also explores possible solutions to this problem, both to improve non-native students' written scholarly work and to restructure global perceptions and biases towards different regional varieties of English. The paper focuses on certain gatekeeping behaviors performed by institutions of knowledge production, and on how the World English theory can be applied to help improve parity in international academia.

Keywords: linguistic rights, World English theory, discrimination, international publication, multilingualism, language varieties

Introduction: An Age of Pluralism

Although international communication and trade has been occurring for centuries, in recent decades, the pace of globalization has accelerated to an unprecedented velocity. The use of English as a vehicle for the agents of globalization has increased hand in hand with electronic communication, the expansion of global businesses, and international scholarly publication. However, the ways in which English is used from region to region vary greatly, so much so that the language itself has evolved into something fundamentally different in many different contexts. Even when market pressure is not such a driving pressure, such as in literary and artistic production and personal expression, English continues to enjoy popularity among speakers for whom it is not a first language (Varughese, 2012). Furthermore, the distinguishing linguistic features of both English varieties and other languages have ceased to honor geographic boundaries (Dor, 2004).

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As a “hyper collective good”, according to Dor (2004), languages like English provide an increased benefit to society with an increased population of speakers (p. 112).

Yet the benefits described by Dor (2004) are disproportionately enjoyed by a global minority of so-called “native speakers”. Non-native and multilingual speakers, most noticeably international scholars, remain disadvantaged in many ways when attempting to engage in English-dominated academic discourses (Curry & Lillis, 2004). The bias against non-native speakers extends to other areas of life as well, limiting employment opportunities, social mobility, and even self-esteem, though manifestations of this vary widely in different contexts (Papen, 2005).

In an effort to address the inequalities created by the global spread of English, as well as its possible advantages, many theories under the umbrella of “World Englishes” have emerged as part of the international discourse on language. Though these theories are as diverse as the contexts they endeavor to describe, they share a common set of philosophical and humanitarian characteristics. As Rajagopalan states, “World English belongs to everybody who speaks it, but is nobody’s mother tongue” (p. 185). This paper will attempt to provide an overview of the past and current trends in the developing World Englishes discourse, with an aim to advocate for equal access to discursive power and honoring of the contributions of multilingual scholars.

The Rise of English and Linguistic Hegemony

Before we explore the tenets and applications of World Englishes theory, it is important to examine the historical factors and processes that have contributed to the rise to power and continued dominance of English as a language of business and education. The dominance of English has been facilitated by the forces of globalization: increased communication and mobility of people and ideas, international trade, and cultural diffusion. But as MacEwan (2001) argues, globalization does not always bring about positive change. Old-fashioned forms of globalization

during the Age of Exploration included slavery, genocide, and the systematic eradication of indigenous cultures and languages: MacEwan (2001) urges us to examine if modern forms of globalization are truly morally superior to their historical predecessors (p. 1). Following in the footsteps of European colonization, the hegemony of English takes advantage of many of the same power mechanics as those used by former colonial powers. Saxena and Omoniyi (2010) describe three chief elements which have contributed to the rise of English's linguistic hegemony: leadership without force, leadership through legitimation, and leadership through consensual rule (p. 513). English is often imported and used in international contexts because of its convenience, and nowadays does not often need to be forced on those who use it. The legitimation of English has perhaps the most direct ties with the age of colonization, especially through the legacy of colonial schools and their tacit communication that English was the language of the powerful and morally superior (Papen, 2005). Further, as the predominance of English is increasingly met with acceptance and taken for granted by international populations, the world increasingly gives its unspoken consent to the rule of the English language. As Papen (2005) states, literacy education depends on "what forms of knowledge have authority". It is clear that the English language is widely regarded as an authority on matters of business and academics, even in places where it has never been a native or colonial language.

The Conventions of English: Setting the Tone for the Wider World

Even when English is not employed as the language of instruction or business, the conventions and underlying cultural beliefs of the English tradition still exert a powerful influence on modern communications. Dor (2004) describes in detail how the tools of mass communication — computer keyboards and the formatting and limitations of modern web pages and applications — are shaped and regulated by the limitations of the English language, even when they are used

by foreign-language users. In a similar fashion, purveyors of academic conventions such as the American Psychological Association, exert control over the work of multilingual scholars any time they wish to publish in English. One of the great linchpins of positivist approaches to science and research is the “assumption that values in narrating science are universal” (Duszak, 2006, p. 38). Yet what is presented by powerful institutions of academia as universal truth is merely the local knowledge of the European, Judeo-Christian root community from which the English-language academic tradition is descended (Canagarajah, 2002). This over-valuing of Western academic values, such as effacing and minimizing the author’s presence, creates an imbalanced dynamic where the contributions of scholars from other language traditions are misunderstood and often dismissed because they do not follow the rules set by the English tradition (Bhatt, 2008). Even in multilingual spaces, such as the world of online communication, expression in other languages is still hindered by the looming influence of English. What results is a kind of “imposed multilingualism” as described by Dor (2004), where speakers keep their languages, but the languages cease to be “theirs” due to regulation and standardization created to further economic goals (p. 116).

There are several major entities who contribute regularly to the perpetuation of the rhetorical and conceptual dominance of the English language. Western academia plays an important role in engaging in gatekeeping activities that limit and diminish the contributions of multilingual scholars (Canagarajah, 2002). As described by Curry & Lillis (2004), scholars in non-English-dominant countries are under increasing pressure to publish in English and reap the rewards given to English-language articles and research. However, the increased competition for limited English-language journals, the confusing and foreign expectations for formatting and style, and the widespread prejudice against ESL writing in English-language journals make attaining the

rewards of writing in English extremely difficult (Curry & Lillis, 2004). This results in a skewed representation in international journals, in which a “good piece of work will not be rejected because of the English but one which is on the borderline... may be at a disadvantage” (Pérez-Lladata, Plo, & Ferguson, 2011). In this way, the process of publishing and disseminating knowledge through respected channels has become a “mechanism by which the intellectual hegemony of the West is maintained on a global scale” (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 254).

Mass media, corporate entities, and even governments also contribute to maintaining the perceived superiority of English conventions and linguistic traditions. Though the number of foreign-language media outlets is increasing, and the ability to translate articles and web material is becoming increasingly widespread, these globalizing processes frequently serve to further the interests of the powerful English-speaking minority. As Canagarajah explains, “the local finds representation only according to the purposes and forms permitted by the powerful” (p. 247). It is not only academic journals that are guilty of perpetuating this inequality: as Bhatt (2008) describes, newspapers and media “simultaneously reproduce and transform discourse” as well (p. 181). Academic blogs, news websites, and even the documentation and coverage surrounding academic conferences all tend to follow the English-dominated pattern. Attempts have been made by governments in different countries both to preserve and eradicate English, but few have succeeded (Rajagopalan, 2010). By far the most fruitful examples of bringing English to foreign markets have been commercially motivated, usually in the form of advertising which blends English with indigenous tongues in order to sell a product (Dor, 2004). While these capitalist and post-colonial explanations have held sway for a long time, a transformational new theory known as World Englishes theory has begun to change the face of global communications discourse.

World Englishes Theory: Basic Principles and Paradigms

Goals and Objectives of World Englishes Theories

World Englishes theory refers to an umbrella of different approaches and frameworks united by a set of common goals and principles. But what are these goals, exactly? World Englishes theory often focuses on turning traditional understandings of linguistic power and privilege upside-down, and empowering those who are usually at the bottom of linguistic hierarchies (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010). Examples of disempowered groups that might be well served by a World Englishes perspective include ESOL learners, students from multicultural backgrounds, multilingual scholars, and any user of language whose experiences and contexts do not match those that are given privilege in modern society (Weber, 2014). While World Englishes offers a revolutionary way of thinking about language and power, scholars in the World Englishes field do not necessarily call for political action to fight existing structures of privilege and oppression. Rather, World Englishes is often treated as a way to build “linguistic peace” by increasing cross-cultural collaboration and understanding (Hoffman & Siebers, 2009, p. 409).

The goals of World Englishes theory are as simple to articulate as they are complex to bring to reality. Curry & Lillis (2004) posit that World Englishes aims to “expand the definition of an ESOL learner”, and by including more language users in this family hopes to foster a more just treatment of their contributions and needs (p. 664). Curry & Lillis also advocate for a more asset-based (rather than deficit-based) perspective on language use, in order to honor the “cultural capital” of users of World Englishes (p. 674). Another important goal of World Englishes theory pertains to the spread of the forces of globalization, explained by Rajagopalan (2010) as sometimes being merely “old capitalism in a new bottle” (p. 177). Rajagopalan (2010) believes that World Englishes’ role is to foster the growth of healthy aspects of globalization (international education,

collaboration, and multicultural society) while thwarting the factors which “masquerade” as globalization to further the ends of the privileged (p. 178). Ultimately, World Englishes scholars agree that their combined endeavor is to create a more just and positively pluralistic community of language users, where privilege is minimized and notions of “correctness” are discarded in favor of usefulness and mutual intelligibility (Bhatt, 2001). As Bhatt (2001) eloquently put it, “World Englishes, in its most ambitious interpretation, attempts to decolonize and democratize applied linguistics” (p. 544).

Paradigm Shift: From Formalism to Functionalism

In order to attain Bhatt’s (2001) goal of decolonization and democratization, it is deemed necessary by World Englishes scholars that a major shift in our perceptions of language use and regulation take place. Historically, pronunciation, spelling, and grammar of English have been regulated by a combined effort of academic institutions, government bodies, and the self-policing of groups of language users (Rajagopalan, 2010). However, as globalization spreads and multilingual, multicultural language users begin to outnumber the monolingual and monocultural, this regulation has become fraught with conflict. One example of this is illustrated in Milroy’s (2001) description of the decline of the standard of British English’s “Received Pronunciation” into obsolescence in recent years (p. 1). Milroy (2001) claims that it is no longer relevant if “correct” pronunciation is used in British English, because so many other forms of pronunciation have passed into wider acceptance that the “correctness” is no longer a requirement for understanding (p. 4).

The prestige associated with “Received Pronunciation” illustrates exactly the type of linguistic formalism that has prevailed over institutions of language regulation until recently. Weber (2014) criticizes this formalist approach, tearing apart the argument that grammar is hard-

wired to human beings and that languages must follow a set pattern of structural rules. As Bhatt (2001) argues, the frameworks used to study, interpret, and evaluate language have until recently been constructed and employed by scholars with a monolingual and monocultural bias. Bhatt (2001) draws attention to five different “sacred cows”, or misinformed ideas that must be sacrificed to fully embrace the philosophy of World Englishes. One of these “sacred cows” pertains to imposing the grammar of one language variety, namely the privileged one, upon other varieties of the same language (Bhatt, 2001). This creates the false idea that there are absolute rules about which are the “wrong” and “right” ways to communicate. There has been considerable debate among scholars as to whether this way of analyzing language is relevant or useful — proponents of World Englishes argue that grammar and syntax cannot be treated as independent of the situations in which they are applied (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010). The functionalist approach which enjoys the most popularity among World Englishes scholars argues that when it comes to language, meaning is fully context-dependent and that linguistic categories and structures are malleable and emergent (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010). Functionalism focuses on “the text rather than the sentence” and treats language not as a pure ideal, but as a tool for accomplishing a variety of tasks (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010, p. 9). As illustrated by Weber (2014), functionalism illuminates many of the dynamics that have sparked an interest in the World Englishes paradigm, specifically its equalizing and democratizing influences. There are several main branches of World Englishes theory that, while not wholly distinct from one another, each fulfill different conceptual objectives.

Major Branches of World Englishes Theory

The emerging landscape of World Englishes theory has as many contributors as there are varieties of English fighting for respect and legitimacy. One of the more prominent branches of World Englishes theory comes from Wolf and Polzenhagen (2009), who champion a framework

for linguistic analysis known as Cognitive Linguistics. Like the other functionalists, Wolf and Polzenhagen (2009) urge for a move away from linguistic formalism and grammar-centered study. They argue that the most important elements of language exist within the mind of both speaker and listener, and pertain to the ways in which thinking affects their communication (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010). Wolf and Polzenhagen (2009) used a number of culturally-dependent topics, such as ghosts, ancestors, and family relationships, to stimulate discussion from speakers of different varieties of English that illustrated differences in cognition and ways of thinking. Cognitive Linguistics is primarily concerned with thought and perception, a complement to the next major branch of World Englishes theory, which is known as usage-based functionalism.

Usage-based functionalism is the preferred theory of World Englishes scholars, and most of the other theories that abound are outgrowths of this basic paradigm. The theory was popularized by Bybee (2006), who describes the development of a person's dialectical and lexical formation as a series of "language events" (p. 711). Bybee (2006) goes on to insist that usage - not grammar or "correctness" - is what makes a word or a phrase meaningful. For the usage-based functionalists, understanding and intelligibility are the markers of acceptable language use. Saxena & Omoniyi (2010) compare this phenomenon to the ways in which children construct their own grammar based on their exposure to different languages. Just like these children, speakers of multiple languages or language varieties always experience some overlap between the linguistic spheres in which they live and work (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010). Language has many different purposes, be they instrumental (for school), regulative (for administration/legal uses), interpersonal, or imaginative (literary/artistic), and each creates different contexts in which language is applied (Bhatt, 2001).

The usage of English as a language of business, instruction, or literary expression has been shaped by historical forces of exploration, colonization, and now, globalization. One scholar who has attempted to make sense of the spread of English over time is Kachru (1985), whose framework of circles of English influence is heavily cited by other World Englishes scholars. Kachru's framework describes three circles, an inner circle, which includes countries where English is considered a native language, an outer circle of countries where English has been institutionalized, and an expanding circle of countries where English is primarily treated as a foreign language (Bhatt, 2001). Kachru's (1985) framework, while it may be a helpful starting point for those new to the World Englishes field, is grossly outdated and no longer an accurate reflection of English usage around the world (if it ever was). Wolf and Polzenhagen (2009) criticize Kachru's oversimplification of a world that is incredibly diverse and complex, arguing that the distinction between circles is "fuzzy" and "always in motion" (p. 2).

While there is some disagreement about the validity of Kachru's (1985) framework, one thing that all World Englishes scholars seem to agree on is the importance of a multicultural theoretical perspective. According to Bhatt (2001), multiculturalism is especially important in subverting unhealthy linguistic power dynamics because varieties of English are treated with equal respect under the WE paradigm (p. 528). Each variety of English is thought to possess its own "cultural capital", a term coined by Curry & Lillis (2004), which makes it valuable and unique in its own right regardless of dissimilarities with privileged varieties of English (p. 674). As Rajagopalan (2010) explains, any language transplanted into a new place will slowly take root in a new environment and develop its own "endonormative standards" (p. 175). World Englishes seeks to do away with the notion that these new standards are inferior to the old ones. Bhatt (2001) speaks for all World Englishes scholars when he puts forth a call to accept, even embrace, multiple

norms for language acquisition and use. As Rajagopalan (2010) explains quite eloquently, World Englishes theory is “multicultural in its very essence, not devoid of culture” (p. 186).

When putting these theories into practice and applying them to real-life situations, there are a number of interesting paradigm shifts that have begun to take place in spaces where the many varieties of English are used and measured against each other. As Rajagopalan (2010) states, English “has long ceased to be the monopoly of [its] original ‘native speakers’” (p. 185). One of the conceptual revolutions that has been fostered by proponents of World Englishes theory is an idea that has shocked many academics in privileged positions: the “apotheosis”, or natural death, of the concept of the native speaker (Rajagopalan, 2010, p. 187).

Practices of Gatekeeping and Discrimination in Academic Publishing

Although the ideal of polyphonic, multilingual expression is an appealing one, actually participating in this transformative means of communicating often fails to bear fruit for scholars. Curry & Lillis (2004) point out that scholars feel frustrated by the obligatory nature of learning and using English even in non-English-dominant countries. This is especially frustrating when their attempts to write in English are treated with derision and disrespect. Canagarajah (2002) describes the irony of the situation: “though there is a major interest in local knowledge in diverse academic circles in the West, publishing practices present a major barrier to its representation” (p. 254). It turns out that most publishers would rather print the descriptions of international research from third-party “native speakers” than to look to the original producers of this knowledge, however willing they may be to share their expertise. In this way, Canagarajah (2002) states, “academic publishing is a gatekeeping activity that legitimizes what passes for established knowledge” (p. 254). This is a toxic dynamic that stifles creativity and excludes meaningful voices from important academic discourses.

The practices of academic publishers reflect their tacit participation in this unfair system, despite empty PR-motivated assurances that they want to cultivate a more multicultural world. Duszak (2006) describes how publishing houses in her nation “privilege educational materials and comprehensive overviews... dictionaries, [textbooks], topical readers and, notably... translations of foreign, mainly English academic books” (p. 41). The demand for having all printed materials in English does not pay respect to the relevance or quality of content of the most sought-after materials. Canagarajah (2002) describes how the barriers to publication can be both nondiscursive, involving infrastructure, personal prejudice, lack of access to resources or networking, and discursive, such as alien formatting concepts, guidelines, and field-specific, English-only jargon. Academic papers written by multilingual scholars are often overlooked for “lack of readability and poor command of English”, according to Perez-Llantada, Plo and Ferguson (2011, p. 25). This is not to say that no work from multilingual scholars ever passes the test and is published: merely that the stakes are much higher and more difficult to clear for non-native speakers. Perez-Llantada, Plo and Ferguson (2011) elaborate: “surely a good piece of work will not be rejected because of the English, but one which is on the borderline... may be at a disadvantage” (p. 23). All of this evidence points to an abuse of power and authority on the part of publishing institutions, which must be rectified to better reflect the pluralistic world in which scholars now work. Papen (2005) argues that researchers and those dispensing publication privileges or other forms of soft power must take into account the historical and sociological background that underlies any ESL writer’s identity and fluency. It is the responsibility of those who are doing the gatekeeping to open those gates and allow for a more varied stream of content to become available. Curry & Lillis (2004) urge such institutions to engage in a dialogue about “global knowledge production” and broaden their publication horizons (p. 684). All of this can contribute to achieving this goal, as articulated

by Gee (2006): more humane notions of literacy/mastery for speakers of English, and less harmful, discriminatory gatekeeping.

Embracing the Contributions of Multilingual Scholars: Recommendations

There are many distinct and measurable benefits to opening the gates of academic publishing to the increasing polyphony of multilingual scholars. Canagarajah (2002) draws a fitting comparison between the push to integrate English-language and other-language academia and recent fusions between Western and Ayurvedic or Chinese traditional medicine. Although historically a great deal of misinformation and undue prejudice has surrounded types of medicine that were divergent from the Western tradition, recently many attempts have been made by prestigious medical institutions to embrace proven practices and treatments from these other sources (Canagarajah, 2002). In the same fashion, traditionally prestigious and powerful institutions of academia can tap into a wealth of resources by opening their doors to multilingual scholars. Uzuner (2008) describes multilingual writers and researchers as “a main pillar of global scholarship”, capable of significantly enriching the academic traditions to which they contribute (p. 251). Uzuner (2008) further elaborates how multilingual scholars enrich the knowledge base of academic communities by “exploring previously unexplored areas of research” and by “exposing and making accessible untapped resources” (p. 251). In a similar vein, Uzuner (2008) explains how ESL scholars make their work more accessible to other-language readership by relying on multimedia and graphs, tables, and images in the non-dialogic parts of their papers, resulting in improved comprehension and utility. Widening the scope of articles that are accepted and read is a powerful force for promoting more efficient and collaborative international resource. As Chew (2010) “is it better to belong to one nation among competing nations or to a united world?” (p. 58). Chew (2010) hopes that reducing discrimination will lead to a state of “unity amidst diversity”

where multiple norms and standards cooperate and coexist to serve the greater academic good (p. 49). If publishing institutions fail to embrace this enormous resource, Uzuner (2008) fears that it will “impoverish knowledge production” around the world (p. 251).

Concluding Thoughts: English as a Catalyst for Peace

World Englishes theory lays bare the realities of being a multilingual scholar, from its unique advantages to the intersections of history, politics, and privilege that make it so often a hurdle to be overcome. The underlying systems of capitalism, imperialism/colonialism, and the institutions which confer and preserve privileged hierarchies, however, could be unraveled by putting this theory into practice. However, just as the World English family of theories is diverse and regionally specific, responses to these oppressive systems and methods for overcoming their dominance vary based on the location and situation of the agents of change. Much of the applicability of World Englishes theory to improving the experiences of multilingual scholars is dependent on their geographic location, the academic tradition and culture from which they originate, infrastructure or logistical obstacles, and social mores or customs that relate to scholarship and language. Canagarajah (2002) reminds us that the concept of positionality and the politics of location, ideas borrowed from feminist theory, can apply to language use and culture as well. Each scholar’s unique linguistic, cultural, and material circumstances influence their ability to be heard and received differently by their academic peers, for good or for ill. For example, a scholar from a culture where freedom of information is restricted or censored may need to apply World Englishes theory to legitimize what limited body of literature is available to him, and to encourage the relaxation of censorship and data restrictions to include foreign writings and scholarship. In a different situation, a scholar whose own country’s facilities for research proceed significantly differently than those of leading nations in the field may need to use World Englishes

theory to explain the nuanced differences in approaches and explain how their variety makes them special and unique rather than redundant. Finally, a scholar from a colonized area may need to tackle the lingering legacy of colonialism head-on in his writing using the principles of World Englishes theory, rather than allowing it to remain an unspoken source of power and privilege. In this way, World Englishes theory can become an agent of liberation and a way to push the boundaries of a location's academic culture for the benefit of those within and outside of the area.

World Englishes theory is at heart a politicized theory which tears privilege from the hands of the few and wishes to spread it equally among all seekers of knowledge. Because of this, it can be instrumental in promoting the ideals of freedom of information, equality among human beings, and non-violent intellectual resolutions to conflict. In the current era of increased political polarization, advanced and catastrophic weaponry, and widespread xenophobia, World Englishes theory may serve as a beacon of optimism and mutual understanding for those who wish to resist the divisive forces of violence and xenophobia. Hoffman and Siebers (2009) offer an interesting and encouraging viewpoint on the plight of multilingual scholars, using concepts from the budding field of "peace linguistics". As Hoffman and Siebers (2009) explain, it is important to define the rights of speakers referred to as "linguistic rights", and to educate people on how to use language to come closer together rather than to set boundaries among each other (p. 408). Hoffman and Siebers' agenda aligns with Dor's (2004) proclamation that speakers have a right to resist global pressures and use, maintain, and develop their local languages as well as their varieties of English. Openly acknowledging the ways in which academic hierarchies and traditions of privilege affect our current academic institutions is an important way of recognizing that the linguistic rights of multilingual scholars are being violated, and allows us to work together to find ways to honor those rights. As Hoffman & Siebers (2009) suggest, embracing the World Englishes framework and

respecting multiple varieties of English is actually an important step in building linguistic peace, which can lead to other types of peace as well (p. 409). For example, acknowledging the nationhood or solidarity of a linguistic group which has been oppressed can provide relief for marginalized groups and allow them to express their identity in a non-violent, constructive way. Providing official recognition for language varieties in government documents, schools, signs, and packaging offers increased visibility for members of marginalized groups and allows them to feel included and represented in their nation's business. This provides a non-violent alternative to the suppression of or discrimination against members of said group, without compromising the nation's integrity. It also allows members of the marginalized group to be recognized for their scholarly contributions in their own tongue, and to be eligible for academic awards and professional opportunities that might otherwise have gone to members of the dominant majority.

In terms of promoting peace and collaboration rather than violence and division, World Englishes offers a gateway from the academic to the political. Hoffman & Siebers (2009) argue that English has a unique position to be employed in the pursuit of peace. Since it is such a globally-used tool, rather than being put to use to divide people and degrade certain groups, through the World Englishes model it can serve as an example of cooperation and mutual acceptance for policymakers in government, in economic institutions, and in religious organizations. For example, acknowledging the flawed and bloody history of English as a language of colonization frees us to continue to use it consciously for reasons of efficiency, while also allowing it to mutate and morph to suit the needs of its modern-day users who are no longer (or never were) colonizers. Using this mutable standard of English, rather than enforcing regional varieties from privileged areas, helps to neutralize its undertones of colonization and discrimination and render it a tool accessible to all. This practice can be employed anywhere that language varieties come into contact, from

diplomatic engagements to business contracts to academic or social media platforms. Advances in translation technology will only improve the utility and feasibility of these applications as it becomes faster and easier to digitally alter text and audio to cater to different populations. Ultimately, World Englishes theory has the potential to transform our understanding and concepts of language and power if it is put properly into practice, for the empowerment of millions and the enrichment of global knowledge and scholarship. As Chew (2010) states most elegantly, “a language must be at the service of the people who use it” (p. 67). Let us cease the discrimination and gatekeeping and, through World Englishes make English work for everyone who uses it.

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