World English and ‘Other’ Englishes – Whose English is it?

Ilsa Sharp, Helen Renwick, Catherine Schwerin

PD Seminar for Editors WA
Monday, 21 November 2016
Presentation outline

1. Some categories of English – Catherine
2. Presuppositions we bring to editing – Helen
3. Case study: Singlish – Ilsa
4. Implications for editing practice (checklist) – Catherine
5. Wind-up
6. Opportunity for discussion
Common categories of English

• By country
  – British
  – American
  – Australian
  – ...

21.11.2016

Copyright ©2016
Another view of English

• By language-teaching approach
  – ENL
  – ESL
  – EFL

“The statistics ...suggest that about a quarter of the world's population is already fluent or competent in English, and this figure is steadily growing—in the early 2000s that means around 1.5 billion people.” (Crystal 2003)
Editing in an international context

Informed by

• the form of English client aspires to (EN-US, EN-AUS, EN-UK...?)

• The client’s own familiarity with or “claim” to English

• And much, much more
Further sub-division of Englishes

By country

• Spoken as a first language
  – New Zealand, Ireland...

• Spoken as a second or official language
  – India, Nigeria...

• Spoken as a third language
  – Germany, China...
Country speaking English as a first language

- primary language of majority
- supposed prestige as ‘standard’ form

BUT

- misapprehension that all speakers speak a so-called standard
- local varieties/dialects often overlooked
Country speaking English as second or official language

- important but not main language
- sometimes chosen so as not to prefer a particular ethnic or cultural group over others
- another language also important

**BUT**

- country often a former colony (emotions, attitudes)
Country speaking English as a third language

• international/business/travel communication in mind

BUT

• not necessarily used for everyday communication (frequency, functional span)
• instrumental benefits (attitudes, emotions)
Learning approach ENL

- learnt as first language in environment where English is main language
- natural use of language

BUT

- assumption that “native” is better
  - however, NS needn’t have a wide competence
Learning approach ESL

- Refers to order in which language learned
- Speaker acquires native-like competence in some or all areas

BUT

- Assumption that “second language” may be inferior to “native” language
Learning approach EFL

• non-native speakers
• English learnt to level necessary to perform particular functions
• English not commonly spoken in environment

AND

• motivation often not high – purely instrumental (emotion, attitude)
• speakers not always flexible or comfortable in use
Classification of Englishes by “register”

- formal/informal
- written/spoken
- conversational
- academic
- medical
- advertising
- business
- legal
- literary
- plain
- emotive/objective
- Old English/Middle English/Modern English
- ...

- appropriate terminology
- situation and context relevant
- purpose relevant
- different registers may habitually employ different styles and grammatical features
- syntax and lexis change over time
- such distinctions generally not addressed in style manuals (typically oriented towards formal, objective ‘standard’)

21.11.2016
Copyright ©2016
• The World Englishes: Scotlish, Irelish, Amlish, Auslish, Kiwilish, Singlish, Uglish, Zamlish, Indlish...

• From Uglish
  – “Please don’t dirten my shirt with your muddy hands.”
  – “Stop cowardising and go see that girl.”
    https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/22/-sp-how-english-language-evolved-uganda-uglish

• English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).
• International Business English (IBE).
• Texts written in IBE/ELF are becoming more common. How should we edit them?
  – NB endless author/editor/reader permutations.
Basic grammatical features of IBE/ELF

“There seems to be an inherent friction in lingua franca English: It allows for effective communication, but it frequently departs from what has traditionally been regarded as correct” (Maurenen & Ranta, 2009).
ELF: some features

- No third person present “s”
- Countable/uncountable distinction blurred
- Relative pronouns who and which interchangeable
- Definite and indefinite articles dropped
- Tag questions formed differently
- Dependent prepositions used differently
- Lexical verbs used more often (do, take, have, make, put)
- Verb patterns used differently
- Doubling up common (“black colour” instead of “black”).

IBE/ELF: Additional challenges

Idiomaticity

• Don’t think proverb/cliché/slang/popular language. Think normal usage.

• Where there has been a meaning shift; where there are additional layers of meaning that aren’t obvious from the words used; where there are (unpredictable) constraints on what can and can’t be used/how words are combined; where there are connotations unpredictably associated with particular words/constructions.

• Mostly subliminal. Not normally fixed expressions.

• Spoken and written language – both formal and informal – relies on these phrasal constructions.
Decoding issues

• When you have “...an expression which the language users couldn’t interpret with complete confidence if they hadn’t learned it separately” (Fillmore, Kay, & O’Connor, 1988: 505).

• Be that as it may,

• Bring a plate.

• ... [be] nothing if not ...

21.11.2016

Copyright ©2016
Encoding issues

“...an expression which language users might or might not understand without prior experience, but concerning which they would not know that it is a conventional way of saying what it says” (Fillmore, Kay, & O’Connor, 1988: 505).

• Answer the door.
• Just because ... doesn’t mean ...
• The –er ... the –er (The more you practise, the better you’ll get).
Decoding issues

• [This variety’s quick growth] lends itself to ... (Ac)
• [That]’s all very well but ...
• ... in good time.
• Quite so.
• Be that as it may ...
• [x] as well as [y].
• [They can’t get the books to balance], let alone [make a profit].
• All things being equal, [farmers would prefer not to sign up].
Encoding

How old are you?
*What age do you have?

Will you marry me?
*I wish to be wedded to you.
*I desire you to become married to me.
*Your marrying me is desired by me.
*My becoming your spouse is what I want.
*I want marriage with you.
*What is desired by me is to wed you.
*I, who am speaking, want to marry you, whom I am addressing.
*It is my wish that I become married to you ...

(Pawley & Syder, 1983: 196)
Encoding

- The Republicans won’t budge on anything.
- The gates won’t budge.
- The client won’t budge.
- *The client has budged the project to 2018.*
Encoding

- strong tea
- powerful engine

- powerful tea?
- strong engine?

(From Halliday 1966: 148-62)
Encoding

• persistent rain
• persistent grumpiness
• persistent hayfever

• persistent success
• persistent beauty
• persistent charisma
• persistent laughter

(Drawing on Hunston, 2007: 251)
Encoding/decoding

• tens if not millions of...
• hundreds if not thousands of...
• thousands if not millions of...
• out of the question
• before the courts
• in the face of
• under the guise of
• at the expense of
• on a par with
• in accordance with
We need new, non-colonial (?!)
guidelines

For general usage, and for encoding and decoding issues.
For different contexts.
Keeping in mind that ...

“Meaning is always provisional, always changing; there is a Darwinian flavour to Teubert’s view that it is the right of each member of a speech community to use a word in whatever way they please, but if the usage is not adopted by the other members of the speech community then it simply disappears – only the fittest survive” (Sinclair 2007: 2).

And understanding that if a particular usage does survive/is surviving ... we will not always have the right to get in its way.
A CASE STUDY

An ‘Other English’
‘SINGLISH’
in
Singapore
• British colonisation – 1819
• Partial (internal) self-government – 1959
• Merger with Malaysia – 1963
• Independence via Separation from Malaysia – 1965
• British troop withdrawal – 1971.
POPULATION & RACE
An island nation, 719.1 sq m

Population – 5.7 million

Ethnic composition:
Chinese – 74.2 %
Malay – 13.3 %
Indian – 9.1 %
Others – 3.3 % (e.g. Eurasians)
LANGUAGES

Literacy: 96.5 %

Most Singaporeans use 3 or more languages – *What language do they think in?*

4 Official Languages:

- ✓ Mandarin
- ✓ Malay
- ✓ Tamil
- ✓ English

The ‘national language’ is **Malay**.

**English** is the lingua franca of business, politics etc.
A LITTLE RED DOT...
...BUT A GLOBAL CITY-STATE
The perfect ‘lab’ for ‘Globish’ & World English

Since British settlement in 1819, Singapore has seen itself, and has acted as, a ‘Global City’.
Its geographical position puts it at the hub of important international trading, shipping and communications networks.
It is also fully wired’ into the Internet/Web.
In many ways, it is, and considers itself to be, closer to the Western/global community than to its regional Asian neighbours.
SINGLISH
‘English as she is broken’

The language of the streets, aka Singapore Colloquial English (SCE), different from Singapore Standard English (SSE).

Characteristics:

- Creole of vocab from all local language streams.
- Structures borrowed from other languages.
- Extreme economy, many contractions, often expressive and comic.
- Use of anachronistic terms/vocab no longer used in modern English.
- Heavily accented, a sing-song delivery rhythm.
SINGLISH IN THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

• BLUR – 1977
• SHIOK – 1977
• WET MARKET – 1978
• KIASU – 1978
• KILLER LITTER – 1984
• SINGLISH – 1984
• HANDPHONE – 1992
• SABO KING – 1993
THE SINGLISH CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD ENGLISH

See


The OED Oxford Words Blog by Danica Salazar, Consultant Editor on World Englishes to OED, lists 10 ways speakers of World English are changing the language:
The 10 ways World English brings change

1. Adding affixes
The *lah* suffix, from Malay – intensification/emphasis, surprise, humour etc: ‘*He one kind lah!*’ (He’s a character, one of a kind).
‘*No lah, how can?*’ (No, impossible, how could you say that, how could anyone do that?).

2. Combining English words to create compounds
*Handphone* for mobile.
‘*Just a small-little island.*’ or ‘*A small-small island.*’
3. Combining two words from different languages to create hybrid compounds

*Bully keci* – bullying of the small and weak (Malay, *kecil* = small).

*Lagi worse* – even worse (Malay, *lagi* = more, again.

4. Shortening words/phrases

‘So how?’ – ‘How’s it going’, or ‘What’s happening?’
5. Making up an initialism

**OCBC** — doubles up for the regionally famous Oversea-(sic) Chinese Banking Corporation but is used colloquially for ‘Overseas Chinese Bukan Cina’ (English-Malay), meaning ‘Overseas Chinese, not really Chinese’, a strong cultural comment on centuries of Malayanisation of the local Chinese.

**SPG** — Sarong Party Girl — a skimpily dressed local beauty who consorts mainly with male European expats, adorning their rowdy parties. Pejorative!
6. Making an analogy with another English word

7. Translating a word or expression from a local language

‘He got down from the car’ – a direct translation from the Chinese (xia chu or xia lai).
8. Using words that are archaic, out of use, in ‘standard English’

‘We’re going outstation/upcountry’. From colonial times, pre-Independence, when officials were ‘stationed’ in Malayan towns and travel to remote rural Malaya was arduous. Still used for pleasure trips to Malaysia, but dying out.

9. Changing a proper noun to a common noun

e.g. ‘Suzie Wong’, for a loose woman/prostitute.
10. Changing the meaning of words

‘Blur like sotong’ – confused, inept, dazed, literally ‘like a squid’ (Malay, sotong).

‘Go stun’ (astern) – frequently used when advising motorists on reversing; of 19th-century maritime origin.
SOME SINGLISH TERMS & PHRASES

• *That one is my one* (mine).
• *Why you worry?* (mind your own business).
• *Act damn tough* (stern, intractable).
• *She, lah, go open coffee-shop!* (mild obscenity referring to sitting with legs akimbo, showing underwear etc, similar to a local open-fronted local café).
• *Shake legs* (do nothing particular, laze around).
• *Malu only!* (too embarrassed, shy, from Malay).
• *Manja lah!* (acting cutesy, flirtatious, to get her way).
• *Don’t play-play!* (no joke, for real! – doubling up of words for extra effect, or pluralisation, from Malay *main-main*).
• *I horn you only, you come down* (no need to come downstairs to the car until I arrive and toot the horn).
• *I send you home, can cannot?* (is it OK if I give you a lift home? ‘Can/cannot’ structure from Chinese).
• *I on the light, can?* (may I switch on the light?).
• *Eh, I need to tap on you, man!* (I’d like to tap your brains, friend!).
• *Got standard!* (pretty good, not bad, some class).
• *Gone case* (ruined, no use, beyond help/repair).
• *Why like dat, ah?* (why are you so unhelpful; why is the world like this? what’s wrong with him?)
Preparing for the task

• purpose/function of the text
• readership (age, social background, attitude, prior knowledge)
• English “market”
• context, situation? (=> style, structure, lexis, punctuation)
• Am I “qualified” to edit this text?
  – (cultural, linguistic, pragmatic knowledge, self-knowledge)
Considerations for praxis

• How is the reader placed in the textual world? How “meta” can the text become?
• If using an English unfamiliar to the market, how do I deal with particular terminology, concepts, etc.?
  – Leave term as is?
  – Italics?
  – In-text glosses?
  – Bracketed explanations?
  – Footnotes/endnotes?
  – Glossaries?
• What features are required by text type?
• What is the client’s mandate?
Some thoughts to take with you

*There is no one standard English.*

*We need to edit according to our client’s mandate/market.*

*We need to assure ourselves that we are qualified to edit this type of English.*

*We need to shed the shackles of ‘linguistic colonialism’.*
REFERENCES (Catherine)


REFERENCES (Helen)


English as a lingua franca: studies and findings: Anna Mauranen, Elina Ranta (2009).


REFERENCES (Ilisa)


