Georgia and the Globalizing English- Some Peculiarities of Mapping Georgia within the Kachruvian Model of the World Englishes

Diana GLONTY

Abstract

The phenomenon of globalization with its extremely complex and multidimensional nature has become one of the hottest issues of the on-going political, economic and scholarly debate. Alongside economic and political aspects, the socio-linguistic ones tend to have far-reaching implications for virtually every facet of our life, and are likely to pose many difficult questions during the years to come within the scope of communicative competence. One of the objectives of the current research is the study of Georgia within the socio-linguistic, cultural and educational contexts of globalization in an attempt to map it within a complex matrix of the Global English .The framework of research is inspired by the Kachruvian model of World Englishes , and includes literature review, interviews, participant observations and questionnaire-based data collection. The current article mainly focuses on the peculiarities of the in-awareness of Georgian respondents of the globalization components including linguistic ones with regards to the elaboration of effective strategies for achieving linguistic competence in English.

Keywords: *Globalization, World Englishes , Georgia, The Expanding Circle, ELT*

Diana Glonty *is a PhD candidate at International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia, nndge@inbox.ru*
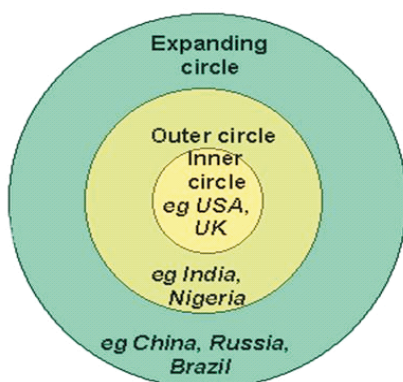
Diana GLONTY

Introduction

The phenomenon of globalization with its extremely complex and often contradictory nature has become one of the hottest issues in academic debate worldwide. It encompasses a wide range of significant economic, political and cultural processes and implies fundamental changes to the structure of our society, thus providing far-reaching implications for virtually every aspect of human activity. The linguistic dimension of the phenomenon is growing in importance, as far as the new status of the English language as a lingua franca of the world is concerned (Crystal, 2004). As Bastardas i Boada (2002) puts it," The group of processes referred to as "globalization "or "internationalization", are constructing a new sociolinguistic situation.". Though in many cases contradictory, the term Anglosphere is applied to describe the global situation of the modern English language. The traditional presentation of users and uses of English through the Kachruvian model of World Englishes (Kachru, 1986) is acquiring a new significance in the context of globalization and requires serious review.

According to the model, the Expanding Circle countries are those in which English has various roles and is widely studied for scientific and technical purposes. These are China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Former Soviet-bloc countries, and among others Georgia. The review of literature, however, shows that the research of English as a lingua franca within the Expanding circle is comparatively recent. At the same time it presents extremely fruitful corpus for the future research, as far as the status and peculiarities of functioning of English here are concerned. Mollin (2006) states that research on English as a Lingua Franca has multiplied and has indeed become the newest trend in the studies of English worldwide. This state of things shows the demand to conduct research with micro- (peculiarities of language use) and macro-approaches (language status and language planning) in mind. The global begins with the local and it is worthy to present a regional perspective on the global subject. Positioning and consequent research of Georgia within the World Englishes paradigm presents a total novelty and has profound practical outcome for ELT and language policies not only in Georgia, but also throughout the Expanding Circle countries.

World Englishes: a new significance

The first attempts to analyze and systematize the process of the world-wide expansion of English took place as early as the70s. However, the tripartite model, depicting the uses and users of the English language as the speakers of World Englishes, and introducing almost boundless diversity into the before strictly monolithic body of English, introduced by B. Kachru in 1985, turned out to be the most popular and influential in modern applied linguistics. This model had a revolutionary effect in the time of its introduction, and has been considered a traditional model for reference ever since.

Figure 1. Kachruvian model of World Englishes (Adapted from Kachru (1986))

According to the model, The *Inner Circle* is the traditional base of English and includes countries such as the United Kingdom and Ireland and former colonies: the United States, Australia, New Zealand, some islands of the Caribbean, and the English-speaking population of Canada. English is the native language or mother tongue of most people in these countries.

The *Outer Circle* comprises those countries where English has official or historical importance ("special significance"). This means most of the Commonwealth of Nations (the former British Empire), including countries such as India, Pakistan, Nigeria, the Philippines, under the sphere of influence of English speaking countries. Higher education, the legislature and judiciary, national commerce and so on may all be carried out predominantly in English.

The *Expanding Circle* refers to those countries, where English has

no official role, but nonetheless is important for certain functions, notably international business, and education. This includes much of the rest of the world's population: China, Russia, Japan, most of Europe, Korea, Egypt, Indonesia, and Georgia as well. The estimates of these users range from 100 million to one billion.

The framework of our research is based primarily on this a-priory conceptual scheme, which is an effective and highly illustrative model of the existing tendencies to expansion within the English language. We also consider it worthy to be applied for the evaluation of the American English prospects to further expand world-wide.

However, the close look at the model enables us to outline its major shortcoming in the new global context, which Mollin (2006) is most precise in identifying as absence in the model of a new dominant function of English world-wide: that of lingua franca between all the 3 circles, but especially within the Expanding Circle.

This implies the sufficiently increased role of the Expanding Circle segment in the processes of language change and standard development. Kachru introduced his model in the mid-80s, when there were no globalizing tendencies, and it is possible to state that the model depicts the linguistic reality of those times. The model managed to predict certain linguistic developments of the 90s; however, it requires serious review in the new context inspired by globalization.

To our mind, introduction of the new variable of globalization into the existing model significantly changes the traditionally accepted balance of power between and within the segments, changing the extent and character of correlation and interdependence between its components. What we need now are new paradigms and perspectives for linguistic and pedagogical research and for understanding the linguistic creativity influenced by globalization.

The model inspires another question relevant within the global context, and that is of the linguistic standard .Originally the notion of the standard was the privilege of the Inner, and to a certain extent of the Outer circles. The users within the Expanding Circle were deprived of the right to create any standard of their own and were supposed to look for such within the Inner one. However, the changing global linguistic reality is making the

question of standard a cornerstone of modern linguistics, one of the most complex and controversial at that. What should be treated a linguistic standard to be taught worldwide? The question is not a simple one, with the growing diversity within the world Englishes. (Crystal, 2004; Graddol, 2006)

Georgia has been actively integrating into major democratic, political and economic processes in the world and attempts to integrate with NATO and EU. It means that, due to the scope of its political and economic activity, it can be included in the number of countries supporting globalization. Its close affiliation with the USA, which is the dominant power of the globalization, and openness towards Western thinking and values, raises the importance of English as a tool for effective communication. Geopolitically, it is the most western-oriented culture in the region. The defining concept of the Expanding Circle implies that English here plays no historical or governmental role, but is, nevertheless, widely used for various purposes. There has been no research conducted on the peculiarities of the use of English in Georgia within the Expanding Circle paradigm and the current study attempts to fill this scholarly gap.

A series of surveys were conducted on 4 focus groups, and quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the total of 140 respondents, with the following multiple tasks in mind:

1. To analyze the attitudes towards globalization;

2. To evaluate the extent of awareness of the increasing role of English in the global context;

3. To define to what extent teaching of English as a culture-based/bound phenomenon is considered necessary for adequate communicative competence;

4. To examine how the notion of linguistic standard is perceived by the respondents, with the purpose to integrate their pool of opinions into the complex matrix of attitudes towards linguistic standard throughout of the Expanding circle.

The interviews conducted in this case had two focal points:

• to measure what form of the English Language is considered the desirable standard for learning and teaching

• to investigate which of the existing dialects of English are perceived as the possible base for the pending Global Standard of English.

These points address the next questions under investigation-whether or not the standardization process should be conducted within the existing body of the Englishes? Which possible actions on the language could be implemented during the process of standardization?

The Method

The method applied was a series of questionnaires and in-depth interviews conducted within 4 focus groups of total 140 respondents:

Table 1. Focus groups for Surveys 1 and 2.

Group A	Undergraduate high school students	17-19 years old	50 respondents
Group B	Sophomore-final year university students	20-24 years old	50 respondents
Group C	School teachers of English	25-55 years old	20 respondents
Group D	University lecturers of English	25-55 years old	20 respondents **Total:140**

The respondents were of both genders, equally represented within each group.

The focus groups were tailored with the following provisions in mind: *As the survey was focusing on some serious and specific linguistic problems, a certain adequate communicative competence of English (pre-intermediate to advanced) and knowledge of its cultural background was considered to be a prerequisite for participation.(groups A, B) The respondents were also supposed to be professionally using English.(groups C, D).*

The comparative analysis provided a typology of audience frames.

The Results

Globalization is mostly viewed as positive equally throughout the 4 focus groups.

Table 2. Response summary for question "what is your attitude towards globalization?"

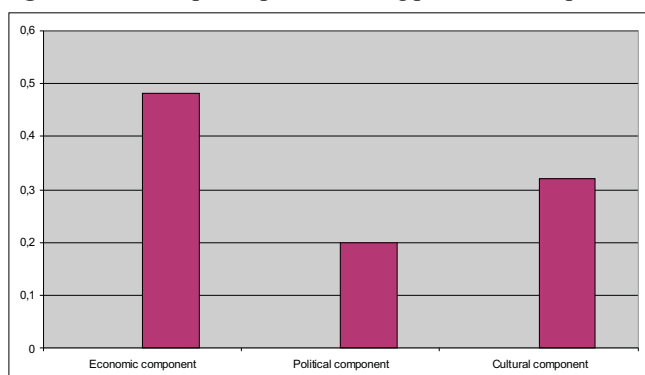|	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Positive	55%	65%	50%	55%
Negative	10%	15%	35%	35%
Indifferent	25%	20%	15%	10%
Don't know	10%	-	-	-
Refused	-	-	-	-

The survey showed that Georgian respondents don't tend to regard globalization as a major threat to Georgian culture; rather they treat it as a minor one or no threat at all.

Table 3. Response summary for question "Define the level of American culture threat for Georgia".

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Very serious	15%	18%	17%	15%
Serious	15%	15%	16%	15%
Minor	45%	40%	42%	35%
No threat	23%	25%	25%	35%
Don't know	2%	2%	-	-
Refused	-	-	-	-

The respondents also showed good knowledge of the core components of globalization and were able to label them as the driving force behind the world expansion of English.

Figure 2. Rates of participants defining particular components of globalization.

The question of the importance of introduction cultural context within the study of English showed that Group C participants, unlike the respondents of the other 3 groups, tend to assign priority in ELT to the teaching of grammatical structure and vocabulary, and treat introduction of the cultural context in ELT as secondary, which unfortunately reflects the existing situation in Georgian secondary schools, where the conventional method of ELT is still based on teaching the so-called "artificially constructed speech"/"idealized classroom English".

Q.: Please select between the following two categories and define, which type of the English language should be taught in a typical Georgian

classroom.

a. English with a focus on the grammatical structure and vocabulary, as primary prerequisites for effective communication.

b. English as a variety of accents, the importance of the cultural context for the effective communicative competence stressed.

Table 4. Response summary for question "Please select between the following two categories and define, which type of the English language should be taught in a typical Georgian classroom".

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Category a.	12%	16%	74%	13%
Category b.	88%	84%	26%	87%

The investigation, as to which of the existing varieties of the English language could be regarded as a desirable standard by the respondents provided identical results within the 4 focus groups -the traditional accents of the Inner-circle countries were the most preferable ones and continue to be associated with the high proficiency in the language. The non-native accents were labeled as "non-desirable".

The increasing dominance of American English is manifested through the responses of the participants to the question, as to which of the existing varieties of English could possibly act as the base for the pending Global Standard of English: the data analysis indicate higher extent of preference towards American English in all the groups by a margin of 6% in comparison with its British counterpart: 45% vs.41% of the overall number of participants respectively.

Following the idea expressed by Calvet (1998), that any group of population can elaborate a language policy, the 3 focus groups (B, C, D) were asked to offer their own variant of possible action/s on the language in case of standardization. They were to work out a list of changes that could be incorporated into the language.

The experiment involved 2 stages: during the first stage the participants were supposed to work as a team and provide results on the basis of brainstorming;

During the second stage they were provided with a list of examples of possible language change from the already existing, but yet controversial varieties of the Global Standard Englishes (Basic English,

Globish, Basic Global English).

The results obtained during the first stage proved to be illustrative of a cautious policy and were confided to the following:

1. Use of the 3rd person singular in the Present Simple Tense without -s/-es inflexion
2. Use of the Past Simple alone (without the Present Perfect)
3. Adoption of the American English spelling rules.

No significant changes to the realms of vocabulary were proposed. The strategy applied by the participants was actually that of simplification, and is similar with the pragmatic linguistic provisions of the American English grammar, which adds to the possibility of American English to evolve into the Global Standard of English.

During the second stage the participants were provided with examples from the Basic English, Global Basic English and Globish, and were asked either to agree or disagree on the possibility of their use. The following points were marked "strongly agree" by 55% of the participants:

- There are two word endings to change all the adjectives: -"ER" and -"EST"
- There are two word endings to change the verb word endings, -"ING" and -"ED".
- Make questions with the opposite word order, and with "DO".

The next ones were the points which were marked by "somewhat agree" by 45 %.

1. Make qualifiers from adverbs by adding -"LY".
2. Talk about amounts with "MORE" and "MOST." Use and know -"ER" and -"EST."
3. Make opposite adjectives with "UN".
4. Operators and pronouns conjugate as in normal English.

The examples from the Globish cited below, however, got a "strongly disagree" label by the overwhelming 87% of the participants:

hee iz faain: (He is fine)

too kaets too went tu siti... (Two cats went to city.)

eet it kwikli... (Eat it quikly!)

du yu no vear dha laaybrari iz? (Do you know where the library is?)

dha warld waunts pis aend prausperiti... (The world wants peace and prosperity)

e frend in nid iz e frend indid...

maay haart lips ap wen aay bihold e renbo in dha skaay...

sar, yuwar baegej did naut kam baay dhis flaait...

Research designed as an attempt to explicate how various publics, and especially those within the Expanding Circle, view prospects of the English language standardization is still at a pioneering stage and is worthy further extensive development. It will undoubtedly provide valuable information on the possibilities of language development and language policies in the age of globalization.

Conclusion

The findings of the current research coincide with the results obtained in the latest large-scale authoritative surveys on the attitudinal frames within the Expanding Circle by Dalton-Buffer et al. (1997) from the Austrian corpus of English students, Timmis' (2002) study of 400 English language students in 14 different countries of the Expanding Circle and Murray's (2003) surveys of Swiss English teachers: the overwhelming majority of the Georgian respondents from the 4 groups continue to regard the traditional Inner Circle British English and American English a standard for learning and teaching.

The research reflects the priority granted to the American variety, especially by the younger respondents-it is winning over its British counterpart, which is directly connected with the increasing dominance of the USA in the global processes worldwide. This feature is characteristic for the whole segment of the Expanding Circle, where American English is enthusiastically associated with the material benefits offered by globalization.

It is possible to state homogeneity of views and attitudes existing throughout the corpus of the Expanding Circle users of English and Georgian respondents on topics relevant to the notions of the existing and possible global linguistic standard. This fact enables to position Georgia alongside other countries of the Expanding Circle supporting standardization.

The experiment indicates, that expectations and demands of Georgian users of English towards the future standard of English reflect tendency towards simplification. The currently existing artificially created forms of English for global use (Basic Global English, Basic English, and Globish) are not acceptable in the form they exist; rather, they reflect the vector of changes in case of actions on the language during standardization. Georgian respondents demonstrated their preference for simplified forms, characteristic for American English, which reflects the increasing dynamics of American English penetration throughout the Expanding segment of the Kachruvian model and significantly adds to the possibility of its evolution into a Global Standard of English.

The research indicates that the traditional method of teaching English through grammatical structure is still prevailing, which leads to the fact that the student, who is primarily interested in making use of the language rather than just learning about its structure (and this is true for the majority of the students worldwide), is not likely to find such a method particularly helpful. Thus, his proficiency in actually using the language may be disappointing.

However, it is still a pronounced tendency among language teachers in Georgia and other countries of the Expanding Circle to disregard that English is, in fact, not a single language, but many, each of which belongs to a particular kind of situation. It is necessary to know what forms are appropriate for a particular situation. Summarizing the results of the research on this point, it is worthy to cite Seidlhofer (2004), "Fundamental issues to do with the global spread and use of English have, at long last, become an important focus of research in applied linguistics…And yet, the daily practices of most of million teachers of English seem to be untouched by this development. This state of affairs has resulted in a concept gap in the ELT".

Implementation of a culture-bound way of teaching English in Georgia will offer a new perspective on the subject, eventually improving and extending the range of communication skills and understanding of the language, which is vital for the users in the Expanding Circle.

The research on the use and users of English within the Expanding Circle has recently moved into the forefront of interest of both linguists and

language teachers; it presents an extensively fruitful corpus for further research and has outstanding impact on the many problems of applied linguistics and ELT. The results obtained within the scope of the current research have significant practical value and should be considered while working on the national English language curriculum in Georgia.

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