Università di Firenze Dipartimento di Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia

L-11 Corso di Studio in Lingue, Letterature e Studi Interculturali III anno Lingua Inglese 3 (6 cfu)

Corso in Lingua e Cultura degli U.S.A. John Gilbert

**Unit 2: From Standard English to World English**

**standard language**

* the “official” language variety of a language community, especially in formal, institutional communication & in the codified written form
* holds social prestige, but is not “superior” or “better’ than the other language varieties
  + a standard is not a “neutral” variety of a language
* not a pre-destined, superior form of a language
* “selected” for historical, socio-economic & political reasons

**dialect** (regional, ethnic, social class, etc.)

- a language variety socially subordinate to a national standard language, often historically cognate and related in origin to the standard, but **not a mere variety** of it or in any other sense derived from it

- a **dialect** is a specific branch or form of a language, usually spoken in a particular geographical area, differing sufficiently from the official standard form of the language in one or all of the areas of the language (pronunciation, grammar/morphology/syntax, lexis, idiomatic use of words) to be viewed as a distinct linguistic entity, yet not sufficiently different from the other dialects of the language to be regarded as a separate language: often a political question? a language or a dialect?

- *“A language is a dialect with an army and navy"* ([Yiddish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/yiddish_language) linguist [Max Weinreich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/max_weinreich), early 20th c)

- if a distinction can be made only in terms of **pronunciation**, the term [accent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/accent_(linguistics)) is more appropriate, not dialect (although in common usage, "dialect" and "accent" are often synonymous).

**variety**:

* a formally definable, conventionalized group use of language: not all varieties are dialects

**standardization** can be described in 4 distinct but overlapping stages:

1. **selection** of a particular variety/dialect in preference to all others

- stigmatization of other varieties

- for BE/RP: variety spoken by new mercantile class in London-Oxford-Cambridge triangle 15th/16th c

2. **acceptance** by the rest of the language community

3. **functional elaboration** in official & public discourse; an omnifunctional variety

- e.g. English replacing Latin, French, regional forms in scholarship & education, diplomacy, the Court, government, law/tribunals, religion, etc.

4. **codification** (began systemically for English in 18th c)

- fixed in grammars, dictionaries, textbooks

- prestigious usage; stigmatization/exclusion of other varieties & usages

- importance of **written form** for process of standardization

- needs to be taught explicitly, unlike spoken form of other language varieties

- notion of “standard English”

- including much non-regional lexis

- English one of most (the most?) lexically mixed languages in world

- grammar of written language

- written norm has remained very homogeneous around the world

- no international norm for pronunciation

-spelling most fixed area; pronunciation the least

**Origins of the English language**

**Old English** (5th c to ca. 1150)

- end of Roman rule in Britain in 410 AD (Romans invaded Britain in 1st c BC)

* also called “Anglo-Saxon” period: dialects referred to as “Anglo-Saxon”
* a **West Germanic language** which originated from Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to England from the mid-5th to 7th c AD

- began w/ settlement of Germanic-speaking tribes (**Angles**, **Saxons**, **Jutes**, **Frisians**) in Britain in **mid-5th century**

- a **highly inflected** language that slowly evolved a written literary form (e.g. *Beowulf,* manuscript dated 975-1025 AD)

- inflections *(flessioni)*: a change in word form (usually ending) to express a grammatical function or attribute such as tense (only 2 tenses in modern English: past, present), mood, person, number, case (only 3 grammatical cases in modern English: subjective/nominative, objective/accusative, possessive/genitive; no dative case) & gender

* vocabulary expanded through spread of Christian culture, with some lexis adopted or translated from Latin
* in 8th, 9th & 10th c Scandinavian Vikings raided & settled, bringing Old Norse, another Germanic language, & new lexis

**Middle English** (ca. 1150-1500)

- after **Norman Conquest** (Battle of Hastings 1066, William the Conqueror), Anglo-Norman was language of ruling classes, but from 14th century Germanic “Englishes” again became the “standard”

- by 15th c most of its inflected endings had disappeared

- in Middle English period about half of lexis was replaced by Norman French & Latin Words

- Normans introduced ca. 10,000 words: many words related to semantic fields of administration, government, parliament, the legal system and the monarchy. Also terms for meat: beef v. cow, veal v. calf, pork v. pig, mutton v. sheep, poultry; also herb & juice. Also words beginning with ‘con’, ‘de’, ‘dis’ and ‘en’, as in: conceal, continue, demand, encounter, disengage & engage. Also words ending in ‘age’ & ‘ence’ such as: advantage, courage, language & commence.

**Modern English** (ca. 1500 onwards)

* development of English up to about 1500 as history of its dialects, “Englishes’

- in 1500 spoken by perhaps 5 million people in England & southern Scotland

- no strong **centralizing influence** on “English” until after arrival of **printing process** from China (where it originated in ca. 8th c) in **mid-15th century** & Gutenberg’s invention of the movable-type press in ca. 1450.

- printing process introduced in England in 1470s

* **selection** of **South East Midland dialect** of new London-based merchant class in 16th c with rise of mercantile capitalism

- London-Oxford-Cambridge triangle

- reached stage of **acceptance** during 16th c

- at least by elite of wider language community

- disappearance of 2nd person informal singular form *thou, thee, thy, thine, thyself*

- decline of *thou* in 17th c according to linguists: increasing identification of *you* w/ "polite society” w/ rise of mercantile capitalism & new merchant social class & uncertainty of using *thou* (for equals/

inferiors) versus *you* (for superiors): w/ unclear status of social relations, safer to use “*you”*

- 1611 King James authorized version of Bible

- by **middle of 17th c** level of **shaky standardization** of English

- the same “language” wherever it was spoken: possible for “educated” people to understand each

other in spoken & written English wherever they went

- 2-tier language became the norm & still is (standard form & dialect/variety)

- by late 17th c written records comprehensible to any educated reader today (unlike Chaucer or even

Shakespeare)

- by mid-**18th century**, **Br English** had reached very much its present **standard** form

- but immediately challenged by **NAm variety** of newly independent USA

- “American Revolution 1775-1783, Declaration of Independence 1776)

- standardization of **spelling** took place in the second half of the **18th century**

- publication of Dr. Samuel Johnson’s dictionary in **1755**

- but pronunciation kept changing esp. realization of vowel phonemes & rhotic/non- rhotic /r/

- explains why spelling often does not correspond to pronunciation

- an advantage because spelling accommodates variances in pronunciation

- **18th century** society established the **prescriptive attitudes/normative approach** towards English so influential over the last three centuries.

- no major changes in English **grammar** since 18th century.

- in Later Modern English there has been some reduction in the amount by which **pronunciation** varies in BrE

- inside England the old rural dialects have been dying out, although there are still class & re- gional accents in England.

- the biggest change in the consonant system in Later Modern English was the disappear-ance during the 18TH century of /r/ before a consonant or a pause in BE/RP English (non-rhotic accent)

- however the majority of the world’s English-speaking community retains a rhotic accent with pre-consonantal and final /r/ (NAmE also IrishE, ScottishE, parts of SW England)

- English began to spread internationally in 16th c & then exploded in 19th & esp. 20th c

* after **Declaration of Independence** in **1776** & victory of “**American Revolution**” w/ end of war in 1783, the English spoken in the new Republic of the U.S.A. emerged as **another standard form** of **English** alongside British English

- U.S. linguistic nationalism; “Americanisms” (“barbarisms” or innovations?)

- **1828 Noah Webster**’s ***An American Dictionary of the English Language***

- in ca. 1850 the U.S. population overtook that of England

- in 1860 U.S. pop. (36 states) 31m; British (England, Wales, Scotland) pop. 30m

#### - but until about end of 19th century the most important English speech-area still Britain

#### until around end of WWII, center of gravity of English still in the Oxford-Cambridge-London triangle of South-east England

**World English today**

since World War II a range of **national standard forms** of English recognized in world: **British, North American, Irish (“Hibernian”), Scottish, Australian & New Zealand, South African**

- greatest differences among standard international varieties in **pronunciation**

- mostly regard the **vowel system** (BE 20 v. NAE 16 vowel phonemes) & **rhoticity**

- for this reason, paradoxically, one of greatest advantages of English may be lack of one-to-one relation between sound & spelling

- the consonant system of English, however, w/ exception of rhotic /r/, virtually same in all present-day varieties: 24 consonant phonemes

- also differences in lexis, small differences in grammar, minor spelling differences

#### English also important as L2 in many parts of the world

- world’s most widely-used L2 (over 1 billion regular users)

- by 2050 est. 1/2 world pop. will be more or less proficient

- the international language of **globalization**

- English official or semi-official language in over 70 countries

#### - esp. in ex-British colonies such as Indian subcontinent (+ 80 million ESL & ca. 50m English 3rd language users in India) & Nigeria (pop. +200m).

- **ENL**, **ESL**, **ESD** (English as a 2nd dialect: speakers of a creole or other non-standard variety: e.g. Aboriginals in Australia, 1st Nations in Canada), **EFL**

- classification not sufficient but best model available

- “functional” v. “genetic” nativeness (Braj Kachru, 1997)

- 1st language English speakers not necessarily ENL

- ESL v. EFL distinction somewhat arbitrary

- really a **continuum** of usage: EFL<———->ESL

#### - ESL substitutes other languages for internal functions (as lingua franca) &

#### international functions

- situation of bi- or pluri-lingualism

- English as “language killer”

- **EFL** used for international functions, not internally: e.g. China, Egypt

- since about 1980 majority of English speakers in world **non-ENL** speakers

- **ESL** & **EFL** speakers now more than 3 times more than **ENL** speakers

#### - “near standards”? - W. Indian/Jamaican, Indian subcontinent, Nigerian?

- “New Englishes”? e.g. India, Nigeria

- connected to new sense of national identity?

- the English language belongs to all those who use it

- phenomena of **denationalization, deculturalization**, “**indigenization"**

- ENL speakers progressively “expropriated” of their language:

- “the Empire strikes back”

- e.g. “Euro-English” of EU

#### - English has become a multi-centered language, w/ very strong NAE influence

- ongoing process of (North) “Americanization" of lexis of various Englishes around world

- merging into a flexible & accommodating standard “World” or “Global” English

- we already live & since 17-18th c have lived in a world w/ both an English language

& a range of English languages

* models of linguistic reference (Braj Kachru, 1985): who establishes norms?

- ENL (inner circle) -> establishers of norms?

- ESL (outer circle) -> developers of norms?

- EFL (expanding circle) -> followers of norms?

- or now for English also establishers/developers of norms?