# World Englishes and Language Assessment

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Edited by

Chokri Smaoui and Aicha Rahal

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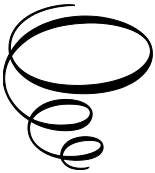

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# INTRODUCTION

CHOKRI SMAOUI

The unprecedented spread of English in modern times (Widdowson, 1997, 2013; Crystal, 1997, 2003; Bolton, 2009; Graddol, 1997, 2006; Jenkins, 2012; Mesthrie, 2009; Ishikawa, 2016) has led to this language taking various forms and shapes depending, among other things, on whether the variety concerned belongs to the inner, outer or expanding circle (Kachru, 1985). The mainstream now seems to be the emphasis on the "pluricentricity and fluidity of English" (Galloway & Rose 2015), in preference to more orthodox and mono-model approaches which argue for the need to follow the established norms of Standard English (e.g. Quirk, 1985, 1989, 1990; Gorlach & Schroder, 1985; Prator, 1968).

The catch sentence in this mainstream is: 'The English language belongs to all those who use it' (Kachru, 1988). The question 'who owns English?' no longer, as a rule, receives the answer 'native-speaking countries'. For, the concept 'native speaker' itself has come under heavy criticism by several scholars. Phillipson (1992 a and b), for example, talks about 'the Native Speaker fallacy' and Rajagopalan (1999) opts for the phrase 'myth of nativity', while Baumgardner (2009) calls for a redefinition of the concept. Attacks on the NS also come from authorities such as Charles Ferguson; he writes: "The whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue should preferably be quietly dropped from the linguists' set of professional myths about language" (1983, p. vii). Davies (2013) avers that native-speakership is an idealization that is at odds with the practical reality of the language and its dialects, its users and those who reach different levels in acquiring it. Jenkins (2006) discusses "the need to abandon the native speaker as the yardstick and to establish empirically some other means of defining an expert (and less expert) speaker of English, regardless of whether they happen to be a native or non-native speaker" (p. 175). In a very recent talk, Ortega (2021) issued a call to fight for 'freedom from nativespeakerism' so that bilinguals can bypass linguistic insecurity.

It is clear, therefore, that we are witnessing more support for and sympathy with (and strong ones, for that matter) this English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) trend. In terms of labeling alone, we can enumerate the following suggestions: English as an International Language (EIL) (Jenkins, 2006); Global English (GE) (Graddol, 1997); World Englishes (Kachru, 1996) and New Englishes (Guerra, 2014). Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1997), in this connection, refer to English nowadays as a "contemporary global linguistic ecology" (p. 20) and Graddol (2006) characterizes this language as 'a new phenomenon'. Pennycook (2011) points out that English should now be looked at as a commodity, and that a process he refers to as 'commodification' should be started. The suggestion, in short, is that the dynamism of the language does not necessarily originate from NS; it is rather the outcome of various parties involved, each contributing their specific fingerprint to this international language.

However, in spite of this well-established tradition now which documents the so many varieties of English worldwide and their distinctive features, and in spite of the vast literature to date and the specialized journals on the issue (e.g. *World Englishes*; *Journal of English as an International and Intranational Language*; *English Worldwide*; *English Today*; *Asian Englishes*; see Baumgardner, 2009), no clear picture has emerged about the educational implications of this phenomenon, for example in relation to teaching, teacher education, teaching materials, and most importantly for our purposes in this edited collection, language assessment. Pennycook (2010) has rightly argued that what WE has been doing over the years is enumerate and describe varieties of English rather than focusing on pedagogical practices.

The questions begging for answers are too many to enumerate, but I will content myself with the most relevant ones. Consider what is to be taken as a reference point first: Will each and every variety of English have its own grammar rules that its respective users would follow, and will those forms, as a consequence, be accepted in assessment? Will we have as many grammars as we have Englishes? Are we to look at learners' errors as cases of deviation or cases of creation (Smaoui, 2014)? A number of scholars argue for acceptance of these 'deviancies' as examples of creativity. Pennycook (2011), for example, mentions examples of creation in the context of Indian English such as 'tusker' to mean 'elephant' and 'preponement' as the opposite of 'postponement'. Kachru's position (e.g. 1985) is that these deviations are innovative and creative, and goes as far as proposing to codify them. Ortega (2021) prefers to use the term 'innovation' rather than 'error' in the context of what she labels 'harmonious

bilingualism'. Now the question that should be raised is: are these created forms to be accepted in standardized tests for example?

Smaoui (2014), in his critical appraisal of ELF, refers to what he calls the 'pedagogical perspective' where he raises issues such as the correction of students' errors and speaking versus writing. One of the arguments there is that creation should have limits. For instance, are we, as teachers, to accept cases of what Burt & Kiparsky dub 'global errors'? Should we accept cases of embarrassing errors such as the use of 'adultery' to mean 'adulthood'? Besides, if we tolerate such 'creations' in spoken interaction, are we also to ignore them in writing, bearing in mind that in this mode we generally abide more by linguistic and rhetorical conventions? And if we end up accepting all these forms, wouldn't that mean that words such as 'progress', 'development', 'learning' and 'level' lose any substance they might have? One major reason for this problem, it would seem, is that ELF is non-codified (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004); in other words, there are no clear norms against which to measure achievement, particularly as far as writing is concerned.

In addition to correctness and norms, another question concerns attitudes to these different variants of English. What are people's perceptions about those varieties, both inside the speech community in question and outside it? Research in this area in general shows some ambivalence, such that there is a kind of acceptance of the local type of English but also alignment with inner circle English. In his study about Honk Kong English (HKE) for example, Ka Long Roy CHAN (this volume) found that despite the general acceptance of this variety, the subjects did not feel comfortable using it, and they identified a number of inaccuracies, which is indicative of the fact that they fell back on standard English for comparison. This is corroborated by another study by Lin (2011) who maintains that HKE is not the variety that most English students and teachers aspire to. As she put it: "Hong Kong speakers, be they teachers or students, still look up to exonormative norms, that is the norms provided by native-speaking countries, particularly Britain, for correction and acceptable models of pronunciation and usage". Lin also anecdotally talks about one of her PhD students who is at the same time a teacher at a local university; he experienced a lot of frustration because his students often commented very negatively on his accent. Kuo (2006) (cited by Harmer, 2007) also administered questionnaires to her doctoral students to gauge their views about which models of English should be used in the classroom. It was found that according to these students NNS varieties are not appropriate models for learning purposes "especially in a highly competitive world

where accuracy and linguistic creativity not only in speech, but also in reading and writing (especially in the domain of e-commerce) may contribute towards success" (cited in Harmer, 2007, p. 21). In a similar vein, Smita Joseph in her study of Indian English (also this volume), found that many subjects marked their General Indian English (GIE) as incorrect. In a sixth study by Hyun-Ju Kim in this volume, the major finding was that the voice file of the American pronunciation sounded the most comfortable for the subjects, followed by the file of the British pronunciation when compared to other variants such as Korean English. This again attests to the ambivalence in attitudes, or what KA Long Roy CHAN termed a 'bi-polar attitude'. In addition to Hong Kong, India and Korea, the legacy of this NS model was also readily observed in countries such as Japan (Chiba et al, 1995; Kubota, 1998; Matsuda, 2002). The morale here again is that it seems to be hard to ignore the norm-providing mechanisms of the inner circle (Kachru, 1998).

Intelligibility is yet another hotly debated question in discussions about ELF. The driving question is: How are we going to grapple with unintelligible varieties of English? How can speakers from different world Englishes understand one another? (Crystal, 2003; Belibi, 2013; Smaoui, 2014). Jenkins herself, a fervent advocator of ELF, concedes (1998) that when local norms diverge too far from each other, international unintelligibility will be the result. But this concession notwithstanding, Jenkins' solution is not to endorse a NS model but rather to work towards a 'lingua franca core' (LFC) to be used in Interlanguage Talk (ILT), that is a set of core phonological features that can lead to maximum intelligibility in ELF interaction. This, however, is easier said than done since its implementation might take ages, if it is possible at all. Besides, as Smaoui (2014) points out, this problem is all the more evident when we take into account the fact that various pronunciations are generally influenced by native language phonology. Two examples can illustrate the point: Some Arab speakers' inability to distinguish between 'p' and 'b' and Japanese learners' tendency to use 'l' and 'r' interchangeably. This can obviously cause misunderstanding in cases of intercultural encounter. Scholars like Smith & Nelson (2009), however, are less concerned about the issue, and argue that this has always happened, even between NS themselves. They suggest that intelligibility should in fact be extended to comprise the trio 'intelligibility, comprehensibility, interpretability', a continuum going from the phonological to the pragmatic. Smith & Nelson (2009), however valid their argument might be, seem to undermine the importance of what psycholinguists call 'low level processing', that is to say being able to

make out the sounds received before moving on to higher level processing, pragmatic processing included.

The questions of norms, attitudes and intelligibility are doubtlessly very relevant to ELF in an educational context, but the question of ELF and language assessment is certainly the most burning issue to date. It has to be pointed out, from the outset, that even proponents of ELF find themselves in an embarrassing situation when this question is raised. This is understandable, in view of the time-honored association that testing has with standard British and American English. Jenkins (2003), for example, maintains that "World English testing still reflects very strongly the 'deficit linguistics' view and gives a clear impression that what is being tested is not proficiency *per se*, but proximity to NS norms. *The difficulty nevertheless remains of establishing precisely which features exemplify difference and which deficiencies*" (p. 109; emphasis mine). A few lines later, Jenkins also concedes that "it cannot be assumed that all divergences from NS norms represent developing varietal norms: they could also be either errors (but in relation to the L2 norm) or nonce words (words invented for a specific purpose and used only once" (p. 109). This is clearly a statement to the effect that a form of comparison against a certain model is needed.

A number of proposals do exist in the literature but with no clear practical value, unfortunately. Lowenberg (2000), for example, argues for including non-native variation in English tests without altogether going into the nitty-gritty reality of that. Galloway and Rose (2015) give suggestions such as prioritizing accommodation skills and focusing on strategies of negotiation and situated performance; however, their proposals represent only general guidelines that will not stand the test of real assessment in an ELF context. Similarly, Jenkins (2007) calls for a new conception of tests where test priority should be laid on accommodation skills and not penalizing the mistakes that are common and intelligible among FL speakers. This might be problematic, though, as some kinds of tests, for example those directed at discrete-point, accuracy assessment, will not allow that. Besides, in some types of standardized testing every detail counts since these tests are generally norm-referenced, with the implication that comparisons between candidates can be established at all levels of performance. Still another suggestion comes from Harding (2012). He proposes tolerating different accents, syntactic forms and discourse styles, being aware of pragmatics for intercultural suitability, and working on communication strategies to overcome communication breakdown, among other suggestions. The same criticism, however, is still

valid here, for these are only broad and vague ideas that at best represent a kind of blueprint for future action. Other researchers have also joined this call to integrate the ELF perspective in language assessment practices (e.g. Canagarajah, 2006; Davidson, 2009; Brown, 2014; McNamara, 2011). It is unfortunate, however, that this is still a far cry from the practical reality of English language assessment across the globe. Davidson (2009), in this connection, expresses 'frustration' "at the core of all the literature on world Englishes and language testing" (p. 710).

It is hoped that through this volume the issue of ELF and language assessment could be illuminated further. Our major goal is to look at the question from various perspectives through data collected from different contexts where English is used, and consequently to try to fill the gap, at least partially, of the practical considerations that are at stake in relation to how different varieties of English can possibly feature in test construction, test design, and test implementation.

The book is divided into three parts in addition to a general introduction. The first part addresses the issue of World Englishes and pedagogical implications of ELF. In the first chapter in this part, Rahal revists the major characteristics of this phenomenon (ELF) and focuses more precisely on the four dimensions of acceptability, pedagogy, intelligibility and language assessment. She also foresees some possible directions that the future of English can direct itself to. In the second part of her chapter, Rahal zooms into the Tunisian educational scene and more closely into teaching English there. Her main qualm is with the strong adherence in the Tunisian ELT landscape to the mono-model, namely the NS standard English model, and the lack of awareness of (and also of interest in) the new realities of English. In the second chapter, which is also about the Tunisian context, Hamdi joins Rahal in highlighting the strong urge to go beyond traditional (and sometimes outdated) methodologies whose narrow angle only values the NS model and dismisses any attempt at integrating the variationist perspective and the benefits it might have such as leading to more learner confidence. Molyneux, in the third chapter in part one, gives a detailed characterization of English as an International Language and call for advocating "culturally sensitive second language teaching methodologies appropriate to the teaching context". The writers focus more closely on the Japanese experience and illustrate it with syllabi at the World Englishes department at Chukyo University.

Part two of the volume is dedicated to attitudes to World Englishes and Implications for Assessment. Chapter 4, written by Joseph & Lakshmi,

investigated the awareness levels of English teachers for specific Indian English variables. Their study looks into the attitudes of English teachers in India towards Indian English varieties. In chapter 5, Joseph also investigated the attitudes and perceptions of intermediate, undergraduate and post-graduate students in India towards General Indian English (GIE). Some features of GIE were found to be more negatively evaluated than others, for example the omission of prepositions and problems related to word order in question formation. The writer focused more on the notion of acceptability of GIE by these students. One of the main results that emerged was that many students were aware of the NS varieties of English and in many cases marked themselves as incorrect. Kim, in chapter 6, also discusses attitudes to ELF. He worked with Korean students of English who had been studying this language for more than ten years. These learners were presented with voice files of different varieties of English. One of the interesting findings in this chapter is that the voice files of American and British pronunciations sounded the most comfortable to these learners, followed by other varieties such as Korean English. Chapter 7 by CHAN discusses Hong Kong English (HKE) and attitudes to it. The writer reviews the different levels of HKE (phonology, lexis, syntax, etc.) and traces the different perceptions of teachers and students towards this variety. The general finding is that there is acceptance of HKE overall, although the participants did not always feel comfortable using it. Roy concludes that there is a kind of 'bi-polar' attitude in these students' and teachers' reactions.

The third part of the book is about assessment in the context of ELF. It is made up of three chapters. Chapter 8 by Listyani concerns itself with one possibility for presenting material, for example published material, namely poster presentations, and how this form can be adapted to cater for the new reality of world Englishes. Astuti Azis in chapter 9 discusses Indonesian junior high school teachers' conceptions and practices of assessment and tries to locate the place of WE in all this. The main finding is that Indonesian teachers' conceptions of assessment were influenced by cultural and contextual considerations. Finally, Rahal in chapter 10 reflects upon language assessment in the context of world Englishes. She raises some problems with the monolingual approaches to testing English proficiency and gives some recommendations on how to include ELF in assessment practices.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# WORLD ENGLISHES IN THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF TUNISIA: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

AICHA RAHAL

## Introduction

According to Crystal (2003), English is "a language [that] achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country" (p.3). It "is now the dominant or official language in over 60 countries and is represented in every continent" (p.106). Rahal (2018) also declares, in her recent book chapter 'English or Englishes? A question of multilingual reality', that today's English is no longer seen as a linguistic standard, rather it is distinct varieties. It is the product of 'multilingualism' and 'glocalization.'

In the Tunisian context, it seems that the status of English is not clear. Fitouri (1983) states that "the status of English in Tunisia is still far from what it should be in order to achieve a true 'opening' on all civilizations instead of shutting ourselves up in one civilization [French]" (p.300). However, Daoud (1996) argues that "Tunisia has entered a critical stage in the promotion of the English language" (p.604). Therefore, English is "spreading so fast and so broadly that it can no longer be considered a 'veneer'... it is quickly replacing French in its ancillary function" (Daoud, 2011, p.16). He further claims that "the ever-growing demand for English has, in the past few years, led to the major developments in language-in-education policy and planning (Judd, 1992)" (p.599).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the linguistic profile of Tunisia which is made up of different languages and many regional varieties. It starts by

giving an overview of the factors behind this unprecedented spread of English. The study introduces the different issues that appear in integrating the new philosophy of World Englishes. These involve acceptability, teaching pedagogy, intelligibility and language assessment. Then, it moves to present the language situation, the status of English in Tunisia and previous studies on the features of contemporary English. It points to the shortcomings at the levels of pedagogy, language assessment and language policy. Finally, it points to some critical perspectives and pedagogical recommendations.

## Factors of the spread of English

Widdowson (1997) declares that "English has spread to become an international language" (p. 135). The international spread of English was the result of a number of factors. First, political reasons include the expansion of British colonial power in the 19th century. English language was one "on which the sun does not set" (Quirk et al., 1985, p.1). Intellectual reasons also play an important role in the spread of English. As Crystal (2003) states: "[...] English is the medium of a great deal of the world's knowledge, especially in such areas as science and technology" (p. 110). English is a tool for scientific research. It is the language of technological and academic information. Furthermore, the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power in the 20th century is one of the economic reasons behind the global spread of English

Kachru (1985) further divides the global spread of English based on three circles, namely the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle. As shown in the following figure, English was spread from inner circle countries to outer circle countries due to colonization. The Outer circle includes former colonies of the British Empire.

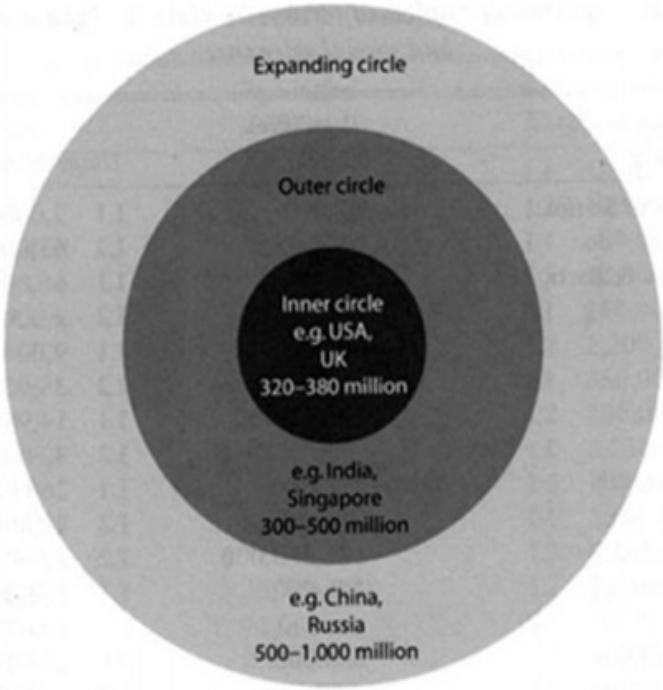


Figure 1: Kachru's three circles of English (1985).

In the expanding circle, the spread of English is due to foreign language learning. It is clear that English has become global either by being a native language in the inner circle, an official language in the outer circle and "being prioritized in the expanding circle countries".

The unprecedented spread of English has evolved into the emergence of World Englishes (WEs). WEs is an umbrella term which covers all varieties of English. World Englishes is defined as:

1. An international variety of English regarded as standard or acceptable wherever it is spoken in the world […] of Standard English.
2. English as spoken around the world and regarded as comprising numerous differing regional varieties (usually excluding those of Britain and the United States).

3. As a count noun. Any of the national regional varieties of English (but usually excluding those of Britain and the United States).[1]

The development of non-inner varieties opens many questions regarding the impact of the new orientation on English language teaching and language assessment. This new philosophy questions the traditional paradigm and calls for changes.

## The Sociolinguistic Reality of English

English has become a "contemporary global linguistic ecology" (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997, p. 20). McArthur (2001) declares that it is now "possible to be multilingual within world English" (p. 16). Saraceni (2010) maintains this view by stating that:

> This entity that we call English, like all other forms of language, has no ancestral home. […] The relocation of English is realized not so much by authorizing a plurality of new Englishes, but by treating English as a language that can carry and share the weight of a plurality of experiences, worldviews and inner thoughts with a multitude of groups and individuals who are willing to take part in the sharing. (p. 143)

English has become a multifarious language; it includes different varieties, different cultures, etc. and it belongs to all people who speak it. Rahal (2018, 2019a) highlights the multilingual feature of today's English. She argues that English has taken on local colorings. It becomes multiple Englishes and this is the result of "natural evolutionary process", and is a tool for "global communication" (Widdowson, 1997, p. 142).

Graddol (2006) observes that English now is "a new phenomenon, and if it represents any kind of triumph it is probably not a cause for celebration by native speakers" (p.11). Iyes (1993) also argues that "there is not on English language anymore, but there are many English languages…each of these Englishes is creating its own very special literature…" (p. 53).

Crystal (1997) shows the reality of English as an international language in the following quotation:

> ... It may well be the case that the English language has already grown to be independent of any form of social control... it proves impossible for any single group or alliance to stop its growth, or even influence its future... It

[1] "World English, n.". OED Online. *Oxford University Press*.

> may be that English, in some shape or form, will find itself in the service of the world community forever... (pp. 139–40)

## Issues with World Englishes

Crystal (1997) states that "no one can avoid being part of the current of linguistic change or variation, and avoid bathing in the sea of linguistic variety" (p. 19). However, non-inner varieties raise many issues regarding acceptability, pedagogy, intelligibility and language assessment.

## Acceptability

There is a heated debate between supporters of native speakerism and supporters of WEs about the status of English in its varieties. Monocenrists reject the plurilingual aspect of English. They believe in the ethnocentricism of English. Quirk (1990), for example, declares that "Of the latter, there are two: American English and British English …" (p. 6). According to them, the only legitimate model which should be followed is British/American English.

Pluralists see that native language varieties become sociolinguistically unrealistic. They criticized applied linguists for not considering the multilingual aspect of English because English is "a language always in translation, as a language always under negotiation" (Pennycook, 2010, p.435). Some scholars (Rushdie, 1991, as cited in Crystal, 1997, p. 140) declare the death of the ownership of native English: "The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago". Seidlhofer (2004) also argues that teaching Standard English is not very realistic, given that it is not a language variety easy to define. She argues that "in terms of numbers of speakers and domains of use, an insistence on Standard English as the only option for all purposes is… difficult to justify" (p.159).

## Teaching Pedagogy

The first pedagogical issue revolves around the absence of a clear pedagogy for teaching English as an international language. Smith (2014) argues that "I know of no perspective from WE that provides a 'royal road to language learning". It seems that English teaching still relies on English as a native language. There have been advances in areas of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics and none of these have so far been taken

into consideration. Quirk (1985) also points to this issue. He states that "the interest of varieties of English has got out of hand and has started blinding both teachers and taught to the central linguistic structure from which varieties might be seen as varying" (p. 15).

The second pedagogical issue is the huge gap between theory and practice. There is a gap between pedagogy theory and how that translates into concrete/real practical skills for teaching. Pennycook (2008) clearly explains this situation, stating that: WE "does not provide such a useful stance on global English teaching, since it has always been more concerned… with description of varieties rather than pedagogy…"

## Intelligibility

Intelligibility is defined as "being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation" (Kenworthy, 1987, p.13). It is "the single most important aspect of all communication" (Munro, 2011, p.13). In the field of WEs, intelligibility is used to refer to the recognition of words/ utterances. With the emergence of the different varieties of English, the question of intelligibility has stirred the attention of many scholars. These Englishes are reported to be unintelligible in comparison to native speakers' Englishes. Belibi (2013) states that "English might end up breaking into a number of mutually unintelligible dialects" (p. 175). Crystal (2003) argues that the diversity of English mixed with local/regional languages creates intelligible problems. Moreover, Quirk (1990) and Chevillet (1993) believe that English should remain a monolithic, standardized language according to the native standards in international communication.

## Language Assessment

Assessment issues mainly include the absence of evaluation of English tests and the absence of English tests that assess proficiency in the context of world Englishes. There are a number of raised questions and issues: How should we as world Englishes professionals use the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examinations? Whose norms should be followed in designing tests of English proficiency? (Davis, Hamp-Lyons and Kemp, 2003), how can English tests be designed to accommodate varietal differences of world Englishes? (Brown, 2014).

Galloway and Rose (2015) outline a number of assessment issues, as follows:

(1) There should be a move away from tests of formal grammatical competence to tests that "focus on one's strategies of negotiation, situated performance, communicative repertoire and language awareness".
(2) We need to consider prioritizing accommodation skills.
(3) There is a need to define communicative competence, by taking into account that the focus should be on how people know the language, not how much they know.
(4) There is a need to determine how achievement is defined by considering the relevance of construct based on native English speaker norms.

## The Linguistic Profile in Tunisia

The first article of the Tunisian constitution declares that, "Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state, its religion is Islam; its language is Arabic and its type of government is the Republic". This does not give a clear picture of its complex linguistic situation. Daoud (2001) argues that "The linguistic scene was therefore a rather multilingual one made up of Berber, Punic, Latin, Greek and Arabic" (p.5). According to Daoud (2001), the complexity of the linguistic profile of Tunisia is due to the "long history stretching over three millennia that shows both its complexity and dynamism" (p. 6). Daoud (2011) shows the competition between languages, namely French and English, stating that:

> The current sociolinguistic situation—characterized by, on the one hand, a continuing rivalry between Arabic and French and an increasing rivalry between French and English as a global language. (p.54)

## English in Tunisia

English began to be taught in Tunisian schools after independence in 1956. It was first studied as a subject at secondary schools. Today, English is a compulsory subject for all students. It is taught across different levels in schools: 2 hours per week in the primary school for grade 6, 3 hours weekly for grades 7, 8, and 9 in preparatory schools, and 3 hours and more per week for secondary level students from grade 1 to 4 in public schools depending on their sections. At university, English is also compulsory.

In 1980, the government launched a new project called the Pioneer Secondary School for the purpose of introducing English as the medium of instruction for all subjects. In 1988, the project was abandoned due to

financial problems. Salhi (1984) claimed that this project was a significant study of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Language Policy in Tunisia. After that, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) went through promising changes in 1990. These include the new locally-produced textbook series which were introduced in 1993 to achieve the communicative approach. Another crucial change took place when English became compulsory for all students and sections of the secondary level. The next change involves the government's decision to introduce English in the primary sector.

Daoud (1996) argues that "the growing demand for English as the means of access to modern science and technology and to economic development has led to interesting changes in the linguistic orientation of many developing countries, particularly those that inherited a language other than English from their former colonial power." He further explains that Tunisia is the case in point "where such changes concern both English language policy decisions and implementation strategies, mainly in the educational system" (Daoud, 1996, p. 598). Recent changes include:

- The UK assistance through British Council programs to improve ELT in educational institutions.
- The US plan to offer Tunisians more English-language training, educational exchanges, and cultural programs; and look for new ways to build security and intelligence cooperation. The political discourse stresses that deeper US cooperation depends on real Tunisian engagement (The Guardian, 2009).
- Short and long term social and material assistance, at all levels, to the country's development from the Canadian government, in 2011.

## Features of Contemporary English in the Linguistic Landscape of Tunisia: Previous Studies

The linguistic landscape in Tunisia is characterized by different forms of English. In studies of Tunisian English students, Bouchhioua (2018) conducted a study on the production of English consonant clusters by Tunisian speakers of English. The study also aims to show the effect of epenthesis on the perceived comprehensibility of the participants. The results revealed that the participants do not have any difficulty in producing two consonant clusters in any position of the word but they have a difficulty in producing three consonant clusters. According to the

findings, consonant cluster does not have an influence on comprehensibility of the speakers.

Bouchhioua (2008) also studied the role of duration in showing stress and accent in Southern British English and Tunisian Arabic. The informants of the study were Tunisian speakers of English. Based on the findings, it is demonstrated that the production of English segments and words by Tunisian speakers is longer than their native production. This can be attributed to the influence of Tunisian Arabic.

Other researchers tried to examine these varieties of English diachronically. Rahal (2014), for example, studied the fossilized pronunciation of the schwa sound. The informants of the study were 5 English students from the department of English of Gafsa, Tunisia. It was found that the informants fossilized the /e/, /ɔ: / and /a: / sounds in place of the schwa sound. The findings revealed that these features are the result of L1 interference, inconsistency of English vowels and lack of knowing the production of English phonetics.

Similarly, Smaoui and Rahal (2015) conducted a study on the fossilized pronunciation of the /3:/ sound in the speech of intermediate Tunisian English students. The informants of the study were 10 students from the department of English of Kairouan, Tunisia. According to the findings, the /ɔ: / sound is replaced by the /3:/ sound. This result can be attributed to the effect of French sound system, limited exposure to L2 environment and lack of practice.

Moreover, Rahal (2016) studied the fossilized pronunciation of Advanced Tunisian English students. The subjects of the study were 20 students from the English department of Kairouan. The findings showed different phonetic varieties in the spoken output of the participants. They are the result of a number of factors, including native language interference, effect of French sound system, inconsistency of English vowels, limited exposure to L2 environment, absence of corrective feedback and insufficient knowledge of English sound system.

More recently, Rahal (2019b) has investigated the characteristics of spoken English in Tunisia. In her presentation, “Spoken English in Tunisia: Preliminary Results of a New Variety” (2019 PAC conference, Aix, France), she presented the unstable forms of English at the levels of phonetics and phonology. These include the absence of the schwa sound,

the substitution of [s] for [z], [ʧ] for [ʃ], the replacement of alveolar sounds by dental sounds, placing stress on final syllables as in French, etc.

Based on the reviewed studies, the raised question is 'where does English in Tunisia stand?' Tunisia is "extremely colourful" (Bahloul, 2001). So, 'what should teachers and policy makers do?' The linguistic situation in Tunisia questions English language Teaching (ELT), language assessment and the educational policy. ELT and language assessment, on one hand, are not adapted to this reality. ELT is considered as learners' languages (Alptekin, 2002). The educational policy, on the other hand, still relies on the orthodox view of Second Language Acquisition and monolingual native speakers rather than on pluricentric users of English.

## Critical Perspectives

The compatibility that language policy and practice in Tunisia has had with global Englishes is still not clear. Salhi (1984) argues that there still "[was] no clear English policy in Tunisia and no coordination at the level of the ministry of higher education". Today, English becomes plural with its emergent varieties. Fitouri (1983, p. 300) also argues that the language policy situation in Tunisia needed to be adjusted. He stated that "in a situation like this, however, common sense calls for a measure of boldness in the revision of the present educational and linguistic policy…".

Sifakis (2004) raises an issue in teaching the new varieties of English. This issue seems to be the same problem of the Tunisian context. Sifakis (2004) shows the gap between EFL teachers who attend university to learn a profession and the new teaching pedagogy for teaching global varieties. He further argues that the teachers are "language and teaching specialists". They are not informed about the new methodological approaches to teaching English. This means that the English language in Tunisia still relies on the traditional perspective which is based on standard British or American English. Matsuda (2012) claims that the traditional perspectives of teaching English are "incomplete and may result in a limited and skewed understanding of who speaks English and for what purposes" (p. 171).

It is worth mentioning that there is another issue revolving around the acceptability of the new varieties of English in the Tunisian context. Based on a study conducted by Bahloul (2001), there seems to be a "positive attitude towards English that has been addressed at great length in a number of studies" among Tunisian English students. However, this "may

lead to confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English users (e.g., from the Outer Circle). Students may be shocked by varieties and uses of English that differ from Inner-Circle English, view them as deficient rather than different, or be disrespectful of such varieties and uses" (Matsuda, 2012, p. 171).

Teaching materials in Tunisia still also rely on English as a native language. As Jenkins (2012) states "ELT materials still remain undoubtedly towards ENL, with correctness and appropriateness still widely driven by NES use regardless of learners' current potential communication contexts" (p.487). If we look at Tunisian textbooks, for example, we can find that reading texts are only from British or American culture and civilization. Their purpose is to measure the English ability of Tunisians to study or work in the UK or the USA.

As far as language assessment is concerned, it is evident that English proficiency tests in Tunisia use the native norms. Lowenberg (2000) insists on the idea that tests should take into account the non-native variation. He also adds that tests should integrate the world language for the purpose of ensuring validity.

## Pedagogical Implications

Rahal (2019b) calls for a change in English teaching pedagogy in Tunisia. She argues that English in Tunisia should move into a 'post-modern' era or a 'post-linguistic' era (PAC 2019 conference). There is also a pressing need to acknowledge "an understanding of the diversity of English, for production as well as for comprehension, [which] makes one a better communicator" (Modiano, 2009, p. 59).

Fostering awareness among Tunisian teachers and students about the new status of English and its multifarious aspect (Rahal, 2018 and 2019a) is important. The purpose behind raising awareness is to promote learners' knowledge about the current sociolinguistic reality of English they are learning. In this context, Kramsch (2014) states that:

> the purpose is not to abandon all standards pedagogic norms of language use as the goals of instruction. It is, rather, to strive to make our students into multilingual individuals, sensitive to linguistic, cultural and, above all, semiotic diversity, and willing to engage with difference, that is, to grapple with differences in social, cultural, political and religious worldviews. (p. 305)

Teaching materials should be revised. Yu (2015) calls for "possible ways to adapt materials from ELF-relevant perspective" (p. 49) because "it is not enough to simply say that ELF has implications for pedagogy" (Dewey, 2012, p. 143). Baxter (1991) also states that "teaching materials should be drawn from all the various English-using communities, not only L1 communities, so as to introduce students to the different manners of speaking English and to build an attitudinal base of acceptance" (p. 67). Additionally, Brown (2002) suggests a WE course: "In addition to familiarizing [TESOL] students with world Englishes materials…it is also appropriate in the world Englishes classroom to familiarize students with various debates and perspectives" (p. 448).

## Conclusion

It is evident that English "has achieved such a depth and range of use that it is becoming native in local linguistic contexts" (Saraceni, Williams, and Wright, 2014, p. 142). It encompasses "a unique cultural pluralism and a linguistic heterogeneity and diversity" (Kachru, 1985). This fact calls for investigating the different varieties of English. The present research, therefore, is an attempt to study the linguistic situation in Tunisia in relation to world Englishes. Tunisia is a multilingual society. It is made up of "a significant number of language varieties" (Bahloul, 2001; Kammoun, 2006). However, pedagogy, language assessment and language policy still rely on English as a native language. More studies need to be done to investigate the newborn English varieties in Tunisia. English in Tunisia should move into a post linguistic era. Language policy should be revised and should show "how it is implemented and how it affects the ELT profession in Tunisia" (Daoud, 1996, p. 599).

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