
Edgar Schneider, *English around the World: An Introduction*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 278 pp.,
ISBN 978-0521716581, 27 euro

Reviewed by **Eleonora Esposito**

It looks like almost everything has been said on the global spread of English: in the last decades, a vast array of alternative theoretical models have emerged, all attempting to describe the incredible diaspora of the English language, and the consequent emergence of a diverse range of varieties around the world.

There are two main remarkable features in the available literature on the subject, and both can be linked to a titanic effort to catalogue the almost ungraspable multiplicity of linguistic expressions in English in the four corners of the planet.

The first is the proliferation of terminology in use. In recent years, scholars have been more and more engaged in adamitic acts of naming, creating umbrella terms for a number of different approaches to the categorization and study of English around the globe: *World English(es)*, *Global English(es)*, *International English(es)*, *New English(es)* among others. The plural alternative in brackets explicitates a crucial theoretical differentiation: choosing *Englishes* raises awareness on the pluricentric, centripetal and autonomous nature of the varieties of English existing around the globe, instead of an essentially monocentric and unitary model, highlighting the irreducible ‘otherness’ of periphery.

The second intriguing aspect is the visual systematization of these concepts: scholars have been attempting to render the intricate paths of this linguistic diaspora through a number of descriptive models, such as maps and diagrams, that could summarize the diverse and complex sociohistorical implications of this linguistic journey worldwide. This plethora of geopolitical model making encompasses Stevans’ pioneristic “World Map of English” (1980), McArthur’s “Circle of World English” (1987) which shares a number of features with Görlach’s (1990) “Circle Model of English”, Kachru’s famous “Three Circles of English” (1992), and Modiano’s “Centripetal Circles of International English” (1999).

Edgar Schneider valuably contributed to this variegated panorama with his *Postcolonial English: Varieties around the World* (2007). While introducing the label *Postcolonial*, his work does not entail a purely geographical model: the ‘Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes’, evolutionary and ecolinguistic rather than geopolitical, valuably accounts for the development of English in former British colonial territories. He proposes that the new varieties of English in post-colonial contexts have developed as a result of a universal cyclic process, involving a given number of stages: (1) foundation; (2) exonormative stabilization; (3) nativization; (4) endonormative stabilization; and (5) differentiation. With this five-phases model backed up by an extensive number of case studies, Schneider makes us rethink our notion of nativeness; since it demonstrates how English was re-rooted and re-indigenized in post-colonial countries, his work contributes to dispelling a number of colonial hangovers on language competence

in the ‘outer circle’, such as the degeneracy claim, the lack of rules, the native/non-native hierarchical divide. Moreover, by focusing on *Postcolonial Englishes*, the study also integrated the linguistic analysis with a welcome and refreshing perspective on nationhood, identity, multilingualism, and ethnicity.

Deeply influenced by his 2007 work, *English Around The World* is part of the ‘Cambridge Introductions to the English Language’, a series of accessible undergraduate textbooks for English language studies.

One of the most striking features of the series is the custom-made website accompanying each book, complementing the study with audio contributions, solutions to the exercises and suggestions for further studies. Linguistic studies are probably the best candidate for an editorial turn to enhanced books, able to provide the reader with a number of additional resources and examples, as well as with a sort of ‘fieldwork vibe’.

In the nine chapters of the book, Schneider provides a comprehensive overview of the global spread of English in the post-colonial era. The first three chapters introduce the reader to the subject, providing some factual background knowledge on the varieties of English and the major models proposed to categorize them. Since colonialism and its aftermaths have been playing a key role in Schneider’s studies, Chapter 3 provides some historical background on the role of the British Empire and the United States in the globalization of English.

The following three chapters explore the presence of English in specific regional contexts, opening with a survey of the socio-historical context, then describing linguistic features of regional Englishes, and concluding with case studies. The eye on colonially-induced language contact situations inevitably leaves pretty much out of the picture the Kachruvian *Expanding Circle*, that is, the vast number of countries where English spread without a previous colonial history. Schneider thus duly explores individual varieties in North America and the Caribbean (Chapter 4), Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (Chapter 5), and Africa, Asia, and the Pacific (Chapter 6).

The last three chapters take the reader back to the theoretical plane. In Chapter 7 a general perspective on the process of language development demonstrates how an interplay of language internal and language external factors contributed to the birth of new English varieties. Issues and attitudes in the major current debates on the social and linguistic outcomes of the global spread of English are covered in Chapter 8, while Chapter 9 is left for conclusions.

The book is user-friendly and rich in examples, but does not indulge in oversimplification. On the contrary, without giving up on a solid theoretical background, it includes a vast number of fascinating descriptions of intricate multilingual situations around the globe. It is to be recommended reading for students and beginners, but is also a valuable and quick reference manual for specialists. It will be appreciated by readers with an interest in language expansion and its socio-political implications, and by anyone believing, especially when it comes to language, that diversity is the norm.