

ELT Research Papers 16.01

Subject teachers' attitudes to English in their online postgraduate studies and in their teaching: voices from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia

Jane Evison and Mary Bailey



The University of
Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

ELT Research Papers 16.01

Subject teachers' attitudes to English in their online postgraduate studies and in their teaching: voices from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia

Jane Evison and Mary Bailey

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the subject teachers in Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia who participated in this research, giving generously of their time despite the demands of both school teaching and part-time postgraduate study. We would also like to thank the following people for their invaluable support in recruiting participants, facilitating the interviews and focus groups and making practical arrangements, and for their hospitality when we visited their countries: Joan Omole (Nigeria), Jennifer Kaumbulu (Kenya) and Chau Meng Huat (Malaysia). Joan Omole and Radzuwan Ab Rashid transcribed focus group and interview data for Nigeria and Malaysia, respectively.

About the authors

Jane Evison is Assistant Professor in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. Her research focuses on talk and interaction, the discourse of teacher education and other learning contexts, and teacher professionalism in international settings. She is the leader of the MA TESOL (web-based) programme and is particularly interested in the role that online teacher education plays in teacher professionalisation.

Mary Bailey is Assistant Professor in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. Her research interests include education policy, teacher education and professional development and online learning. She teaches on the MA Education (face-to-face and online) and PGCE International programmes, with a particular interest in supporting practitioner enquiry.

ISBN 978-0-86355-792-7

© **British Council 2016** Design/F251

10 Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BN, UK

www.britishcouncil.org

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract | 3 |
| 1 Introduction | 5 |
| 2 Theoretical background | 7 |
| 3 Methodology | 9 |
| Participants | 9 |
| Nigeria | 9 |
| Kenya | 9 |
| Malaysia | 10 |
| Research instruments..... | 10 |
| Autobiographies..... | 10 |
| Focus groups..... | 10 |
| Interviews..... | 10 |
| 4 Findings | 11 |
| Initial findings..... | 11 |
| Nigeria | 11 |
| Kenya | 11 |
| Malaysia | 12 |
| Thematic analysis | 13 |
| Intellectual appreciation of varieties of English..... | 13 |
| Challenges of academic English at PG level – process and product..... | 16 |
| A pragmatic view of developing expertise | 17 |
| 5 Conclusion and implications | 21 |
| Transitions..... | 21 |
| Identities | 21 |
| Implications for teachers..... | 21 |
| Implications for HE tutors..... | 22 |
| References | 23 |
| Appendix 1 | 25 |
| Autobiography task..... | 25 |
| Part 1 | 25 |
| Part 2..... | 26 |
| Appendix 2 | 27 |
| Focus group task instruction and example prompts..... | 27 |
| Appendix 3 | 29 |
| Individual semi-structured interview schedule..... | 29 |

Abstract

School subject teachers who teach through the medium of English play a pivotal and often underappreciated role in their students' learning of English. This affects these students' access to social and economic capital, locally and globally, including access to higher education. This is particularly significant and under-researched in 'outer circle' countries where English is or has recently been an official language, and thus where varieties of English form part of a multilingual context alongside local indigenous languages.

This paper reports on a recent study of teachers from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia. In addition to teaching full time, these teachers are also studying through the medium of English with an international UK university on master's-level postgraduate (PG) programmes. They thus form a particularly interesting group of professionals who can inform us about their own experiences of, and attitudes towards, English as a medium of instruction and study, both in their place of work in their own countries and in international higher education.

We present an analysis which is centred on focus group discussions held in Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia in which the participants reacted to some authentic examples of tutor formative feedback on PG university assignments. In each case, the assignments were written by teachers from the country in which the focus groups were held. The analysis is enriched by insights from individual interviews and written autobiography tasks, the latter being administered before the face-to-face meetings. The findings show the complexity of the teachers' linguistic landscapes and give insights into three main areas: teachers' increasing intellectual appreciation of varieties of English, the challenges of writing in academic English at PG level and how teachers take a pragmatic stance in relation to wanting to become 'better' or 'more expert' both as students and as teachers.

1

Introduction

Although they are not English language teachers but content teachers who teach in English, these educators have a pivotal role to play in their own students' relationship with the English language. In addition to supporting their students' cognitive development and academic learning, both in the subject and in English, these teachers influence the way their students perceive the English language and those who speak it, and decisions their students might make to further their own English language abilities by attending courses such as those run by the British Council, taking further English qualifications such as FCE, CAE and IELTS. Furthermore, they are likely to have an impact on their students' motivation for, and access to, higher education (HE) study in the medium of English, whether at a university in their own country or at an overseas university, either face-to-face or, increasingly, online.

As academics at a UK university which has a large number of international students, two overseas campuses and a vibrant online/blended programme of study, we have first-hand experience of the challenges faced by international students from 'outer circle' countries (Kachru, 1992) such as Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia, which have strong historical/colonial links with the UK and which have (or have had, in the case of Malaysia) English as an official language. Master's-level postgraduate (PG) study at UK universities is generally accepted as being intense. In the social sciences a full-time master's course can require in excess of 36,000 words of written assessed coursework in a year (spread over two years if part-time), in addition to contributions to in-class or online discussions and individual tutorials. Our work as tutors in a School of Education tells us that for subject teachers from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia who are studying PG qualifications with us, the experience brings with it a re-negotiation of many aspects of their identities and practices as English speakers and writers.

This study therefore investigates the experiences of these 'outer circle' subject teachers through a qualitative study, which attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What do subject teachers from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia report about their experience of the transition from being a school teacher in English to becoming an online postgraduate student in English?
2. What do these teachers report about their own linguistic and professional identities during their HE studies?
3. What are the implications of the above for their own professional and academic practice?
4. What are the implications for subject teachers in 'outer circle' countries and their HE tutors?

2

Theoretical background

Our theoretical perspective is broadly interpretivist and thus the background to this study is sociolinguistic in terms of conceptions of English in both multilingual school classrooms and in UK-based (online) HE, and social constructivist in terms of learning. Our political and ethical framework leads us to take a critical perspective in recognising the social and economic capital associated with hegemonic forms and practices of English, and the implications of access to these for development in an increasingly globalised educational and economic context. Our study is underpinned by research and theorisation from a number of influential areas: Kachru's model of English usage, World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca in Academic contexts (ELFA), and academic literacies.

Kachru's concentric circle model of world English use (e.g. Kachru, 1992) which places speakers from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia in the 'outer circle' countries where English has played a major role for historical reasons (and contrasted with speakers from the 'inner circle' (e.g. the UK and the US) and those from the 'expanding circle' (e.g. China, South Korea) where English is a lingua franca) is an important theoretical model. Although Kachru's distinction has been subjected to some critique by other World English scholars (e.g. Jenkins, 2003) and some modifications to it have been suggested, it remains a highly influential way of understanding the global spread of English. Alongside this, more recent developments such as Norton's (1997) notion of the 'ownership' of English and debates on the usefulness of the native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy (e.g. Higgins, 2003) contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

The World Englishes literature (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2008) and work on specific varieties of English, including that which relates this to national language policy, education and global development, is important to this study as much of it sets the use of English – or indeed Englishes – in complex linguistic ecologies and recognises the advantage of bilingual/multilingual contexts as well as the dilemmas these can pose. Explorations of Nigerian English (e.g. Bisong, 1995; Ufomata, 1999), Kenyan English (e.g. Schmied, 2006, 2012; Budohoska, 2014) and Malaysian English (Ridge, 2004; Nair-Venugopai,

2013; Hashim, 2014) foreground the multilingual linguistic landscape and the complex relationship between language use, identity, solidarity and power. In relation to HE specifically, the recent work of Jenkins (2013) calls for more exploration by HE practitioners of the Englishes used at their institutions, and is mindful of criticisms of the 'linguistic imperialism' of English (e.g. Phillipson, 1996, 2009).

In both Kenya and Malaysia, there are keen media debates around standards of English that impact on teachers. Schmied (2006) comments that in East Africa this debate tends to be 'less about teaching English properly than teaching (other subjects) in English properly' (p. 192). In Malaysia, however, since English ceased to be the medium of instruction for science and maths in state schools in 2009, media debates do not focus specifically on subject teaching but continue to centre on falling standards of the English language and the failure of successive government schemes to improve English teaching in schools. Such debates are not new; Gobel et al. (2013: 5) wryly observe that 'Gaudart (1987: 17) could not have expressed it better when she said that, "Malaysian society is constantly regaled with opinions about the falling standards of English. Falling where and in what way is seldom mentioned"'. Interestingly, at the time of going to press, it seems that the policy may change again as the possibility of dual language instruction has been mooted by the Ministry of Education. In Nigeria, educational debate centres on mother tongue bilingual teaching and the use of Nigerian Pidgin. For example, Igboanusi (2008a) reports that the 'real problem' with bilingual education implementation is the lack of investment in the teaching and examining of minority languages alongside that of English and the three majority languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). Elsewhere, he presents the case that Nigerian Pidgin is widely spoken and is effectively a national lingua franca. However, there is no consensus about whether it should be made an official language or used in education, due to concerns about the effects this might have on both mother tongue and Nigerian English usage, as well as its low economic status (Igboanusi, 2008b).

The bilingual/multilingual subject teachers who are the subject of this study are also PG students studying at a UK university, either online and at a distance (the Nigeria and Kenya groups), or attending a regional campus for extended block weekends of study only (the Malaysia group). As such, they continue to be learners of English and also, crucially, learners of academic English usage. The field of academic literacies, building on the insights of New Literacy Studies (e.g. Gee, 1996; Street, 1999), presents academic literacy as a social practice of meaning making (Lea and Street, 1998). While learning academic writing (or other forms of academic discourse) involves socialisation into a particular discourse community and is thus understood as a form of situated practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), an academic literacies perspective goes beyond this to consider power relations and identity, and to view academic conventions as contested (Lillis and Scott, 2007). Consequently, this perspective rejects the deficit model of HE students, in a similar way to how a World Englishes' perspective leads to the rejection of deficit models of English learners.

As HE tutors and researchers we take a critical approach to the teaching and learning of academic genres, and the English language usage associated with these. This connects with the suggestion from Hall et al.'s (2013) British Council ELT research paper that ELT teachers can perhaps hold both 'monolithic' and 'plurilithic' conceptions of English. We share Hall et al.'s commitment to take 'very seriously the need to listen to and interact with teachers, and to discover how their educational and professional experiences help to mould and perpetuate their beliefs' (*ibid.*: 16). Our paper extends this dialogue, in different ways, to subject teachers using the medium of English in multilingual contexts in order to recognise and inform their contribution as educators about English(es) in local and global contexts.

3

Methodology

We regard qualitative methods as most appropriate for studying the linguistic identities and practices of these subject teachers. There were three methods of data generation in this study: focus groups in which participants talked about their experiences of receiving tutor feedback on written work using extracts of assignments annotated with tutor comments as prompts, semi-structured interviews which directly followed the focus groups, as well as participants' linguistic and professional autobiographies provided electronically before the main data generation.

We used non-purposive sampling and invited volunteers from online or local PG cohorts from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia, aiming initially to recruit at least four subject teachers from each country to form three participant groups for the fieldwork to be conducted in their countries of origin. We see this as a particular strength of our research for two reasons. Firstly, online programmes in particular remain an under-researched area despite the rise in the numbers of teachers studying through this medium (England and Hall, 2012). Secondly, to date, studies of the education experiences of, 'outer (and expanding) circle' speakers of English have tended to be carried out in 'inner circle' host countries/institutions (e.g. Jenkins, 2013; Orim et al., 2013; Higgins, 2003) rather than in participants' home countries. In contrast, the participants in this research project were studying while living in their countries of origin, where the fieldwork was conducted.

Prior to the data generation, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Nottingham, also in compliance with the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2011). This included seeking informed, voluntary consent and providing the right to withdraw at any time. As the participants were PG students of the University of Nottingham, we were careful to ensure that they did not feel under duress to participate and that their participation was not to the detriment of their studies. We assured them of anonymity and of data security, and that they would not be traceable. As PG tutors we have some

knowledge of the context in Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia from our experience of teaching PG students from these countries, online, in the UK and on visits to the countries. We also worked with local facilitators who knew the participants and brokered arrangements with them, and advised us on our approach to data generation. We believe that this enabled us to conduct the research in a respectful way.

Participants

Nigeria

There were five Nigerian participants, all of whom were students in their third year of a part-time MA in Education online programme and thus further into their PG studies than the Kenyan participants. As part of their PG programme they have face-to-face tutorials in Lagos twice a year during their MA studies. Otherwise, most communication with their tutors is online, asynchronous, and in written form: email exchanges and the tutor using track changes and comments in Word to provide feedback on proposals and drafts. They make very limited use of Skype tutorials, even though this is encouraged, mostly due to poor-quality internet connections and unreliable power supplies, but also due to commuting times in Lagos. All five participants completed the written task and autobiographies and took part in the focus group. Four of these were also interviewed individually.

Kenya

The six Kenyan teachers who took part in this study had all studied for their first degrees in Kenya. They all worked in British international schools in Nairobi and were in the same cohort of PG students who were just about to complete their year-long online certificate programme at the time of the fieldwork. In addition to studying online, these students had attended two face-to-face events (one at the beginning and one mid-course) which were facilitated by tutors who flew out from the UK. For the remainder of the course, tutors and students kept in contact, usually by email, as the students worked through structured online materials.

Malaysia

Unlike the groups in Nigeria and Kenya, the group in Malaysia was made up of three participants who did not come from a single cohort of Nottingham PG students. The two Nottingham students were taking master's programmes at the campus in Malaysia where they periodically attended extended weekends of study and maintained tutor contact via email. Because of some unforeseen problems with these focus group arrangements, in addition to these two students who were available, a third volunteer who already had taken a master's in Malaysia and who had recently started a PhD at a Malaysian English as a medium of instruction (EMI) institution agreed to take part.

Research instruments

Autobiographies

Participants were asked to write a brief, informal autobiographical account of their linguistic and professional histories, in English, but in any variety of this that they chose, in order to further understand and situate their practices and identities in terms of what they identify as important contexts and influences. A blank version of this document can be found in Appendix 1.

Focus groups

The focus groups used country-specific examples of PG student writing, in the form of extracts from draft assignments that had been submitted for formative feedback, and which included marginal comments from tutors. This approach reflected the high stakes attached to writing and our interest in participants' attitudes and views towards texts and practices in PG study (Lillis, 2001; Lillis and Scott, 2007).

These extracts were used as prompts for discussion (cf. Higgins [2003] who used an acceptability judgement task to investigate ownership of English). These prompts were designed to provoke discussion and exploration of participants' own experiences of receiving feedback, as well as their own orientation to acceptability in academic writing. Participants were asked to discuss whether tutor feedback focused on language or content, reflecting a central theme of the project, as well as to consider how the PG student might have responded to the feedback given and whether this represents typical feedback.

A copy of the general instructions and example prompts from each country can be found in Appendix 2. The focus group discussions lasted from 25 to 45 minutes. The members themselves chaired the groups, and while one of us was present at each, our contributions were minimal. The focus groups were digitally audio recorded and then transcribed.

Interviews

We used semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996) to ask participants to report and reflect on their experience as classroom teachers and as PG students in order to explore their language use and academic literacies as situated practices. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix 3. The interviews were digitally audio recorded and then transcribed.

4

Findings

Working within an interpretivist paradigm (e.g. Grotjahn, 1987) and using qualitative content analysis (e.g. Silverman, 2006) the focus group and individual interview transcripts, and autobiographical data were coded by each researcher independently in order to identify themes. Once each researcher had generated micro-level themes, we met to review our analysis and agree on a macro-level grouping of the themes. We then returned independently to the data to make minor revisions to the themes before meeting again to agree the final version and carry out discourse analysis on key episodes which provided further insights into how the participants positioned themselves in relation to each other, various languages, the university and the broader academic community (cf. Evison and Bailey, 2014). Although contrasts between the different countries were noted, the focus of the analysis was on the identification of commonalities rather than differences.

The findings which are presented in this section are organised as follows: a summary of some key aspects that emerged from the focus groups, organised by country, followed by an exploration of the three overarching themes. In keeping with the aims of this paper, we make considerable use of the teachers' own words, quoting verbatim and at as much length as we can.

Initial findings

Nigeria

All five Nigerian participants have a teaching qualification and four already have master's degrees from universities in Nigeria (David, Bashir, Victor, Yemi). They were all subject specialist teachers employed full time in different state schools in the city of Lagos, so only knew one another through their PG programme. Three of them were secondary teachers of science (Sarah, David, Victor) and one of secondary economics (Yemi), whereas one was a primary teacher of physical and health education, who also teaches mathematics (Bashir). They ranged in age from 42 to 50 years old, with school teaching experience of between 14 and 20 years.

Lagos is in the Yoruba-speaking area of Nigeria, but as a large city speakers of other Nigerian languages will also be represented in school populations. All five participants indicated that Yoruba was their mother tongue and the main language spoken at home, although Victor reported that Egun was also spoken at home. David reported that some Igbo had been spoken and Bashir that some Hausa had been spoken.

Discussion in the Nigerian focus group was lively, with the five participants sometimes speaking at the same time, completing one another's utterances, repeating one another's comments for emphasis and arguing. There was also considerable use of humour. For example, in discussing an example of feedback asking a student to use gender-neutral language, they identify with this and find it amusing, because a member of the group had received similar feedback:

Yemi: *What will be the reaction of the students? He should not feel bad, at least.*

Bashir: *Students are being informed more it's like learning more. And do you think this is typical feedback on master's-level Nigerian students? Yes.*

Yemi: *Yes, because we even have somebody testify to it* [Laughter].

In the individual interviews, participants reported that they followed the policy of using English as a medium of instruction in their teaching, but some mentioned that occasionally Yoruba would be used if pupils were struggling to understand something (Sarah, David) or, particularly, with younger pupils in primary school (Bashir).

Kenya

The Kenyan participants were divided into two focus groups, one of three primary teachers (Kenya FG1) and one of three secondary teachers (Kenya FG2). The three participants in the primary-level focus group were in their early to mid-thirties and had been teachers for between one and a half and nine years. Of the more experienced teachers, one, Charles, had a Kenyan primary teaching qualification and one, Harriet, had a Bachelor of Education.

The least experienced of the three, Njeri, had been volunteering part time after changing profession. The two experienced teachers were a key stage two/three teacher and a primary co-ordinator/class teacher respectively. All three spoke Kiswahili¹ and English. Harriet was also a fluent Luhya speaker (reporting this language as her mother tongue), Charles reported partial knowledge of Luhya (with Kiswahili as his mother tongue) and Njeri was fluent in Kikuyu (stating that both this and Kiswahili were her mother tongues).

Two of the three participants in the secondary-level focus group were in their early thirties and one was in her mid-forties. They had been teachers for between seven and 15 years. The older teacher, Esther, who specialised in art and design, was the only one with a teaching qualification: an online diploma from Cambridge. Isaac taught geography and business studies, and Janet taught physical education. All three spoke Kiswahili and English as well as another tribal language. Both Janet and Esther spoke Kikuyu, but whereas this was Janet's first language, Esther reported that English was spoken most at home when she was a child. Isaac's mother tongue was Luo.

The primary school focus group engaged enthusiastically with the task and seemed confident arguing with each other – for example, they 'agree to disagree' (Njeri) about a tricky aspect of referencing. Their discussion of whether the comments they are looking at represent typical feedback on Kenyan PG students' work (the third of the focus group questions) generates what becomes a recurring theme in the conversation because Harriet strongly argues that the feedback is typical of any beginning PG student, not necessarily a Kenyan student:

Do you think this is typical feedback on Kenyan master's-level students? I would say no. I think it's something that can happen to any student in any ... even in England, even in Nottingham.

Harriet continues to voice this opinion from the middle of the focus group until the end, by which time it is referred to as 'the Kenyan factor', an example of in-group language/shared knowledge. Interestingly, although each participant was given the chance at the beginning of their individual interview to talk about what was the most memorable aspect of the focus group, none of the three mentioned 'the Kenyan factor', choosing instead to talk about disciplinary differences between their first degree and their PG study as potential sources of challenge

in academic writing. In fact, their transition from teacher in English to PG student in English was not clearly delineated from their transition from their original disciplines to social sciences, and, in the case of two of the three from Kenyan state education, to a private EMI institution.

The secondary school focus group engaged well with the task, but were more instrumental in their approach, perhaps due to the chairing style of Esther, the participant who led the discussion. They tended to achieve an easy consensus. Nevertheless, they were similar to the primary one in concentrating more on their experience at Kenyan universities and their current experience with a UK university, and the differences in expectations, whether this was progression from UG or PG level in Kenya. This was particularly linked to different conventions and expectations in relation to academic referencing, yet clearly they were also talking about expectations in general:

And you'd be surprised, some people doing this Nottingham course have actually done a master's level here in Kenya and passed really well. (Janet)

In their individual interviews, the secondary teachers all commented on the usefulness of the focus group as an opportunity to reflect on their own learning, rather than specifically focusing on the language or content issues raised in the discussion. Janet commented on how reassuring the focus group activity had been for her:

Like when I was starting off with the course my tutor would give those comments and I used to think, am I the only one who is getting such comments? Am I doing so badly off? Or are they too harsh? But today, even we were just discussing down there, they are actually OK.

Malaysia

The Malaysia group was more diverse than the others and did not represent only school teachers studying online, but did meet the prime condition that participants were studying at PG level in the medium of English in the region while remaining resident in the region, having not chosen an 'inner circle' country for their current course of study. The participants' teaching roles are indicative of Malaysia's situation as an 'outer circle' country that currently has no EMI in its state schools having recently abandoned its policy of teaching science and maths through the medium of English. The three participants also exemplified the ethnic diversity which characterises Malaysia, identifying themselves

1 The official language of Kenya is Kiswahili. Participants referred to this as Kiswahili or Swahili, depending on individual preference and context. We use Kiswahili for consistency here.

2 Although the official language is called Bahasa Malaysia, all three participants typically referred to it as Malay and so this term is used here.

as Malay (Aminah), Chinese (Michelle) and Sri Lankan (Thilini) and as having Malay,² Cantonese and Tamil as their mother tongues, respectively.

Michelle and Thilini were Nottingham PG students taking different master's degrees at the campus in Kuala Lumpur, going to the campus routinely only for intensive weekend seminars for their taught modules, keeping in touch with their tutors via email and submitting assignments online. Aminah had only just begun her doctoral studies at the institution at which she worked as a lecturer and so her situation was somewhat different. The three participants also had different teaching backgrounds. Of the two teachers, Michelle had a Montessori diploma and five years' experience and managed and taught in an English-medium kindergarten attached to a company, and Thilini was a special-needs teacher with a BSc in Psychological Sciences. She was in her twenties and an EMI special-needs school teacher with a year's experience. Aminah, as indicated above, was a university English lecturer, also in her forties, with a background in language and technology, a master's degree in linguistics and 17 years' teaching experience.

Although the focus group discussion did not draw on shared experience in the same way as did those of the other groups, the participants in the Malaysia group quickly established a group identity as experts compared with an imagined community of students whose writing they were commenting on. As a group, they were quite critical of the writing they were reading, suggesting that the writers were not of a very high level, for example when Thilini says 'It looks like they are not taught how to write the basic writing', although none of the three returned to this issue in the individual interviews. They also did not talk about their own experiences of getting feedback as readily as did the other groups. Again this may be because they did not know each other well enough to feel comfortable sharing talk about their own tutors' feedback on work. Through their interviews, however, it was evident that the participants' advanced-level study and English knowledge seemed to bring with it a greater sense of responsibility for successful interactions in their own workplaces. This is exemplified in interview by Thilini, who is talking about concepts she's learnt as part of her PG study:

*I do [use the terms that I'm learning] but not much because I feel that they [my colleagues] are not of the same level so they wouldn't really understand. So I break it down into simpler terms so that **we're** all at the same level and **we** can discuss about it at that level [...] and then in my mind I'm converting it back into the words that **we** use at uni.*

Viewed through the lens of footing (Goffman, 1981), Thilini's personal pronoun choice shows her individual decision making 'I break it down' indexed to her membership of two different communities through the multiple referents for **we**, shifting subtly from work to academic allegiance and then back again.

This kind of sophisticated understanding of the complexities surrounding English and Englishes, and creative and responsible ways of dealing with the realities of communication in English medium environments, is returned to in the thematic analysis which follows.

Thematic analysis

Three over-arching themes were identified: an increasing intellectual appreciation of varieties of English, a process/product view of the challenges of writing in academic English at PG level and a pragmatic view of wanting to become 'better' or 'more expert'. Each major theme is discussed in turn, illustrated with extracts from the transcripts.

Intellectual appreciation of varieties of English

The autobiographies that the teachers supplied prior to the focus groups and interviews give a vivid introduction to the complexity of their linguistic ecologies. These three examples are chosen to illustrate this complexity in the context of their daily teaching lives:

In school setting, I use both English language and Yoruba language when I am discussing about professional issues with my colleagues in an informal setting but in a formal setting like when we are having a staff meeting, I only use English language.

[Sarah, Nigeria]

The same diversity pointed out in the students may also be seen in the staff but with fewer nationalities and more diverse native backgrounds. As such the main language used in formal meetings and any other forum where professional issues are being discussed is English whereas in informal settings such as staff get-together, a mixture of English and Kiswahili may be used.

[Isaac, Kenya]

When I communicate with colleagues on a daily basis, I mainly use English. However, teachers I work with sometimes use Tamil and Bahasa Malaysia when communicating with me. So I reply in that language they have spoken in. This is the same with Mandarin speaking teachers.

[Thilini, Malaysia]

The teachers' understanding of varieties of English thus represents a complex landscape. Sometimes this was understood in terms of binaries such as informal/formal, written/spoken, vernacular/academic, native/non-native, UG/PG, standard/non-standard (Manglish, broken English, Pidgin). Sometimes variety was understood in relation to country: Nigerian/Kenyan/Malaysian English, British English, American English, 'English English'. There was also an understanding that variety exists between academic subjects or disciplines as well as between modes such as email, forum posting or (draft) assignment. All these categorisations were problematised and negotiated by the speakers with different ones being salient at different points. These categories were constructed through accounts of a range of practices including planning, rehearsal and code-switching. The teachers indicated a sense of their linguistic responsibilities and the effects of increased awareness on their professional practice and understanding.

In this extract from the Kenyan primary teacher focus group, we can see Njeri and Charles aligning with each other to challenge Harriet, who is continuing to contest the view that the kinds of issues commented on by tutors are somehow typical of Kenyan writers. In doing so, they appropriate the voice of the tutor 'do you have any sources to back up this idea?', mimicking the kinds of comments they have been looking at:

Charles: *I get, for me I get a lot of grammar, grammar corrections and I appreciate because I know that's part of my weak point.*

Harriet: *But we can't say – [it's typical of a Kenyan [student] **It's typical to any master's student anywhere, from any part of the world.***

Njeri: *I think so but I would beg to differ a bit but I would still think that perhaps a bit more in – not Kenyan per se **in a country like this where English is not our only spoken language, we have...***

Harriet: *Not necessarily, **there are some English people from England who speak poor English.** And they have wrong use of punctuation.*

Njeri: ***Well, do you have any sources to back up this idea?** [laughter]*

Charles: ***Yeah, you need your sources to back up** [laughter], **you don't just say***

Harriet: *No **what she said like it's typical it's mostly to people from countries like ours** and I'm like no this is a problem that is typical to any master's student, yeah. It is common to any master's student or any student.*

Njeri: *Er...*

Charles: *Yeah, let's go to example six.*
[Kenya FG1]

In the Nigeria focus group, in response to one of the prompts which showed several comments on a passage of student writing, participants made a connection to their own experiences of receiving similar feedback and going through stages, from being 'destabilised' to 'retracing steps'. They also reflected humorously on their own learning of academic English. Similarly to the Kenyan participants, they also showed their perception of the perspective of the tutor when Sarah reports a comment that a fellow student made when they saw feedback she had received on a draft assignment.

Sarah: *Well, seeing this feedback, I'd **first of all be destabilised.***

Bashir: *Ah. Means that you don't want to learn.*

Sarah: *Not that I don't want to learn, I said I'd **first of all be destabilised.** Not that I will not learn, because looking at maybe a paragraph, I have about four or five comments on a paragraph [laughs] so ... but when I now, you know, **come back, calm down, then I can always trace my steps.***

David: *Let me, let me now – let me give you an additive to that. One of us saw [the tutor's] comment on their [...] assignment. He now said, **ah, to them you don't understand English at all.***

[Nigeria FG]

This is considered so amusing that it is repeated a minute later:

Bashir: *No. Do you think this is a typical feedback on a Nigerian student?*

All: Yes, yes.

Victor: *Exactly, and we are used to it and we are even improving.*

[Laughter]

David: *That's why I said, one of us said to them...*

Sarah: *You don't understand English.*

[Nigeria FG]

Here the phrase 'and we are used to it' is very telling, implying both familiarity with this type of feedback and resignation, but also acceptance and humour in understanding that this is what you expect when you choose to study with a UK university. This might also imply that students consider that they have a more sophisticated understanding of varieties of English than their tutors.

David helpfully elaborates on this further in his individual interview:

Mary: *So in terms of your identity as a speaker of English and...if I just said to you, what's your main language or how do you see yourself ... would you say English speaker, Yoruba speaker, what is the most important thing to you?*

David: *It depends on the gathering.*

Mary: *It depends on the what?*

David: *Gathering, gathering, the mode of the gathering.*

Mary: *Right.*

David: *The occasion.*

Mary: *Right.*

David: *The community, the sample under consideration.*

Mary: *Yes.*

David: *If the sample, if it is within the Nigerian context, I will say Yoruba.*

Mary: *Yes.*

David: *But if it is internationally, I won't say Yoruba, I would say English.*

Mary: *That's really interesting.*

David: *When I say Yoruba, some people have not heard about Yoruba before.*

Mary: *Yes. So your linguistic identity depends on the context.*

David: *Yes.*

Mary: *A little bit, so that would, well significantly as well, and there might be other context when you speak **Pidgin**. Do you ever speak **Pidgin** or not really?*

David: *A typical Lagosian.*

Mary: *Yes.*

David: *People reside in Lagos will speak **Pidgin**.*

Mary: *Yes.*

David: *Because it is our **market language**.*

Another of the Nigerian participants, Bashir, who teaches in a primary school, implies in his individual interview that he now considers himself to be more of an expert in English than those teaching English as a subject in his primary school because he has appreciated the differences between Nigerian English and 'English English':

Bashir: *Most times when we do our work we still give it to them [English teachers] to read and that is a similar problem. By the time the work gets to another person you see your grammar and you wonder, **if English language teachers go through this and they did not find anything then it means that our English is not really 'English English'. I'm telling you that I am getting improved by the day with the way I write now.***

The participants' understanding of varieties of English also extends to a sophisticated understanding of different modes of communication as the excerpt below exemplifies. Here, during her interview, Thilini comments on both email language and difference between British and American usage:

Thilini: *I'm very aware of the difference in spelling [between British and American English].*

Jane: *That's in journal articles and books but what about in emails?*

Thilini: *Erm no I don't see a huge difference.*

Jane: *But you could identify email English?*

Thilini: *Yes, yes I can [laughs].*

Jane: *What are the characteristics of email English?*

Thilini: *They're straight to the point. They're short – sentences are a lot shorter. The words are a lot – they use common words. I could only tell the difference between **American speaking lecturer and the British English speaking lecturer** through the spelling that's the only difference I feel.*

These examples have illustrated the participants' intellectual appreciation of the many ways in which the English language varies and how these varieties can be contextualised in a complex linguistic landscape. It is within this complex context that the next section's exploration of academic writing challenges should be read.

Challenges of academic English at PG level – process and product

Although the participants could be seen as being open to correction and feedback, and not threatened by it, there was a strong sense of the challenges of academic writing in English at PG level. Sometimes the participants cast themselves as victims of the requirements of academic writing, as in these extracts:

Esther: *So I go the second one the same, [reads prompt]. I will start it myself. I think for me this is just an omission, and also for me because **I was also a victim of this** it made me realise how important it is to refer, so and that omission is common especially when you start doing this writing.*
[Kenya FG2]

Thilini: *So do you think this is typical? I think it is typical [Michelle: yeah] **especially** [Aminah: yeah, yeah] **in Malaysia coz we are so multilingual that sometimes it can be so confusing.***
[...]

Thilini: *So what do you think the student's reaction would be...*

Aminah: *The student's reaction...*

Michelle: *I think it's an honest mistake [laughter] because she probably wouldn't have thought 'oh, this is wrong' because she is so used to speaking and writing in that way.*

[Laughter]

[Malaysia FG]

However, the teachers build up a complex picture of being powerless but also being responsible for engaging with the issues that are raised by tutors, as shown by these comments from the beginning and end of a lively debate about tutor feedback on informal language. The episode begins with Bashir casually describing himself as a 'victim':

Bashir: *It all leads back to a language and **I once fell victim of this type of thing.** I am used to using all these 'marvellous' 'fantastic' and my tutor, you know, corrected me at the initial stage of our programme.*
[Nigeria FG]

Five minutes later, towards the end of the discussion of this particular focus group prompt, which has now moved on to a consideration of how tutors should provide feedback, he interrupts others to reposition himself as more powerful:

Bashir: *Let me come in. **The tutor is placing this writer almost at the same level with himself or herself,** thinking that that person will reason and make use of a better word, a more suitable word. I said it happened to me. I am fond of, you know, using 'fantastic' 'this is marvellous', and the moment I was corrected that it is not formal, I've started using more formal language.*
[Nigeria FG]

In the Malaysia focus group, we can see sympathy for both students and tutors articulated before the topic is closed down by Michelle who puts the responsibility for improvement firmly back with the student.

Aminah: *Another thing is that when the students see there are a lot of grammatical errors in their writing, **they will feel worried and also upset, right?***

Michelle: *The marker also has to be concerned of the feelings of the students. **It is a pity.*** [Aminah: yeah] **Waste of time.**
[Laughter]

Aminah: *Worried because of the marks and the hard work they have done, the effort they have put, **then but still they cannot do it correctly, right?***

Michelle: *A smart student should go and sign up for English class.*

Aminah: *We move on to the next one.*
[Malaysia FG]

In one of the interviews in Nigeria, with David, there was a reflection of tensions about using English as a medium of instruction in what one participant referred to in their individual interview as a 'nation of nations'.

David: *I would prefer like we say [we should use mother tongue instruction] all the time if the language of the country is monolingual.*

Mary: Yes.

David: *There is nothing bad in using the mother tongue as medium of instruction, but since our country is **nations inside a nation**, that is why we have all these civil unrest. Our country Nigeria is **nations inside a nation**.*

Mary: Yes. I agree.

David: *So, to agree...to adopt one language is unforeseeable.*

It is clear from the analysis that participants do see a problem with academic writing stemming from direct translation from their local languages as the following extract from the Kenyan primary focus group attests and although all three of these participants speak Kiswahili, they find it difficult to understand exactly what the writer is trying to say.

Njeri: *I think if I was looking, if I had written this, I would probably **and I think it's also a typical feedback on Kenyan master's level student writing because our expression in the language of English sometimes is directly translated.***

Charles: *From our, our local language.*

Njeri: Yes.

Charles: *Yeah, so, **we put it directly in English the way it is in our local language.***

Njeri: ***Exactly, yeah** so, we have articulated the thoughts here in a very grammatically correct...*

Charles: *But, but the student might not know about the grammatically correct, the phrase itself, he might not even be aware even reading two or three times **unless they get an extra set of eyes to look at it** according to the language that direct translation...*

Njeri: ***What do you think the student is trying to say here?***

Charles: *Hmm...[spends some time reading] **it's unclear to me still.***

[Kenya FG1]

Similarly a Nigerian participant, Victor, explained in his interview that he can see interpretation from one language to another:

Victor: *What I've discovered is that, most times, when we write, I discovered that our interpretation of the English language [...] **We interpret. What we write is more like the way we speak our mother tongue.***

Overall, although foregrounding a number of challenges, the participants show a keen understanding that academic writing is both a process and a product, and that their alignment to the roles of tutor and student is continuously in flux. Their discussion is characterised by humour as well as considerable resilience to the difficulties encountered.

A pragmatic view of developing expertise

The idea of resilience is pertinent to this final theme too. In both the focus groups and the interviews, there seems to be a very pragmatic recognition of the participants' post-colonial context and an acceptance of the use of English as a lingua franca in many aspects of their lives. The teachers are aware of the status of English and the affordances that English use brings and there is openness to feedback. Despite often referring to it as 'correction', they do not seem to be threatened by the process, rather they are open to it.

There is agreement in the Malaysia focus group, that, in some cases, they do need their tutors to assist them to recognise different varieties of English, summarised by one participant:

Aminah: *Furthermore we also have a mix up between standard English and Malaysian English. Sometime we tend to use Malaysian English in our writing, yeah. **That one we need the teachers, the lecturers to correct us.***

[Malaysia FG]

In the Nigerian focus group there was a noticeable focus on 'correct' English and it is interesting here to note that the connotations of the term 'correction' appear to be slightly different to UK English usage, being more synonymous with guidance or advice that leads to improvement, which they accept pragmatically:

Victor: *Personally, someone like me would see it as a way of correcting me. I would see it as a way of correcting me.*

Sarah: *As a way of correction.*

Victor: *As a way of making me use a better language for it. So **I would see it as a way of correcting me.***

David: *What do you think the student would?*

Victor: *I said personally, so... but I don't know it depends in the – on the student.*

[...]

Yemi: *The tutor gave options that he could have used this instead of this. **He should see it as a correction.***

Victor: ***It's a learning process; that individual is improving, he is improving.***

Yemi: Yes.

[Nigeria FG]

They mostly say that the PG course has made their English 'better':

Bashir: *Even in our previous modules [...] those things, how we were just starting and **the corrections that have made us somehow better now, in terms of academic writing. So it's a very good thing.***

[Nigeria FG]

Compliance with academic referencing conventions, in this case the Harvard system, was seen as an important aspect of academic writing and a considerable amount of focus group talk was devoted to the associated challenges, as in these two examples, both from Kenya:

Njeri: *I think this is more about the language used in the referencing.*

Charles: *Yeah, I agree. I agree with you. It's more about, more about the language because the comment has just gave them the correct way to reference that. So I think it's more about the language and I think the student will just, ok it will be a learning point, learning point from the next assignment if he has to use the same kind of reference, his reference is better so **this will be a welcomed comment.***

[Kenya FG1]

Esther: ***For me citation has become easier, I've learnt a lot and I think my reaction was because I'm learning I think I've gotten better. I don't think I'm, I'm ... I'm very alert now about citations and about referencing.** So anytime I do my work, I'm very keen on that. Maybe the way, maybe the ... Initially we do not know **honestly** we do not know really ... **We've come a long way.***

[Kenya FG2]

In the Nigerian focus group, an interesting debate occurred about whether an example of feedback to a student about how to compile a references list was about content or language, which also shows several of these features typical of the way these participants interacted. Bashir insists that the point is about language, because it is about 'research language', and David implies that referencing style is language. However, Victor and Sarah disagree and say that it is about content because no language (i.e. sentence) is being corrected:

Victor: *I assume that the person tried to categorise the references into e-books, journals articles and if you look at what the tutor wrote, 'all references should be in a single list, not categorised by type, please check'. I think it's just an instruction; it's just a way of trying to put the students back on track. So I don't see any fault in this.*

Yemi: *Or is it content or language?*

Sarah: ***It's not language, it is content. It's content, it's not language.***

David: *It's the **style** adopted for referencing, which is the Harvard.*

Bashir: *Is it content? No! I think I will object to that, it is language. In the sense that we have what we call research language. There's what we call research language. So this person is not in line and the tutor is trying to put the person on the right track.*
[Arguing over one another.]

Victor: *It's not about language, it's about a ... the person was trying to categorise, references are not categorised. References are placed together; references are raised together.*

Sarah: *Using language like maybe he's correcting a sentence or something. That's language...*

Victor: *No sentence is corrected here. No, no, I don't think err...*

David: *It's language.*

Victor: *I don't think it's about language. It's about a content.*

David: *It is to adopt the style of referencing.*
[Nigeria FG]

In the Kenyan focus group of secondary teachers, discussion about referencing elaborates on expectations in terms of the features of master's level writing, and the principles behind this. They discuss an example of feedback on student writing about the 'knowledge age', and conclude that this would only be typical of someone just starting their PG studies:

Esther: *[...] There's no definition of knowledge age, the student has assumed that people know what the knowledge age is or whoever is reading they may not know what the knowledge age is. So they have not tried to clarify, there's no supporting information...*

Isaac: *I think...*

Esther: *Yes.*

Isaac: *This is it's like you're learning how do I write an essay that's good enough for a master's-level course, so I think what the tutor is, the tutor's comment is something that is constructive for the student because they will know that when I write the knowledge age I need to add sources, I need to explain all the facts so that I am able to express my ideas. I think it was a quite a fair comment, constructive feedback.*

Janet: *With the tutor's feedback, I also agree with him. I think when I'm writing an essay or whatever you're writing you should be able to, somebody else wouldn't know about knowledge age, should be able to at least have a clue of where to that information of the knowledge age.*

Esther: *This would be typical of a student who is at module one.*

Isaac: *Module one, that's true.*

Esther: *This would be typical only for a person who is at module one.*

[Kenya FG2]

After discussing three more examples, Janet draws conclusions about how their proficiency has developed since the start of the course:

Janet: *I think, I would like to say my own conclusion that as the modules go on, from M1 to M2, M1 has many mistakes we personally have made, but as we go on we become better. I think if there was M5 or M6 there would be no mistakes at all, it would just flow. By this stage you know the standards of Nottingham, you know what is required. At M1 you are never sure you know at all. By M2 you are analysing how you need to improve my standards and then M3 you're getting...*

Esther: *More stable.*

Janet: *...stable into it and this is particularly M4, where you are not trying to get the mistakes, you look at M1 where to already drop this part, so you're trying to make it perfect so...*

[Kenya FG2]

Although the Malaysia focus group did not contain extended personal accounts and opinions, a similar pragmatic/instrument view of improvement is evident. Sometimes this is alluded to through the participants' comments on what the students who wrote the assignments should have done. For example Michelle says at one point, 'the student shouldn't have any reaction, he should correct it straight away'. A short while later, she says:

Michelle: *I think we need practice. For me also I think I have problem writing. I have to make sure I read ten times. I don't know where I go wrong until I submit then I get the feedback.*

This third overarching theme can go some way to reconciling the first two themes as it makes the link between the teachers' use of English beyond the challenges that they encounter in their academic writing to include the complexities of its use as a medium of instruction in the schools where they are advancing in their careers. We see this as relating to Hall et al.'s (2013) argument that there is a tension between holding both monolithic and plurilithic views in relation to English. The teachers in all three of our focus groups show a strong sense that they are appropriating and transforming this kind of tension by viewing English language variety recognition and choice as just one of the many pedagogical decisions they make on a daily basis, choices they feel they are getting better at making as their careers progress.

5

Conclusion and implications

We draw some conclusions about what we have learnt from our participants in response to the research questions of this project. We also identify implications for subject teachers in ‘outer circle’ countries and their HE tutors.

Transitions

Our first research question asked, what do subject teachers from Nigeria, Kenya and Malaysia report about their experience of the transition from being a school teacher in English to becoming an online PG student in English?

The Nigerian participants reported that the transition has made them focus more on their own English use. From the Kenyan primary and secondary teachers, who had no or little prior teacher education, there was as much of a focus on the change of discipline from first degrees to PG study in education as there was in the transition from Kenyan to UK universities, particularly as two of these had studied subjects where there had been as much focus on practical skills as writing (art and physical education). The least experienced of the Malaysian group also focused on disciplinary transition, while all three took very pragmatic views of the changes that they were undergoing as part of a package of developments related to career progression.

Identities

What do these teachers report about their own linguistic and professional identities during their HE studies?

The Nigerian participants all spoke Yoruba at home and in their communities, but English at school and in professional contexts. Both the Nigerian and Kenyan participants reported that English was the official language of instruction and professional communication in school, but that socially they would use Yoruba (in Lagos) or Kiswahili (in Nairobi). With their families they might also use other tribal languages. Thus these teachers see themselves as

having multiple linguistic identities relevant to social contexts and the degree of formality involved. There is a possibility of threat to their linguistic identities as teachers who are proficient users of English as their use of English in their PG work is subject to critique from tutors. However, an appreciation of varieties of English allows them to reconcile this threat, together with a certain distancing (what Nottingham wants) as well as personalisation (what the tutor wants).

Implications for teachers

What are the implications for subject teachers in ‘outer circle’ countries for their own professional and academic practice?

In terms of their professional practice, most of the teachers claimed in individual interviews that PG study in English has led them to reflect on their use of English in the classroom as well as in their studies. For example, Bashir and David, who teach mathematics and science respectively in Nigerian state schools, reflect on their greater awareness of the clarity of language that they use and the positive impact that they believe this has had in the classroom:

Bashir: *They call me an asset now [...] Now I think I can express myself better and with this programme really I'm a rebranded teacher.*

David: *In teaching and certainly in teaching science most teachers don't speak good English. Our reputation is that science people are not really too good in speaking English [...] So as a science teacher this course has really helped me to develop.*

In the context of an international school in Kenya, Isaac, a geography and business studies teacher, comments:

Isaac: *The major change has been in how I express myself in terms of, do the people I am teaching actually get what I am saying? [...] I need to use a language where I will be able to reach all the students in the class.*

Although the educational contexts referred to by the participants from Malaysia were varied, all three share a strong sense of professionalism and are aware of the importance of a range of languages in their day-to-day professional lives. For both Thilini and Michelle who report being the most fluent speakers of English in their working environment, studying in English has given them an important opportunity to know more about what they can achieve when writing English, an opportunity that they value, and one which allows them to reflect on a range of daily interactions. In turn, they link this with developing professionalism. In the context of her role as principal, rather than as a teacher, Michelle says at interview:

Michelle: *It [studying at PG level in English] has changed my approach and you know, knowing my own level of English, at this stage, at this stage, you know. The more professional I have to be – that's my point. Actually it depends on the characteristic of that person you know so whether you want to improve yourself or not. For me because I want to improve myself that's why I took up this course otherwise I'd be stagnant with my profession, I'll be dead, you know, forever.*

Particularly in the Nigerian focus group, but also to an extent in the Kenyan secondary teacher group, there was a new appreciation of the perspective of their own students' responses to feedback on their writing. In some cases the teachers liked the model of feedback they had experienced in their HE studies to such an extent that they had adopted a similar approach with their own students.

In terms of their academic practice, there was an acceptance among the participants that they had moved into a new territory in studying with a UK university. If they had not had this before, they certainly now had an awareness of different expectations, sometimes framed as higher expectations, but not always.

Implications for HE tutors

With the expansion of PG teacher education by UK universities in international and online settings beyond English language teacher education, the HE tutors who are working with international students

are increasingly unlikely to be English language specialists. Furthermore, in online teaching environments, interaction between tutors and PG students is more likely to be in written form, as email and discussion board 'conversations' and written comments on plans and drafts tend to substitute for oral communication in face-to-face seminars and tutorials. This draws attention to students' language in new ways, particularly in the experience of formal writing by students and to students, and the foregrounding of their reading and writing competence over oral skills.

The findings of this research project encourage reflection on our roles as HE tutors. Just as the participants in this study are teachers of their subjects, but also teachers of English in EMI contexts, so are HE teacher educators also acting as teachers of academic English. Thus we argue that HE tutors need to have a greater understanding of their students' learning of academic English as situated practice and the learning of a 'new' variety of English. We recommend promoting awareness of a new literacies perspective and suggest that there is greater communication between English for Academic Purposes tutors and other HE teaching staff. One aim of this should be to develop non-language specialist tutors' understanding of the 'plurilithic' notions of English (Hall et al., 2013) and of the particular varieties of English used by their students in their personal and professional lives. This might be built into student induction activities (face-to-face or virtual) but also achieved through an encouragement to use more metalanguage (language about language) and explicit reflection on language in use.

HE tutors too need to recognise that they are not only teachers of their subjects, but teachers of English, and that they have much to learn from students who in many cases are much more aware of the negotiations involved in using varieties of English across a range of personal and professional contexts.

References

- Bisong, J (1995) Language choice and cultural imperialism: a Nigerian perspective. *ELT Journal* 49/2: 122–132.
- British Educational Research Association (2011) *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. London: BERA.
- Budohoska, N (2014) English in Kenya or Kenyan English? *Polish Studies in English Language and Literature*, Vol. 36. Peter Lang [e-book].
- England, L and Hall, DR (2012) 'The Future of Online TESOL', in England, L (ed) *Online Language Teacher Education* 187–199. London: Routledge.
- Evison, J and Bailey, L (2014) *English language teachers and their place in the world: insights from talk about professional development*. Paper presented at the 7th Inter-Varietal Applied Corpus Studies (IVACS) Group International Conference, June 2014, Newcastle.
- Gee, JP (1996) *Social linguistics and literacies: ideology in discourses* (2nd Edition). Basingstoke: Falmer Press.
- Gobel, P, Thang, SM, Sidhu, GK, Oon, SI and Chan, YF (2013) Attributions to Success and Failure in English Language Learning: A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural Undergraduates in Malaysia. *Asian Social Science* 9/2: 53–62.
- Goffman, E (1981) *Forms of talk*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Grotjahn, R (1987) 'On the methodological basis of introspective method', in Faerch, C and Kasper, G (eds) *Introspection in Second Language Research*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Hall, CJ, Wicaksono, R, Liu, S, Qian, Y and Xiaoqing, X (2013) *English reconceived: Raising teachers' awareness of English as a 'plurilithic' resource through an online course*. London: British Council. Available online at: <http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/elt-research-partnership>
- Hashim, A (2014) English and the Linguistic Ecology of Malaysia. *World Englishes* 33/4: 458–471.
- Higgins, C (2003) 'Ownership' of English in the 'outer circle': An alternative to the NS-NNS dichotomy. *TESOL Quarterly* 37/4: 615–644.
- Hill, C and Beadle, S (2014) *The art of attraction: soft power and the UK's role in the world*. London: The British Academy. Available online at: www.britac.ac.uk/intl/softpower.cfm?frmAlias=/softpower/
- Igboanusi, H (2008a) Mother-tongue-based bilingual education in Nigeria: attitudes and practice. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11/6: 721–734.
- Igboanusi, H (2008b) Empowering Nigerian Pidgin: a challenge for status planning? *World Englishes* 27/1: 68–82.
- Jenkins, J (2003) *World Englishes: a resource book for students*. London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, J (2013) *English as a Lingua Franca in the International University: the politics of academic English language policy*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Kachru, BB (1992) 'Models for non-native Englishes', in *The Other Tongue* (2nd Edition) (ed). Urbana: University of Illinois.
- Kirkpatrick A (ed) (2008) *The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Kirkpatrick, A (2007) *World Englishes: Implications for international communication and English language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kvale, S (1996) *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Lave, J and Wenger, E (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lea, M and Street, B (1998) Student writing in higher education: an academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education* 11/3: 182–199.
- Lillis, TM (2001) *Student writing: access, regulation, desire*. London: Routledge.
- Lillis, T and Scott, M (2007) Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics* 4/1: 5–32.

Nair-Venugopal, S (2013) Linguistic ideology and practice: Language, literacy and communication in a localized workplace context in relation to the globalized. *Linguistics and Education* 24/4: 454–465.

Norton, B (1997) Language, identity and ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly* 31/3: 409–429.

Orim, S-M, Davies, JW, Borg, E and Glendinning, I (2013) Exploring Nigerian postgraduate students' experience of plagiarism: a phenomenographic case study. *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 9/1: 20–34.

Phillipson, R (1996) Linguistic imperialism: African perspectives. *ELT Journal* 50/2: 160–167.

Phillipson, R (2009) *Linguistic imperialism continued*. New York; London: Routledge.

Richards, K (2003) *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ridge, B (2004) Bangsa Malaysia and Recent Malaysian English Language Policies. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 5/4: 407–423.

Schmied, J (2006) East African Englishes, in Kachru, B, Kachru, Y and Nelson, C (eds) *The Handbook of World Englishes*. Basingstoke: Blackwell.

Schmied, J (2012) 'Standards of English in East Africa', in Hickey, R (ed) *Standards of English. Codified Varieties around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Silverman, D (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.

Street, B (1999) New literacies in theory and practice: what are the implications for language in education? *Linguistics and Education* 10/1: 1–24.

Ufomata, T (1999) Major and minor languages in complex linguistic ecologies: the Nigerian experience. *International Journal of Educational Development* 19: 315–322.

Appendix 1

Autobiography task

Please save this Word document to your computer and write directly in it.
When you have finished, please email it back to us as an attachment.

Please complete Part 1 (background information) and then in Part 2 write a short account of the role of language in your daily professional life as a teacher.

Part 1

Please answer as many questions as you can in the table below (the boxes will expand as you type). If you do not wish to answer, just put a dash (-).

| General information | |
|---|--|
| Nationality | |
| Main country of residence | |
| Countries in which you have lived | |
| Age | |
| Mother tongue(s) | |
| Languages spoken fluently | |
| Languages written fluently | |
| Languages you have partial knowledge of | |
| Any other information | |
| Childhood and school education | |
| Languages spoken in your home when you were a child | |
| Country and region where you went to school | |
| Languages you spoke at school | |
| Languages you heard at school | |
| Languages you learnt at school | |
| Languages used in school assessment | |
| Any other information | |
| Education post-school | |
| Place(s) of study | |
| Subject(s) studied | |
| Qualification(s) gained | |
| Languages used during your studies | |
| Languages used for assessment | |
| Any other information | |
| Professional information | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Teaching qualification(s) (What? Where gained?) | |
| Years' experience as a teacher | |
| Current job title | |
| Main subject/level taught | |
| Other subjects/levels taught | |
| Main responsibilities | |
| Languages used in your current place of employment | |
| Languages taught in your current place of employment | |
| Any other important information | |

Part 2

Please write a short account in the space below (around 500 words) about the role of language(s) in your daily working life, using the following questions to guide you:

- What language(s) do you use in classroom teaching – when speaking to the class, in reading and writing tasks?
- What language(s) do your students speak, at school and at home?
- What language(s) are they assessed in? Have there been any changes in this? What language(s) do you use with colleagues when talking about professional issues, in school meetings and more informally?

We would like continuous prose rather than separate responses to each prompt, and you may address these in any order you like.

You don't need to write about all of these things if they are not relevant; if there are other things that you think are relevant, please include them instead.

Please write your response here (the box will expand as you type):

Thank you for participating in this task. Please email this document back to us as an attachment.

Appendix 2

Focus group task instruction and example prompts

Focus group instructions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. We envisage that your discussion will take around 30 minutes.

We would like you to discuss some examples of tutor comments on students' draft assignments for the first module of a master's-level course.

You will be given a small pile of cards on each of which is a short extract from an assignment and some tutor feedback.

Please turn over the cards one at a time and discuss the feedback and the extract in relation to the following:

Is this example feedback about the content of the assignment or the language used to express it?

What do you think the students' reaction was to this feedback?

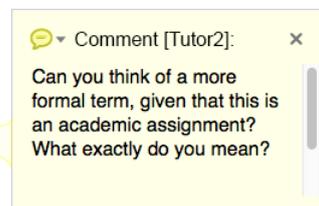
Do you think this is typical feedback on Kenyan/Nigerian/Malaysian [as appropriate] master's-level students' writing?

Please state clearly the number of the example you are discussing so that when we transcribe the audio we know which extract you are talking about.

Thank you.

Examples of focus group prompts

I believe that a balanced curriculum is necessary to develop a child intellectually and morally and that students learn best when they are given ample opportunity to construct knowledge by themselves rather than when they are just being spoon fed.



My ideal school would therefore seek to involve key educators and children influencers in drawing a rich all inclusive curriculum that would consist of core curricular and extra curricular activities to ensure a holistic education. The curriculum would be progressive in nature; hence, care would be taken in developing content that matches with **the right stage of development and learning.**

Comment [Tutor1]:
??? is this a reference to Piaget? If so, cite him.

On the contrary, I think the setting in the book is not suitable for the students. They may get bored easily as the sentence in the examples and exercises are based on school settings. The students are mostly 19–20 years old. They need examples which are more similar to their setting. They may prefer 'driving their own cars' rather than 'waiting for the school bus at the bus stop'. The adult learners' setting with language of a lower level of proficiency may not easily get in a book published for the profit purposes but this is what these group of students need.

Comment [Tutor3]:
These are interesting personal views. Can you substantiate this claim by reference to appropriate academic source? You may also want to think about helping your assertion.

Appendix 3

Individual semi-structured interview schedule

Note: The aim of the interview is to encourage participants to report and reflect on their experience as classroom teachers and as PG students in order to explore their language use and academic literacies.

- (Start with a written task and follow up on any areas for clarification there, particularly languages used in different contexts and different varieties of English.)
- Reflect on your experience in the focus group discussion. Was there anything particularly memorable or relevant to you in this discussion?
- What was your experience of moving from being a school teacher in English to also becoming an online postgraduate student in English at an English university? How does this compare to your UG (and if relevant other PG) studies? Were these in the medium of English and what was your view of this? Have your views about academic English changed in any way?
- Can you now please reflect on your own linguistic and professional identities during your PG studies? How do you see yourself as a speaker of English and other languages? How do you see yourself as a teacher, teaching in the medium of English? Has this changed since you started your PG studies? [Will need prompting as appropriate depending on individual]
- Has learning in English (in Moodle discussion boards, via email, via Skype) changed how you teach in English?
- What do you think about the English you read in the course materials/that your tutors use in emails/that your course-mates use? [Maybe if it all seems the same, if it's British or American English or some other kind and how do they know.]
- Has interacting in Moodle changed how you feel about language/teaching in English?
- We are particularly interested in different varieties of English and what is considered acceptable in different contexts. What are your opinions about any of the things we have asked you about your use of English in your teaching and your studies? What do you think about language use in your school and do you have any suggestions about this? What do you think about language use in your PG studies and do you have any suggestions about this?

www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications

ISBN 978-0-86355-792-7

All images © British Council

© **British Council 2016/F251**

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.