Second Language Englishes (extended circle): Africa

Global English, SS 2010

1. Introduction -> Sonja Faulhaber
2. East African English -> Christiane Hoy
4. West African English -> Nicole Pfeifer
5. English representing African cultures -> Anna Kurpiers
6. What linguistic choices do governments have? -> Anna Kurpiers
7. Short summary -> Sonja Faulhaber
8. Sources

History

Colonization
- South Africa: 1806
- Namibia: 1919
- Tanzania: 1922
- Zambia: 1911

- English is spoken in Africa because it was the Colonial Language of the British colonies.

Different forms of English in Africa

- West Africa: Cameroon English, Nigerian English and Liberian English
- East Africa: Malawi English and Uganda English
- South Africa: South African English

Where is English spoken in Africa?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Eligible Pop.</th>
<th>As First Lang.</th>
<th>As Additional Language</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>148,093,000</td>
<td>79,000,000</td>
<td>&gt;75,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
<td>13,700,000</td>
<td>3,673,203</td>
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<td>2,700,000</td>
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<td>Uganda</td>
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<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1,910,000</td>
<td>1,910,000</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
East African English

Historical Background
• end of 19th century: establishment of British and German colonial power
• Kiswahili as lingua franca
• trilingual language policy
  • local tribal mother tongues
  • Kiswahili (African lingua franca)
  • English

Who speaks English?
• two factors:
  • education
  • social position
  • urbanization
• numbers:
  • 30% of people in Uganda
  • 20% of people in Kenya
  • 5% of people in Tanzania

Phonology
• homophonous “minimal pairs”
  • ram & lamb
  • beat & bit
  • show & so
  • consonants /t/ and /l/ are one and the same
    – /lori/ becomes /loli/ and /lori/
• fricatives
  • the sets of voiced and voiceless fricatives around the alveolar ridge are not distinguished clearly
    – /ɖ/ and /ɭ/
    – /ɡ/ and /z/
    – /ɟ/ and /ʤ/
• vowels
  • central vowels /ʌ/ as in but, /ɜ:/ as in bird and /ʌ/ are avoided
  • tendency toward half-open or open positions:
    – /a/ and /e/
Lexicon

- old borrowings have already been integrated into English (e.g. safari)
- fields of food, clothing and politics are culture-specific everywhere
- often English words are used with a different meaning (e.g. to forget & to lose)

Grammar

- complex tenses are avoided:
  It would have been much better if this was done.
- continuous forms be + verb + -ing are overused:
  Women always are having a lot to do.

Grammar

- the use of (–s) plural markers is overgeneralized:
  people and peoples
  information and informations
  food and foods
- question tags tend to occur in invariant forms:
  There we are, isn’t it?

Outlook

- trifocal language system:
  English is not a threat to other languages!
- globalization supports the use of English

History

- formerly and historically bilingual state
- struggle between English and Afrikaans
- used to protect white minority privilege and power in all spheres in life
- Colonial possession:
  - Dutch: 1652-1795
  - British: 1795-1948
  - Afrikaans: 1948-1994

English(es) in South Africa
English in a multilingual country

- 11 official languages (out of 25 estimated languages) → asymmetrical multilingualism
- Bantu languages: few economic and educational advantages
- English: far more prestige than any other official language
- Unmarked language in inter-racial as well as in inter-ethnic communities

*“linguistic glue to bond a [racially, ethnically, and linguistically] diverse and complex society”*

English(es) in South Africa

- diverse South African English:
  - White SAE
  - Black SAE
  - Indian SAE
  - Colored/Afrikaans SAE
  - each has its own standards and sub-varieties

English(es) in South Africa

- Second-language varieties heavily marked by primary languages at every level of linguistic structure:
  - African languages for Black-SAE
  - Afrikaans for Colored- and Afrikaans-SAE
  - Indian languages for Indian-SAE
- Most salient (sociolinguistic) marker: accent

Phonology

- Follows British conventions
- Two South African Conventions:
  - Natal → RP
  - Cape English → Cockney
  - RP as prestige model until long after end of WWII
- Today replaced by “respectable SAFE” (based on Natal)
- Borrowed lexical items from Afrikaans or African languages not anglicized

Phonology: examples

- Allophonic variations
  - e.g.: lift → [l] → [li]
- Tendencies to monothongization
  - e.g.: square → [e]
- Prevoical /r/ realized as fricative, tap, trill
- Afrikaans-based lexical items
  - e.g.: ag → [x]
**Grammar**

- morphology and syntax can hardly be distinguished from Standard EngE or General English

- **Characteristics in informal speech:**
  - *no* as sentence initiator
    
  ```
  Can you deliver it? No, sure, we'll send it this afternoon
  ```

  - *Is it?* as “all-purpose response”
    
  ```
  - He's left St Helena.
  - Is it?
  ```

- busy as marker of progressive aspect with certain verbs, where it does not have its normal sense of activity:
  
  ```
  He was busy lying in bed
  ```

- never as simple marker of sentence negations
  
  ```
  - I never borrowed your tackies.
  - You did.
  - I never.
  ```

**Lexis**

- relates to aspects of South Africa life, culture, and environment:
  
  - *veld* (open country, broad high grassland)
  - *dorp* (small town)
  - *kaffir* (native)

- borrowings from other SA languages:
  
  - e.g.: *indaba* (from Zulu and Xhosa) serious meeting between community leaders
  - *mampara* (from Sotho) wate material, idiot

- lexical change as result of social changes:
  
  - e.g.: rainbow-X, where X can be any English noun
    
  ```
  rainbow nation, rainbow swimming pool
  ```

**The Future of English in SA**

- since the end of apartheid:
  
  - English as medium of instruction in more than 80% of schools
  - pupils leaving township schools for urban institutions
  - speakers believe that African languages cannot “feed” them:
    
    - "the children’s future lies with the global language, English"

**Conclusion**

- access to educational and job opportunities
- language of wider communication
- important key to knowledge, science, world literature and current affairs
- simultaneously a barrier for non-English speakers
- accusation of suppressing indigenous languages

--> mixed attitudes
West African English

General information
West African English WAE/ WAfrE as official language in:
- Nigeria
- Ghana
- Cameroon (co-official languages: English & French)
- Sierra Leone
- Gambia
- Liberia (highest percentage of speakers of English)

Features of WAE
- Non-rhotic (but /r/ often trilled where used)
- Grammar: in general like standard BrE, but different structures are possible
- Intonation: features of tonal systems of West African Languages
- Vocabulary: mostly transferred from target language English

Usually as 2nd (3rd, …) language
- Rather small elite group of speakers; used in formal context
- For informal contexts in everyday life: West African Pidgin English

Historical background
- Linguisitic features
- Attitudes in West Africa
• 4 varieties of WAE speakers
• Apart from WAE there are also West African vernaculars (WAVE):
• Gambia: Aku
• Sierra Leone: Krio
• Nigeria: Yoruba (West), Igbo (East), Hausa (North)
• Ghana: Aku, Ga, Ewe
• e.g.: Krio Dem dey go dey fo'oh it res
  - padi - friend = They are going there to eat rice
  - berin - funeral

Historical background

Phase 1 (early 19th cent. – ca. 1900)
• English in Africa since 1557
• Establishment of forts and trading posts in 17th cent.
• First forms of pidgin through trading contacts
• Missionaries in 1840’s
• By 1860’s: Nigerian English well established in Brit. regions
• Pidgin English as Lingua Franca between ethnicities

Phase 2 (1900 - late 1940’s)
• English dominant in law, commerce, education, administration
• Pidgin in cities and informal domains
• Most Brit. residents in Nigeria were from the middle and upper classes and RP speakers
• Expansion of English in formal contexts
  (Nigerian Pidgin in informal contexts)

Phase 3 (late 1940’s)
• After WW II
• English teaching now theoretically available to everyone
• Nigerians usually learned (Nigerian) English from 4th year on at school
• Diglossic situation
• Pidgin became language of everyday life and situations and was associated with the lower classes but gradually became more popular, e.g. in the mass media
• More Nigerians have Pidgin as 1st language (or simultaneously with another ethnic mother tongue)

Linguistic features

Phonology
• Non-rhotic
• Tendency towards syllable-timing:
  Schwa replaced by full vowel
  → stu-dent quiet-ness
• Dental fricatives realized as /t, d/
  → three of these becomes tree of dese
• Some diphthongs pronounced as monophthongs
  → toe - to/to/to
  → bake - bek
• In consonant clusters one consonant may be dropped
  → lis instead of list
• …or a vowel is inserted
  → arrangement becomes arrang-i-ment

Vocabulary
• Neologisms
  → watchnight for staying up the whole night in order to celebrate something
• Loans from local compounds of English and vernacular words
  → Akara ball – bean cake
  → juju music – a kind of music
• Loan translations and adaptations of local usages
  → father/mother – a relative
  → He is staying with his fathers = He is staying with the relatives of his father
• Loans from WAVE
  ➔ buka – a food stand (Hausa)
  wayo - tricks
  danfo – minibus (Yoruba)
  wahala – trouble
• Local extensions
  ➔ corner – a curve in a road
goslow – traffic jam
towetplants – to water plants
• Translation equivalents
  ➔ To paste/ to wash mouth - “to brush one’s teeth with toothpaste”
buy the market – “buy goods”

Word formation and syntax
• Ellipsis
  ➔ He is a mental instead of he is a mental patient
• Clipping
  ➔ Perms instead of permutations
• African peculiarities may influence a standard BrE construction
  ➔ A country where you have never been there
  or
  He is an important somebody

Attitudes in West Africa

English
• chances for social advancement
• internationally intelligible
• doesn’t reveal any connection to certain ethnic group
  ➔ avoiding tensions

• language of the elite
• creates a feeling of distance

Pidgin

• Neutral: every ethnic group understands it; no connection to certain ethnic group
• Solidarity; creates atmosphere of intimacy
• Among youths: indicates identity

Critics see it as inferior to English
• Low prestige

African vernaculars

• group identity
• intimacy, friendliness

• ethnic tensions and rivalry

Nigerian English

• ➔ controversial
• Some educated Nigerians deny the existence of Nigerian English
• Others recognize its existence, but see it as an incorrect version of StE
• Another opinion: deviant forms show creativity of the user ➔ Nigerian English as a type on its own

“Pidgin is that language that you have taken from the colonizer and you have made it your own”
(Deuber)
English representing African cultures

- Can English adequately represent African cultures?
- Mazrui (1973): English helped to detribalize the African’s mind and to give it a national dimension
- Important question, especially for African writers – no general agreement, but the majority supports writing in English
- Two important, but very different statements by the writers Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) and Achebe (1975)

Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o:

- best-known proponent of writing in local languages and opponent of writing in English
- Reports about his own experiences with the colonial school system
- Elaborates on the relationship of language and culture

English representing African cultures

Some quotes:

- “The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the main determinant of a child’s progress up the ladder of formal education.”

- “Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.”

English representing African cultures

- Ngugi wa Thiong’o feels so strongly about this, that he is even dismissive of those writers who have chosen to write in English, like the Nigerian Chinua Achebe
- Achebe accepts English as a historical fact and makes the point that, if sub-Saharan Africa has a ‘national’ language, then that language is English, as English is spoken in more countries than any other language
- He promotes the use of an African variety of English and deliberately deviates from standard English and adopts African idioms
- Some quotes again:

English representing African cultures

- “The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience.”

- “I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.”

What linguistic choices do governments have?

- Aim: to find the right balance between English and other languages, regional or local
- Questions arising in Anglophone Africa:
  1) What role should African languages play in society and education?
  2) What role should English play in society and education?
  3) How should one balance the mix of languages – should one use one or more of the local languages, a local language and English, or just English?
  4) If English is to be taught in schools, which variety of English should be taught?
What linguistic choices do governments have?

- If English is to be taught in schools, which variety of English should be taught?
- Problems coming into play:
  - Exonormative model:
    - the government can be charged with extending the cultural domination of previous colonial powers
    - Enough trained teachers?
  - Local variety: the government can be charged with promoting education in an internationally non-viable or unintelligible variety of English

What linguistic choices do governments have?

- Kirkpatrick (2007) says:
  - “In the context of Africa, my view is that the adoption of an African variety of English is the choice that is both most viable and most appropriate (…). African Englishes can represent African cultures and thought, while at the same time maintaining international intelligibility. The choice of an African variety of English also undermines the arguments of those who see the choice of English as tantamount to continuing to submit to the cultural domination of English.”
  - What do you think?

Short summary

- medium of instruction in schools
- access to educational and job opportunities
- language of wider communication
- important key to knowledge, science, world literature and current affairs

Sources