

Institution: York St John University		
Unit of Assessment: UoA26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Challenging monolithic conceptualisations of English for learning, teaching and assessment: the <i>Changing Englishes</i> online course		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Christopher J Hall	Professor of Applied Linguistics	2007 - present
Rachel Wicaksono	Associate Professor and Head, School of Education, Language and Psychology	2005 - present
Clare Cunningham	Senior Lecturer in Linguistics	2010 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study reports the impact of a research-informed online course for English teachers, used worldwide and sponsored by the British Council. The course encourages users to challenge the pervasive belief that learning outcomes can and should be determined solely by monolithic native-speaker norms. As a result of taking the course, teachers and teacher trainers have achieved new understanding and are able to adopt a more 'plurilithic' orientation to English, in which effective non-native users, forms, and uses are valued. Incorporating the free course content and activities into their professional practice, teachers have helped their students develop more realistic and meaningful learning goals, and trainers have enriched their pedagogical repertoires.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The dominant conceptualisations of English underpinning learning, teaching and assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT) are monolithic in nature, based on 'standard' native norms. This is becoming increasingly problematic in a world in which most English users are second language (L2) speakers, many with their own quite established local varieties (World Englishes); indeed, most interaction in English is now between speakers of different first languages, as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Prof Hall has been exploring several dimensions of this 'Global Englishes' phenomenon for over a decade, and since 2012 has been collaborating with Dr Wicaksono on projects which challenge the exclusive focus on Anglocentric norms in ELT. Hall's research, drawing on the notion that English is a 'plurilithic' (as opposed to monolithic) phenomenon, seeks to stimulate change in educational policy and practice towards the adoption of more realistic and socially just goals for ELT.</p> <p>Hall's plurilithic framework develops ideas from Critical Applied Linguistics regarding the socio-political nature of named language boundaries, and shows how these ideas are consistent with findings from psycholinguistics about the illusory nature of distinct named languages in multilingual minds [3.1]. Hall has applied the plurilithic framework specifically to English [3.6]. Focusing on the polysemy of the word <i>English</i>, he distinguishes between two sets of ontological categories, corresponding to language conceptualised as a general phenomenon (and hence English[es] as instantiations of this) and language conceptualised</p>		

as a collection of distinct named codes associated with different nations (of which English is one). Hall argues that English exists in the first sense by virtue of the existence of language as a human capacity and is independent of our awareness of it. In the second sense, he argues, English exists by virtue of the original existence of a group of people perceiving themselves as a nation, 'the English', and those who now trace a cultural lineage with this group. The first set reflects a plurilithic sense in which English is constituted by distributed cognitive resources, social processes and discourse products; in the second set, English is considered a monolithic resource governed by regulative norms. Hall claims that it is this latter sense which underpins most educational practice.

Hall and colleagues have conducted a number of empirical studies which illuminate the plurilithic framework, examining both the nature of teachers' ontological and ideological beliefs about English and the plurilithic nature of English itself. Interview and focus group data from teachers in China [3.2] and Gaza revealed monolithic beliefs about grammar on the one hand, and more plurilithic orientations in other areas of competence and use (e.g. pronunciation and vocabulary) on the other. An analysis of interview data from primary school educators working with L2 English-using students in England, conducted with Dr Cunningham, inferred monolithic ontological categories of English from the prevalent 'Standard Language' and 'One Nation, One Language' ideologies prevailing in the educators' discourse [3.5]. A corpus study of a user of L2 English operating in an ELF context demonstrated the 'usage-based' idiolectal nature of the grammatical resources brought to effective communication [3.4]. An analysis of native-speaker child language data from the online CHILDES database was used to motivate a plurilithic approach to L2 English assessment for an academic/professional readership [3.3].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [3.1] Hall, C. J. (2013). Cognitive contributions to plurilithic views of English and other languages. *Applied Linguistics*, 34, 211-231, doi.org/10.1093/applin/ams042.
- [3.2] Hall, C. J., Wicaksono, R., Liu, S., Qian, Y. and Xu, X. (2017). Exploring teachers' ontologies of English. Monolithic conceptions of grammar in a group of Chinese teachers. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 27, 1, 87-109. [Listed in REF2]
- [3.3] Hall, C. J. (2014). Moving beyond accuracy: from tests of English to tests of 'Englishing'. *ELT Journal*, 68, 4, 376-385, doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu016.
- [3.4] Hall, C. J., Joyce, J. and Robson, C. (2017). Investigating the lexico-grammatical resources of a non-native user of English: the case of *can* and *could* in email requests. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 8, 1, 35-59. [Listed in REF2]
- [3.5] Hall, C. J. and Cunningham, C. (2020). Educators' beliefs about English and languages beyond English: from ideology to ontology and back again. *Linguistics and Education*. doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2020.100817. [Listed in REF2]
- [3.6] Hall, C. J. (2020). An ontological framework for English. In Hall, C. J. and Wicaksono, R. (eds), *Ontologies of English. Conceptualising the language for learning, teaching, and assessment* (pp. 13-36). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Listed in REF2]

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In a 2008 position statement on English as a Global Language, *TESOL International* (the biggest international professional ELT body) states: "In terms of language teaching, TESOL does not advocate one standard or variety of English over another. Rather, TESOL urges English language teachers to make informed decisions at local, regional, and/or national levels, taking into account the purposes and contexts of use that are most relevant to their learners". Our research facilitates this process in two interlinked ways, by influencing: (a) the awareness, attitudes and understandings of ELT professionals, challenging the conventional wisdom that learning outcomes can and should be determined solely by monolithic norms; and (b) ELT professional practice, through the adoption of a research-informed plurilithic orientation to English in personal and professional training and development, as well as teaching.

The main pathway to these impacts is the online course for teachers *Changing Englishes*, originally released in 2013. V.02 was pre-released to trial users in 2019 and launched for the general public through the British Council's global TeachingEnglish website in April 2020. A fully upgraded v.02.2 *beta* was released in October 2020 [5.1]. Its Creative Commons license means it is free to take, and any part of it may be used and adapted for teaching/training purposes. Participants may formally register for the course and be eligible for a Certificate of Completion, or dip in and use however much of the material they wish without registering. Course users are taken through five units of research-informed interactive material. Units 1 and 2 draw on theory described in [3.1] and [3.6]; Unit 3 introduces concepts and data discussed in [3.3] and [3.4]; Unit 4 incorporates qualitative data from [3.2] and [3.5].

Reach

Since its original launch in 2013 on the British Council's global TeachingEnglish website, the course has received thousands of visitors and has been used and cited as best practice around the world. In 2019, 54 teachers from 19 countries registered to take the completely revised v.02 during the pre-release trial. Since the official release of v.02.1 in April 2020 and its follow-up v.02.2 in October, it has received 4,499 unique visitors, with 868 returning, from 109 countries [5.2]. During this period, 495 teachers have formally registered, 43 have applied for and been awarded certificates of completion, and the online Self-Assessment Tool has been used 481 times.

Course content has been incorporated into teaching programmes both in the UK (e.g. Leeds and Manchester) and abroad (e.g. Hong Kong and Malaysia). The course has been discussed and recommended in several books and over 30 journal articles (Google Scholar), from Bangladesh to Ukraine, and has been included on international online professional platforms, such as the international Global Englishes network coordinated by the University of Edinburgh. Material from the course has been reproduced in a blog for ELT teachers, in a teacher training event in Latvia, and a Business English conference in Prague. In the book *English as a Lingua Franca in Teacher Education* (de Gruyter, 2017), the authors describe how pre-service teacher trainees in Brazil were encouraged to identify "websites that could spark ideas about how an ELF perspective could be incorporated into the classroom" and chose *Changing Englishes* as one of the five resources they found most relevant. A presentation by Hall using material from the course, uploaded by an audience member to the digital publishing site Yumpu in 2016, has been viewed 1973 times. As of April 2020, the British Council report on the course had been downloaded 188 times from their website. [5.3]

Significance

Participation in the course has led to real changes in beliefs and professional practice. Testimony from ten users of v.01 of the course who are now practising English teachers in eight different countries [5.4] and two tutors who have used the course on UK postgraduate teacher preparation programmes [5.5] provide evidence of these changes. A teacher from Iraq stated that "Before I took the Changing Englishes course [...] I had the belief that there is a standard English, however, once I [was] introduced to the concept of "World Englishes" and grasp the idea. Thereafter, I convey the message to my students here in Iraq". A teacher from Kazakhstan told us: "I [...] use the materials and examples from this Changing Englishes course for my professional development [...], workshops for my colleagues and simply in class discussions". A teacher in Japan uses the course "to create the chance for my students to think about English language [...] through discussing in groups about where English language is a planet or a galaxy". A teacher from Germany reports that Unit 4 of the course provided a "breakthrough moment" following which he "then tried in [his] teaching to welcome and appreciate translanguaging and encouraged students to express themselves with a stronger focus on communicating and getting a message across rather than focussing

on pronunciation and grammatical correctness.” The latest teacher to be awarded a certificate of completion (in December, 2020) told us in an unsolicited email: “I cannot express how helpful this course has been for me as an English teacher educator in Nigeria. It has gone beyond just CPD, it is a world view changer.”

One postgraduate tutor in the UK told us that they use the Self-Assessment Tool (based on the questionnaire instrument used in **[3.2]**) and course activities in their Approaches and Contexts in TESOL module, reporting that the course “has enriched my teaching and contributed greatly to the urgent task of adapting ELT professionals’ mindsets to the new realities of global English usage”. Another tutor told us that the course “has led me to include a greater focus in my teaching on how English is conceptualised, especially by teachers, and how these conceptualisations influence both social issues (e.g. of teacher and learner identity) and cognitive issues (e.g. of the problematic nature of monolithic norms as a learning target)”.

Of 23 teachers who completed a v.02 post-trial survey **[5.6]**: 21 agreed or strongly agreed that ‘taking the course has changed how I conceptualise the English language’ and 18 agreed or strongly agreed that ‘taking the course has changed the way I think about my students’ learning goals and outcomes’. One participant commented that “The course helped me to be more aware of the necessity to talk about Changing Englishes in order to bring about change.” Another described her reaction to the course as “Engaged, interested, inspired, astonished”. Comments in the v.02.1 Discussion Board (totalling 17,000+ words) demonstrate how participation in the course changed teachers’ beliefs or provided them with stronger justifications for the beliefs they already had **[5.7]**.

After six months, we followed up on the longer-term effects of the course with eleven of these trial users **[5.8]**. All participants reported greater levels of awareness and deeper understanding of the plurilithic nature of English, with more open attitudes to learners’ communicative achievements and needs. The following extracts illustrate the range of actions and changed practices that have resulted directly from course participation:

- “As a result of the course, I held two workshops for students at a Business University in Riga (Erasmus Staff mobility) and it has become an important part of my curriculum for my English class.”
- “I no longer insist on teaching just the standard English and, being a teacher of French and a fluent speaker of Italian as well, I’m helping myself with other languages when teaching (TRANSLANGUAGING).”
- “My ability and conscious effort to deduce meaning from every writing in English, no matter how ‘substandard’ it might be has improved. [...]” The teacher gives an example of a student who relocated from another part of Nigeria with a ‘less standard’ variety of English and was finding it difficult to fit in. “With my experience [of the course], I helped him understand what was happening and assured him he was no less than they are but was just from a different background and exposure.”
- “Previously I was obsessed with speaking British English and it was a little hard to do. Furthermore, my students found it a little strange. Instead I decided to keep my Iranian identity while talking and while communicating in English which I think would be much more interesting to the people whom I speak with.”
- “I pick more appropriate tasks according to my students level and needs.”
- “When incorporating videos, I make sure there are non-native speakers of English involved.”
- “In terms of assessment, I double-check whether the option a student has given me might be right somewhere in the world, and if yes, he / she gets the point for the answer.”
- “Unexpectedly, I probably speak my mind more readily in team situations.”

One participant in v.02, a teacher trainer from Germany, approached Hall to propose a collaborative project to produce video materials for teacher trainees, taking up a suggestion

in Unit 5 of the course. The project was awarded financial support from BAAL's Applying Linguistics fund in June 2020 and has recruited MA student courses from at least three institutions in Germany, two in Austria, eight in the UK, one in Spain, and two in China. The award committee commended the project for "its timely topic and its potential in challenging Anglocentric norms for English Language Teaching" [5.9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of ten references)

[5.1] The online *Changing Englishes* course, v.02.2 beta: www.changingenglishes.online.

[5.2] User analytics data, v.02.

[5.3] References to the global reach of the course.

[5.4] Testimony from v.01 ELT teacher users.

[5.5] Testimony from v.01 teacher trainer users.

[5.6] Qualtrics survey data from v.02.1 trial users, immediately post-trial.

[5.7] Selected comments from v.02.1 trial Discussion Board.

[5.8] Qualtrics survey data from v.02.1 trial users, six months post-trial.

[5.9] Grant application to BAAL Applying Linguistics fund and award notification.