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ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGE

THEORETICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EIAL AND ESL/EFL/ESOL

Yoshiko Otsubo

It seems to me that the East-West Center in Hawaii is a kind of miniature world: the peoples living at the East-West Center come from different countries, and it is natural that they should have their own language. They do not use their own language, however, in order to communicate with peoples from other countries. English is the only language with which they can communicate with each other. English is a common language or an auxiliary language at the East-West Center, and it is modified in various ways. We can say that there is a single English language but there are different varieties of English at the East-West Center, e.g., American English, Philippine English, Indonesian English, Chinese English, Korean English, Japanese English and so on.

We may ask what is American English, what is Philippine English, what is Japanese English and so on. Roughly speaking, the English language of the United States is American English, which is spoken by the Americans as a native language, the English language spoken by the native speakers of Philippine languages is Philippine English and the English language spoken by the native speakers of Japanese is Japanese English. As Larry E. Smith pointed out in his paper "English as an International Auxiliary Language" (1976), "Certainly speakers of American English are identifiable by their pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm, and some vocabulary items but the language (the general orthography, lexicology, semantics, syntax, the grammar, if you will) is English. It is the same English that is spoken in Singapore; however, Singapore English speakers are also identifiable by their pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm, and some vocabulary items." And we can also identify Indonesian English speakers, Chinese English speakers, Korean English speakers, Japanese English speakers and so on by their pronunciation, intonation, stress, and rhythm. We call such English as used by the peoples from different countries to communicate with each other "an International Auxiliary Language."

This paper is primarily concerned with the theoretical difference between EIAL and ESL/EFL/ESOL. It consists of three sections: First of all, in the section 1, we will discuss the relation between the concept of EIAL and its realization, which will be compared with the relation between the concept of the so-called Standard Japanese and its realization. In this section it will be shown
that the many varieties of English, such as American English, Philippine English, Chinese English, Korean English, Japanese English and so on are theoretically equal to each other from the viewpoint of EIAL. Secondly, in the section 2, we will touch on the concepts of ESL, EFL, ESOL, and it will be shown that these terms are different from EIAL in that they are used in contrast with "English as a Native Language" (ENL). Through these two sections, the theoretical difference between EIAL and ESL/EFL/ESOL will be pointed out. Thirdly and finally, in the section 3, we will touch on the difference between EIAL and EFL from the viewpoint of a EFL country, in which some subsidiary problems will be discussed.

1. Let's begin with the definition of "English as an International Auxiliary Language" (hereafter EIAL). Larry E. Smith defined the concept of EIAL as follows:

My operational definition of an International language is one which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another. English is the most frequently used international language.

My operational definition for Auxiliary language is a language, other than the first language, which is used by nationals of a country for internal communication. English also frequently serves this purpose.

It goes without saying that the most important factor of EIAL is to be used as a medium of communication. A person from the Philippine Islands speaks his own Philippine English in order to communicate with people from other countries, a person from Japan speaks his own Japanese English in order to communicate with people from other countries and so on. They do not always understand each other without special effort; however, they can communicate with one another. It seems to me that this is one of the special features of EIAL.2) It is clear that the term EIAL covers all different varieties of English: It covers American English, Philippine English, Chinese English, Korean English, Japanese English and so on. In other words, EIAL is the term expressing all different varieties of English. If we sketch the relations among these varieties of English from the viewpoint of EIAL, we may represent these in the following way:

![Diagram 1](image)
It is also clear that there is some difference among them: American English is spoken by the Americans as an native language, Philippine English is spoken by the Filipinos as a second language, and also peoples in such countries as the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan and so on use their English as a foreign language. This diagram, however, implies that these varieties of English are equal to each other. Even American English spoken by the Americans as a native language *theoretically* does not necessarily have any more prestige than the others.

It is interesting to show that we can find the same kind of relation between the so-called Standard Japanese and the various Japanese dialects. Roughly speaking, there are four kinds of dialects in Japan: Tohoku dialect, Tokyo dialect, Kansai dialect and Kyushu dialect. The Tokyo dialect is supposed to be the model of our Standard Japanese. However, it has been admitted that each dialect can express some concepts better than Standard Japanese, and these dialects have been *theoretically* considered to be equal to each other.

These dialects, however, are very different from each other; people from different districts always have some difficulty in communicating with one another. This is the reason why we Japanese learn the use of our Standard Japanese at schools. Teachers officially use their Standard Japanese in the classes and pupils (or students) are also required to use Standard Japanese in the classes. We Japanese can speak our own Standard Japanese whenever we need, though we don’t use our Standard Japanese in our everyday life.

“Our Standard Japanese” is actually not identical to the Tokyo dialect. It is very difficult to show the so-called Standard Japanese, because our Standard Japanese is normally modified by our own dialect. In fact, we have many varieties of Standard Japanese, e.g., Tohoku dialect speaker Standard Japanese, Tokyo dialect speaker Standard Japanese, Kansai dialect speaker Standard Japanese, Kyushu dialect speaker Standard Japanese and so on. More precisely, every speaker of Japanese speaks his own Standard Japanese modified by his own dialect. It seems to me that these varieties of Standard Japanese are to the Standard Japanese what such varieties of English as American English, Philippine English and so on are to EIAL.

Since these varieties of Standard Japanese can be used whenever Japanese people want to communicate with persons from other districts, the scholars working in the field of Japanese call them “The Common Language.” Thus it is clear that “Our Standard Japanese” is just like EIAL. We may represent the relation between the Standard Japanese (or the Common Language) and each dialect speaker’s Standard Japanese as follows:
This diagram implies that the speakers of each dialect speak their own Standard Japanese, and that the so-called Standard Japanese covers all these different varieties of Standard Japanese. Furthermore, it is important to note here that EIAL is a concept and at present can only be realized through many varieties of English: As EIAL can be realized only through these varieties of English, so is Standard Japanese realized through many varieties of Standard Japanese, and it is only through these varieties of Standard Japanese that Standard Japanese can be realized. And we also should emphasize here that the main purpose of EIAL and Standard Japanese is to communicate with the persons from other countries or districts.

2. We should here turn our attention to ESL, EFL, and ESOL. Let's consider them in that order: In "English as a Second Language" (ESL) countries, such as the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong and so on, English is officially used, i.e., "English becomes a language of instruction in the schools, of a lingua franca between speakers of widely diverse language." On the other hand, in "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) countries, such as the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan and so on, "English is a language taught as a school subject or on an adult level solely for the purpose of giving students a foreign language competence, which he may use in one of several ways; to read literature, to read technical works, to listen to the radio, to understand dialogs of movies, to use the language for communication, possibly with transient Englishmen, or Americans." It is clear that the terms ESL, EFL are the ones for the specified peoples or countries which have their own native language, and these terms are used in contrast with "English as a Native Language" (ENL). What is ESOL? It means "English for Speakers of Other Language." ESOL, therefore, covers ESL and EFL, and it is used in contrast with ENL. We may represent these relations in the following way:
Let's compare Diagram 3 with Diagram 4a or 4b, which are represented from the viewpoint of EIAL. It is important to note that there is no contrast between ENL and ESOL or between ENL and ESL/EFL in either Diagram 4a or 4b:
My conclusion on the theoretical difference between EIAL and ESL/EFL/ESOL is that ESL/EFL/ESOL are used in contrast with ENL; on the contrary EIAL covers both ESOL (ESL+EFL) and ENL, which are theoretically equal to each other from the viewpoint of EIAL. In other words, ESL, EFL and ESOL belong to some specified peoples or countries which have their own native language; whereas EIAL does not belong to any specified people or country, but to every people or country.

3. Finally, let’s consider some subsidiary problems to the theoretical difference between EIAL and ESL/EFL/ESOL from the viewpoint of a EFL country. If the purpose of EIAL is to be used by the peoples from different countries to communicate with one another, then we have to teach or learn English as a medium of communication even in an EFL country. In the EFL countries, however, English is a language taught as a school subject or on an adult level solely for the purpose of giving students a foreign language competence. In fact, we Japanese begin to learn English as a school subject at the level of junior high schools, and English as a school subject is normally passive English, which means that we do not learn English itself or the use of English, but do learn about English. In other words, it means that teachers of English do not provide the skill of live or active English, but a rather abstract schema of English or English Grammar. Therefore, it is clear that English as a school subject in Japan has little relation with EIAL.

In the ESL countries, English is a language of instruction in the schools, and they are using English as an Auxiliary language. So the peoples in the ESL countries are always exposed to live English. Therefore, it seems to me that there is no difference between EIAL and ESL as well as between EIAL and ENL in actuality.

Being an EFL country, is it impossible for the Japanese to learn English as
an International Auxiliary Language? Personally I believe it is possible to learn EIAL even in Japan if the teachers of English can command English and teach the use of English to their students in the English classes, the same way our Standard Japanese is taught. Fortunately, not only most students of the first year classes of junior high schools, but also many other students in Japan want to learn live or active English; therefore the mental direction of learners of English already coincides with EIAL even in Japan.

One of the serious problems, however, is that many Japanese teachers of English are used to teaching passive English, and make their students disappointed learning English. In my personal opinion, EIAL should be particularly emphasized of the levels of junior and senior high schools, and therefore the teachers of English of both junior and senior high schools should train their students to command active English as much as they can. Therefore the re-training of teachers of English is indispensable for EIAL in Japan. And it seems to me that EIAL in a EFL country is a responsibility of the teachers' colleges and those who train teachers (or future teachers) there.

The other problem of EFL countries such as ours is that we always have some difficulty in learning "the Register" or the appropriate expression for a given situation because we are not always exposed to live English. The informations from the field of Pragmatics or Sociolinguistics seem to be useful for this in an indirect way, this is an open question, however.

*The first draft of this paper had been read at the EIAL class by Larry E. Smith, Mark Lester and other in the 1977 Summer Institute of Linguistics, the Linguistic Society of America sponsored by the University of Hawaii and the East-West Center in Hawaii.

Notes:
1) "English as an International Auxiliary Language" (EIAL) is rather new concept, which Mr. Smith proposed in his paper "English as an International Auxiliary Language" (1976). We can find it hinted at in Albert H. Marckwardt's book, American English (1958), however. He mentioned as follow:

.... if we are to look forward to any single language which might serve as an international auxiliary ...., and the increase in rapidity and extent of travel and communication somehow leads us to expect this .... such a language will undoubtedly be one of those in use at the present time. The English language would seem to be the best candidate for a number of reasons.

2) Although there is no problem of communication among the native speakers of English, there seems to be some difficulty between the native speakers of English and the
non-native speakers of English, and also among the non-native speakers from different countries. In such ESL countries as the philippine Islands, Hong Kong, Singapore, and so on, peoples are familiar with speaking English, but their English is normally modified by their first language, so is difficult to understand. On the other hand, in such EFL countries as the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Japan and so on, peoples are not familiar with speaking English, therefore they always have some difficulty to speak it, and besides, their English is greatly modified by their own language. Furthermore, in both ESL and EFL countries, there are various kinds of speakers of English: Some may speak just like a native speaker of English, some may be in the level called "Interlanguage" or "Idiosyncratic dialect", which implies that the speaker of English uses his own English, but his English is not stable and often has some mistakes. Because of these reasons they do not understand one another without special effort.

3) Dr. Hachiro-Yasutaka Atago, who is a dialectologist of Japanese, pointed out that they normally use the term "The Common Language" instead of "The Standard Japanese" in a personal conversation.


5) Cf. Ibid., American English and "Against The Grain".

References: