English in Asia
The emergence of new varieties

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Why look at English in Asia?
1) English in Asia is the result of a specific kind of non-settler colony, for instance in countries like India or Pakistan and thus forms a good contrast to settler colonies like the United States, Canada or Australia.

2) English in Asia is often the result of different historical inputs, e.g. British English in South Asia but American English in the Philippines.

3) English in Asia is the result of complex interactions of background languages and learner varieties of English, e.g. in Hong Kong or Malaysia.
4) English in Asia consists of many different levels of second-language competence and can thus help us in our understanding of learner varieties of English.

5) English in Asia also contains an emergent set of native speaker or quasi-native speaker varieties in countries like Singapore.

6) English in Asia offers many different linguistic scenarios and hence can increase our knowledge of types of externally motivated language change, i.e. change determined ultimately by social and cultural factors.

7) English in Asia is demographically significant given the numbers of speakers involved.
Division of the anglophone world by hemisphere
The anglophone world today

Dark blue regions: English as first language
Light blue regions: English as second language
The circle of World English

Inner circle: English as a native language

Outer circle: English as a second language

Expanding circle: English as a foreign language

Kachru (1992: 356)
— Inner Circle —

United Kingdom
(England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland)

United States
(Anglo-American varieties)

Canada
(Anglo-Canadian varieties)

South Africa
(white, non-Afrikaans English)

Australia and New Zealand
(original Anglo-Celtic varieties)
The varieties contained in the inner circle are those in England along with settler varieties overseas. The original list was approximate and could include settler varieties in the Caribbean (a minority in that area) and in parts of Africa such as South Africa and Zimbabwe.

These varieties show an historically continuous transmission through emigration and settlement at overseas locations. They are acquired as first language varieties in early childhood and show a clear phonological and grammatical derivation from varieties in Britain and Ireland.
— Outer Circle —

West Africa
Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon

East Africa
Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia

South Asia
India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka

South-East Asia
Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong
The outer circle varieties are to be found in Asia and Africa (with exceptions like white South Africa). They are spoken by people for whom English is a second-language, whatever degree of competence they may show. This issue is becoming increasingly disputed, largely by self-assertion of native-speaker ability, e.g. by many Singaporeans.

Outer circle varieties are easily recognised by their phonologies. These show influence from background languages and reflect the fact that they were acquired after an indigenous language. This may not always be a clear-cut matter, again Singapore represents a more complex scenario than other Asian countries.
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For want of a better term, I will use ‘New Englishes’ for the non-settler varieties in Africa and especially in Asia which are the object of interest today. Despite criticism of this term it is still favoured by authorities in the field, e.g. Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008).
'New Englishes' regions in Africa and Asia

- East Africa
- West Africa
- Northern South Africa
- South Asia
- South-East Asia
'New Englishes’
Second language varieties of English
India
Pakistan
Bangladesh
Sri Lanka
Nepal
Bhutan and The Maldives
The main locations of South Asian Englishes
English and China
British trade with China in the 18th and 19th centuries
British trade was concentrated on the region of Guangdong (Canton) and Fujian (Fukien) which was the part of China reached first when sailing up the South China Sea.
Britain, along with other countries, established bases in China ports, such as the Thirteen Factories at Guangzhou.
This trade, in which many European countries were involved, was disadvantageous to the Chinese.
The British and others forced the Qing rulers to concede trading rights to Europeans in a series of arrangements rightly called nowadays the *Unequal Treaties* (including the Treaty of Nanjing and the Treaties of Tianjin).
The opium trade with China

Chinese Opium Smokers
In the second half of the Qing dynasty, Western powers reaped huge profits by smuggling the addictive drug opium into China, mainly through the port city of Guangzhou (Canton), to be re-exported. China’s efforts to curb the opium trade were unsuccessful and led to defeats in the First and Second Opium Wars. By 1890, it is estimated that over 15 million Chinese were addicted to opium.
Opium was carried from India by the ships of the East India Company on the way to China in chests which were then used for tea when leaving China.
Chinese animosity to England arose because the British created a market of opium addicts which the Chinese authorities tried to remove.
The disputes with Britain led to the Opium Wars (or the Anglo-Chinese Wars), the first one from 1839-1842 and the second one from 1856-1860.
The defeat of China in these wars meant it was weakened and had to agree to a 99-year lease of Kowloon and the New Territories on the mainland of Hong Kong in 1898.
The linguistic legacy of 18th- and 19th-century British-Chinese contacts

The main legacy of the trade contacts between the British and the Chinese in the last two-and-a-half centuries is actually the foundation of a British presence in Hong Kong which led to a specific variety of English arising in this city.

However, it is known that a pidgin with English as the lexifier language and Chinese (mainly Cantonese) as the substrate developed along the ports of the south and south-east of China (such as Guangzhou and Fuzhou). This pidgin never became a creole (the mother tongue of a later generation) and eventually died out with the demise of the opium trade and other types of commercial contacts between the British and the Chinese (apart from Hong Kong). Nonetheless, the word ‘pidgin’ may well go back to a Cantonese phrase ‘bei chin’ (give money/pay) or to the pronunciation of the English word ‘business’.
The future of English in present-day China
Provinces of China
Sino-Tibetan languages
The future of English in present-day China

English is spoken as a foreign language by many millions in China today and this number is increasing every year.

There are certain linguistic features of this English on the levels of pronunciation and vocabulary. Chinese do not normally pronounce clusters at the end of a word, e.g. *sixth, texts*, nor do they observe the distinction between /l/ and /r/ and their English has a very different rhythm from that of native speakers of English (more syllable-timed).
The future of English in present-day China

On the level of grammar there are prominent features of Chinese English such as the absence of the definite article, the lack of inflectional endings and different application of prepositions.

These features are clearly derived from the background Chinese languages given that English is learned by the vast majority of Chinese after childhood.
The future of English in present-day China

However, given the great number of Chinese people learning and using English, especially in an international context, native speakers of English will probably become more acquainted with the Chinese pronunciation of English and their use of English grammar and so increased recognition will most likely be given to your manner of speaking the English language.
English in South-East Asia

The main locations of South-East Asian Englishes

- India
- China
- Hong Kong
- The Phillipines
- Malaysia
- Indonesia
- Singapore
- Australia
Hong Kong on south China coast
Hong Kong
English in Hong Kong

The English language in Hong Kong was taken there by the British when they were colonially involved with China during the 18th and 19th centuries. After the British leased Hong Kong from the Chinese in 1898 for 99 years, English became the language of public life and of the government.

However, since the handover in 1997 there has been a certain decline in the colloquial usage of English which is being replaced more and more by Chinese, especially by Cantonese (a southern Chinese language spoken in the hinterland of Hong Kong.)
Malay is spoken in the state of Malaysia and, in a slightly different form, in Indonesia by approximately 20 million native speakers and by 60 million speakers in all. It is found throughout the following countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, parts of Thailand. Malay is an Austronesian language belonging to the Western Austronesian branch.

Malay is agglutinative in type and has a basic SVO word order. Slightly different versions of the Roman alphabet are used for Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia. The influence of Dutch on Bahasa Indonesia is minimal but that of English on both forms is considerable.
The Philippines
Tagalog (stressed on the second syllable) is an Austronesian language (like Malay) and has about 15 million speakers mainly on the northern island of Luzon and is the main indigenous language in the area of metropolitan Manila. Tagalog is agglutinative in type and has a basic VSO word-order for sentences without particular focus.

Cebuano is an Austronesian language spoken in southern parts of the Philippines by about 12 million people. The cultural history of sea trade led to the spread of varieties throughout the Philippine archipelagos. There are other languages such as Ilocano and Bicol which have several million speakers each.
A closer look at Singapore
Singapore to the south of Malaysia
Ethnic composition of Singapore

There are three main ethnic groups comprising a total of some 4.4 million speakers (2002): (1) Malay 14%, (2) Chinese 77%, (3) Indian 7%. The Republic of Singapore has four official languages — English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil of which the national language is, for historical reasons, Malay.
English in Singapore

The English language in the city state of Singapore is continuously increasing in importance. The authorities are concerned with establishing it as the first language of public life. The other main languages are Chinese, Malay and Tamil.

To this end they have instituted school programs which expose young Singaporeans to English from the beginning onwards.

A linguistically interesting question is whether new generations of native speakers of English can result from this kind of language planning.
The rise of ‘New Englishes’ in Asia, especially Singapore
Background

New Englishes are not historically continuous forms of English, that is they do not arise, or have not arisen, in scenarios in which native speakers transmitted English from one generation to the next, though the countries in question do have a British colonial past. They arise in an environment in which other languages, so-called ‘background’ languages are spoken natively by the community in question.

Genesis

These forms of English arise largely through the educational system. They can develop in those states where English is taught in primary education and is the medium of instruction. A common feature in the genesis of ‘New Englishes’ is the use of English — at least partially — in the domestic environment and on a wider scale in the public sphere.
Function

Mature New Englishes are characterised by partaking fully in all public functions in the societies which use them, e.g. in education, the media, politics and also in most domestic functions. The latter sphere is one in which various background languages may also be competing with English, especially in the early phase, thus in Singapore, forms of Chinese (Putonghua/Mandarin having largely replaced Hokkien), Malay and Tamil may be used parallel to English by speakers in private discourse. There would appear to be no country in which a New English has supplanted any background language which may be present. This fact renders the New English scenario, either in Africa or South/South-East Asia, essentially different from a language-shift situation which one has historically in Ireland, parts of Scotland, in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa for the Indian population, etc.
Linguistic features of ‘New Englishes’
Features of language acquisition in a non-prescriptive environment

Because of the unguided quality of acquisition in this context and because of the restricted nature of the input, certain elements may be at a premium.

1) Foregrounding of pragmatic information to compensate for insufficient competence in the target language. Certain devices are employed to this end, e.g. topicalisation through fronting to highlight new information in an exchange (*It's wedding of my brother soon*). Left dislocation of the given information can also be found (*My brother, there is wedding soon*).

2) Backgrounding of morphology and complex syntax. Preference for word order over inflection, parataxis over hypotaxis. Preference of intonation over syntax in interrogative sentences (*You like new car?*).

3) An adherence to natural order in syntax (*He drink much wine when he come home* rather than *After he come home he drink much wine*).
Redundancy in English

Use of ‘be’ in equative sentences.

I (am) a lecturer in linguistics.

Double marking of various kinds, e.g. nouns immediately preceded by numerals

This book costs twenty pound(s).

Relative clauses with a relative pronoun and an unambiguous word order

There is a man outside Ø waiting for you.
Typologically unusual features in English

1) Inversion in embedded interrogative clauses

2) Inflection on only third person singular present tense

N.B.: In the colonial situation people may have been exposed to varieties in which a reanalysis and reallocation of verbal s had already taken place.

3) The existence of a present-perfect tense

4) Negative attraction (Nobody has come for Anybody hasn’t come)

5) The use of tags with number agreement and inverse polarity (Linguistics is interesting, isn’t it?)
Dealing with afunctional syntactic and morphological irregularity

There are three basic options:

1) It is carried forward as irregularity, the less prescriptive the acquisitional environment the less likely this is.

2) It is neglected in the emergent target variety. This is likely to take place in a non-prescriptive environment, assuming that the formal markers of this irregularity are not subject to innovative interpretation (or later to re-functionalisation).
Dealing with afunctional syntactic and morphological irregularity

3) a. *formal regularisation with innovative interpretation*

This innovation is normally motivated by the search for equivalents to categories in a background language and not evident in the target variety as it presents itself to those engaged in acquiring it.

b. *subsequent functionalisation*

This may have a similar motivation to innovative interpretation but crucially it takes place after the establishment of the target variety. Thus this refunctionalisation is not motivated by universals of unguided second language acquisition.
Neglect of categories and distinctions in English

The neglect of categorial distinctions in English is common in New Englishes and older language shift varieties when these distinctions are/were not present in the background languages. For instance, Malay does not distinguish pronominally between *he* and *she*. It has a determiner *itu*. Tamil has a system of vowel prefixes (i, e, a, u) which are the rough equivalents of demonstratives in English. Sino-Tibetan languages (including Putonghua/Mandarin and Hokkien) do not have definite and indefinite articles.

The upshot of this is that pronominal distinctions and the use of articles do not correspond to usage in standard varieties of English.

There may be a mixture of motivations here: the influence of the background languages combined with more general aspects of unguided language acquisition which might favour a neglect of formal distinctions which are pragmatically obvious.
Summary

Given that non-standard features in new varieties of English can have a number of sources which may overlap to a greater or lesser extent it is a clear desideratum in variety studies that scholars examine emerging varieties of English wherever possible.

Investigations in situ, if possible, can supply clues about how features become established in emerging varieties and can offer documentation of early steps on trajectories which are perhaps attested at later stages in more established varieties. Such investigations can also help in the relative weighting of the chief factors, namely L1 transfer, input varieties of the target language and general principles of second acquisition in non-prescriptive environments.

These are areas in which there is an increasingly amount of research being done and the near future will certainly bring results from this research which is of relevance to a wider audience of linguists.