1 Introduction

Leaving the relatively ordered universe of native forms of English in the southern hemisphere, which arose on the basis of large numbers of native-speaker settlers in that area, one arrives at varieties of English spoken as second-language, near-native or indeed native varieties at overseas locations, above all in parts of Asia, and which are not historically continuous with British or American English. All countries, where such varieties of English are spoken, are former colonies of Britain, with the exception of Nepal which was never a colony but which entertained links with Britain, not least in the military area, and which had contact with English due to the presence of the language in Nepal’s mighty southern neighbour, India. One further Asian country, the Philippines, was under American control between the end of Spanish colonialism in 1898 and independence in 1946 and hence has been exposed to forms of American rather than British English.

Before discussing linguistic aspects of English in Asia, it is necessary to discuss questions of terminology. About twenty years ago, in the early 1980s, the term ‘New English’ became popular in linguistic literature on English in Asia and many parts of Africa, not least because of its use in two important publications, by Pride (1982) and by Platt, Weber and Ho (1984). The term was meant as a neutral means of referring to forms of English which had arisen in countries which had not had substantial numbers of English-speaking settlers in their recent history, despite their postcolonial status, and which had largely arisen through the education system (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 2). There was no implied value judgement in the use of ‘New Englishes’ and no anglocentric position, in any cultural sense, was intended (see Crystal 1997: 130–4 for further discussion). It is difficult, of course, to avoid such connotations. Even the imagery, employed by Asian scholars in the field, implies centricity, e.g. the notion of circles proposed by Braj Kachru,

* I would like to express my gratitude to the following colleagues who have been helpful with many comments on a draft of this chapter: Anthea Gupta, Kingsley Bolton, Braj Kachru, Edgar Schneider and Josef Schmied. None of these are to be associated with the shortcomings in the chapter.
with an inner circle containing chiefly British and American English, an outer circle encompassing English in postcolonial Asia and an expanding circle with second-language varieties in countries without a colonial link to England.

Despite intended neutrality, dissatisfaction with the label ‘New Englishes’ arose quickly, not least because many of the varieties it encompassed, such as South Asian and forms of South-East Asian English, had been in existence for some considerable time and were in fact older than some forms of historically continuous English such as New Zealand English. While this standpoint is understandable, the use of ‘New Englishes’ (with capital letters for both words) had already become lexicalised, i.e. it referred to forms of English which developed mainly through the education system of the countries involved. The search for alternative terminology was already under way and Braj Kachru, perhaps the foremost scholar in the field, used the term ‘Other Tongue’ in a similar sense in a seminal publication (Kachru 1992 [1982]). However, this term is not countable and is implicitly comparative.

1.1 ‘World Englishes’, definition and aims

An alternative, which has gained wide acceptance in certain circles today and which is the title of a major journal, is ‘World Englishes’, used to refer to historically discontinuous forms of English. Note the use of a plural to distinguish it from ‘World English’ or ‘International English’, both terms used to refer to non-localised English on which there is broad agreement concerning grammar and vocabulary and which is used in international communication by native and non-native speakers alike (see the detailed discussion in McArthur 2002: 439–51).

For many scholars working in the field of transported English (see the many chapters in this volume) ‘World Englishes’ is regarded as somewhat pretentious or at least lacking in clear contours. But a sympathetic view of the term would recognise the parallel to other similar terms, such as World Music, and would stress the implied inclusivity of the term. There is no doubt, however, that the ‘World Englishes’ enterprise is programmatic (Nelson 1992) and is often about a perceived aim of decolonialising English or deculturising English outside the ‘Western World’ in a vein similar to that in which postcolonial studies in literature and anthropology operates. For example, the idea of having ‘liberated’ English from a monolingual, monocultural ‘Western’ tradition is prominent in recent writing on ‘World Englishes’ (Kachru 1997: 23). Furthermore, many studies have programmatic titles, such as ‘English is an Asian language’ (Bautista 1997), and seek to dissociate Asian Englishes from those in the northern hemisphere.

Defendants of the term ‘World Englishes’ would stress the ‘paradigm shift’ (Bolton 2002b: 30f.) which has taken place and which is manifest in the movement away from standards of northern hemisphere English (British and American – see the discussion in Bex and Watts (1999) towards a more global and truly cross-cultural view of English as advocated from the beginning. Again this may be seen by some scholars as a laudable agenda but not always directly connected with
linguistics. Certainly the concern is with external aspects of language (Matiki 2001); consider the representation of cultural differences considered by many contributions in Kachru and Kahane (1995).

Whether one agrees with the use of the term ‘World Englishes’ or not, it is nonetheless undeniable that the field is one of great vigour and optimism (Yano 2001) and in its practical aspects addresses actual needs of language teachers at least by providing a pedagogical baseline from which to operate. The demands for the teaching of English, for example, have been researched from the perspective of general globalisation (Evans 2000; Gupta 2001; Nelson 1995). Lexicographical matters and the question of standards of English (in Asia in particular) are addressed in Benson (2001), Butler (1996, 1999) and Pakir (1999).

Issues of language use figure prominently in studies on ‘World Englishes’, especially as the area of pragmatics and speech acts is (rightly) perceived as one of significant difference. This has been treated, for example, in a number of papers by Yamuna Kachru (1991, 1995a, b, 1996).

1.2 Continuing contact and ‘World Englishes’

By and large the fields of ‘World Englishes’ and settler-derived English overseas have been kept distinct by scholars, although some of the latter, such as Irish English and South African Indian English, derive from an original language shift situation. Perhaps the reason is that in the case of ‘World Englishes’ there is continuing contact between background languages and forms of English, i.e. the shift to English is in no sense complete. This is not to say that this should happen – the countries involved are by their nature multilingual – but merely highlights a difference in kind between the two groups of Englishes.

There have nonetheless been a few cases of cross-fertilisation; see, for example, Lee (2001) where Australian English and Hong Kong English are compared. The difficulty here would seem to be that the degree of contact-induced change for settler-derived English is finite. This contact has been greatly reduced in traditionally anglophone countries (with the important exception of South Africa and, to a lesser degree, Canada [Quebec] and the south-west United States), but in Asian countries this contact is very much present on all social levels and so the question of comparability must be addressed. For instance, there is a continuing influence of Cantonese on Hong Kong English at the present so that one has a situation of active contact (see the contributions in Bolton 2002 for discussions) which in the Australian context is only paralleled by a minute number of bilingual Aborigines and by later nonanglophone emigrants. This fact has led other scholars, such as Mesthrie (2002), to suggest that ‘World Englishes’ – Mesthrie still uses the term ‘New Englishes’ (in quotes) – should be contextualised within the larger field of language contact. Other scholars, such as Bao and Wee (1999), openly acknowledge language contact, e.g. in their treatment of passive structures in Singaporean English, as do Alsagoff and Lick (1998) in their treatment of relative clause strategies, also in Singaporean English.
The forms of English at those Asian locations in which the language has been present since the days of the British empire rest heavily on the interaction with background languages which to this day are the first languages of the vast majority of the population in these countries. This means that when considering what varieties of English have arisen at these Asian locations, and are still in the process of arising, three key factors play a central role:

1. What forms of English are/were the non-English population exposed to?
2. What is the situation in which English is transmitted to the non-English population, what type of schooling is there?
3. What are the background languages against which English is acquired?

1.3 Autonomy, creativity and focusing

In the scholarly treatment of ‘World Englishes’ two qualifiers are particularly common: ‘autonomy’ and ‘creativity’. Quite naturally scholars wish to stress the autonomy of such Englishes (Bolton 2002a: 18–22) and hence avoid terminology which sees them primarily as members of a traditional grouping, which they did not devise, rather than as independent varieties.

The second qualifier, ‘creativity’, has to do with the fact that the ‘World Englishes’ are spoken in multilingual societies and so code-mixing and code-switching are the order of the day. The expressive side of such mixing is captured by characterising ‘World Englishes’ as ‘creative’ (Baker and Eggington 1999). Such terminology implies a loosening of too strict conceptions of correctness and rejects a linguistic purity seen as imposed by speakers of northern hemisphere forms of English. This issue has also been extended to encompass gender differences in language (see Baker 2001) and in the field of literature, the matter has been extensively researched (see Osakwe 1999; Thumboo 1985, 1988, 1990, 1991; Thumboo and Kandiah 1995a).

From the vantage point of transported English, such creativity can be viewed as an early stage in a possible process of focusing (see contributions by Sudbury, Schreier, and Gordon and Trudgill, this volume). The concern in this context is with features of speech which might become typical of an entire speech community. The question, for a linguist working within the context of historically continuous English, is whether there are linguistically specifiable features which give, for instance, Hong Kong English, a clearly identifiable profile, i.e. make it a focused variety in the sense in which, for example, Dublin English is just such a variety. This approach is one which looks at the differences between the overseas variety and the northern hemisphere variety or varieties which can be identified as the historical input to the region involved, for example, British English in Hong Kong or American English in the Philippines.

But for many emerging Englishes, especially in South-East Asia, the emphasis has been on their closeness to standard forms of English from Britain or the United States. Hence the issue of ‘otherness’ is sometimes backgroun
stress is placed on how much a variety has become native, on the extensive presence of (standard) English in education and its use in public life. For countries where English stems from original British settlers, as in the case of New Zealand for instance, the nativeness of the variety is not contested and scholars are much more concerned with describing differences between this overseas variety and historical source varieties in the British Isles.

In the present chapter the discussion of Asian Englishes is concerned with describing possibly community-wide linguistic features, with accounting for how such features might have arisen and with drawing parallels to other varieties. The genuine desire of many scholars for acceptance of a variety as an independent, fully-fledged form of English is recognised by the present author but this external issue is not the central concern in the chapters on Asian Englishes in this volume.

1.4 Further terminology

In the field of ‘World Englishes’ two further terms are used which are essential in classifying knowledge of English in communities said to use such Englishes. These are (i) ‘English-using’ (Kachru 1997) and (ii) ‘English-knowing’ (Pakir 1991), which appear to refer to degrees of competence in English. The meanings of such terms can only be determined by their use and there is considerable variation in scope. Thus in the context of South-East Asia, at least in Hong Kong, ‘English-knowing’ bilinguals are individuals who identify themselves as those who know and use English as another language. Some 40 per cent of those registered in the 2001 census in Hong Kong placed themselves in this category (Bolton 2002a: 6). This is a case where the judgement of the general population and that of linguists would diverge and highlights the care necessary in the use and assessment of terms referring to the relative competence of speakers in English.

1.5 The nativeness question again

Although in the vast majority of cases, ‘World Englishes’ refer to non-native varieties of English, there is a general dislike of, or at least controversy (McArthur 2002: 431) concerning the term ‘non-native’. It is seen as evaluative rather than factual, particularly as speakers of historically continuous forms of English can claim nativeness for themselves and then judge others from that vantage point. There have been attempts to view the nativeness question as a matter of social and cultural standpoint rather than resting solely on language proficiency (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy 2001). However, nativeness is not constructed by willing adults but is a result of sufficient exposure to and use of native English in early childhood. This statement explicitly specifies that nativeness is not a question of choice or assessment by others (Lowenberg 2002), but a result of early language acquisition. There is an important consequence of this: if the members of a speech community acquire a variety of English under conditions of natural
language acquisition in early childhood then that variety is native, irrespective of its relationship to standard English.

The difficulty for the linguist lies in finding a yardstick against which to measure new forms of English. Standard English, on the grammatical and lexical levels, is a fairly stable and historically continuous form of language and is hence used by linguists as a reference point when describing nonstandard forms of the language, whatever their source. This may be seen as stating the obvious for many, but in the context of ‘World Englishes’ it is important to stress that there is no suggestion of one group – users of standard English – being somehow more advanced than another. The terms ‘native’, ‘near-native’, ‘non-native’ rest on a comparison of Asian and African Englishes with historically continuous varieties. The comparison is strictly linguistic: the pronunciation, the grammar, the lexicon, style and pragmatic factors are compared with those levels in forms of English in largely monolingual anglophone countries. Similarity to, or distance from, mainstream varieties of British or American English is not meant in an evaluative sense and should not be construed as such.

In the discussion of Asian Englishes, reference must be made to a speech community as a whole. If, for instance, one is to regard ‘Singaporean English’ as a native variety of English then nativeness must apply to more or less the entire community and not just to a section which has had the privilege of sufficient exposure to English in childhood and through education. Needless to say, if English is the sole language of a community, then this is automatically native.

Historically, one can see that countries like Ireland, Scotland and parts of South Africa underwent language shift with speakers moving to English over several generations. Once the first language for the community had become English then their variety was native, although in each of these cases the forms of English showed many differences compared to standard English. Of course this is not to say that the situations just referred to are identical with those of ‘World Englishes’ as the countries mentioned underwent language shift through contact with native speakers of English and not as a result of any educational or social policy. This fact is relevant to the classification of Englishes today, for instance in contemporary South Africa where new forms of Black South African English are emerging. The knowledge of English among blacks is partly due to contact with native speakers (the British-derived population of South Africa), partly due to contact with Afrikaans speakers of English and partly due to increasing educational possibilities for this sector of the population (de Klerk 1999; Wissing 2002; van der Walt and van Rooy 2002).

A last point to mention in this context is that the presence of native speakers adds additional stability to a variety as it will continue to exist as long as these native speakers are there to use it. Of course later language shift away from English cannot be ruled out but this is less likely than if it is a second language used by a community. In such a situation English could recede at the expense of the first language if the social demands for its use were to decline.
1.6 Terminology and background languages

Just as ‘New Englishes’ before it had become lexicalised, ‘World Englishes’ is similarly being lexicalised, in the sense of all those varieties which are either foreign-language, if not second-language, varieties which have arisen in the burgeoning arena of ‘deculturised’ English. This understanding would seem to inform the majority of contributions to the journal *World Englishes* (though in the ‘Aim and Scope’ statement the emphasis is laid on cross-cultural perspectives and identities) and from the papers at the conferences of the International Association for World Englishes which have been held so far at the University of Illinois, a centre for the study of such Englishes, in Portland State University (Oregon) and at venues in Africa and Asia.

The current chapter considers a major subset of ‘World Englishes’, those to be found in Asia. The label used here is ‘Asian Englishes’, the plural form deliberately implying several varieties at different locations with different background languages. The term ‘background language’ refers to languages present which have had and continue to have an influence on English. ‘Background’ refers solely to the contact relationship with English and says nothing about the position of languages labelled in this way in the societies with Asian Englishes.

For the purpose of comparison, a section has been included in this chapter on African Englishes. Again this plural compound refers to English in parts of Africa – in countries like Kenya (Whiteley 1974) and Tanzania (Schmied 1985, 1990; Abdulaziz 1991; Polomé and Hill 1980) as well as Nigeria (Görlich 1998a), Ghana (Huber 1995, 1999) and Cameroon (Todd 1984; Wolf 2001) – where English has not been transmitted in an unbroken fashion by native speakers since its first arrival at these locations. By this token African Englishes may include forms of black South African English but not white South African English derived from British settlers.

English in the African countries just mentioned and a few others besides, such as those in the north of southern Africa (Chishimba 1991) – i.e. Zimbabwe (excepting the descendants of original settlers, Mesthrie 1992: 4), Zambia and Malawi – will be regarded as a second-language phenomenon, arising against the background of specific African languages in which speakers have primary linguistic competence, even if this language is itself a lingua franca of the region as is the case with Kiswahili in parts of East Africa such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

In table 19.1 the language families and the main languages are listed which form the linguistic backdrop in those regions where African and Asian Englishes are spoken.

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1 This list could be expanded to include other countries such as Uganda (East Africa) and Botswana, Malawi (the north of southern Africa).

2 See Mesthrie (1992: 1–5) for a discussion of South African Indian English as a ‘New English’ with useful comparisons to other varieties.
Table 19.1. *Main background languages for African and Asian Englishes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1. West / East / the north of southern Africa</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Bantu languages</strong></td>
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<th><strong>2. South Asia</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indo–European</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indo–Aryan (Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dravidian</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamil, Kannada, Telegu, Malayalam (southern India); Brahui (Pakistan).</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>3. South-East Asia</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sino–Tibetan</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Chinese languages, Hokkien (recessively) in Singapore, Cantonese in Hong Kong; Putonghua (Mandarin) in both areas.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Austronesian</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Malay in Singapore; Tagalog in the Philippines.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dravidian</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamil in Singapore.</td>
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*a* See Williamson and Blench (2000) for a recent overview of the Niger-Congo phylum.

## 2 Second-language and foreign-language varieties

In the literature on non-native varieties of English it is general practice to recognise two large blocks which have been labelled ‘second-language English’ and ‘foreign-language English’ respectively (see the discussion in McArthur 1998: 42–6). These terms refer to forms of English which are at an increasing remove from native forms of the language. The details of how to define these terms for a specific purpose may vary but, in keeping with trends in the field, the term ‘second-language English’ will be used here to refer to varieties of English which are to be found in those countries which do not have a background of English colonialism and hence not a tradition of native English (however slight), e.g. Thailand, Cambodia/Kampuchea, Indonesia. Such countries show a much lower level of exposure to the English language, particularly in education, i.e. in the formative years of language acquisition.

The second label ‘foreign-language English’ is used in describing non-native varieties in countries which do not show a widespread use of English. Of course the borderline between second-language and foreign-language varieties is a grey one but in general the latter term can be taken to apply to English in countries with
long-established, written native languages, e.g. the countries of mainland Europe. Another distinguishing feature of ‘foreign-language English’ is that it is used for external communication. For this reason it has been referred to as International English (McArthur 1998: xv; 2002: 444f.), stressing its function as a means of communication on a more global level. The use of English in the international sphere is strongly marked by its use in commerce. A curious phenomenon which this aspect of modern society has spawned has been labelled ‘Decorative English’ by McArthur (2002: 420f.). It refers to the practice of putting English phrases or slogans on commercial products, in advertisements, etc. In Japan, for instance, this English is used frequently but is largely ignored by the native population. It is part of the desire (perceived above all by the commercial sector) to internationalise the Japanese world by sprinkling bits of English here and there. It would be pedantic to criticise the incorrectness of much decorative English. Its linguistic effect is greatest on the lexical and smallest on the morphological level, i.e. decorative English may lead in time to established borrowings from English but not to any grammatical influence on the surrounding language. It is part of being ‘cool’, ‘fashionable’, ‘trendy’. The borrowings and formations it engenders are known in Japanese as *gairaigo* ‘language from the outside’ (McArthur 1998: 16–18).

The essential difference between the situation in Japan and a country like India is that there is no cline of English with an upper end of near-native or native competence. The situation with heavy borrowing from English, even with morphological adaptations and extensions, does not imply competence in English. A case in point is present-day German which has borrowed massively from English and continues to do so. Many of the borrowings are in fact German inventions, like the word *handy* for ‘mobile phone’ or *dressman* for ‘male model’. Other cases are where initial users of a phrase just got it wrong, a type of contact malapropism, like *last not least* ‘last but not least’ or *happy end* ‘happy ending’. Many extensions have been created, like *pullunder* ‘sleeveless jumper’ (on the basis of *pullover*) or *twens* ‘people in their twenties’ (on the basis of *teens*). All of this does not, however, make for a specific German variety of English.

3 What is an Asian English?

The question posed in this section can be answered with reference to three main factors. These can be labelled the background, genesis and functional factors. According to the classical definition of ‘New Englishes’ offered by Platt, Weber and Ho (1984: 2), and adopted for the present discussion of Asian Englishes, these forms of the language are those which show the characteristics outlined in the following section.

3.1 Main factors in determining Asian Englishes

3.1.1 Background. Asian Englishes are not historically continuous forms of English, that is they do not arise, or have not arisen, in scenarios in which native
speakers of the language transmitted English from one generation to the next. In the context of the southern hemisphere and Asia this fact clearly separates English in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Falklands and Tristan da Cunha from forms of the language in various countries in South and South-East Asia.

3.1.2 Genesis. These forms of English arise through the educational system. They can develop in those states where English is taught in primary education and is the medium of instruction. Although Platt, Weber and Ho (1984) do not originally specify this, a common feature in the genesis of ‘New Englishes’ is the use of the language – at least partially – in the domestic environment and more essentially in the public sphere. The latter fact usually follows from the presence of English in the primary education system. The reinforcement of English outside school is important to give added motivation to its general use and hence to further the rise of an Asian English.

3.1.3 Function. Mature Asian 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 of an Asian English, thus in Singapore, forms of Chinese, Malay and Tamil may be used parallel to English by speakers in private discourse. It is important to stress this fact as there would appear to be no country in which an Asian English has supplanted any background language which may be present. This fact renders the Asian English scenario essentially different from a language-shift situation which one has historically in Ireland, in the north, north-east and west of Scotland, in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, etc. Additionally, the relationship to indigenous languages, especially if one of the latter is a co-official language, can determine the relative prominence of English in the social life of a country. The case of the Philippines illustrates this clearly because English has not adopted the identification role which it has increasingly in Singapore, for instance. This function is now exercised by Filipino, a derivative of the native language Tagalog (Gonzalez 1997; Schneider 2003).

In the context of the present volume the background question has been the key factor in determining what kind of English has arisen at various overseas locations. It is helpful in this context to consider the term ‘imposition’ (Guy 1990) by which is meant that speakers of a foreign language come to impose structures from their second-language form of a target language onto this variety as a whole, i.e. affecting the form spoken by all speakers of this language in a society. This notion would seem to be useful when dealing with ‘New English’ scenarios, among the Asian Englishes that of Hong Kong, for example, where there is a perceptible influence of Cantonese on the English of all groups in the city.
One should also bear in mind that the countries in which forms of English still exist have, as a rule, all been colonies of Britain until some time in the twentieth century. In some of these former colonies there were significant numbers of immigrants from the British Isles for historically continuous varieties of English to survive. Indeed in many of these cases, indigenous peoples have to a large extent shifted to the language of the colonials as in Australia and New Zealand. But in a number of Asian colonies of Britain, the historical situation was different. There were not large numbers of immigrants who went to these locations. Rather Britain kept an administrative and military presence there, often managed by more or less private bodies, as with the well-known East India Company (see chapter on South Asian English). In such instances there was no immigrant section of the population which could have established itself permanently for a historically continuous form of English to survive. Furthermore, the administrative staff of the colonial power was not numerically sufficient to trigger a large-scale language shift in favour of English.

The fate of a colony, in terms of the English language which it came to embody, was largely the result of perception on the part of the colonial power. Countries like Australia and New Zealand were perceived as ‘empty’ (as was North America in the seventeenth century) and thus free to be planted by substantial immigration. This also applied to a certain extent to South Africa, as with the 1820s settlers in the Eastern Cape region. It also held for Rhodesia/Zimbabwe but not for Kenya in East Africa which was not settled by large numbers of English speakers (Schmied 2004).

England’s Asian colonies were viewed quite differently. Here the main concern was using them as a source of cheap imports, notably of spices and of textiles like silk in the early days of the colonial enterprise, later on as a source of such raw materials as rubber (in the case of the Straits Settlements, later Malaysia). It was known that Asian countries contained established societies and the notion of peopling them with immigrants did not seem to figure in colonial planning.

It is interesting to consider the position of the West African colonies in this respect. From the colonial perspective of previous centuries, English colonies in the bulge of Africa, such as Nigeria and Ghana, were not necessarily viewed as containing established societies but neither were they considered as likely places for emigration because of existing native populations and for climatic reasons. The result of this was similar to Asia in that the English presence in these countries was administrative and military.

In addition there was a strong missionary presence in West African and Asian colonies. This fact is significant in the genesis of newer forms of English in both Africa³ and Asia. Most of the missionary involvement in former colonies included the establishment of schools, e.g. in South Africa, and hence the transmission of English through education. In some instances, such as India with the famous

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Minute by Macaulay in 1835, the use of English was officially furthered by the colonial government, but as often as not the schools were part of a missionary enterprise, funded by the two main Christian churches, with much tacit approval by the British government.

3.2 Interactions between Asian Englishes

By and large the Asian Englishes are separate from one another but there are instances of contact. For example, there is a one-way influence of Philippine English on Hong Kong English due to the increasing number of Filipino domestic workers in the former crown colony. The number of migrant workers in Hong Kong rose from 72,000 in 1991 to 170,000 in 1999 (Bolton 2000: 111) and these were mainly female domesticics or ‘amahs’. Their employers actively encourage them to speak English with the young children in their charge, exposing the latter to the English of the Philippines. This may well be a reduplication of the caregiver scenario which some linguists assume was partly responsible for the (former) influence of African American domestics in the southern United States on the speech of the white population there.

4 Characteristics of Asian Englishes

The term ‘Asian Englishes’ would seem to imply a degree of unity among the varieties of English which it refers to. The question to be considered here is whether this unity can be derived from the structure of background languages and not just from the sociolinguistic conditions under which such varieties have arisen, or arise. Many of the features listed below seem to occur with a more than chance frequency in specific Asian Englishes. For instance, the syntactic features are largely typical of colloquial Malaysian English dealt with by Wong in her investigation (Wong 1983: 131ff.). Two main explanations can be put forward here: (i) a typological similarity exists among background languages, at least within the two main blocks, African Englishes and Asian Englishes, (ii) the situation in which English is learned in these regions determines the type of non-native language which arises, i.e. these newer forms of English have come to embody universals of unguided second-language acquisition.

If there are such common features then these may become established if the genesis of a new English is followed by focusing, a set of sociolinguistic developments whereby new varieties obtain a clear linguistic profile (apart from a distinctive vocabulary) which makes them recognisable for others and which fulfils an identity function within the society which uses a given English (see above). Such focusing is taken to have occurred historically in Australia and New Zealand but not to have yet taken place on the Falklands or on Tristan da Cunha (see Sudbury and Schreier, this volume, respectively).

The discussion below concerns features found in Asian Englishes with some reference to African Englishes as well. It should be stressed that code-switching is
Table 19.2. Cline of phonetic realisations in Singapore English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realisations of the vowel nucleus in /fa:/</th>
<th>least-educated speakers</th>
<th>most-educated speakers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ ɛ' ɛː ɛɪ ɛi ɛː]</td>
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</table>

common in all such areas. Such activity presupposes that speakers are competent in both English and one or more background languages, e.g. English and Malay in Malaysia or English and Tagalog in the Philippines or English and Cantonese in Hong Kong. Code-switching is an obvious characteristic of any language mix situation and is found historically in many macaronic texts, e.g. from the Middle English period with French and English, which suggest an audience fluent in at least two languages. Although code-switching is not examined here it should be mentioned that this is a process whereby elements from background languages can become established in newer forms of English. If code-switching is done repeatedly for single words on a community-wide basis, then the result is in effect borrowing and such words may be later known to speakers who no longer have fluency in the background language from which they derive.4

4.1 Phonology

The phonology of Asian Englishes generally reflects the speech habits of the background languages spoken in a region. In any such area there will be a continuum of realisations which depend on such factors as education, social position and contact with near-native speakers of English. For instance, in table 19.2 one can observe the cline for the realisation of the vowel in the /fa:/ lexical set in Singapore. Such realisations are part of a general process in Singapore English and other Asian Englishes where two of the rising diphthongs of English tend to have monophthongal and also lower equivalents in more vernacular forms of these Englishes, e.g. /ei/ > /e(ː), e(ː)/, /əu/ > /o(ː), o(ː)/ (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 35f.).

Syllable-timing. A common prosodic trait of Englishes in both Africa (Jowitt 2000) and large parts of Asia is what is called syllable-timing, a situation where all syllables are pronounced with approximately the same length, with little vowel reduction and with little if any stress contrast across syllables, e.g. matter /mata/, butter /bata/, beer /bia/ in African Englishes (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 35). In such Englishes the phenomenon of contrastive stress, present in English word pairs like ‘convert and con’vert, is not realised.

4.1.1 Vowels

Vowel length. The length distinction among vowels, responsible (with relative centralisation) for the differentiation of *bit* and *beat* is a feature of standard English which is not necessarily shared by Asian Englishes. If the background languages do not show phonemic length distinctions among vowels then these may not be present in the English of the region either. It is important to stress ‘phonemic length distinction’ here as many languages without this kind of systemic distinction, e.g. French, nonetheless have relative phonetic length for low vowels, e.g. /a/ [a’, a:]. The neglect of phonemic vowel length is found in India and in the Philippines (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 32) with half-length a typical vocalic feature of Singapore English.

Vowel distinctions. The English vowels /ɛ/, /æ/, /ʌ/ involve a set of distinctions which are not common cross-linguistically and hence lead to substitutions in Asian Englishes. The presence of an /æ/ – /ʌ/ distinction in either the Niger-Congo languages of central Africa (Batibo 2000: 142) and of the north of southern Africa or in Indo-Aryan, Dravidian or in Chinese or Malay is unknown so that substitution with the nearest substrate equivalent is found; table 19.3 shows various possibilities. The scenarios in table 19.3 represent common solutions to the question of realising /æ/ and /ʌ/ in Asian and African Englishes, the first with the retention of a distinction, the second with a merger and the third with the possibilities of both the first and second, but with the merger of /æ/ with the vowel of the *dress* lexical set due to the raised realisation of the *trap* vowel. This last situation is common in Singapore, for instance (a similar development to German, Russian and many European languages which do not have [æ]).

The central stressed vowel of English can lead to similar substitutions, as is the case in forms of English in Nigeria (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 35); see table 19.4. Another more general cause of distinction loss is the lack of vowel-length distinctions which means that pairs like *fed* and *fude* become homophones. There have been some suggestions, e.g. by Hancock and Angogo (1982), that missionaries may have had an influence here, i.e. in the absence of phonemic vowel length, a feature of Scots which would have been in the speech of Scottish missionaries in East Africa. Schmied (1991a and personal communication) is
very doubtful of this given the numerical relationship of missionaries to native population and he sees native languages as a much more likely source of this phenomenon.

\text{LONG LOW} /a:/ \text{. The vowel in RP} \text{ fast, dance is normally a retracted long vowel, i.e. } /\text{a}:/. \text{Not all varieties of English share this realisation; a central vowel, } /\text{a}:/, \text{is found in areas as far apart as Ireland and Australia while the United States tends to have a low front vowel, i.e. } /\text{æ}/. \text{For African Englishes a central vowel is most common, given that many background languages do not usually have } /\text{a}/ \text{and hence no exact equivalent to the vowel in the bath lexical set is readily available.}

\textbf{4.1.2 Consonants}

\textsc{ambidental fricatives}. \text{These segments are cross-linguistically somewhat rare, for instance in European languages they occur in Welsh, Spanish, Greek, certain central Italian dialects, but not at all in the Slavic languages or in the Germanic languages, bar English, Danish and Icelandic, or in Finnish and Hungarian. The background languages of both African and Asian Englishes do not have ambidental fricatives and hence substitution is normal. There are basically two types, involving a shift to either stops or fricatives, as shown in table 19.5. Of the two types of substitutions, the fortition to stops or the retraction of fricatives to an alveolar point of articulation, the former is by far the more common, though alveolar retraction is reported for northern Nigeria (Jibril 1986: 51f.). Other correspondences are sometimes reached for the ambidental fricatives of English, e.g. aspiration or affrication of coronal stops (dental or alveolar), as reported for Malaysia/Singapore (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 38f.).}

\textbf{/v/ versus /w/}. \text{English is unusual among the Germanic languages in having a distinction between } /\text{v}/ \text{ and } /\text{w}/. \text{This resulted from the development of } /\text{w}/
from Germanic /v/, with present-day /v/ stemming from Romance loanwords. The remaining Germanic languages have maintained the original /v/ as [v].

The Asian and African Englishes show one of two types of substitution: either /v/ and /w/ are both realised as [v] or as [w], with minor variants like the bilabial approximants [β] also occurring. Occasionally, as in Filipino English, there can be complete closure to [b]. In all these cases homophony in word pairs like vet and wet is the result.

/s/ versus /ʃ/. By no means all languages have a distinction among sibilants similar to that in English between /s/ and /ʃ/ where the difference is that between a nongrooved versus a grooved fricative, the latter showing attendant lip-rounding. Among the European languages, Dutch, Spanish, Finnish and Greek do not have this distinction. In such languages /s/ may be realised as an apico-alveolar fricative rather than as a lamino-alveolar one. For the Asian and African Englishes a similar situation may obtain: where there is only one voiceless sibilant, its normal realisation is used for both /s/ and /ʃ/, i.e. there is a merger leading to homophony in word pairs like sue and shoe. A feature like this can become salient in a country, as is the case with this lack of distinction in Kenya (Schmied 1991b) and hence be stigmatised.

Presence of initial /h–/. The glottal fricative has developed in English from Common Germanic /x/, but has been lost in many urban varieties of British English. In Asian and African Englishes this sound is unstable and if background languages do not have /h/ then the forms of English in these regions do not either, leading to homophony in word pairs like hall and all.

Rhoticity. The lack of syllable-final /r/ is a common feature among the transported dialects of the southern hemisphere. Among the Asian and African Englishes, the situation is not that simple. By and large one can say that the African Englishes and those of South-East Asia are nonrhotic, because the background languages do not generally have /r/ in syllable-final position (though forms of Malay do). In South Asia most forms of English are rhotic; again one can observe that the background languages, here Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, maintain /r/ in syllable-final position.

The realisation of /r/ can vary across Asian and African Englishes. In South Asia it is largely a retroflex /r/ in keeping with background languages which share this. In the Philippines, /r/ is an alveolar tap, although American English, which has a retroflex /r/ as well, is the superstrate model for the region.

Merger of /l/ and /v/. This is a well-known feature of Chinese languages and is to be found in vernacular forms of English in Hong Kong, for instance. Among African languages it is known to occur in Kikuyu in Kenya, where it is stigmatised (Schmied 1991b), and is also found in Luganda in Uganda (Batibo 2000: 164).

4.1.3 Phonotactics. The background languages of Asian and African Englishes often have a phonotactics which is quite different from that of English and hence
influence the latter. The most common pattern is CV (possibly in sequence) and leads to realisations such as hospital [hospitiːl] in East Africa where the Bantu languages, including Kiswahili, do not permit the syllable-initial consonant clusters found in English (Schmied 1991a).

**Cluster simplification.** A salient phonotactic feature of Asian and African Englishes, and one which represents a considerable obstacle to comprehensibility, is the reduction of final consonant clusters (a syllable-final phenomenon linked to that in syllable-initial position just mentioned). As with so many of the phonological features, this is determined largely by the phonotactics of the background language(s). Examples of this phenomenon are: /-sk/ > /-s/, tasks > /task/, /tas/; /-ndz/ > /-nd > /-n/, pounds > /paund/, /paun/.

There are considerable consequences of this simplification for the morphology of the Asian and African Englishes. One area where this is obvious is with negated modals and auxiliary verbs, e.g. didn’t, couldn’t, mustn’t appear after simplification as [dɪdŋ], [kʊdn], [mʌn].

Indeed speakers of Asian and African Englishes may delete word-final consonants not because of word-final clusters but perhaps because of their lying below a perceptual threshold and because they are not aware of the noncontracted forms. An instance of what is meant here is supplied by contracted would which, with the first person, appears as I’d in English. But in many Asian Englishes, e.g. Malaysian English, this form is realised merely as I as in I rather go by plane (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 75). See also deletion of final consonants in next section.

**Final consonants.** The realisation of consonants in word-final position can be affected if they are part of a cluster, as just mentioned. However, many Asian and African Englishes show further nonstandard features in this phonotactic position. The simplest of these is a lack of release of stops which in terms of American English is normal. Devoicing of stops in word-final position is known to be the default case in first-language acquisition which became established in adult language for German and the Slavic languages, for instance. Glottalisation of stops is also a feature which many Asian Englishes with a Chinese-language background share with vernacular forms of British English. One should mention that final consonants may be deleted even though they do not form part of a cluster. These options can be seen in alternative pronunciations of a word like bid [bɪd̪], [bɪt], [bɪʔ], [bɪ]. Occasionally in East African English l-vocalisation, e.g. able [ebo], appears (Josef Schmied, personal communication).

**Re-syllabification.** The prohibition on consonant clusters in Asian and African Englishes can be resolved in a number of ways. Certainly deletion of an element of the cluster is an option, but re-syllabification to split up the cluster is another. The strategy here is to prefix a vowel before a cluster, or insert a vowel between the elements of this cluster. In both cases an extra syllable is created and
the former cluster is now distributed across two syllables, e.g. *school* > /s.ku:l/, *glass* > /gə.las/.

4.2 Morphology

**Plural marking.** The background languages of Asian and African Englishes have various means of expressing plurality. In Malay reduplication is common, e.g. *bunga-bunga* ‘flowers’. Bantu languages, like Kiswahili, have complex nominal classes (Dimmendaal 2000: 189–91) and the plural is often formed by an alteration of the beginning of a word, e.g. Kiswahili *kitabu* ‘book’ (< Arabic *kitab*) *vitabu* ‘books’. In still other cases, notably that of the Chinese languages, both Putonghua (Mandarin) and Hokkien, plurality is implied by context (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 46ff.).

These situations with background languages mean that plurals are not always marked. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. **Phonological:** final cluster simplification (see above) dictates that a final –s remains unrealised, e.g. *books* = [bɔk].
2. **Morphological:** one or more background languages may not have formal marking of the plural, as in Hokkien (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 49), so that plurality is inferred from context.
3. **Morphological:** background languages have a different principle of plural formation, e.g. Bantu languages, which is not readily transferable to English with the result that no marking is undertaken.

**Nonstandard plurals.** This phenomenon is most apparent in the use of the plurals with noncountable nouns, e.g. *All our rices we have to import* (Hong Kong); *I lost all my furnitures and valuable properties* (Nigeria); *He has many luggages* (the Philippines) (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 50). The reason for these kinds of structures can lie either in the background language or in insufficient knowledge of the morphology of English. A further related reason could be in the extension of the context in which noncountable nouns can nonetheless occur in the plural in English, e.g. *We have too many works to do* (ibid.) may derive from sentences like *The good works of our government*.

Noncountable nouns, if they are not recognised as such, may be preceded by an indefinite article, as in *A staff came up to help us* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 51). A further motivation for this kind of usage is conceptual: if a noncountable noun is perceived as consisting of a number of elements, then it is likely to appear as countable. This is seen in foreign-language varieties of English as well, e.g. in German forms of English the noun *information* is treated as countable (influenced no doubt by the status of the noun in German): *He gave us an important information*.

**The use of the definite article.** Definiteness and specificness. The use of the article is determined in standard English by definiteness, which according to Platt, Weber and Ho (1984: 53ff.) is defined as an attribute of
a noun whereby it is known to the interlocutors in a discourse, hence the use of the definite article in a sentence like *The man you met yesterday* versus *A man is waiting outside in the hall for you*. On the other hand, the notion of specificness has to do with the quality of a noun as an instance of a set. Nonspecific usages are seen in Asian Englishes where a noun is any random member of a set, e.g. *It looks like cat* ‘It looks like a cat’; *I’m not on scholarship* ‘I am not on a scholarship’ (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 55). A nonspecific usage can also be found where the set has only a single possible instance in a certain context, e.g. *I got very kind mother* (Singapore English; Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 56).

Specific usages are somewhat more complex. For instance, if a member of a set is particular but unknown then the quantifier *one* is often used, as in *I’m staying in one house with three other (students)*; *Here got one stall selling soup noodles* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 56f.). Known specific items on the contrary demand the use of the definite article or of a demonstrative pronoun: *This handbag you wanted to buy the other day. Buy already or not?* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 57). The preference for demonstrative pronouns – as in Singapore English (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 58) – may derive from the lack of definite articles in background languages.

**Quantifiers.** Many of the quantifiers of English occur as word groups, frequently with a preceding indefinite article, e.g. *a few*, *a couple of*, *a number of*. The likelihood that the article will be dropped in Asian Englishes is high, especially as there would appear to be no necessary semantic reason for its presence. This could help to account for attestations like *I applied couple of places in Australia* (Indian English); *I did bit shopping; He got little bit of knowledge about acupuncture* (Malaysian English; Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 60).

There is perhaps another reason for the nonstandard appearance of quantifier phrases. When speakers are influenced in the target language by structures in their native language, then they usually expect a one-to-one correspondence between outset and target structures. For example, the present author has noticed repeatedly that German students of English only use *also* as a translation equivalent of German *auch* ‘also’ and neglect the option of using *as well* at the end of the sentence as in *He is interested in Russian as well*. The reason may be that there is no equivalent two-word phrase in German which occurs word-finally (or in any other position for that matter) so that the option is not considered by speakers at all. Similar phenomena have been reported for African Englishes. For instance, Schmied (personal communication) noticed a widespread occurrence in English in Kenya of *also* before a pronoun-initial noun phrase (frequently in a concessive sense) as in *Not only are these factories better equipped to land more fish, but also they are creating monopolies; It was also they that took it to other lands like America.*

The negation of *all* in standard English is *none*, but in vernacular forms of Asian Englishes this might not be appreciated and *all* may used with a negated verb as the equivalent of acrolectal *none*, e.g. *All the letters didn’t arrive* (Malaysian English; Newbrook 1997: 240).
unmarked genitive. The use of word-final /-s/ on words in the genitive may be neglected if position is sufficient to indicate the grammatical category which a word represents (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 61), e.g. children playground (Malaysian English), women groups (Indian English). Such occurrences can have a number of causes. The first is simply phonological, i.e. final cluster reduction leads to the dropping of /-s/ when it follows a consonant. Another reason could be the removal of grammatical redundancy: if position relative to the governed noun (in the nominative) is sufficient to indicate the genitive then additional marking with a suffixed /-s/ is unnecessary. A third reason could be the lack of overt genitive marking in background languages.

pronominal usage. A gender distinction for pronouns of the third person singular is not found in all languages. Among the European languages, Finnish is well known for not having such a distinction. Background languages in Asian English regions which do not show such a distinction are likely to lead to an uncertainty in the use of gender-specific pronouns in English for the third person singular. Platt, Weber and Ho (1984: 61) quote instances from East Africa, Hong Kong and Malaysia/Singapore, e.g. My mother, he live in kampong (Malaysia), She born on national day (Singapore, referring to a male), He work in office in Kowloon (Hong Kong, referring to a female). For South-East Asia one can note that the southern Chinese languages – Hokkien, Hainanese, Cantonese – only have a single form for masculine and feminine pronouns in the third person singular, namely i, i, koei respectively (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 62).

suffixation. Among the word classes of English which show variation in suffixes is the adjective. Both -ed and -ing are possible on various stems, though the usage is generally mutually exclusive. Confusion in the use of such suffixes is a common feature of non-native English, especially where background languages do not assist speakers in distinguishing between adjectives deriving from past and present participles and those which are neither, e.g. The instructions are very complicating; You are most welcomed to stay with us; The museum will be opened to the public (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 62).

4.3 Syntax

word order. The order of more than one adjective in attributive position may vary among non-native varieties of English, e.g. These last two years refers to a stint of two years which is most recent, whereas These two last years would refer to two from a collection of ‘last years’ which are the topic of a discourse (admittedly the more unusual of the two possible word orders).

The semantic scope of adjectives is determined by order in attributive position and this may be flouted or simply not perceived by non-native speakers, either because of insufficient knowledge of English or because of an influence from a background language. For instance, in Hokkien Chinese the quantifiers all and over ‘more than’ are placed after the elements they qualify and this may lead
to interference in English word order: "ninety over cheques" ‘over ninety cheques’; "around two years plus" ‘over two years’ (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 63).

Another nonstandard word order is found in Malaysian and Singapore English where demonstrative and possessive pronouns co-occur. In English this co-occurrence requires a postpositioning of the possessive pronoun preceded by ‘of’ as in *That brother of yours is coming again*. But for the two Asian Englishes just mentioned the possessive pronoun can be immediately followed by a demonstrative, both preceding the noun they qualify: *Your that brother come back already or not?* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 64).

The inversion of subject–verb order which is triggered in English by so-called *wh*-questions is often lacking, for instance in Indian English: *What you would like to eat?* (Kachru 1982: 360). The use or not of inversion is a feature which varies widely across the anglophone world. For instance, inversion in embedded questions without a conjunction is a common phenomenon in Irish English, e.g. *She asked him was he interested* ‘She asked him if he was interested’.

**Conjunctions.** Juxtaposition rather than conjunction is found in South-East Asian Englishes, perhaps as an influence of background languages as in *Altogether I have two brother, four sister* (Singapore English; Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 64). However, the absence of conjunctions is a typical feature of non-native English, particularly in the various approximations to the target language which learners show in situations of unguided acquisition, so that one may be dealing with a convergence of motivations here (Schmied 1991a).

**Prepositions.** English prepositions form an area where many speakers have a usage different from that of the standard, chiefly because those found in verbal complements are unpredictable to speakers. Nonstandard usage is found in Asian Englishes – to varying degrees – as can be seen in sentences like *I congratulate you for your work; They discussed about the mistakes and emphasised on the need for greater care*. Some of the usages have become more or less established as part of an embryonic focusing process, e.g. *He got up/down the bus* (Singapore English).

Analogical extensions from existing phrasal verbs in English could be a source of such constructions (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 85), e.g. *speak out > voice out. You can voice out what you are not satisfied with at the meeting; talk about > discuss about. The phrasal verbs could in some cases be back-formations from nominal phrases, e.g. *A discussion about the meeting > We discussed about the meeting* (Schmied 2004). In still other instances there may be a use of a preposition which derives from a background language, *He threw out his hands in despair* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 82).

**Reduplication.** The use of reduplication for emphasis is widely attested in Asian Englishes as in many other languages, e.g. *You watch TV until late late – no wonder cannot get up!; Scrub until clean clean; Eat until full full* (Malaysian and Singapore English; Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 114). Malay as a background language provides many instances of reduplication, including plural formation,
which can provide supportive influence in English in the region of the Malay peninsula.

**The use of ‘never’**. In standard English *never* refers to the entire period of past discourse, as in *He never visited us when he lived in Paris*. But there are varieties of English in which *never* has a much more restricted, almost punctual scope, e.g. *She never rang yesterday evening* ‘She did not ring at all yesterday evening’. In Irish English this narrower scope is most probably derived from Irish where there is a similar range for *riamh* ‘never’. During the language-shift period, the Irish transferred the semantic scope of their temporal negative to English where it also serves the purpose of emphasis (a Gaelic influence may be responsible for a similar usage in Scotland). Many Asian Englishes show a similar range of applications of *never*, e.g. *I never take your book* ‘I did not take your book’ (Singapore English; Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 77).

**Resumptive pronouns**. A pronoun is labelled ‘resumptive’ when it occurs immediately after the noun it refers to, i.e. it does not have the usual anaphoric function of linking sentences text-linguistically. The use of pronouns in this fashion is very common in a wide range of varieties of English, not just the subset being considered here. Resumptive pronouns form a part of a particular discourse strategy in which the theme of a sentence is fronted with the pronoun as a placeholder for the noun phrase which was extracted by the fronting process, e.g. *But the grandson(s) they know to speak Malay* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 120); *People they don’t have that sort of belief now* (Bangladesh English).

**Fronting**. This is a general process, involved in the occurrence of resumptive pronouns (see previous section), by which elements of a sentence are highlighted by left-shifting. Fronting as a discourse device is found to a limited extent in standard English, but other varieties may show a great deal more, e.g. Irish English which has an amount of fronting which can only be accounted for by imposition of the scope in Irish by speakers in the language-shift process, e.g. *It’s to Dublin he has gone for the day*.

Topicalisation by fronting is found in Asian Englishes as well. It is recorded, for instance, for Singapore English (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 121) as in the sentences *Certain medicine we don’(t) stock in our dispensary; To my sister sometime I speak English*.

**4.3.1 The verbal complex**

**Lack of inflections**. The lack of suffixal *-s* in the present tense can have, as with similar omissions in other areas of syntax, two principal causes: (i) final cluster reduction and (ii) a general neglect of verbal inflection (perhaps due to switching from a standard to a more vernacular register). In order to decide which is the case, it is necessary to find sentences in which the verb *be* occurs. The use of *be* for *is* would definitely point to (ii), neglect of inflection, as the cause for the lack of suffixal *-s*. As always, background languages exercise an influence. In
Singapore, Chinese – Hokkien and Mandarin – with its lack of verbal inflections, has played a role in the marking of inflection (or lack of it) among English-speaking Singaporeans (especially in vernacular varieties). There is here, as elsewhere, a rule of thumb that the higher the level of education, the greater the conformity to standard English patterns (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 67). Various stages on the way to native-like competence in the target language can of course embody hypercorrection so that suffixal -s can be found on more than just the third person singular. Such occurrences should not be confused with present-tense inflections found in historically continuous forms of overseas English which are generally treated under the heading ‘Northern Subject Rule’. This is a reference to a phenomenon, originally widespread in northern England but also elsewhere, where suffixal -s occurs depending on such factors as distance and weight of the subject vis-à-vis the verb it accompanies and depending on the nominal or pronominal status of the subject (see chapter by Poplack and Tagliamonte, this volume).

Final cluster reduction and a substrate-influenced neglect of inflections can equally be posited as dual causes of a lack of verbal endings in the past tense, e.g. *Last year I work in Ipoh* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 68). However, in many cases it may well be the present which is intended. There is a reason for this which has to do with the application of tenses in discourse. It is known from many pidgins and creoles that the present tense is used for the time in focus during a discourse, even if this lies in the past. A roughly similar phenomenon is found in the narrative present in more standard varieties of English. This would account for the use of the present in the Singapore English example, *We stay there whole afternoon and we catch one small fish* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 68). In such instances the discourse context renders the time obvious. Alternatively or additionally, an adverb of time may be present in a sentence which obviates any necessity for past marking in Asian Englishes like Malaysian English: *Before I always go to that market; When I small that time, I stay with my auntie* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 70). The authors Platt, Weber and Ho stress the aspect-orientation of verbs in both Hokkien and Malay and mention the aspectual marker of the latter language, *sedang ‘still’, i.e. progressive, and sudah ‘finish’, i.e. perfective. In Hokkien forms meaning ‘now’ and ‘already’ have similar functions (ibid.). The upshot of this situation is that background languages in both Malaysia and Singapore are in large part responsible for the lack of tense marking in the Asian Englishes spoken in that region. This may still apply although knowledge of Hokkien in Singapore has declined with the younger generation which orientates itself towards Putonghua (Mandarin).

The highlighting of aspectual elements of the verbal complex is particularly clear with *use to* which marks habitual actions, including those which are still continuing, e.g. *I use to converse with my amah in Cantonese ‘I talk Cantonese with our maid servant’* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 71). Philippine English also shows aspectual markers, e.g. *na* (from Filipino) to indicate completion as in *Matthew finish na ‘Matthew has finished’* (ibid.).
Undoubtedly certain verb forms and/or adverbs lend themselves to a use as aspectual markers. One need only think of completive done in various nonstandard forms of New World English or progressive stay in Hawaiian Creole. In Singapore and Malaysian English already has a similar perfective meaning, e.g. My father already pass away ‘My father has died.’ Finish can also be employed in this perfective sense, e.g. You eat finish, go out and play.

**Statative and Dynamic Verbs.** The distinction between these types of verbs is of importance when determining whether a verb can occur in the continuous form. As a rule of thumb, statative verbs do not take the continuous form, hence the incorrectness of *I am knowing German very well* in standard English. However, many varieties of English are not as rigid in the prohibition of the continuous with statative verbs, e.g. South African English. For Asian and African Englishes one can note a general insensitivity to the distinction between statative and dynamic verbs in vernacular forms (Schmied 2004). As the co-occurrence restrictions of the kind just mentioned are highly specific to English, background languages do not offer support here and a high level of exposure to near-native English is necessary for mastery of continuous versus simple present verb forms.

**Transitivity.** Even where a sentence does not involve something as specific as the object of a transitive verb, English demands at least a dummy *it* or the use of a verb reflexively in many instances, e.g. *I don’t like it* (the situation); *Did you enjoy yourself?* Asian and African Englishes are less standard-like in this respect in allowing verbs that are generally transitive to be used intransitively, e.g. *Did you enjoy?*; *I cannot afford; I don’t like* (Filipeno English).

**Tag Questions.** The link between a tag question and the finite verb of the sentence it is appended to is a feature of standard English which may not be mastered by speakers of Asian and African Englishes, resulting in sentences like He does work in the city, isn’t it? (for examples from East Africa, see Schmied 1991a). Such usage can become established quite quickly and form part of the profile of an Asian or African English, i.e. survive the transition to a near-native/native variety as with Singapore English.

**Copula Deletion.** There are many cases where finite *be* in a sentence is grammatically redundant. In equative sentences, for instance, such copula deletion is quite common in pidgins and creoles and in African American English. It is also the norm in Russian, for instance, e.g. *ja lingvist* ‘I (am a) linguist.’

Copula deletion is widespread in Asian Englishes in equative sentences, e.g. This coffee house – very cheap (Singapore English); English – main language of instruction (Hong Kong English); My sister – in London (Malaysian English). The authors Platt, Weber and Ho (1984: 78f.) stress that in Hokkien, Mandarin/Putonghua, Malay, Bazar Malay and Tamil no form of the verb *be* occurs in equative sentences.

The lack of *be* applies to progressives, I think he telling lies, and to past forms as well, as in passive sentences such as The Vietnam people – smuggle(d) out (Hong
Kong English). In such cases considerable ambiguity can arise, especially if there is the expected simplification of word-final consonants which in the sentence just quoted would make it homophonous with The Vietnam people smuggle out (sth.).

**DO SUPPORT.** Again a highly specific feature of the English verbal system is the do support which is required in interrogatives, negatives and emphatic sentences. Particularly in interrogatives, omission of supportive do is found in Asian Englishes, e.g. *Who you talk to there?*, often with the infinitive form of a verb used, e.g. *How to spell?*

**CONVERSION TO AND FROM VERBS.** This phenomenon has been termed ‘grammatical shift’ (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 99) and refers to cases where nouns, prepositions and/or adverbs are used as verbs, e.g. *to under* ‘to let someone down badly’ (Sri Lankan English), *to friend* ‘to be friends with, befriend’ (Singapore and Malaysia); *Sorry not to have been chanced to write before; They feel more secured* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 100).

**FURTHER VERBAL FEATURES.** Semantic extensions of verbs are found in Asian Englishes, e.g. *hear* in the sense of *understand*, e.g. *I can’t speak Cantonese – I can hear lah!* The dialectally attested confusion of *borrow*: *lend*; *bring*: *take* is also variously found (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 111–13).

The use of *open* ‘to turn something on’ and *close* ‘to turn something off’ is indicative of South-East Asian varieties of English in general, e.g. *open the radio, close the light* (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 111). Lack of existential *there* or dummy *it* is also attested, e.g. *Too many people in the room at that time; Raining very heavily then*.

In Singapore English there is furthermore a use of *get* in an existential sense: *Here got a lot of people come and eat* ‘Here there are a lot of people who come and eat’ (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 80).

5 **African Englishes**

The current chapter is concerned primarily with Asian Englishes. However, the discussion of these varieties is of relevance to those forms of English in Africa (Bamgbose, Banjo and Thomas 1997) which show the essential similarity of not being derived from settler English. For that reason a brief treatment of this group is offered here. There has been much literature on non-native English in Africa, especially given the postcolonial status of so many countries and the emerging identity function which forms of English have for indigenous people using the language (Schneider 2003).

In one instance, namely that of South Africa, one is dealing with a country which has a history of settlement by emigrants from the British Isles and so embodies historically continuous forms of transported dialects and is the subject of a separate chapter in this volume (see contribution by Lass). In the case of Liberia (independent since 1847) there is an historically transmitted form of
English (Liberian Settler English, see Singler 1991), in this case due to the settlement of freed slaves from the United States by the American Colonization Society which was founded in 1816. Sierra Leone has a similar background (the first attempt at slave resettlement in 1815 failed, however). Names of countries and cities often reflect this origin, e.g. Liberia itself, the capital Monrovia named after President Monroe (1758–1831) and Freetown the capital of Sierra Leone. The area of West Africa (Todd 1982), roughly covering the region from Sierra Leone to Cameroon, is one where there are many forms of pidgin English, e.g. Krio in Sierra Leone and more generally, West African Pidgin English, used in Ghana (Huber 1999) and Nigeria (Bamgbose 1971, 1992 [1982]; Görlach 1998). For the present considerations both the native and pidgin forms will be left aside as the term ‘African Englishes’ is taken to refer to second-language varieties which do not have a background of historical continuity or of obvious pidginisation. However, it should be stressed that English in Africa, especially in the west, displays a continuum of varieties. In an attempt to classify these, Angogo and Hancock (1980: 71) postulated the following categories for English in Africa:

1. Native English of African-born whites and expatriates
2. Native English of locally born Africans
3. Non-native English spoken fluently as a second language (in several styles)
4. Non-native English spoken imperfectly, as a foreign language (in several styles)

Category [3] in the above list is the closest equivalent to Asian Englishes. It is found throughout those countries which were colonies, or at least protectorates, of England, especially those in West Africa such as Ghana and Nigeria and some in East Africa such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (the latter deriving in 1964 from the federation of Tanganyika, formerly under German control until the end of World War I, when it became a British mandate, and the island of Zanzibar which had been declared a British protectorate in 1890). In addition one should mention countries in northern regions of southern Africa, i.e. immediately north of South Africa, especially Zimbabwe, former Southern Rhodesia, Zambia, former Northern Rhodesia, and Malawi, declared a British protectorate in 1891 (Schmied 1996; Ohannessian and Kashoki 1978). In a comprehensive list one could include other countries of the area, e.g. Namibia (former German South-West Africa) and Botswana (former Bechuanaland, made a British protectorate in 1885). However, some countries have had a different colonial background, e.g. Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola, with French (via Belgium) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire).

In the postcolonial countries which were under British rule English plays a clear role in public life and is used in higher education, the media and to a not inconsiderable extent in politics (Bamgbose 1997: 20ff.; Adekunle 1997: 58). It is additionally a link language in countries like Nigeria where, because of tribal rivalries, there is often a greater acceptance of English as a less emotionally charged language of choice (Jowitt 1997: 55).
The fate of English in African countries has also been represented in the form of a life cycle, notably by Schmied (1991a: 194–9) who recognises the following phases:

1. Contact  
2. Institutionalisation  
3. Expansion  
4. Decision (recognition or repression)  
5. De-institutionalisation

Some countries which were not part of the British empire (e.g. Togo) did not experience institutionalisation but shifted from a foreign-language variety to an international-language variety (Schmied 1991a: 197).

Phase 4 can be seen in some countries where the development was determined ultimately by political factors and during which English was repressed as a consequence of furthering a local language or languages. Tanzania is an example in Africa and Malaysia in Asia.

The status of English and its further development may furthermore be determined by the presence of another lingua franca in a region. This is especially clear in the case of Kiswahili (Sure 1991: 256ff.), a Bantu language of the Niger-Congo phylum, agglutinative in its grammatical structure with a basic SOV word order and heavily influenced by Arabic in its lexicon. It is spoken by approximately 40 million people as a lingua franca across large stretches of East Africa contained in the countries Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, eastern sections of the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) as well as southern Somalia and northern Mozambique. Kiswahili first appeared in the twelfth century and was written until the nineteenth century using Arabic orthography. The basis for a standard form of the language was laid in 1928 when the Unguja dialect of Zanzibar was recognised as standard. It is the object of study of the Institute of Kiswahili Research founded in 1964. Kiswahili is an official language in Tanzania (since 1964) and in Kenya (since 1970) and is also one of the four official languages in the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire).

5.1 The role of background languages

As one would expect after observing Asian Englishes, the background languages of countries where English is spoken have had a decisive influence on its manifestation there. For instance, Jibril (1986: 51f.) remarks on the different realisation of the segments in the Thin and This lexical sets in Nigeria depending on the mother tongue of the speakers in question. In general Hausa speakers tend to substitute the English sounds by the fricatives /s/ and /z/ whereas speakers of Igbo and Yoruba are more likely to use corresponding stops /t/, /t/ and /d/, respectively. Many characteristics can be traced to the structure of groups of languages, hence the nonrhotic nature and the syllable-timing of English in all parts of Nigeria (Bobda 1997: 253–67).
The influence of background languages is also evident in the grammar of African Englishes. Schmied in his study of English in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi notes the following grammatical differences vis-à-vis more standard forms of English (Schmied 1996: 311–13):

1. Nouns are not always marked for number and case.
2. Prepositions are used differently.
3. Inflectional endings of verbs are confused in complex cases.
4. Complex tenses tend to be avoided.
5. The use of continuous forms is expanded to stative verbs.

These features can also be traced, in part at least, to the acquisitional situation for many speakers (Williams 1987). Uncertainty with regard to verb endings or the use of continuous forms with stative verbs may be due to an insufficient grasp of English grammar. The different use of prepositions could be due to the requirements of background languages or simply an inadequate command of usage in English or both.

When looking to the future a question arises with regard to the structure of these African Englishes: the respects in which they differ from more standard forms of English may lead in time to nonstandard features becoming part of a clearer linguistic profile for these Englishes and, after this, possibly lead to focused varieties which could then fulfil an identity function for their speakers (Schneider 2003). In this respect there may well be a parallel development to Black South African English (Gough 1996; Heugh 1995).

References


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