

# Countering Racism and Linguicism with Inclusive Teaching Materials

Riah Werner

BELPaF Symposium, March 11, 2019



Racism is discrimination  
based on race.

Linguicism is discrimination  
based on language.

“Speaking about ESOL students in terms of language identity provide[s] a shroud for discourses that might otherwise be read as racist”

(Motha, 2014)

# How English is Racialized

1. Constructing English as White
  2. Racializing Non-Standard Englishes
  3. Racializing Nonnative Speakers
  4. Linguistic Prejudice against Non-White Native Speakers
-

Racialization is the process of attributing meaning based on racial categorization.

# Constructing English as White

Textbook Representation  
Kachru's Circles

“Because the spread of the English language across the globe was historically connected to the international political power of White people, English and Whiteness are thornily intertwined.”

-Motha (2006)

---

# “I See More White People Than Black People”

Textbooks link English to Whiteness through images

A study of textbooks used in Brazil found that most references were to the US (Taylor-Mendes, 2010)

- The US is “the land of the White elite.”
- Blacks are “poor and powerless” while Whites are “wealthy and powerful”
- Race is divided by continent

“The people who study in ... schools very expensive want to see themselves and to see themselves is to see White people ... White people and happy situations, a car, a beautiful beach, beautiful things.” -Fatima

# Kachru's Circles

## **Inner Circle:**

English is the primary language.  
Norm-providing.

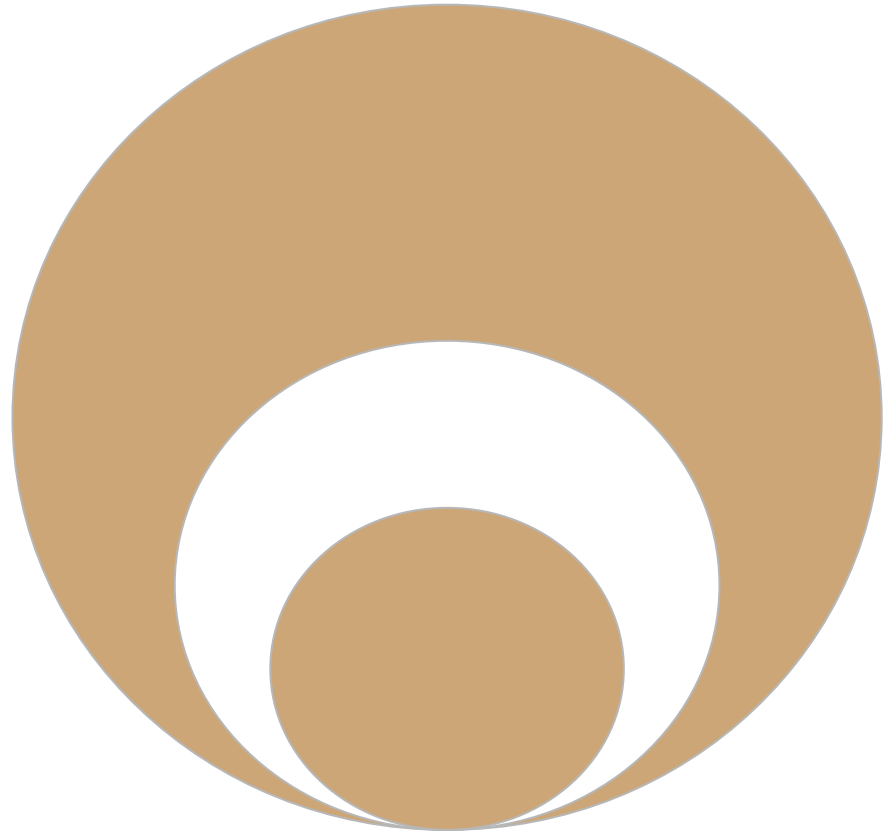
## **Outer Circle:**

English has historical/colonial roots  
and official status.  
Norm-developing.

## **Expanding Circle:**

English has no official status.  
Norm-dependent.

(Kachru, 1985)





# Kachru's Circles

## **Inner Circle:**

Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the US, the UK.

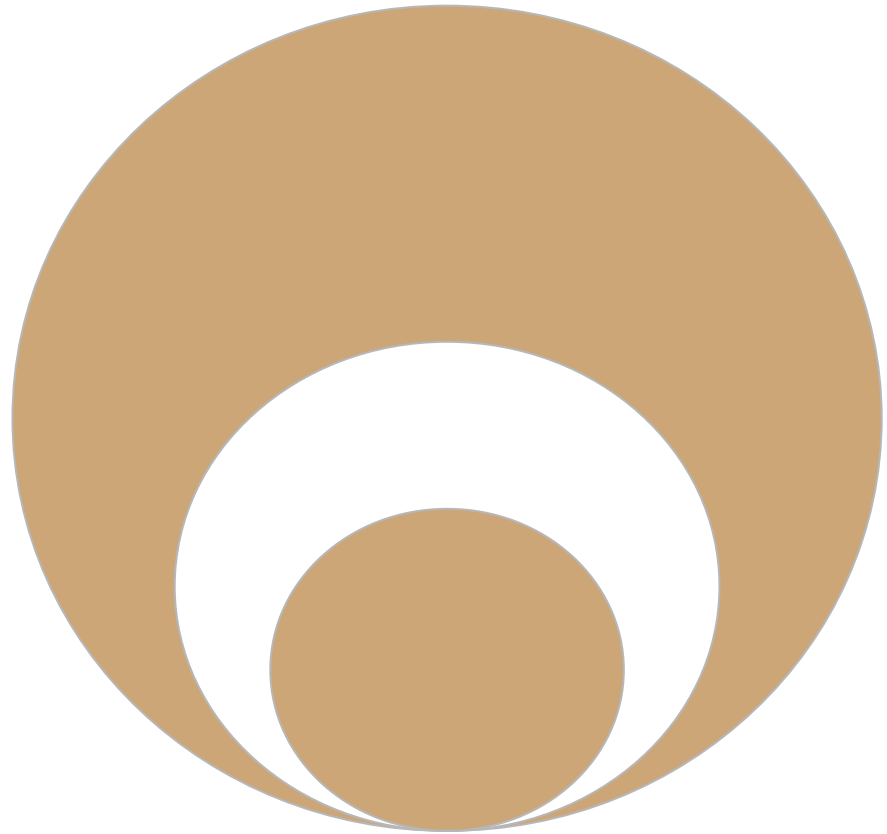
## **Outer Circle:**

India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, Tanzania, etc.

## **Expanding Circle:**

Brazil, China, France, Kuwait, Mexico, Russia, Japan, Korea, etc.

(Kachru, 1985)



The Anglophone Caribbean  
meets inner circle criteria.

South Africa has 4.8 million  
L1 English speakers.

617 million

English users outside of the traditional 6 inner circle countries  
(Ethnologue, 2016)

# Racializing Non-Standard Englishes

Caribbean Creole English  
World English Speakers in ESL  
Ebonics

“The value system of colonial slave society created the belief that Africans had no language. This belief, with its total vacuum of knowledge on the African side, left the West Indian with no alternative but to think of his language negatively in terms of English; hence the terms “broken English,” “bad English,” etc.”

-Roberts (quoted in Nero, 2000)

---

“I strongly believe that if these were [white] students from rural Scotland or outback Australia, school personnel would have the same degree of difficulty understanding them, but they would never be placed in ESL classes. **Does race play a part in this? Probably... Does ignorance about world geography play a part in this? Undeniably...** There were professionals in my current school who didn’t know that English was spoken in Liberia, or anywhere in Africa. (So when students started coming in from Liberia and people couldn’t understand what they were saying, they were placed into ESL classes because that’s where kids from foreign countries go, right?)”

-Schwartz (quoted in Romney, 2010)

# “A Youth from the Caribbean Never Has It Easy”

The Anglophone Caribbean includes Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Caricou, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts–Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos and the US Virgin Islands. Belize and Guyana are also included because of their similar history.

Creole Continuum: Creole ↔ Creole English ↔ standard Caribbean English

Binary construct of NS v. NNS works against Caribbean English speakers  
(Nero, 2000)

# “I Was Surprise to Get Put in ESL”

Students who speak World Englishes are often placed in ESL. In some school districts, “World English” is the most common L1 in ESL classes. (Motha, 2014)

This placement is most common for students from the Caribbean or Africa.

“World English” is taken to mean “non-Western,” similar to “world music.”

World English speaking students often have distinct academic needs, stemming from limited or interrupted formal education or lack of literacy skills, but conflating SLIFE with ESL doesn't address students' actual needs.

# “Hooked on Ebonics Worked for Me!”

Ebonics is "a style of speaking English words with Black flava -- with Africanized semantic, grammatical, pronunciation and rhetorical patterns" (Smitherman, quoted in Barrett, 2016). Also AAVE, AAE, AAL, BE, BV, BEV, BVE.

Ebonics is a rule-driven form of speech, but highly stigmatized. The term was coined in 1973.

In 1996, the Oakland School Board declared it an African language, separate from English, and recommended training teachers in the rules of Ebonics and African American culture. (Delpit, 2002; McWhorter, 1998)



# Racializing Nonnative Speakers

Accents as a Mark of Otherness  
Discrimination against NNESTs

“When you come here, you come from a continent or a country that was originally colonized by the British. You had your education, you were taught by the British. You speak your good English, but somehow they ask you “what colour is your English?””

-Focus Group Participant  
(Creese & Kambere, 2002)

---

# “They Will Know You Are From Africa”

Study of African women in Canada (Creese & Kambere, 2002)

10 of the 12 women were fluent in English prior to arriving in Canada. The women experienced language as a problem, not because of communication difficulties, but because of their accents.

Extra-local accents marked them as others, outsiders, non-Canadians and immigrants, which lead to social and professional discrimination.

They resisted “the racialized construction of language fluency.”

“I realized that the administrators were not being totally honest: There were at least two British speakers of English and one nonnative speaker of English with a European background. Thus, it was not true that they hired only Americans or speakers of American English. However, the one thing that was terribly true about this was that the three non-Americans were all White. **I wonder if it was my skin color rather than my accent that was really the issue. ...** To me, this episode implied that that although non-American White accents were acceptable, non-American non-White accents were not.”

-Mahboob (2006)

# “I Do Have Concerns About How You Look”

TESOL advertisements often specify that applicants must be native speakers. Sometimes they also specify race or country of origin. (Ruecker & Ives, 2015)

Websites use images of White teachers and exoticize the host country.

Reasons given include student/parent preferences, school requirements and government visa restrictions. In situations where NNESTs are allowed, they must have higher qualifications. Often hirers require photographs.

“Although I would like to hire you, how will I be able to justify this to our students? They will not be happy to see a person with your appearance as their teacher.” -Program Administrator (quoted in Mahboob, 2006)

88%

of TESOL advertisements in the Middle East and East Asia were discriminatory  
(Mahboob & Golden, 2013, cited in Ruecker and Ives, 2015)

# Linguistic Prejudice against Non-White Native Speakers

Questioning Teachers' Credibility  
Research on Racial Bias in Listening

"I suddenly sensed I was losing credibility. Reflecting on the interaction later, I realized that my fears were related to race. I didn't want my students to think that I was teaching them a form of English associated with my race if they believed that form of English would not serve them well. ... Aligning myself with Australia rather than Sri Lanka gave me legitimacy." -Motha (2006)

---

# “You are African, You Cannot Be the Teacher”

S: Are you the teacher?

T: Yes.

S: Are you the one teaching English?

T: Yes, I am the English as a second language teacher.

S: Where is the real teacher?

T: What do you mean?

S: I mean the American teacher.

T: Well, I am an American teacher.

S: No, no, the real teacher.

T: What do you mean?

S: You are African; you cannot be the teacher.

(Snicker)

T: How do you know that I cannot be a teacher?

S: (Pause) All the English teachers I saw in Africa were all American.

T: I understand that, and I want you to understand that I am also a teacher.

S: OK. (Pause . . . smile). I never think that. (Snicker)

(Bashir-Ali, 2004)

77%

of ESL students preferred White American teachers  
over American teachers of other races (Stephan, 2006)




# Linguistic Racial Profiling


Study used matched guise methodology to assess perceptions of speakers' intelligibility (Rubin, 1992)

Participants listened to the same recording of a Midwestern speaker of standard English, matched with images of a White woman or an Asian woman. Despite the recordings being identical, they rated the white woman as more understandable than the Asian woman.

Non-White standard English speakers don't fit the norm of what a standard English speaker "should" look like, even when they sound like one



How can we counter racism and linguisticism  
in our teaching?



# 3 Types of Inclusive Teaching Materials

1. World English Listening Exercises
  2. Images of Diverse English Speakers
  3. Readings by and about English Speakers of Color
-

# World English Listening Exercises

- Exposure to a wide range of accents helps de-centralize standard English and counter native speakerism
- Using a range of speakers in class legitimizes them as valid English users
- Analyzing different varieties helps students understand the systematic nature of World Englishes
- Using World Englishes provides opportunities for students to reflect on their own varieties

# Images of Diverse English Speakers

- Students need to see themselves and people like them reflected in the images we use
- Diverse images show the range of cultures English speakers come from, including students' own
- Supplementing textbooks with additional pictures allows for multiple images of the same idea
- Students can draw or take their own photographs to be used in class

# Readings by and about English Speakers of Color

- Students relate to authors and characters of color
- Books by people of color or nonnative speakers sometimes include reflections on navigating language
- Authors of color are more likely to engage in code switching or translanguaging
- Dialogue in books is a great source of examples of different varieties and styles of speaking

# Ideas for Challenging the Racialization of English

Recognize the construction of English as White and critique it when it happens

Recognize the diversity of English users

Consciously incorporate people of color into the images you use to represent English

Train students to recognize and understand a variety of Englishes, including diverse accents

Be conscious of your pronoun use in class

Speak up about the placement of L1 World English speakers in ESL classes

Use students' home dialects as a bridge to standard English literacy

Advocate for NNEST equality in TESOL

Reflect on the impact of your racial identity

Don't take jobs that are advertised using discriminatory postings

Ask students to notice linguisticism and who they see it happening to

Discuss code switching and translanguaging



Questions?

Riah.Werner@gmail.com





# References

- Barrett, C. (2016). Finding Our Rhythm: Contextualizing Second Language Development Through Music-Based Pedagogy (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (10003888).
- Bashir-Ali, K. (2004). How Race Defined an ESL Teacher's Role as an Educator. *International Black Professionals and Friends in TESOL Caucus E-Newsletter* 6(1). Retrieved from [http://www.oocities.org/ibpft\\_tesol/Newsletter6.pdf](http://www.oocities.org/ibpft_tesol/Newsletter6.pdf)
- Curtis, A. & Romney, M. (Eds.) (2006). *Color, Race and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Creese, G. & Kambere, E. N. (2002). "What Colour is Your English?" (Working Paper No. 02-20). Retrieved from Metropolis British Columbia website: <http://mbc.metropolis.net/assets/uploads/files/wp/2002/WP02-20.pdf>
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Delpit, L. (Ed.) (2002). *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom*. New York: The New Press.

# References

Ethnologue (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/eng>

Kachru, B. (1985). Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle. In *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*, Quirk, R. & Widdowson, H. G. (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kubota, R. & Lin, A. (Eds.) (2006). Race and TESOL (Special Topic Issue). *TESOL Quarterly* 40(3).

Kubota, R. & Lin, A. (Eds.) (2009). *Race, Culture and Identities in Second Language Education: Exploring Critically Engaged Practice*. New York: Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998) Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What's It Doing In a Nice Field Like Education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, 7-24.

Lin, A., Grant, R., Kubota, R., Motha, S., Tinker Sachs, G., Vandrick, S. & Wong, S. (2004) Women Faculty of Color in TESOL: Theorizing Our Lived Experiences. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(3), 487-504.

# References

Mahboob, A. (2006). Confessions of an Enraced TESOL Professional. In Curtis, A. & Romney, M. (Eds.) *Color, Race and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning*. (173-188). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mahboob, A. (2010). *The NNEST Lens: Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

McWhorter, J. (1998). *Word on the Street: Debunking the Myth of a "Pure" Standard English*. New York: Basic Books.

Motha, S. (2006). Racializing ESOL Teacher Identities in U.S. K-12 Public Schools. *TESOL Quarterly* 40(3), 495-518.

Motha, S. (2006). Out of the Safety Zone. In Curtis, A. & Romney, M. (Eds.) *Color, Race and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning*. (161-172). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Motha, S. (2014). *Race, Empire and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-Racist Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Nero, S. (2000). The Changing Face of English: A Caribbean Perspective. *TESOL Quarterly* 34(3), 483-510.

# References

- Romney, M. (2010). The Colour of English. In A. Mahboob (Ed.) *The NNEST Lens: Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL* (18-34). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Rubin, D. L. (1992). Non-Language Factors Affecting Undergraduates' Judgments of Nonnative English-Speaking Teaching Assistants. *Research In Higher Education*, 33 (4), 511-531.
- Ruecker, T. & Ives, L. (2015). White Native English Speakers Needed: The Rhetorical Construction of Privilege in Online Teacher Recruitment Spaces. *TESOL Quarterly* 49(4) 733-756.
- Stephan, M. (2006). Musings of a Black ESL Instructor. In Curtis, A. & Romney, M. (Eds.) *Color, Race and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning*. (107-120). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Taylor-Mendes, C. (2009). Construction of Racial Stereotypes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks: Images as Discourse. In Kubota, R. & Lin, A. (Eds.) *Race, Culture and Identities in Second Language Education: Exploring Critically Engaged Practice*. (64-80). New York: Routledge.