

Past Encounters with Englishes

as opportunities for reflection

Stefanie Hehner - Bremen 05.05.2022

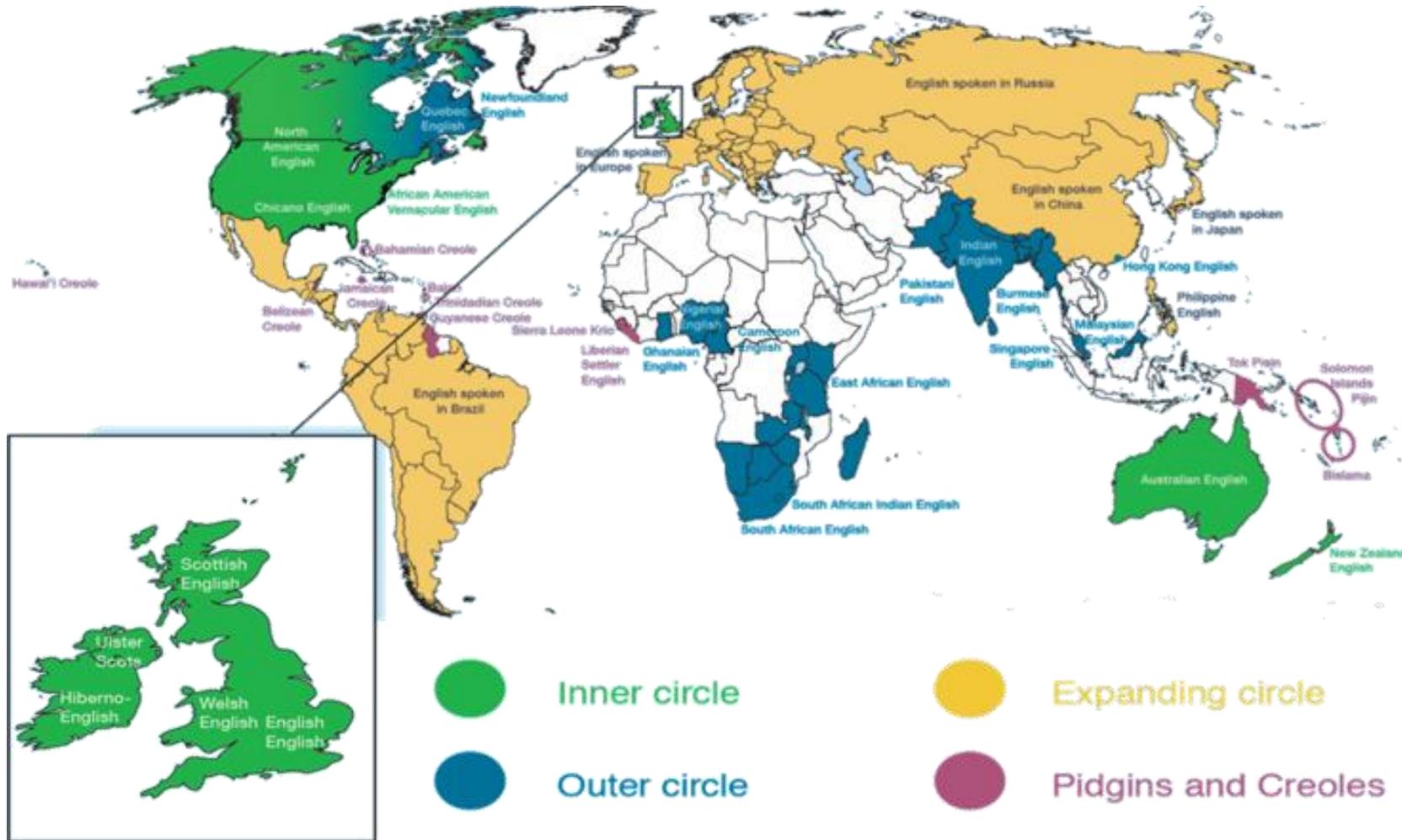
GEFÖRDERT VOM



Schnittstellen gestalten – Lehrerbildung entlang des Leitbildes des *Reflective Practitioner* an der Universität Bremen wird im Rahmen der gemeinsamen „Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung“ von Bund und Ländern aus Mitteln des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung gefördert.

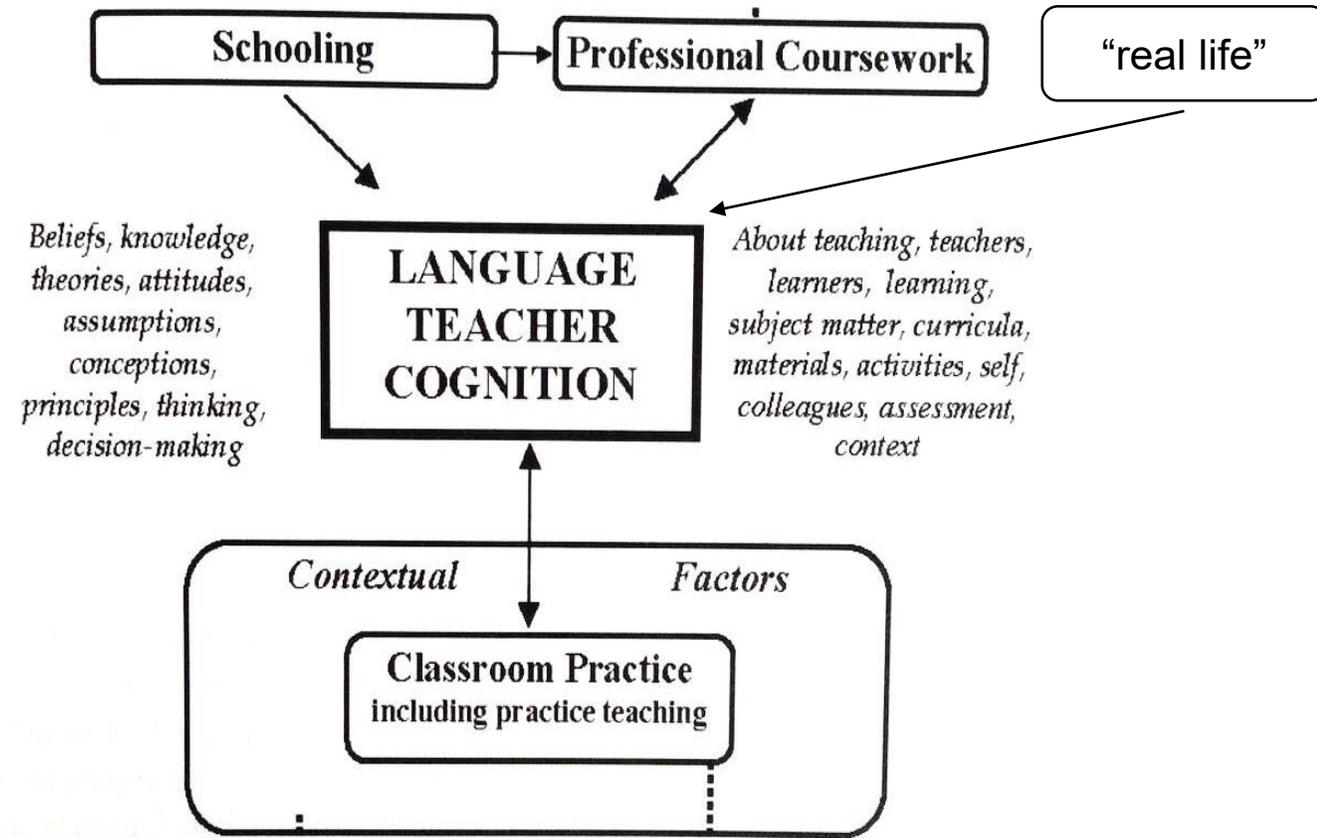


English → Englishes



Teacher Cognition

„the unobservable
cognitive dimension
of teaching – what
teachers know,
believe, and think.“
(Borg 2003)



Questions and Goals

Which setting-specific cognitions regarding different varieties of English and speakers of English can be reconstructed from future teachers' narrations of their encounters and experiences in LLBs?

Create reflective tasks for English-language teacher education which build on the findings.

Data: Language Learning Biographies

Guiding questions:

- Describe your encounters with the English language in Germany and abroad.
 - In which situations/ with whom was it easy or difficult to communicate?
 - In which situations did you feel (un)comfortable?
 - Describe your opinions about your personal variety and other varieties you have been in contact with.
 - Is there a specific variety (or accent) you are trying to reach? Does this change in different situations/contexts?
 - Did you notice specific features in a variety/dialect that you liked or didn't like? Did you try to adopt or avoid specific features?
 - Have people commented on the way you speak English (in a positive or negative way)?
 - In which situations did you feel you learned a lot for your own proficiency in English or for teaching it?
 - How have your experiences shaped your view on the English language?
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Difficulty and success of communication

“In the beginning that was a major hurdle for communication, because when somebody spoke to me in Scouse I could hardly understand them. But I got used to the variety and **eventually got to love it.**” (D4: 8)

“At the beginning of my time abroad, I had a very hard time understanding the African American slang. However, after a while I got used to it and sometimes used slang myself, **depending on whom I was with.**” (B9: 4)

“[...] but I do remember that I was very confused when I had difficulties understanding exchange students from Brazil. Because of this, **I immediately assumed that they were not very good at English.** This prejudice was completely wrong, but I only realized that years later.” (D9: 6)

“That was the first time I came into contact with another variety of English [American English] and it was a great struggle for me to even understand the simplest sentences she said. I felt like the four years of English I had been learning at point were useless and I refused to talk English to her, because **I was so embarrassed.**” (D16: 4)

Difficulty and success of communication

“When I think about challenging experiences I had with the English language I remember a conversation with an Australian park ranger who I met on a campsite in Australia. He had a very strong Australian accent and **did not try to make it easier for me to understand him.**” (B21: 8)

Setting-specific target/model

Adopting local variety

“I fell in love with California and subsequently with the Californian English dialect. I tried to copy most of it, leaving out the constant sentence filler “like” and repetitive exaggerations such as “awesome”.” (D19: 5)

“My host parents quickly corrected me and convinced me to use “lie” instead. “lay” would be colloquial and not appropriate to describe a person’s position. Ever since, I have also never used the word “for sure” again, as they explained to me, that it was American English and thus bad English.” (C12: 4)

Setting-specific target/model

Rejection of local variety

“my greatest fear was that I might adopt an Indian accent and be subject to ridicule once I am back in Europe” (B6: 7).

“[...] my Indian friends seemed to reinforce rather than question the very language hierarchy I had in my own head. They hailed my “European accent” and tried to imitate the way I speak.” (B6: 6)

“As I spend my semester abroad in South England the people there had a very strong British accent. I somehow liked to hear it but as I speak American English, there were sometimes funny situations when my flatmates tried to correct my grammar or my vocabulary.”

Discussion Topics

Intelligibility/ responsibility for success of communication

- Questions: Whose fault is it when communication does not work / breaks down? Who is responsible for the success of communication in which settings? Why?
- EFL lens: 'Non-native' speakers should be intelligible to 'native speakers'; 'native speakers' are judges of intelligibility
- GELT lens: Interlocutors share responsibility for intelligibility
- Research: Intelligibility depends on familiarity with variety/variation (Bayyurt, 2018), 'native' Englishes are not always the most intelligible (Kaur, 2018)
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Discussion Topics

Hierarchy of Varieties

- Questions: Which reasons are there to adapt (or not adapt) to a certain norm in a specific setting? Does this include pronunciation?
- EFL lens: 'Native' varieties are 'better' than 'non-native' varieties (carry more prestige); 'standard' varieties are better than 'non-standard' varieties
- GELT lens: All varieties (and ELF) are valued equally (but setting may influence appropriateness of language use)
- Literature: Whether a native-speaker target is useful depends on the goal/future use of the learner (Matsuda & Friedrich 2011); research on attitudes towards varieties and speakers (hierarchy and native speakerism) (e.g. Rose et al)
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Conclusion

Even if the impact of teacher education on future teachers' beliefs has been disputed:

- beliefs can “be made more apparent to teachers and assume a form that can be verbalized”
- “teachers can learn how to put their beliefs into practice and also develop links between their beliefs and theory”

(Borg 2011: 378).

Thank you

Stefanie Hehner
hehner@uni-bremen.de
