CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO WORLD ENGLISHES

1.0 Status of English in the World

Before the colonial era, English was thought to belong only to the people of England. However, with the colonization of countries by the British and large-scale migration of people from the British Isles to countries across the globe such as Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada, the English language has become the only language in the history of the world to attain the status of a universal language (Yamuna Kachru, 1994).

On a world scale, the English language can no longer be regarded as the sole possession of the people of the British isles. In 1900 it was estimated that the speakers of English numbered between 116 and 123 million. Today, it is estimated that 330 million speak English as a mothertongue, the same number speak it as a second language and 350 million use it as a foreign language (Baskaran, 1988). In other words, more than one billion people in the world are regular users of English. English is also regarded as the single most important language of global mass media, the internet and international trade and commerce. It is also the most favoured language of academic discourse in international conferences (Yamuna Kachru, 1994). There is probably greater demand for the learning of English than any other language for all these stated reasons. Braj Kachru(1983), who has campaigned for the recognition of local varieties of English, describes the spread of English in the world in terms of three concentric circles. These are the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle as shown in Figure 1.1 on the next page:
The Expanding Circle
China Caribbean Countries Egypt
Israel Saudi Arabia Korea
Indonesia South America Japan
Taiwan South Africa Zimbabwe

The Outer Circle
Bangladesh Ghana India
Malaysia Kenya Nigeria
Pakistan Philippines Singapore

The Inner Circle
USA UK Canada
Australia New Zealand

Figure 1.1
Three Concentric Circles


1.1 The Inner Circle

The countries where English has always been the native language, represent the most influential nations in the world in terms of international trade, information technology, scientific progress and world politics. Here it is the official language as well as the medium of education, government and commerce.

Each of these countries has its own standard dialect of English in terms of lexis, semantics and phonology, such as Standard British English in Britain, and General American English in the USA. Besides these standard dialects, there are also non-standard dialects such as Yorkshire, Cambridgeshire
and Cockney in England, as well as Black English in the USA and Bush English in Australia. Large-scale immigration and settlement of people from all over Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa to the predominantly Caucasian Inner Circle countries over the last half century has led to the growth of many non-native communities in the Inner Circle countries, each with its own variety of English. There has been mixed reactions to this phenomenon. Initially some English leaders refused to accept the fact that the immigrant communities are as fluent in English as the native English people. One of them, Enoch Powell, a former member of the British Parliament, said in a 1988 speech, "Others may speak and read English - more or less - but it is our language, not theirs. It was made in England by the English and it remains our distinctive property, however widely it is learnt or used" (quoted in Greenbaum 1990:15). However, with the passage of time, the educational institutions of countries such as England and the USA, have been compelled to accept the use of non-standard varieties of English at least at the phonological level, though they still expect standardization in terms of lexis and syntax.

1.2 The Outer Circle

All the countries of the Outer Circle are former colonies of either Britain, America or Australia. Due to the historical fact that English had been the mainstream language of all administrative and social transactions during the colonial era, all these countries have adopted English as a second language, beside their own national language. At the end of the colonial era, local languages replaced English for administrative purposes, for example, Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia, kiSwahili in East Africa and Hindi in India.
However, English remained as an important second language, as there is a growing realization that English is very important for these nations to interact internationally in trade, industry, tourism, politics, higher education and many other areas. In some of the countries of the Outer Circle, which have multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies, namely India, the countries of Africa as well as Singapore, English has become an important link language for inter-group and intra-group communication. In some of these countries, such as Nigeria, India and Singapore, this has resulted in an abundance of local creative writing in English. In the following section the role and development of English usage in India, Africa and Singapore will be briefly described.

1.2.1 Role of English in India

In India, where English is the mother tongue of 223,981 speakers and the second language of more than 25 million, English remained the tool for national integration long after independence. Singh (1974) says, "If you weigh languages in terms of the power they wield, you will see that English outweighs all the 14 other Indian languages put together." (quoted in Mehrotra, 1998). Mehrotra says, "No other language in this country has been asked to do so many things in so many situations and at places so remote from one another both geographically and culturally." He says that English is currently used in India for the following main purposes:

- Trade and Commerce: correspondence, negotiating business deals, reading financial newspapers and magazines, advertising and participating in business conferences.

- Administration: writing official notes, reports and announcements, issuing and reading notices and communiques, answering queries, holding job
interviews and interacting with members and officials in board meetings.

- Education: lecturing in the classroom, participating in seminars and meetings, reading books and journals, writing lesson notes and research articles and counseling.

- Social Interaction: talking to people from other states, countries, interaction with people at social gatherings, writing letter applications and telegrams and reading newspapers.

- Recreation: understanding dialogues in movies and theatrical performances, watching programmes on TV and reading film and other popular magazines.

- Hotel and Restaurant: interacting with guests and customers, bookings and reservations.

- Sports: listening to sports commentary, reading and writing reports, reading sports magazines, interacting with sportsmen from other states and countries.

- Politics: delivering speeches, issuing orders and instructions, debating in parliament, interacting with visitors from overseas and reading newspapers and reference material.

- Religion: Listening to religious discourses, reading religious works and commentaries on them, visiting centers of pilgrimages in other parts of the country and reading astrological forecasts.

In fact, English has become such an important tool of social and cultural integration that a well-known Indian writer, C. Rajagopalachari says the English language is "Goddess Saraswati's gift to India" (Nagarajan, quoted in Mehrotra, 1998). Mehrotra says that English has been given various names such as 'associate official language', 'associate additional language', 'alternate language', 'subsidiary link language', 'literary language', 'tool language' and 'language of wider communication'. Baskaran (1987) states that other names which have been used in the Outer Circle countries with regard to the status of English are 'link language', 'strong second language', 'additional language', 'bridge language' and 'coordinate
language'. As Fishman says, "Regardless of what may have happened to the British Empire, the sun never sets on the English language" (Fishman, 1983).

1.2.2 Development of English in Africa

The common feature between the development of English in India and Africa was that in both regions, English usage developed due to the large number of separate indigenous languages. In each of the nations of both East and West Africa there are approximately 80-400 tribal languages, depending on the size and ethnic diversity of a nation.

The difference between West Africa and East Africa was that in West Africa, English-based pidgins and creoles developed as an important means of communication whereas in East Africa there was no such development. The main reason for the development of pidgins in West Africa was the frequent use of English as a means of communication between the foreign sailors and traders and the local population.

In Nigeria, Shnukal (1982) described pidgin English as the lingua franca of two states, namely Bendel and Rivers, as well as large southern cities such as Lagos. Large numbers of freed American slaves returned to Africa and settled in countries such as Sierra Leone, where they introduced an English-based creole called 'Krio'. As Krio speakers were in demand as missionaries, clerks and teachers in various parts of West Africa, Krio began to influence the usage of English in many parts of West Africa. English has an important official status in Sierra Leone, Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. Though the indigenous languages are given importance as compulsory subjects at the school level, English has remained an important medium of
instruction, as shown in Figure 1.2, presented in Platt, Weber and Ho(1984).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Official medium of instruction (language of education)</th>
<th>Unofficial medium of instruction</th>
<th>Position of local languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English or major local languages</td>
<td>Krio, Pidgin or local languages</td>
<td>Compulsory or encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Encouraged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.2**
Position of English in West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
<th>Main Second Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Urban: English rural; KiSwahili or regional language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>KiSwahili (usually from Primary 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>(first years) local languages or KiSwahili (later years English)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>KiSwahili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>(first year) major local language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>A major local language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>(local languages)</td>
<td>Forms 1-4 KiSwahili Forms 5-6 Still English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>From Primary 4 English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.3**
English as a Medium of Education in East Africa

Source: Platt, Weber and Ho(1984), *The New Englishes*

Figure 1.3 illustrates the role of English vis-a-vis the local languages in the education system in four countries of East Africa. The situation in East Africa is similar to that in West Africa, except in Tanzania where both primary as well as secondary education, up to Form 4, is in KiSwahili. In its pidgin form, KiSwahili has the role Pidgin English and Krio have in West
Africa and in its more educated form it has taken over from English. Except for Tanzania, it can be said that English continues to play an important role as a medium of education in all the former British colonies in the African continent.

1.2.3 Development of English in Singapore

Singapore stands out as the former British colony which needed English the most for its development. From the days of the Straits Settlements, English has remained the official language of government in Singapore. English-language education was the only ticket to entry into the middle class, and most of all, the Singapore government has maintained the position of English in commerce, industry and the mass media. This is because Singapore's success and very survival depends on its role as an international centre for shipping, trade and commerce and the main customers of its harbour and other facilities are countries in the Inner Circle such as Britain, Australia and the United States.

Another reason why the usage of English has become more widespread is because it has become the lingua franca of the younger generation of the many Chinese communities in Singapore. Platt and Weber (1980) says that 76% of the population are Chinese, and they are from many dialect groups. The largest dialect group is Hokkien and this group comprises 42% of the Chinese population. This is the group that had urged the former British government to set up English-medium primary and secondary schools to promote the use of English.

There are four official languages in Singapore - English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. In the 1990 Census, use of Mandarin by Chinese speaking to
parents rose from 7% in 1980 to 28% in 1990 (1990 Census, Statistical Release 3, p.7). The 2000 Census records that 35% of Singaporean Chinese speak Mandarin at home. Indeed, it is considered by the Singapore government to be a more suitable language for the expression of Chinese values and culture than any of the Southern Chinese dialects. However, the majority of the Chinese realize that it is the mastery of the English language which ensures greater social mobility in Singapore, and thus prefer to send their children to English-medium schools rather than Chinese-medium schools. English continues to grow in its usage in Singapore, even though the Singapore government has emphasized that all its citizens must be bilingual - proficient in English and one other language - either Mandarin, Malay or Tamil.

1.3 The Expanding Circle

In the countries of the Expanding Circle, English has remained a foreign language. As these countries have never been under British or American colonial rule, there is no historical basis for English to be used for internal affairs such as administration or education. The only exceptions are the Caribbean countries where English is used widely as a creole language and Papua New Guinea where the official language is 'Tok Pisin', a form of Pidgin English. English in the other countries is taught for mainly functional purposes. Kachru (1983) uses the term 'performance variety' for such English use. These countries need English as a link language for international transactions in trade and commerce, as their trading partners are often
countries in the Inner Circle which use English as the only language of transactions. Hence, the governments of these nations have realised that the mastery of English is crucial in order to compete economically with the rest of the world.

All agencies and government departments dealing with international travel and transportation, use English as the predominant language. Besides this, they need to use English to keep abreast of the latest developments in science and technology, as Inner Circle countries are the most advanced in these fields.

Due to this expertise, only individuals who are proficient in the English language are suitable as candidates to be sent to the Inner Circle countries for acquiring higher education or more advanced knowledge in every professional and academic field. Hence English is regarded as a linguistic tool for economic success and social mobility, especially among the educated classes.

Prominent international journals of scientific and academic research only utilize the English language. International conferences, conventions, symposiums, seminars and meetings are conducted solely in English. Thus there is a growing demand for English language fluency in these countries as their citizens are beginning to realize that in order to keep abreast with the latest developments in all areas of knowledge today, mastery of the English language is crucial.

1.4 The Growth of Varieties of English

The countries of the Outer Circle have had exposure to the English language for more than a century. Before independence, English was
introduced as the official language. Due to the need for clerks and other employees in government and business organizations, schools were established in which all the subjects were taught in English. Many of these schools were established by Christian missionaries and churches were set up where English was the language used for church services.

With the increase in school enrolment and the establishment of more schools, non-native teachers had to be recruited. In the case of Malaya and Singapore, the British first recruited teachers from other colonial countries where English had already established itself firmly, such as India and Sri Lanka or Ceylon, as it was called at that time. Later teachers' training colleges were established locally and local teachers were then recruited. These teachers had all passed through the local English-medium schools. These teachers used British English textbooks, but conversed in a variety of English that was different from the native speakers. The new generation of school-going children acquired this variety from their teachers. They used it freely outside the classroom as well, especially when talking to children from other ethnic groups. Many heard it used by their elder brothers and sisters at home as well as by their neighbours and family friends.

As education facilities increased and universities and colleges were established, the range and functions of the local varieties of English increased. English became the official language of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. It was no longer a colloquial language used only for communication with friends, but it was also used on formal occasions and by educated speakers for all their everyday activities.
Yet at both formal and informal levels, it acquired a flavour of its own which made it different from Standard British English. After independence, in countries such as Malaysia, Tanzania and India, English acquired the status of a second language while a local language became the official language as well as the medium of education. When the citizens of the independent Commonwealth nations became more proficient in their indigenous languages than in English, the result was they transferred many linguistic features of their own languages into the English they used to make it more ‘user-friendly’ to the masses. The informal spoken style of English used in each country became considered unique to that particular country. Each particular style was considered to belong to that particular community as its usage created special bonds among the members of that particular community. This resulted in many varieties of English being accepted as legitimate means of communication on a worldwide basis.

In a linguistic sense, English came into closer contact with a variety of local languages, and subsequently began to absorb features of these local languages. Different linguists have referred to this phenomenon using different terms. Baskaran (1987) describes this as ‘indigenization’ of English which is the result of processes of language acculturation slowly taking place. Kachru (1984) has described this as ‘hybridization’ and ‘nativization’. The main result of all these processes is that each country or region has its own specific variety of English which has absorbed phonological, syntactic, lexical and semantic aspects of the local languages. The sum total of these linguistic developments is the growth of ‘New Englishes’ (Platt and Weber, 1980), varieties of English in different parts of the Commonwealth
that no longer 'belong' to the original native speakers, but to the new
groups of speakers.

In addition, British English has become overshadowed by American
English today, due to the pervasive influence of the mass media and the
Internet. In other words, there is another group of influential native speakers
with its own standard variety, non-standard variety and regional dialects.
The situation now is that there is not one native English, but two 'native
Englishes'. Hence while the older speakers of English look towards
England as their native model, the younger users of the New Englishes
look towards the USA as their native model. After all, English has undergone
the processes of internationalization for too long to remain the sole
possession of the British. Braj Kachru(1983) has used the terms 'World
Englishes' and as mentioned earlier, Platt and Weber (1980) have used the
term 'New Englishes' for these new varieties. Platt et. al. have defined 'New
English' as one which fulfils the following criteria:

1. It has developed through the education system. This means that it has
   been taught as a subject and, in many cases, also used as a medium of
   instruction in regions where languages other than English were the
   main languages.

2. It has developed where the native variety of English was not the
   language spoken by most of the population.

3. It is used for a range of functions among those who speak or write it in
   the region where it is used, namely in spoken or written communication
   between the government and the people, in parliament, in letter-
   writing, in the writing of literature, in the media and sometimes for
   spoken communication in social circles. It may be used as a lingua
   franca, a general language of communication among those speaking
different native languages, or even among those who speak the same
native language because it is felt to be more appropriate for certain
purposes.
4. It has become 'localized' or 'nativized' by adopting some language features of its own, such as sounds, intonation patterns, sentence structures and expressions.

Well-known examples of New Englishes include Indian English, African Englishes, Filipino English and Singapore English. The following section briefly describes the growth of some nativized varieties of English.

1.4.1 Indian English

A major development that characterized the use of English in India during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries was the borrowing of numerous words of Indian origin into the English language, such as 'curry', 'calico', 'veranda', 'cheroot', 'loot', 'bamboo', 'junk', 'chit' and 'bungalow' (Yule and Burnell, 1903). One of the many reasons for the adoption of Indian words into English, is the important fact that English has become firmly entrenched as a literary language in India. Even as early as 1830, an Indian writer, Kashi Prasad Ghosh, published a collection of poems in English entitled 'The Shair and Other Poems'.

According to Mehrotra (1998), between the years 1898 and 1902, there were as many as 226 candidates who graduated with M.A. degrees in English from Indian universities. During the period 1958-72, the largest number of book titles, namely 53,212, published in India was in English, and many of these have been exported to all the countries of the Commonwealth. According to a UNESCO report, today India ranks third, after the USA and the United Kingdom, in the production of English titles. India has emerged a literary giant not only in terms of the quantity of Indian writings in English but also in terms of quality. Nearly half a century ago an
Indian poet named Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature. In the year 2000, Arundati Roy won the Booker Prize, Britain's most prestigious literary award, for her first novel 'The God of Small Things'. In the year 2001 V.S. Naipaul, an Indian writer from Trinidad was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Events such as these illustrate the immense potential role indigenous literature written in English can play in portraying Indian life to the world. They also reflect the acceptance of hybridized forms of English by Indian writers, collectively known as 'Indian Writing in English' not only within the borders of India, but also in other countries of the Commonwealth, the USA and the Inner Circle.

McCrum et. al, describes Indian Writing in English in the following way:

"The marriage of English and the languages of India has made what Anthony Burgess has called a 'whole language, complete with the colloquialisms of Calcutta and London, Shakespearean archaisms, bazaar whinings, references to the Hindu pantheon, the jargon of Indian litigation, and shrill Babu irritability all together. It's not pure English but it's like the English of Shakespeare, Joyce and Kipling - gloriously impure.'"(McCrum 1986:322)

Indian Writing in English is part of the broader non-native variety of English known as 'Indian English' which is used widely in India. Although based on standard British English, it has evolved over the years certain linguistic features, to portray the socio-cultural and linguistic realities of India. As reflected in the quotation by McCrum a popular myth about Indian English has been to consider it both formally and culturally deviant (Mathai 1951, Kachru 1986). 'Variant' rather than 'deviant' appears to be the right word in the present context. For one thing, Indian English does not deviate much

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from the rules of grammar of British English.

Dixon says "Most aspects of the grammar of Indian English do follow syntactic rules, supporting my contention that it is a bonafide variety of English, not an error-ridden travesty of British English" (Dixon 1991:442).

Indian writers themselves have strongly defended the use of Indian English. Raja Rao, one of the early Indian novelists said, "We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians."(Rao, 1938) For one thing, in a semantic sense, even common English words such as 'teacher', 'mother', 'wife', 'guest', 'saint', 'family', 'home', 'marriage' and 'kitchen' are conceptualized very differently in the Indian value system when compared to how they are conceptualized in the Western value system (Mehrotra, 1998:287).

Besides being used in the domain of literature, another domain of Indian English is the field of journalism, particularly in the text types of advertisements, letters to the editor, public notices and announcements, market trends, obituaries and astrological forecasts. In the domain of education, Indian English occurs frequently in classroom lectures, school textbooks, examination answer-books, doctoral dissertations, notices, circulars, applications and testimonials. In the domain of administration Indian English is usually discernible in official orders, correspondence, circulars, applications and complaints.

As illustrated by the international awards won by writers such as Arundati Roy and V.S. Naipaul, Indian writing in English has now gained recognition as a viable variety of English in its own right by scholars and literary critics in
countries where English is the first language. Indeed, Indian English has crossed the frontiers of India and is being studied, researched and discussed in these Inner Circle countries as well as other countries of the Commonwealth and the USA. Quirk (1972) describes it as 'a self-respecting, established variety of English.'

This is further illustrated by the fact that the 1996 edition of the 'Advanced Learner's Dictionary' (OUP) includes a supplement of Indian usages of English. This recognizes not only the international acceptability of Indian English but also the general acceptability of regional varieties of English. The next section will briefly describe the growth of Singaporean English.

1.4.2 Singaporean English

Platt (1977) describes Singaporean English as a speech continuum, ranging from the lowest variety, known as the Basilect, through the medium variety, the Mesolect, to the highest variety, the Acrolect. These sub-varieties have been referred to as 'sociolects'.

According to Platt, the main factors which determine the type of sociolect used by a person are socio-economic and educational. The speakers of the higher sociolects are generally more educated and hold more high status jobs than the speakers of the lower sociolects. Those who use the acrolectal sub-variety usually have Higher School Certificate or university education, and hold 'status type' occupations such as professional or managerial posts in organizations. Those who use the Mesolect have GCE or O Level qualifications and are usually in the middle rung of organizations holding jobs such as office workers, nurses, bank tellers, sales representatives and secretaries.
Those who use the Basilectal sub-variety are usually primary school or secondary school ‘drop-outs’ who have learnt a trade as apprentices or who are running their own businesses. They are mainly ‘blue collar’ workers such as electricians, mechanics, plumbers, waiters and taxi-drivers, as well as manual labourers such as janitors and domestic workers.

These sub-varieties or sociolects are found not only in Singapore, but also in other countries where English is a second language. Mehrotra(1998) talks of three main varieties of Indian English: ‘Sahib’ English corresponding to the Acrolect, ‘Babu’ English which corresponds to the Mesolect and ‘Butler’ English which corresponds to the Basilect.

However, according to Platt the main difference between the users of sociolects in Inner Circle countries and in Singapore is that in those countries, a speaker of a higher sociolect would not be able to quickly change to a lower sociolect in a different social situation. Speakers of lower sociolects may not even be intelligible to speakers of higher sociolects. For example, in Britain, most speakers of Cockney are not intelligible to the educated upper classes.

On the other hand, in Singapore, all users of the higher sub-varieties can easily understand the lower sociolects and can even ‘drop’ quite easily and comfortably into lower sociolects for functional purposes’(Platt, 1977). The higher the sociolect used by a speaker, the greater will be the range of the continuum available to the speaker. For example, Singaporeans who use the Acrolectal sub-variety in lectures, debates and formal discussions, use a Mesolectal sub-variety in less formal situations with friends or colleagues, and can also ‘drop’ comfortably and without artificiality into the Basilectal.
sub-varieties when talking to 'blue-collar' workers.

Figure 1.4 below illustrates in a diagrammatic way the sociolectal-functional flexibility of the higher sub-varieties of Singapore English compared to the lower sub-varieties. Platt assumed that this feature only exists in Singapore English. However, Kachru(1983) also refers to this ability to switch from one lectal sub-variety to another as the 'linguistic repertoire' of bilinguals.

![Diagram showing the flexibility of Singapore English dialects.]

Figure 1.4
Sociolectal-Functional Flexibility of Singapore English Dialects


Another researcher on Indian English, Pandharipande (1987) has also
referred to the above phenomenon in Indian English, which she terms `lectal code-mixing'. She compares the linguistic repertoire of the English educated Hindi-English bilingual who has both the formal or less nativized variety of English and the informal or more nativized variety of English, with that of the uneducated Hindi-English bilingual who does not have the formal variety in his repertoire. Thus English-educated Indians, like English-educated Singaporeans, have the ability to engage in `lectal code-mixing'.

Gupta(1994) explains that there are two sub-varieties of English spoken in Singapore: the High variety or Singapore Standard English (SSStdE) and the Low variety or Singapore Colloquial English (SCE). She says SSStdE differs from other Standard Englishes in terms of phonology and in the use of a small number of culturally based items (Gupta, 1994). This variety is the norm in formal circumstances, especially in education and government administration. On the other hand, the Low variety is sharply different from SSStdE, in terms of syntax and morphology. It is the main variety of English used at home and in casual situations.

Shields (in Platt et. al.,1977) says there are two factors which influence the borrowing of lexico-semantic items into the variety of English spoken in Singapore - the speaker's own native language, and the general substratum which is the public aggregate of the other languages spoken. Among the lexical items which she collected from her students, the following words may have been borrowed from the latter substratum: `char siew', `mee', `samfoo', `durian', `wayang' and `sampan'. She observed that loanwords of Malay origin seem to predominate, especially where colloquial expressions
are concerned.

The following section will briefly describe the development of New Englishes in Africa.

1.4.3 African English

There are two factors to consider when discussing the development of the English language in Africa. The first factor is the growth of sociolects or sub-varieties such as Platt and Weber's 'Acrolect', 'Mesolect' and 'Basilect'. The second is the socio-cultural reasons for the development of African English.

According to Richmond (1989), localized varieties of English have been in Africa since the 16th century. The first English used in Africa was a contact variety, the pidgin variety which the Europeans used for trading with the local people. British government officials and missionaries arrived with a more standardized form of English, and Africans were thus exposed to a second variety, namely Standard British English which Richmond calls 'Metropolitan English'.

British teachers attempted to train Africans to speak British English, but when the countries gained independence, the British teachers left the continent, leaving the former colonies without native speaker models. African teachers who replaced the British teachers passed their Africanized English onto their students. The English used in Africa began to absorb lexico-semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological features of the local languages. This has been termed by Richmond as the 'third variety' of English. He says there are three Englishes used on the African continent - the creolized version, the standard metropolitan version
and the localized version which has an African flavour, as shown in Figure 1.5 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact English</th>
<th>Metropolitan English</th>
<th>Localized English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English-based Pidgin and Creole developed from early contact of European with Africans</td>
<td>Spoken by native speakers from the United Kingdom and the United States who work or live in Africa</td>
<td>Spoken locally by Africans to other Africans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.5**

*Englishes in Africa*


Richmond says that the Localized English can be viewed as a sub-variety more closely approaching a Standard Metropolitan English, but still containing African influences of a Vernacular Local English, which he says contains more 'deviant' features and which is spoken by less educated Africans and which resembles 'Contact English'.

This classification is similar to Platt and Weber's classification of Singapore English into the Basilect, the Mesolect and the Acrolect, and Mehrotra's classification of Indian English into 'Butler English', 'Babu English' and 'Sahib English'. Thus the existence of sociolects or sub-varieties within the new varieties of English has been confirmed by Indian, African and Singaporean researchers alike.

Since the English language was introduced into Nigeria, contact with the tribal languages has caused the variety of English spoken within the country to reflect the phonological, grammatical and lexico-semantic features of
these languages. Adegjiba (1989) has investigated the lexicosemantic changes in the norms and forms of English spoken in Nigeria. He has identified six causes for lexicosemantic variation in Nigerian English, namely:

1.4.3.1 Socio-cultural differences between the English and the Nigerian people.
1.4.3.2 Pragmatic aspects of the dynamics of a multi-lingual context
1.4.3.3 Differences in discourse constraints and modes between English and the indigenous languages
1.4.3.4 The standardization of idiosyncrasies and errors
1.4.3.5 The pervasive, indomitable and omnipresent influence of the media
1.4.3.6 The predominantly formal medium of the acquisition of English

After explaining the above six causes, Adegjiba identified five major classes of lexicosemantic variation in Nigerian English and they are:

a. Transfer
b. Semantic Shift or Extension
c. Analogy
d. Coinages or Neologisms
e. Acronyms

The present researcher has adapted three of the above classes of lexicosemantic variation for her study, namely 'Semantic Shift', 'Semantic Extension' and 'Coinages', as substantial evidence of these features were found in her data. In his discussion, Adegjiba has not linked the causes with the classes of lexicosemantic variation. The present researcher has also linked the causes with the classes to reveal that more than one lexicosemantic class can be attributed to each cause. For example, 'Socio-cultural differences between the English and the Nigerian people' can be
considered the cause for three of the classes, namely 'Lexical Transfer, Semantic Extension of Shift' and 'Coinages or Neologisms'. The 'pragmatic aspects of the dynamics of a multi-lingual context' can be the cause for both 'Lexical Transfer' as well as 'Coinages or Neologisms'.

1.4.3.1 Socio-cultural differences between the English and the Nigerian people

Using the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as his source, Adegbija says the definition of 'socio-cultural' includes 'thoughts, customs, experiences and ways of life'. He says that when the English language came to Nigeria, it took on an important functional role inter- and intra-ethnically, and thus resulted in cross-cultural fertilization whereby new lexico-semantic denotations and connotations developed in the local English used. Lexico-semantic variation that is a result of socio-cultural differences between the English and Nigerian people would fall under the three possible classes: 'Lexical Transfer', Semantic Extension/ Shift' and 'Coinages/Neologisms'.

b. Semantic Shift or Extension

1.4.3.2 Pragmatic aspects of the dynamics of a multi-lingual context

In order to express the socio-cultural meanings specific to Nigerian customs, common lexical items in native English have had their semantic range restricted, shifted or extended in Nigerian English.

1.4.3.3 Differences in discourse constraints and modes between English and the indigenous languages

Many lexico-semantic variations of Nigerian English are patterned on the sociolinguistic conventions of discourse used in the Nigerian indigenous
languages. Adegiiba quotes Chishimba (1982:247): "In the cultures of Africa, loquacity, ambiguity, redundancy, obscurity and other strategies of verbal discourse are markers of wisdom, age, knowledge, sex and other socially relevant criteria. For example, the main factor influencing the use of verbal strategies such as politeness markers and greetings is the age of the participants concerned. For example, in most contexts in Nigeria an elder is usually not referred to by name by a younger person as it would be considered rude to do so. This is similar to the situation in Malaysia where it is considered to refer to any family elder by name, and everyone is given a specific kinship term, depending on the position of the speakers in the hierarchy. Adegiiba says this differs from the situation in most Western cultures where social status is the main factor. In order that this discourse-cum cultural norm not be violated, adjectives such as 'senior' or 'junior' have been adopted for use in Nigerian English in reference to older or younger people: 'My senior brother has just left for Lagos.'

Native equivalent: 'My elder brother has left for Lagos.'

Another verbal discourse strategy used is indirectness especially in lessening the effects of otherwise offensive or indecent utterances. This has led to the pervasiveness of proverbs in everyday discourse. Hence it is impolite to announce bluntly that a king or chief is dead. A more euphemistic way of expressing this is: 'He has joined his ancestors.' In addition, Adegiiba says several common Nigerian English idioms have been created in indirect reference to childbirth as shown on the next page:
Blunt/direct (Native English)  Indirect (Nigerian English)
to become pregnant to take in
to make a woman pregnant to put in the family way
to be pregnant and expecting a baby to be expecting
to deliver a baby to put to bed
to give birth to a baby to deliver

Among the above examples, the Nigerian English expressions 'to be expecting' and 'to deliver' differ from their native versions in that they are used intransitively, while their native equivalents have to be used transitively.

1.4.3.4 The standardization of idiosyncrasies and errors

b. Semantic Shift

An example of Semantic Shift is the Nigerian English usage of the expression 'troubleshooter'. In Standard British English it means one who quells trouble but in Nigerian English it means one who foments or causes political trouble. Adegjiba says this example of Semantic Shift has been absorbed into Nigerian English due to this idiosyncratic usage by a well-known politician, Kingsley Mbadiwe. In the current study, there were also examples of Semantic Shift but the researcher could not attribute their usage to any such specific cause.

c. Analogy

Adegjiba used the term 'Analogy' to describe the formation of new words which resemble already existing words either in form or in meaning. Word formation processes in English such as suffixation and prefixation have led to many examples of analogy in Nigerian English.

The present study has adapted this concept and has categorized this form of New English lexis under 'Derivational Variation'. One reason for
analogy could be the standardization of idiosyncrasies and errors. Adegjiba explains this as follows:

'When an idiosyncratic usage is vivid or striking enough to command national respect, attention and admiration in its own right, because of the importance of its user or because of the topicality of the context of its first usage, it could eventually become a standard acceptable usage.'

It could be added that standardization of any of the New Englishes could also be the result of large numbers of people frequently using the local sub-varieties and making them a permanent aspect of language usage.

1.4.3.5 The pervasive, indomitable and omnipresent influence of the media

d. Coinages or Neologisms

Adegjiba attributes the pervasive influence of the media to the creation of several new Nigerian English expressions. These expressions were established and given currency due to the influence of English-language newspapers, magazines, sports journals, radio and television on Nigerian English. Adegjiba says that lexical items that owe their origins to media effect are created by writers who want to present an idea in a more vivid and picturesque manner than is possible with Standard British English.

Examples of such expressions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexico-Semantic Collocations</th>
<th>Semantic Sense Intended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'bottom power':</td>
<td>favours obtained by a woman through the use of feminine charm or the granting of sexual favours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'backing the camera':</td>
<td>with back to the camera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'national cake':</td>
<td>rights, privileges, items to be shared by states or citizens of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'yellow-carded':</td>
<td>a football player being warned with a yellow card</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of the word 'backing' in the above context in Nigerian English is an
example of what has been termed in this study as 'Derivational Variation'. A similar word was found in the present corpus of Malaysian English. A presenter at a women's seminar used a similar derivative in his seminar paper on features of the St. Anne's church in Bukit Mertajam:

'On the hillside backing the church, most of these rock outcrops have remained intact.'

Besides the word 'backing', the word 'fronting' was also found in Malaysian English usage as seen in the following sentence taken from a Business feature article:

'The residential quarters have access from a side staircase fronting the colonnaded pavement.'

The use of similar words such as 'backing' in both Malaysian and Nigerian English reveal common features in both non-native Englishes, which may not be related to any linguistic feature of the indigenous languages of each country.

**e. Acronyms**

Another feature of Nigerian English probably caused by media influence is the formation of new lexical items by the use of the initial letters or larger portions of existing words, namely the use of Nigerian English acronyms, eg.

ASUU  Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities  
NEPA  Nigerian Electric Power Authority  
FEM  Foreign Exchange Market  
WAI  War Against Indiscipline  
JAMB  Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board

Some of these acronyms have become so established in Nigerian English that they have taken on prefixes and suffixes. Thus Nigerians often hear references to 'anti-ASUU activities', 'anti-WAI tendencies' and 'Jambite'.
1.4.3.6 The predominantly formal medium of the acquisition of English

Wilmott (1979:230) commented on the ‘biblical, archaic or awkwardly formal flavour given to many speech patterns.’ One reason for this is the frequent use of the formal register in the English taught in Nigerian schools. As a result, for many Nigerian speakers ‘big words’ or ‘jaw-breaking words’ constitute a symbol of knowledge and learnedness. An example of a ‘jaw-breaker’ that was popularized by the media was ‘conditionalities’. Another example is ‘to bring forth’ meaning to deliver a baby.

The following words reflect Lexical Transfer from pidgin or creole:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical Transfer from Pidgin/Creole</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'chop'</td>
<td>food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'full up'</td>
<td>to be filled to capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'get de bigeye'</td>
<td>to be greedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'headtie'</td>
<td>scarf worn on head be women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'moto'</td>
<td>motorized vehicle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of Analogy are pluralized mass nouns such as advices', 'furnitures', 'learnings' and 'mails'. Other examples of Analogy are 'paining' for hurting and 'newly' for 'for the first time' as in 'When I came here newly'. Two of these examples of Analogy, 'paining' and 'e-mails' have also been found in the data for this present study.
Conclusion

While on the surface, the new varieties of English may appear different from each other in terms of non-native lexis, at a deeper level, they have many shared lexico-semantic features. In each variety there are new senses introduced to native English words to describe the cultural lifestyle or experiences which are unique to that particular country. In each new variety there is redundancy and ellipsis in language usage. Each variety has its sociolects or sub-varieties recognizable only by the speakers themselves. In a linguistic sense, there are also similar lexico-semantic features such as redundant affixations of irregular verbs such as 'quitted' and collocational variations of native words. In other words, the new varieties have been grouped together under the umbrella term 'World Englishes' by linguists such as Kachru (1983) simply because they have much in common, though they have come into contact with different indigenous languages.