

Section A: English in the world

Question 1

Read the following article, which was posted on the University of Manchester website in 2019.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the changing use of English in the world. You should refer to specific details from the text as well as to ideas and examples from your wider study of English in the world. [25]

English does not just belong to the English

A linguistics expert from The University of Manchester's Institute of Education is calling for different varieties of English spoken around the world to be recognised as equally legitimate – particularly in the classroom – and for their variances to be viewed as differences rather than errors when teaching the English language. 5

In the age of globalism, English has become a lingua franca, with countries around the world including India, Singapore and South Korea using it. As such, it can no longer be considered as the sole domain of those considered to be 'native speakers', such as the British, Americans and Australians – rather, English is a truly international language.

From the perspective of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), however, a common belief still exists that the only 'true' variety of English is that spoken by native speakers and these are the only varieties that should be taught, and that other varieties – known as 'World Englishes' – are somehow not 'proper', incorrect, or failed attempts to master the language. 10

Nonetheless, from a purely linguistic perspective, these other varieties are only different from 'native' ones in terms of their grammar and use of vocabulary – thus, *grand open*¹ and *teacheress* are perfectly acceptable for Korean and Indian English respectively, as is *I am having a car*, an example of Indian English grammar. 15

This has implications for the EFL classroom:

- Given the respect for diversity and equality, we need to recognise this on a linguistic level – denigrating someone's language is the same as denigrating their culture. 20
- To insist on a single variety of English in the classroom does not prepare students for the reality of multiple forms of the language spoken outside the classroom.
- Students who speak World Englishes can use their knowledge to teach the teacher, and such varieties can be used to teach British or American English in the process – this allows for a more inclusive, and relevant, EFL classroom. 25

Dr Alex Baratta embarked on a study with 36 EFL students and teachers from 15 countries around the world. He found a general consensus that World Englishes merely exhibit differences – not errors – and can be incorporated into the EFL classroom as part of a more balanced approach to teaching English. 30

'The majority of English-speakers worldwide are no longer from the countries we might think of as "native" English-speaking countries,' one participant in the study explained. 'Demanding that all speakers of English mimic native speakers and classifying all other variations as improper is no longer something we should do – who dictates what "proper" English is anyway?' 35

Dr Baratta tweeted, 'Contrary to popular opinion, the establishment of a language need not rely on "official" government-produced school-based textbooks or dictionaries. World Englishes have already been established through their repeated use in society by the

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people who are speaking them on a daily basis, to include Internet usage and the use of English within the country in question, such as *Grand Open* being seen throughout Korea, and everywhere from restaurant menus to billboards – thus, the people have decided!

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¹ *grand open*: short form of 'grand opening', seen on advertising boards in Korea

Section B: Language and the self

Question 2

Read the following two texts. **Text A** is an extract from an article published on the website of *The New York Times* in 2019. **Text B** is from a university guide for staff about using preferred gender pronouns.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the texts relating to the ways in which language can shape and reflect personal and social identity. You should refer to specific details from the texts as well as to ideas and examples from your wider study of Language and the self. [25]

Text A

It's Time for 'They'

The singular 'they' is inclusive and flexible, and it breaks the stifling prison of gender expectations. Let's all use it.

I am your stereotypical, cisgender¹, middle-aged suburban dad. I dabble in woodworking, I take out the garbage, and I covet my neighbor's Porsche. Though I do think men should wear makeup (it looks nice!), my tepid masculinity apparently rings loudly enough online and in person that most people guess that I go by 'he' and 'him.' And that's fine; I will not be offended if you refer to me by those traditional, uselessly gendered pronouns. 5

But 'he' is not what you *should* call me. If we lived in a just, rational, inclusive universe, there would be no requirement for you to have to assume my gender just to refer to me in the common tongue. 10

There are, after all, few obvious linguistic advantages to the requirement. When I refer to myself, I don't have to announce my gender and all the baggage it carries. Instead I use the gender-nonspecific 'I.' Nor do I have to bother with gender when I'm speaking directly to someone or when I'm talking about a group of people. I just say 'you' or 'they.' 15

So why does Standard English impose a gender requirement on the third-person singular? And why do elite cultural institutions – universities, publishers and media outlets like *The Times* – still encourage all this gendering? To get to my particular beef²: When I refer to an individual whose gender I don't know here in *The Times*, why do I usually have to choose either 'he' or 'she' or, in the clunkiest phrase ever cooked up by small-minded grammarians, 'he or she'? 20

The truth is, I shouldn't have to. It's time for the singular 'they.'

¹ *cisgender*: denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex

² *beef*: complaint

Text B

Preferred Gender Pronouns: For Faculty

What is a 'preferred gender pronoun'?

- A 'preferred gender pronoun' (or PGP) is the pronoun that a person chooses to use for themselves. For example: If Xena's preferred pronouns are *she*, *her*, and *hers*, you could say 'Xena ate *her* food because *she* was hungry.'

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What are some commonly used pronouns?

- **There are also lots of gender-neutral pronouns in use.** Here are a few you might hear:
 - **They, them, theirs** (Xena ate *their* food because *they* were hungry.)
This is a pretty common gender-neutral pronoun ... And yes, it *can* in fact be used in the singular. 10
 - **Ze, hir** (Xena ate *hir* food because *ze* was hungry.)
Ze is pronounced like 'zee', can also be spelled *zie* or *xe*, and replaces *she/he/they*.
Hir is pronounced like 'here' and replaces *her/hers/him/his/they/theirs*. 15
- **Just my name please!** (Xena ate Xena's food because Xena was hungry.)
Some people prefer not to use pronouns at all, using their name as a pronoun instead.

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