Institution: York St John University

Unit of Assessment: 29 (English Language and Literature)

Title of case study: Applying 'plurilithic' concepts of English to help English teachers become aware of, and to challenge, deficit models of language learning, teaching, and assessment

1. Summary of the impact

Dr Christopher Hall's research on second language (L2) lexical development stressed the hybrid nature of lexical mental representation in learners of English. This led him to reflect more critically on the local experiences and needs of learners and non-native users, and to develop a 'plurilithic' account of the ontological ambiguity, unfairness, unhelpfulness, and unsustainability of monolithic conceptions of English for learning/teaching. Informed by this research, Hall (Reader in Applied Linguistics) and colleagues Dr Rachel Wicaksono (Head of the Department of Languages and Linguistics), and Clare Cunningham (formerly Wardman, an ECR and Lecturer in Linguistics) have taken steps to raise awareness of the implications of monolithic thinking among UK and international English Language Teaching (ELT) stakeholders, thereby challenging some firmly established tenets of language education policy.

2. Underpinning research

Hall's research on the hybrid nature of incipient bilinguals' and multilinguals' vocabulary knowledge began during his time at the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico. His L2 corpus analysis and experimental work suggested that divergence from native-speaker norms in the grammatical usage of words was largely the result of their automatic integration into L1 lexical networks. On the basis of these studies, Hall and Dr Peter Ecke (University of Arizona) developed a theoretical model (the 'Parasitic Model') accounting for the initial stages of L2 lexical development (R2). Subsequent research, which continued at York St John University after 2007, explored and refined the model in the context of minority language loss, the effects of learners' increasing proficiency, and third language learning (e.g. R3, R4).

Hall's problematisation of the assumption of fixed language norms in the Parasitic Model led him to a new research focus inspired by work in the areas of World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), paradigm-shifting approaches to language variation in postcolonial and globalising contexts. In a paper in *Applied Linguistics* (R1), he sets out the metatheoretical rationale for an original and distinctive approach to English learning and use, co-opting from critical applied linguistics proposals for the 'disinvention' of named languages as monolithic entities. He enriches this view with an outline for a model of individual speakers' 'plurilithic' sociocognitive resources for language, drawing on theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. The integrated approach is used to contest the prevailing assumption in ELT that monolithic native-speaker norms constitute the only legitimate learning target, and the consequent deficit models of learning which underpin professional policy and practice. A co-authored paper in *World Englishes* (R5) uses corpus data on global variation in the grammatical use of countability in nouns to support the new approach.

This research and the resultant ontological position on 'plurilithic' Englishes generated synergies with Wicaksono's and Cunningham's socioculturally-oriented work on interaction between native and non-native users of English in UK contexts. (Indeed, R1 was informed in part by very fruitful discussion with Wicaksono as they collaborated on other projects.) Wicaksono's major interest is in ELF interaction in Higher Education (see below), and Cunningham has focused on interaction between teachers and emergent bilinguals using English as an Additional Language (EAL) in primary education (e.g. R6). The work of all three has highlighted the deleterious effects of the conflation of language competence and national/native-speaker status in the perceptions of many educators. Their current research departs from a shared contention that educational policies and practices will not transcend the deficit model of monolithic thinking without teachers' awareness being raised regarding the 'plurilithic' nature of the sociocognitive resources that users of English develop through social interaction.

3. References to the research

R1 Hall, C. J. (2013). Cognitive contributions to plurilithic views of English and other languages. *Applied Linguistics, 34*, 211-231. [Listed in REF2]

R2 Hall, C. J. and Ecke, P. (2003). Parasitism as a default mechanism in vocabulary acquisition. In J. Cenoz, B. Hufeisen & U. Jessner (Eds). *The multilingual lexicon* (pp. 71-85).   Dordrecht: Kluwer. [doi: 10.1007/978-0-306-48367-7_6]

R3 Hall, C. J., Newbrand, D., Ecke, P., Sperr. U., Marchand, V. and Hayes, L. (2009). Learners' implicit assumptions about syntactic frames in new L3 words: The role of cognates, typological proximity and L2 status. *Language Learning, 59*, 1, 153-202. [Listed in REF2]

R4 Hall, C. J. and Reyes, A. (2009). Cross-linguistic influence in L2 verb frames: the effects of word familiarity and language proficiency. In Benati, A. & Roehr, K. (Ed.), *Issues in second language proficiency* (pp. 24-44). London: Continuum. [Listed in REF2]

R5 Hall, C. J., Schmidtke, D. and Vickers, J. (2013). Countability in world Englishes. *World Englishes, 32*, 1, 1-22. [doi: 10.1111/weng.12001]

R6 Wardman, C. (2012). Interactions between EAL pupils, specialist teachers and TAs during withdrawal from the mainstream in UK primary schools. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/03004279.2011.621896. [Listed in REF2]

4. Details of the impact

Hall, Cunningham, and Wicaksono have used their plurilithically-informed research in order to raise awareness of, and to contest, deficit models of learning in bilingual contexts, both in the UK (and other 'Anglophone' nations) and countries where other languages dominate. They have shared the implications of their work with trainee and practising teachers, testers, administrators, ELT companies, and education policy-makers, primarily through oral presentations and online resources.

Talks and workshops

In 2008 and 2009, Hall gave invited keynotes and plenaries at the International Conference of the Mexican Association of Teachers of English (MEXTESOL), in which he presented pedagogical implications of his research on the mental lexicon and the link with world Englishes, drawing on material that appeared in R1 – R5. The association president invited Hall to give another plenary on this research at the 40th anniversary conference in 2013, writing: "Your innovative research in psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and teacher training have provided informative talks that have been memorable to the MEXTESOL audience" (E1).

In order to maximise the impact of their research on a global scale, Hall, Cunningham, and Wicaksono have developed a strong relationship with the British Council (BC). At the BC IELTS Conference in Shanghai in 2008, Hall gave a keynote for testers and a workshop for teachers in which he explored the implications of the ideas developed in R1 and R5 for teaching and assessment in China. In 2010 Hall was again invited to give a lecture, this time for staff and local teachers at the BC in Beijing. Hall's presentations in China attracted the interest of the national media. Together with the BC's Director of Examinations Services (China), he was interviewed by: (a) Sina.com's education channel, watched so far by over 60,900 viewers (E2); and (b) *21st Century English Language Teaching Review* (100,000 national circulation), the ELT supplement of *China Daily* (E3). The BC director writes: "The views and content that you presented have influenced my own and my colleagues' understanding of world Englishes so that, for example, I was able to edit a draft British Embassy memo on English so that it made reference to the 'plurilithic' nature of English rather than the outdated notions of a correct 'British English' that appeared in the original" (E4).

Hall has also been invited to talk about his and Wicaksono's development of an online course for teachers, informed by R1 and R5 (see below). He presented the research at the International

Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) in 2012, where his talk was broadcast live online by the BC. The BC subsequently invited Hall to participate in its UK seminar series in 2013. This seminar was made available online in June, and by the end of July had been shared through social media over 90 times. On the basis of interest provoked by BC dissemination of the course, Hall was invited to give a plenary talk and a workshop for teachers at the 15th Biannual International Conference of the Lithuanian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in October 2013.

Like Hall, Cunningham has also shared her 'plurilithically-informed' outlook on EAL in IATEFL and BC events. According to a BC Senior Advisor, Cunningham's presentations on EAL (e.g. R6) have had "impact on the direction that the British Council takes in terms of provision of resources for EAL teachers and research in the UK" (E5). The co-ordinator of the IATEFL ES(O)L Special Interest Group affirms that she has invited Cunningham to participate in a special pre-conference event in 2014 "to ensure that your work has the widest impact possible within IATEFL" (E6). The online video of the BC seminar Cunningham participated in (May, 2013) had been shared through social media 160 times by the end of July.

Hall's and Cunningham's work has had an impact in the private ELT sector. Steve Flinders, director of York Associates, comments regarding his company's efforts to deliver language awareness and communication skills for native speakers: "[t]eaching 'English people to speak English' is of course something of a marketing challenge but the view that the British and the Americans are often poor international communicators is very current across the world and the work being done by you and your colleagues […] provides us with credibility and authority when trying to propagate this message" (E7).

Wicaksono organised a Higher Education Academy seminar in 2012, *Changing Englishes in internationalising universities*, at which Hall, Wicaksono, and Cunningham presented, drawing on R1, R5, and R6. The workshop, held to enable internationalisation strategies which recognise the plurilithic nature of students' Englishes, was attended by over 50 academic and support staff from around the UK. Over 70% of those who gave their feedback said they were 'very satisfied' with the event. Related to this, Flinders comments: "the work of language sensitisation that is being carried out at the University of York St John has provided me with insights into the change management process in this context that I have found helpful in both my thinking and my training" (E7).

Online resources

Hall and Wicaksono's online *Changing Englishes* course for teachers presents a plurilithic perspective on TESOL and teacher development, informed by R1 – R5. The course is intended as a vehicle to enable teachers globally to use the plurilithic approach to change the conceptualisation of English which currently underpins teaching policy and practice, thus seeking a direct impact on professional values and on educational practice around the world. Prior to release, the course was evaluated positively by trial participants (both intending and practising teachers from ten different countries), with one commenting a month after completion: "[t]he greatest benefit of working through the course was that it sparked reflection (on my own practice, on my own experiences) and I have, in fact, been thinking quite a bit about the course" (E8). Since its release in early 2013, the site has received over 195,000 unique visitors (adjusted for bounce rate), with over 75% returning (E9). A 'top story' in June 2013 announcing the course on the British Council/BBC *TeachingEnglish* website had been shared over 1,150 times by the end of July. A BC blog posting Hall was invited to contribute has been tweeted over 60 times.

The course is a sister project to Wicaksono's online *ELF Tutorial*, underpinned in part by ideas from R2. The objective of the tutorial is to help HE students in all disciplines to develop awareness of, and consequently enhance, the ways they interact in mixed language groups. It has been viewed or downloaded from the Jorum digital repository of Open Educational Resources on more than 1,100 occasions (E10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

E1 Invitation from MEXTESOL president

E2 Sina.org interview and viewing figures: http://video.sina.com.cn/p/edu/news/2010-09-10/161661138561.html#

E3 *Century English Language Teaching Review* interview: http://elt.i21st.cn/article/7623_1.html

E4 Testimonial from BC Director

E5 Testimonial from BC Advisor

E6 Testimonial from IATEFL SIG Coordinator

E7 Testimonial from York Associates Director

E8 British Council research report: http://tinyurl.com/kn7wn8n

E9 Google Analytics data: http://tinyurl.com/ntyhtzr

E10 Jorum hits statistics: http://tinyurl.com/ntyhtzr