

1.2 Linguistic diversity

Transcript

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In this module, our focus will be on linguistic diversity.

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Before we begin, think about the following questions:

- What does **linguistic diversity** mean to **you**? Can you provide a brief definition?
- To what extent is the **country** or **area** you live in **linguistically diverse**?
- What do you think about linguistic diversity in the **classroom**? Does it affect **English learning** in any way?

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Similar to biological diversity, **linguistic diversity** refers to the range of variation across languages spoken around the world. There are about **6000-7000** languages alive today. **Most spoken languages** (by native speakers) are the following: Mandarin Chinese (approx. 1.3 billion); Spanish (approx. 460 million); and **English** (approx. 379 million). If we add non-native speakers of English to this picture, English becomes the most widely spoken language in the world.

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Of these many languages spoken around the world today, some are **genetically close** to each other, i.e. they belong to the same language family. Some others are **typologically** similar, i.e. they have similar grammar structures. Still others show **internal diversity**, i.e. variation due to social or geographical circumstances.

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Now, let's move onto our second activity. Think about **your own context**—do some search on the Internet if necessary.

- Regardless of level of language proficiency and whether the users are native or non-native, **how many languages are used**:

- in the **country** where you live?
- in your **city/town/village**?
- in your **work place**?

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Linguistic diversity is closely connected to **human diversity** in the world today—as people lived in groups of differing sizes in the inhabitable places of the world, most of them spoke languages **unique** to their groups/communities without much contact with other groups. The diversity in human groups inventing their own languages led into the **linguistic diversity** that we are speaking of today. **Some** of these languages may have been extinct due to population factors and others are endangered, but we still live in a world of immense linguistic diversity.

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Much of the linguistic diversity stems from the high number of **Indigenous languages**, languages native in **particular** regions. Indigenous languages are not necessarily the same as the national language(s) of the country. **For example**, there are 54 officially recognized states in Africa and 48 in Asia but more than 2000 languages are spoken in each of these continents.

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An important reason behind linguistic diversity is the **colonial history** in certain parts of the world. Thus, for instance, **major European languages** have spread outside Europe long before globalization.

Another reason behind linguistic diversity is the **unequal distribution of resources**, which partially stems from colonialism, and which has, in turn, led to continuous **human migration**.

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In addition to linguistic diversity, we speak of linguistic superdiversity today. In Vertovec's definition, **superdiversity** is "a **dynamic interplay** of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified **immigrants** who have arrived over the last decade." Thus, high number of **immigrants** from formerly colonized countries in urban centres all over Europe contribute to this superdiversity.

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For example, one can see in a **mid-sized** city in Europe various strands of immigrants who may originate from the same country. They might **differ** though in hometowns of origin, ethnic, racial and religious composition, socioeconomic status, educational background, etc. The **diversity** in this demography has increased tremendously with **globalization**.

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Superdiversity in today's societies leads to **linguistic superdiversity**. Not only do **mobile** individuals migrate from one place to another and start learning new languages, they also do so with **various languages at their disposal**. For instance, immigrants from the same country might speak different **home languages** while they also learn the **languages of the host country** and **additional languages** through schooling—the most widespread of which is **English**.

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The most important driving force behind the **spread of English** around the world today is the **colonization** of the outer circle countries by the inner circle. This has led into the **emergence of World Englishes**. Native speakers of English today are larger in number than the inner circle countries, e.g., in African and Asian countries. This essentially means that there is **variation** even within **English** itself, such as British, American, or Australian English; Indian, African, or Asian English, and English as a lingua franca.

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Now, it's time again for our activity. Watch the video "**World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching**" by Andy Kirkpatrick <https://youtu.be/BmzCEenoqOg>

- To what extent do **you** agree with Kirkpatrick's view that there are often **prejudices** against some English varieties? Do **you** personally think some varieties have '**higher**' status? **Why** or **why not**?
- How do **you personally feel** as regards **variation** in English language use? Do you welcome it or do view it perhaps as something undesired or even dangerous?

Click the **link** under the video to share your views

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Spread of English in the extended circle is mainly due to **globalization** and its consequences such as **new technologies** and the **Internet**. Today, the whole world invests in **English education** and speakers in the Extended Circle **far exceed** those in the Inner and Outer Circles. Another reason behind the spread

of English in the extended circle is the **inter-/intra-national mobility** and **migration flows**. In major cities **across Europe**, more than half of the students in **school classrooms** come from **multilingual** immigrant families.

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The **superdiverse** structures of **major urban areas** are directly reflected in the composition of **mainstream schools** in Europe. Research has focused on many major European cities of varying sizes and has uncovered how **multilingualism** is not an exception but the **norm** in these schools. Starting with the pre-school ages up until higher education, **multilingual immigrants** who have populated Europe mainly after the WWII are represented in classes.

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Meanwhile, the linguistic diversity as represented in **higher education** stems both from the **local** multilingual students, e.g. Turkish multilingual students studying in German universities, and **international** students, e.g. Chinese students in British universities. As one major trend of **globalization**, there is now more circulation of students among universities, which leads into a revised understanding of the role of **English as a medium of instruction** (EMI).

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Language policy making in multilingual schools shows variations across contexts. For instance, in some schools, **classroom** language policy is different from the **school's** language policy—while the former may be based on **monolingualism** as the norm, the latter may be more permissive of **multilingualism** as an everyday reality.

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As multilingualism becomes an everyday reality, **multimodal language use** is equally widespread in classrooms. A key reason for this change is the incorporation of **digital technologies** in personal lives and education more than ever before. This has led teachers into designing **classes** that are **more multimodal** and relevant to learners' needs and wants—language is not only in verbal or written form anymore, but the **whole set of multimodal resources** contributes to the meaning-making process.

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English has an important role both in terms of **linguistic diversity** and **multimodality**. For example, while most of the world's **online communication** is conducted in English, the **culture** brought with it is perpetuated through

multimodal resources, such as videos, gifs, etc.—a highly diverse set of English speakers deploys these resources and feel **attachment** to a **global community**.

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As we are about to close this module, let's go on with our last activity:

Think about **your own context** and your experience so far as a **user** and a **teacher** of English

- In general, what would you say are the **benefits** and **challenges** of **linguistic diversity** around the world, especially as regards teaching **multilingual classes**?
- Among all **English varieties** that there are nowadays, which one(s) do **you teach** your own learners? **Why**?
- In your opinion, to what extent should **learners** be **exposed to** and **aware of** linguistic diversity? **Why**?

Click the **link** under the video to share your views at the **Forum** of this section

Thanks for your attention!