

Sandra Mollin 2006: *Euro-English. Assessing Variety Status*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag. xi + 214pp. ISBN 13:978-3-8233-6250-0

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The concept of *Euro-English* is becoming more and more familiar to all those people who are interested in the varieties of English around the world, or so-called *World Englishes*. Much literature by well-known scholars (Kachru 1992; Kachru, Kachru and Nelson 2006) has dealt with the different varieties of English all over the world. Different models (McArthur 1987; Kachru 1992) have been created in order to distinguish the different worldwide varieties of English. However, the most popular is Kachru's (1992: 356-57) 'three concentric circles' model. This makes a three-way distinction: first, those countries in which English is the native tongue, the Inner Circle countries such as the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, (curiously, Ireland does not appear in this circle); second, the Outer Circle or countries with non-native, though institutionalised varieties of English, (Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia); the third circle is the Expanding Circle, which includes those countries in which English is regarded a foreign language (China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and URSS).

No European countries are included in this theory, even though it is beyond doubt that English has gained great importance in the European context, being the first foreign language studied in most European educational systems. Berns (1995: 8-9) applies Kachru's theory to the context of Europe, distinguishing the Inner circle countries, Great Britain and Ireland, where English is the native language; the Outer circle, composed of Holland, Germany and Luxemburg, where English works as an international language, and the Expanding circle, where English has the role of international language and is learned as a foreign language. This group includes Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

In the last decade, certain scholars (Modiano 2001; Seidlhofer 2001; Jenkins 2001) started mentioning the possibility of recognising and labelling a variety of English that has developed in Europe. If there is a 'British English' an 'Irish English', why can't we consider the existence of a 'Euro-English' variety? Today this debate is relevant, along with that of English as a *lingua franca*, and scholars seem to be in agreement about the emergence of a variety of European English or 'Euro-English'.

This book begins with a thorough review of the concept of Euro-English since the coining of the term until present-day debate on this issue. It is structured into seven main chapters whose titles will be mentioned throughout this review. In addition, the author includes three Appendices; A, B and C. The first comprises two tables with sociolinguistic figures reflecting the numbers of native speakers in EU member states per language. Appendix B includes figures of words that supposedly belong to the Euro-English corpus based on Wordsmith's WordList, and Appendix C is composed of two

different sections; first, the list of universities sampled in the study, and second, the questionnaire used in this research. Finally, the bibliography used in the study is quite extensive, and includes the main works that have been carried out in this field. This research is the result of the author's Doctoral Dissertation submitted in 2005 to the University of Freiburg under the title *The Institutionalization of Euro-English? Form and Function of an Emerging Non-Native Variety of English in Europe*.

Chapter One, 'Introduction', gives a brief description of the concept of Euro-English and the different models that have been previously referred to, as well as a short summary of the content of each of the seven chapters. Mollin outlines that "there is one definition to be made" (3) for the concept of Euro-English and justifies the need to cover this gap in academic research.

Chapter Two, 'On Euro-English: A Review', is a preliminary section which offers a review of all the works that have dealt with the use of English in Europe. The writer looks back to the 1980s, when Ferguson (1992) remarked on the widespread use of English in the European continent, as well as the appearance of certain features (uses of tenses and details of pronunciation), which began to be associated with what he called Continental English. However, according to Mollin, the term 'Euro-English' can be dated back to 1986 with Carstensen. Mollin states that the concept of 'Euro-English' should be "reserved for an institutionalised variety of English in Europe while a new term for Anglicisms in European languages should be invented" (5). She also refers to other scholars (Modiano 2001; Seidlhofer 2001; Jenkins 2001) who have studied features of this variety of English. Nevertheless, it seems that Mollin does not put enough emphasis on the crucial contributions by these well-known scholars, and even questions their treatment of the subject.

Chapter Three, titled 'Background: English Worldwide and New Englishes', introduces the theoretical background to this research. A summary is made of the expansion of English across the globe and its present day status. The author refers to three researchers who have defined *language spread*. In 1988, Quirk provided a model of spread (demographic, imperial and econocultural) of English in Europe (14); In 1992 Phillipson talked about the linguistic imperialism of English, and in 2002 Brutt-Griffler basically distinguished 'speaker migration' and 'macroacquisition' as the definition of language spread (14). The different phases of English expansion are also described; the first involved Ireland, Scotland and Wales (from 11th to 19th century); the second phase added North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (from the 17th to the 19th century); the third was the period of British rule (16th to 20th century), which affected South Asia, South East Asia, West Africa, East Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Nowadays, we are in the fourth phase (the 20th and 21st centuries), which started in 1945, with English being the first language of international domains and large-scale learning as a foreign language throughout the world. This dominance of English has been ensured by the support of the US, with its pioneering position in the electronic revolution, and it involves the whole world. In this chapter, Mollin offers an interesting summary of the spread of English around the world from the 11th to the 21st century, highlighting the role it plays nowadays.

Chapter four, 'The Functions of English in Europe', reviews the linguistic landscape of Continental Europe. It includes all the countries that belong to the European Union,

where currently twenty different languages are regarded as official, and a number of autochthonous minority languages are not official. The analysis of the number of native speakers per language within the EU reveals that German is the most spoken language with over 90 million speakers, followed by English, Italian and French (between 50 and 60 million). Spanish, Polish and Dutch have 15 to 40 million native speakers. Europe, in comparison with the other continents, has the lowest number of different languages spoken (with only 3% of the total number of languages currently spoken in the world). The second part of this chapter focuses on the use of English in Europe, the bilingualism with English in Europe being the first issue dealt with. The author uses as a research tool the *Eurobarometer* survey; the results show that 75% of the inhabitants in Malta, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands claim to be bilingual, while the remaining countries achieved lower scores.

In this chapter, the role of English is analysed from a variety of perspectives. In education, English is the most prominent foreign language in all educational systems in Europe, as Eurydice (EU education network) states. According to data from 1999/2000, 66.17% of all pupils study English, 12.21% learn French, and 11.16% choose German, in secondary education. In administration each state uses only its own national language(s). Nevertheless, the working languages of the official EU apparatus are English and French. In the media, the author focuses on the consumption of international media (*The International Herald Tribune* and *CNN*), and the results show that the analysis of television, radio, cinema and the printed press reveal that there are no productions in English for Europeans by Europeans. However, as regards cinema, the most successful productions come from English-speaking countries. Research on the Internet reveals that English and the national languages are the only important languages. The use of English is also shown as a contact code used between people who do not share a mother tongue in Western Europe. Finally, in the area of creativity English has made the smallest inroads, since authors prefer to write in their native languages, with the exception of song writers and slam poets who are trying to reach a global audience. The author provides extensive and valuable samples of the important status of English in European society. However, the method used in this research might make us question its academic reliability. For example the *Eurobarometer* survey is questionable as a reliable research medium since it is conducted by the public opinion section of the European Commission taking a random selection from the population or electoral lists (depending on the country). The original purpose of the data obtained from these surveys was probably not to aid academic research and therefore the researcher was not present while it was being conducted. It would have been different had the author conducted her own survey. In contrast, the use of *Eurydice* as a source to analyse the impact of English in European educational systems is, to the reviewer's knowledge, a more reliable and accurate research tool.

Chapter five is titled 'Evidence for the Formal Independence of Euro-English', and the guiding question is: Does Euro-English have its own independent form? It aims to analyse whether there are specific features that can make English a nativised variety. The author carries out an empirical study in an attempt to find a specific corpus of Euro-English (spoken and written). She examines different registers or linguistic situations: spoken English, informal (online) writing, and transcriptions of recordings

from the European Commission's online archive. After studying this data, Mollin suggests some features that might distinguish Euro-English. From the lexical point of view, a word such as *actual* is used in the sense of 'current', and not with the meaning of 'real'. *Possibility* is used by European speakers in the sense of 'opportunity'. In terms of verbs, *have* is by far the most frequent, followed by *be*, and less frequently *do* and *put*. There are also some specific words that are unique to Euro-English, for example: *Euro*, *Euro-zone*, *Euro-area*, *member states*, *additionality*, *internal market*, *Berlaymont*. As regards grammar, a number of aspects are studied: countability and number, relative pronouns, articles, the auxiliary *do*, adverbs, question tags, prepositions, complementation, inversion and aspect. The findings reveal that the specific uses of some individual cases are more closely related to the speaker's proficiency in English, frequently considered incorrect use, rather than to the deliberate choice of that use by European speakers. For the author, these facts are indicators that Euro-English should not be seen as a nativised variety, but rather as "an amalgam of idiosyncratic learner Englishes" (155). In contrast to Mollin's theory, the data provided in this analysis might be regarded as the early emergence of a European English variety - a variety which is defining itself on the basis of the choice of certain words and structures instead of others and that differs from native uses of English, in addition to the creation of new terms (*Euro-zone*, *Euro-area*) that belong to the specific context of Europe.

The main objective of chapter six, 'Evidence for the Acceptance of Euro-English', is to deal with the matter of the institutionalisation of Euro-English. The author provides certain hypotheses about the unwillingness of Europeans to accept a variety of English as their *lingua franca*. On the one hand, considering the tradition of monolingualism and linguistic nationalism in Europe, Mollin states that "the notion that a language belongs to its own nation is more common in Europe than anywhere else in the world" (158). On the other hand, an indirect indicator for the acceptance of Euro-English is the motivation for learning English.

For this research, a questionnaire survey was used as the unique method of studying attitudes towards English across Europe. It was administered via e-mail, and the sampling was the population of academics across Europe, as university lecturers' e-mails are easily accessible. The total number was 4230 addresses from 21 countries. The questionnaire was composed of three sections; the first being elicited to analyse the error correction by means of a set of sentences that had to be checked by the respondents offering a correct alternative in case of mistakes; the second section asked for personal data required as sociolinguistic variables: age, country of origin, mother tongue and branch of science (Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, or the Arts); the third targeted the respondents' general beliefs and attitudes towards English by questioning their agreement or disagreement on a scale of five items that ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Two rounds were necessary. After both were completed, 746 completed questionnaires were obtained. The degree of participation varied depending on the countries, and the average age of respondents was 43 years old.

The results show that the majority of respondents (52.2%) assess their competence in English as 'fairly good'. As regards their target variety, the highest score (30.9%) is for respondents who choose 'international English', followed by 'professional English'

or 'scientific English'. The British English variety is chosen more frequently than the American variety by learners.

The attitudes of the Europeans towards English used as a *lingua franca* can be regarded as positive. In fact, it is seen as a *lingua franca* that complements their language repertoire, but it is not perceived by Continental Europeans as a substitute for their own languages. A percentage of 83.14% of respondents consider their mother tongue more important than English, and only 6.79% argue the opposite. Other questions in the survey show that most Europeans (59.29%) are not bothered about mistakes of other learners as long as they understand. Another statement says that "Schools should teach English not as the native speakers speak it but for efficient international communication"; this has more opponents (43.43%) than supporters (33.10%). The younger respondents seem to be the most conservative. Attitudes among Europeans seem to prevent an institutionalisation of Euro-English. All in all, this chapter provides valuable data on sociolinguistic aspects that are usually analysed by means of questionnaires. Nevertheless, an objection might be made to the sample, since it only focuses on university lecturers from European universities, (mostly highly qualified middle-aged people – average age 43), and it calls into question whether this sample really reflects the attitudes and viewpoints of the whole European society. There seem to be important sectors of population (e.g. according to age or qualification) that remain unrepresented in this analysis. Furthermore, the complementation of interviews (face-to-face or by telephone) with another research tool such as the interview might have enriched the study, since interviewing a representative of each population sample could have made the analysis more rigorous.

Chapter seven, the concluding chapter, tackles the legitimacy of the label *Euro-English*. After the analysis presented above, the author concludes that Euro-English is not a variety as had been believed, but merely a means to aid communication between non-native speakers. The responses of the participants in this study display positive attitudes towards non-nativeness, but they clearly aim for a native-speaker standard. Thus, the label *Euro-English* cannot be applied to any variety of English spoken in Europe. According to Mollin, "the term should be discarded. Continental Europe is, as far as English is concerned, norm-dependent but not norm-developing" (199). However, the acceptance of this subject may be important, since it implies a recognition of the sociolinguistic reality of Europe. In other words, if we discard this concept, we deny the possibility of emergence of a European variety of English. Recent research by Berns (2009: 196) supports this idea.

The overall concept of the book is extremely interesting. It deals with the timely topic of whether a variety of English exists in Europe, and consequently, whether the label *Euro-English* is appropriate or not. After analysing this issue, covering a wide variety of sociolinguistic variables, the author concludes that the label *Euro-English* should not be applied to any variety of English. Despite the objections made to some of the research sources employed in this study, we still consider that the work treats a crucial topic in the field of present-day sociolinguistics. This book uses an accessible style and is sufficiently accurate as to be considered a praiseworthy contribution for scholars in the fields of sociolinguistics and world Englishes. This book is highly

recommendable as essential reference material as it brings another viewpoint, debate and criticism to this fascinating topic.

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