

CONCEPT OF ENGLISHES: AN APPROACH TO INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING FOR VARIETIES OF LIFE

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The rhythm of life is highly expressed in language just as life itself is built on and around language use. The understanding of life is highly dependent upon the understanding of the workings of language in the varied contexts of lifecycle. This study uses a sociolinguistic concept of the study of language known as Varieties of English, to illustrate the connections between varieties of English and the grammar of English, versus the varieties of life of students and the image of God in them. The data for the study is drawn from students' responses from a class assignment. This is analysed using the concepts of Varieties of English. The findings of the study reveals that each of the students embodies varieties of life. They identified more of negative varieties of life among themselves. In addition, each one saw their life as a central object surrounded by many social and cultural influences that manifest in varieties of experiences. Furthermore, they recognize the differences between who they really are and who the influences around them turned them into. The study recommends an intentional interwovenness of the realities of life in the courses taught in the classrooms, to help the students make right and logical connections about life and life choices.

Key words: sociolinguistics, language, English grammar, varieties of English, IFL

Introduction

Every form of education has its aim and objectives. The emphasis on integrating faith and learning in classrooms has one of its objectives as preparing and producing students who can recognise and appreciate God's image in themselves and in other people. This requires that they be exposed to varieties of realities through the workings of the different systems of the courses they are taught, and how the embedded values, themes and experiences of those systems can help them to understand their calling as ministers of God in such areas of their study. In other words, IFL emphasis is that studying a particular course in a higher institution is a way of repositioning oneself for better service towards God and man; a service that is established in the truth of the word of God. The services to be rendered differ according to contexts, but must keep to God's high standard of calling that corroborates His word in 1 Corinthians 10:31-32 thus:

So then, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do,
Do all to the glory of our great God, do not offend Jews or
Greek or even the church of God but live to honour Him.
(Amplified Version)

From the Bible text above, Paul makes it clear that one has varieties of activities that constitutes aspects of one's life, but in engaging in these varieties of activities, his admonition emphasizes truthfulness and faithfulness to God at the center of them all.

Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL)

Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) as a Christian concept is designed to infuse biblical worldviews into every subject area of study, especially in the higher institutions. It is a concept that acts to help the teacher teach a course with the underlying assumption that the learners need to understand the place of truth and faithfulness of God's character in the course of study. In response, the learners see God as central to every field of study and as God's image that they are, they begin to see in the course of study a relationship between the systems of the course and the principles of heaven. Hence, this affects the way they work with their fellow humans, and in the consciousness of God's will for their lives. It involves much more than simply praying and reading of the Bible in class and other spiritual programmes and activities organized by the institution. The aim is to cause the learners to be change agents in the midst of corrupt philosophies and ideologies

that rule the world such as secularism, individualism and the likes, which deny God His place in the affairs of life. In other words, IFL helps humans to connect, achieve, and be the best they can in their relationship with one another and their maker in obedience to His laws.

Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) is “to give a completely God centered orientation of life to the students, to develop a thoroughly Christian and biblical worldview, and to teach students how to think Christianly” (Lowrie: 1984). IFL is like putting flavour into a dish of the course of study, to make it more nutritious and appetizing to the malnourished world as the students serve in their different fields of endeavour. The malnourishment in the world is a result of lack of connections between the themes and issues that directly apply to life naturally from the standpoint of being a Christian and the approved education curriculum contents of the circular system. Every course taught in any classroom has a natural connection with the originator of those concepts because whatever exists, finds its root or origin in the power of the word of God. In essence, IFL should be the basis of teaching and learning in every Christian school and by extension, the world at large.

Just as Psalm 139:14 states, “I will give thanks and praise to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, and my soul knows it very well” (Amplified Version), the process of integrating faith in learning helps the student to appreciate better God’s wisdom and power in creation. This goes in line with Smith (1995:16) which states that Christian education should creatively and responsibly create something which honours God and reflects something of God. In essence, the Christian teacher must be a *deus-in-*God in creating out of every subject he or she teaches, practical connections between the wisdom and the power of God in the subjects taught, and how God expects the students to live out that wisdom and power in the works they engage in and in their relationship with God’s world.

Over the years, Babcock University has emphasized IFL as a way to effectively integrate its core-values in everything it does. Efforts have been made to educate both staff and faculty in this direction and resources have also been expended to actualise this, but it seems obvious that the right connections have not been made between efforts put in and the expected outcomes. This is premised on the fact that most of the students cannot make out the connections between faith and learning in their studies, rather, what they talk about in regard to IFL is praying and preaching

before every class starts. An effective outcome should be easily identifiable by the students, hence, there is a missing link.

Consequently, this results in students living a disconnected life from the faith the institution professes. Here is illustrated Smith (2006) view which posits that:

generalization of IFL towards spiritual development without taking into account the spiritual and the particular values, concepts, goals, practices and professional cultures into the curriculum might risk missing the insight into the nature of spiritual development which might be provided from perspectives rooted in particular subject areas.

Thus, a Christian institution according to Gangel (1983) is “a post-secondary institution of learning that takes seriously, an evangelical doctrinal statement, classes in Bible and Christian ministry, a distinctively Christian philosophy of education and life, and the quality of spiritual life on campus. Hence, the absence or lack of integration of these creates a gap. Students are to understand that the fear of the Lord is the basis to successful endeavour in life and since God created all things, all disciplines emanated from Him and must be developed in a way to glorify God.”

The Bible in Revelation 4:19 says that God is worthy to receive all glory, honour and power because He created all things for His pleasure, even the courses we study. Holmes (1987) posits that students at a Christian college must realise that their education is their prime calling from God and so, Christian principles and practices must permeate every aspect of campus life. Dockey (2000) asserts that there is this need to prepare students to secure society and to change the world for Christ. Wolterstorff (2004:297) asserts that the goal of Christian education is to energise students to work for social justice and peace....to engage in practices that promote human flourishing. For these concerns to become true, especially in the world we are living in today, there will be an intentional and radical approach to modify the contents and methods of what is taught in the classrooms to align with the wisdom of God embedded in those courses. The systems of these courses must be linked to the one who made those systems for the good of man and the students must be made to understand their responsibility and accountability to God in their different areas of calling; for every discipline is a calling.

Sociolinguistics

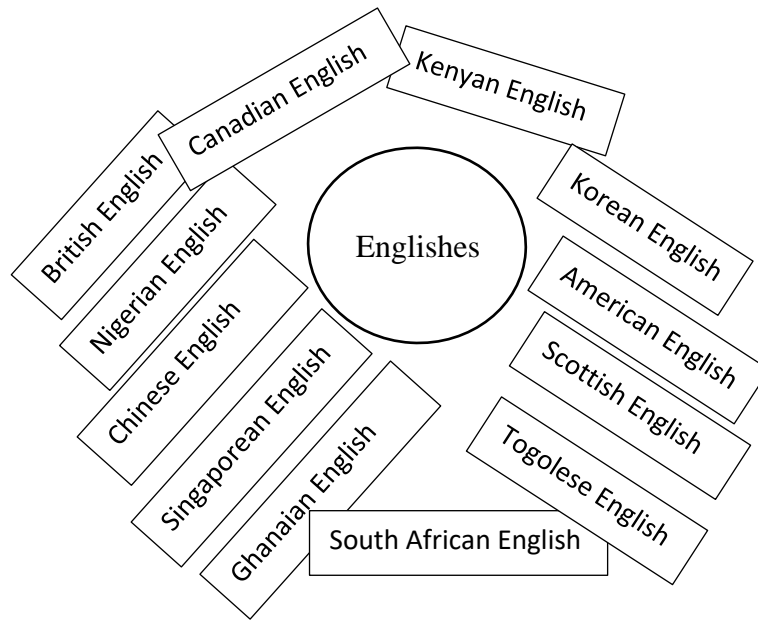
Sociolinguistics studies language behaviour and sees language as a social behaviour. It describes the effects of society on language in terms of cultural norms, expectations, beliefs, worldviews and contexts, that interact with language to produce a considerable level of distinctions in the form and usage. In other words, it takes into consideration varieties of a language that result from interaction of different social variables. It is a broad approach to language study that includes, among others, usage among speech communities, social class and social networks that result in variations and varieties of usages. From the sociolinguistic descriptions, this paper seeks to digress from studying language behaviour to drawing lessons from language behaviour of English in its mixing and mingling attitude, that can aid human beings in their varieties of life and experiences, as they walk with their God and in relationship with fellow human beings.

The Concept of Varieties of English/Englishes

The concept of Englishes arose as a result of English mingling and mixing with other languages, which in turn influenced it in various ways that are evident in the usages across the globe. Varieties of English or Englishes deal with emerging localized or indigenised varieties that have developed in territories colonised or influenced by either the British or the Americans. They exist in diverse socio-cultural and socio-linguistic contexts and function in multi-social and multi-linguistic contexts in the different regions of the globe.

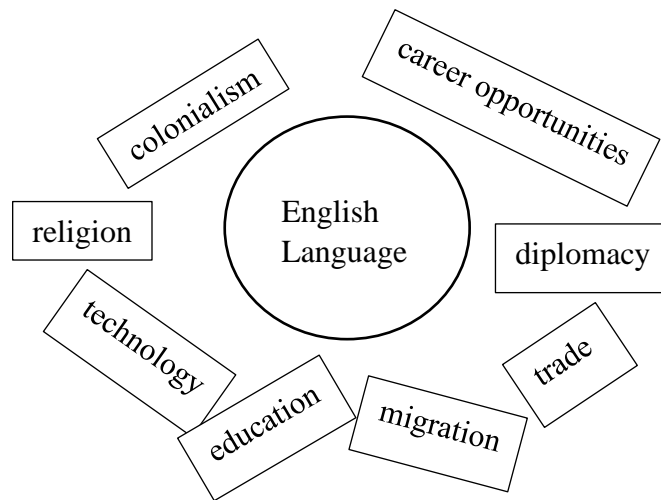
The influence of environment on English language led to the concept of Englishes or varieties of English which function in different domains to achieve different communicative needs, but with grammar intact. In the same vein, students' interaction with different contexts of life results in their living varieties of life, but the question is how have they been able to retain their God-given image in the course of their mixing and mingling?

Some of these varieties include the following:



Within the different contexts of these Englises, such factors as appropriateness, comprehensibility, intelligibility and interpretability justify their usage. The social and cultural contexts of these countries interacted with English as English moved and mingled with them. The reason for the emerging varieties is as a result of the encounter English had and is still having as represented below.

The reasons for the mixing and mingling of English include:

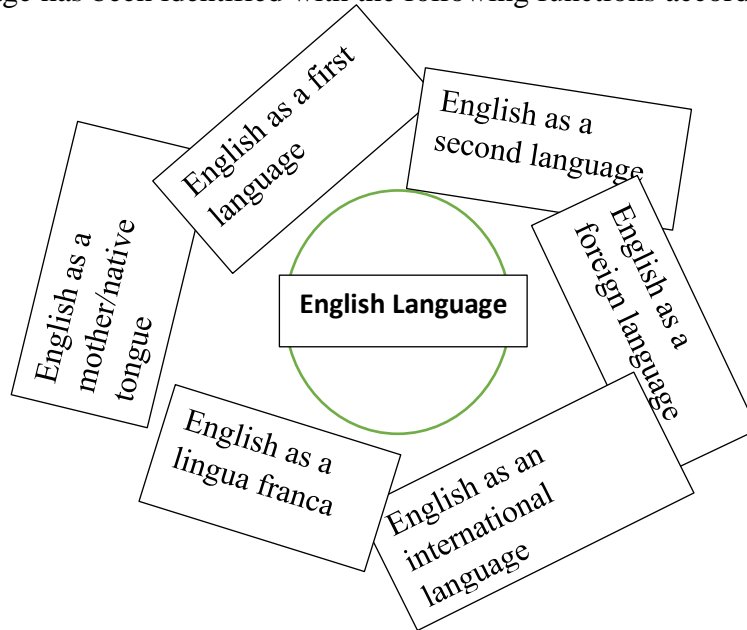


These items can also constitute the reason for a student or any individual to mix and mingle with issues and concerns of life but what is important here is the ability of the individual student to

glorify God at every level of interaction, bearing in mind that God's glory must not be short-changed for any reason.

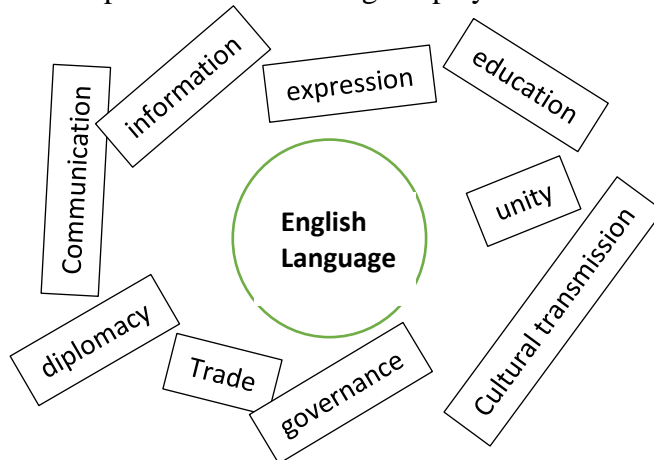
Functions of English Language

English language has been identified with the following functions according to different contexts of use:



From the diagram above, different countries where English has gone to find it useful in one or more contexts of usage, which has given rise to different varieties and functions.

Some of the specific functions English plays in the above contexts include:



These functions of English language can easily be related to how an individual can become a positive influence in a variety of situations without losing one's essence-the image of God.

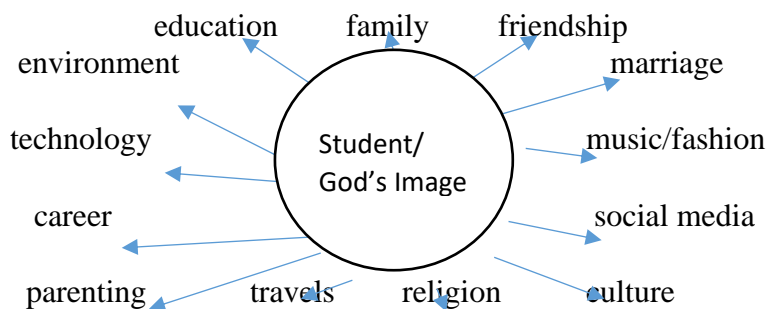
Every course of study has its origin in what God created. In this way, life cannot be lived successfully outside of God. Any field of study that is not rooted back to God and His will is bound to produce social disaster. It is out of the will and knowledge of God that these subjects exist, and they exist for the good of man. Failure to root these subjects back to God, the originator and creator of all things, including the ideas and values embedded in them, will invariably entail rooting them on the enemy of God. Such a misdemeanor has landed the world today into so much crisis. The emphasis on IFL should not be trivialised. There is so much of the lack of the consciousness of the image of God in man which has resulted in man becoming an enemy of His creator through the ways he behaves, reasons and even sees his fellow man. Conscious and concerted effort is required to bring man back to the right mind-set that can help him connect with his maker, to reflect and practice the truth of God in whatever he does.

In my interaction with the students in class, on the course varieties of English, it was difficult for them to make a connection between the principles that led to the concept of varieties of English and principles that can lead to varieties of life in them. At first, it was not clear to them how this could be but through the discussions on the different aspects of the course content, they were able to begin to make some connections. But the harder nut to crack was the ability to behave like English language and still retain its grammar, which has to do with rules for correct choice and placement of words and the construction of correct sentences. In other words, although English language is used in a variety of ways in the different socio-cultural milieu where it serves as a means of communication amongst others, it has retained its grammar as a basis for its study. In the same vein, the students can function in a variety of situations but their God-given image can be retained as the basis that everyone must strive to come to.

With the varieties of English that exist, it is quite obvious that those who speak these varieties recognise the centrality and essence of the grammar of English and long to know it in order to be more effective in their communication. In the same vein, for every individual student, while mixing and mingling with different situations that result in different varieties of life, the God's image in them must be seen as central and essential towards effective, efficient and true living.

The concepts that constitute circles of mixing and mingling of English language gave birth to varieties of English. These varieties developed peculiar syntax, morphology, phonology, lexis

and semantics. When the students were encouraged to apply the idea of English mixing and mingling to possible life experiences, the students came up with the following as possible socio-cultural contexts of mixing and mingling they find around them. These they believe can influence and be influenced by them. Thus:

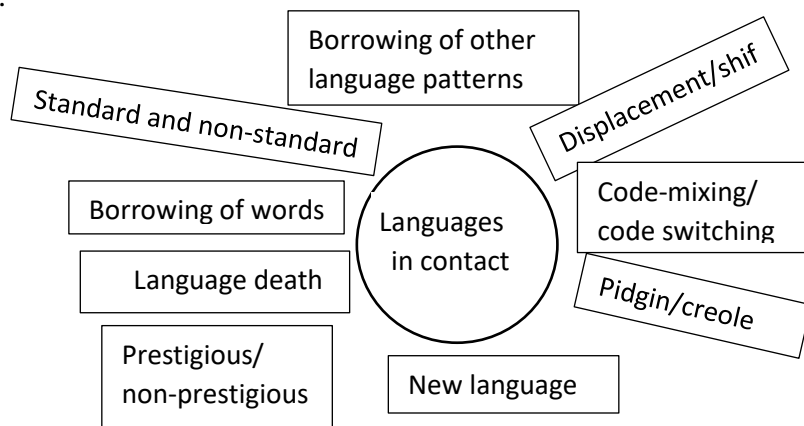


The superordinate concepts of influence

This is the summary of the major areas they could identify that constitute different levels of interaction with life. In other words, they believe that these concepts can produce varied influences in their lives and that just as in English varieties, an individual's life can acquire different syntax, lexis, meaning, sound and structure in its mixing and mingling. But this mixing and mingling must not change the image of God in the individual as it is with the grammar of English. This is where IFL stands out from the circular system of teaching of this course.

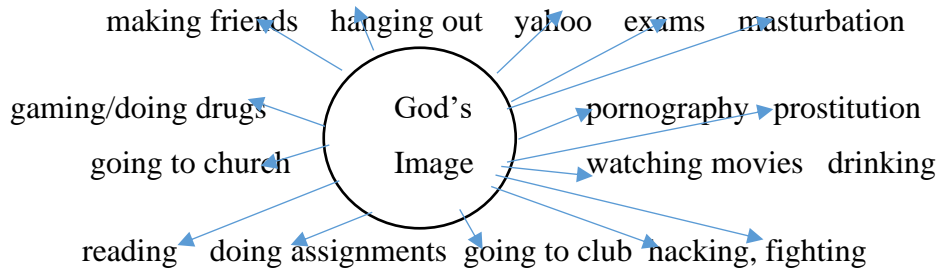
Possible Influences on Languages in Contact Situation

The following are possible influences languages may have on each other or one another in contact situations:



The quality or type of life students live draws more from contacts. These contacts can be from home, school, environment, church, friends, media, teachers etc. But from the items above,

in contact situations, their lives can become the real standard or non-standard, prestigious or non-prestigious life, a life with a shift from the image of God to death or a new life, life of mixing or switching of God's codes, among others; maybe as a result of borrowing from the world rather than the world borrowing from them. When the students were asked to make available some of the varieties of life that result from influences around them as students, they came up with the following:



Hyponymic Representation of Influences

What a horrible distortion and an ardent need for reformation and restoration; IFL, the way out!

The hyponymic representation of the sub-group of the hypernym projects the possibility of more forms of negative influences from the viewpoints of mixing and mingling in the areas of education, technology, social media, environment and friendship. Invariably, these constitute the major focus of attraction in the life of students, hence, the need for fervent fight to save their minds from the evils that come through these pathways into their lives. Education is key towards the development of any child, hence, the diagram is a call for intentional steps towards redemptive and restorative education as the above vividly projects a big cognitive and behavioural lacuna in the life of the students.

Discussion

The interaction English had with different social and cultural contexts led to different Englishes with different linguistic make-ups. Thus, English at the different levels of mixing and mingling influenced and was as well influenced by the different contexts of its usage. Then was the beginning of the Englishes because there were obvious linguistic differences in the social and cultural contexts. But as stated above, no matter what differences exist, the grammar of English has remained unchanged and even, a basis for learning the language. In this sense, a child of God will mix and mingle with situations of life that he/she will influence as well as those that will

influence him/her, but a lesson from the grammar of English is very paramount here; just as the grammar of English has withstood all influences, so should God's image in man triumph over every influence and stand out. The syntax, morphology, lexis, semantics and phonology of English have received a lot of colouring that are intelligible, understandable, appropriate and interpretable within the socio-cultural contexts where they operate but the grammar of English remains the nucleus for every learner and user of English for national and international intelligibility. In essence, no matter the socio-cultural contexts students find themselves, they must be made to realise, borrowing from English, their need to be heavenly focused and earthly relevant in their discharge of duty in life.

With the varieties of life they can identify in and around themselves as students, more of negative than positive, lies the point of the missing link. It was difficult at first for them to make connections but after some illustrations with English and the varieties that exist, but with its grammar being retained and taught over the years, and comparing that to the image of God in them, their understanding was awakened. It became clear to them as they compared their life experiences in mixing and mingling with that of English, although with more of negatives than positives. Through explanations and examples drawn from the English, they realised that they have not been showcasing a true life that reflects the image of God in them as a result of contact with different environments, different people and situations. In other words, the picture of living the kind of life Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 10:31-32 is yet to be integrated in the life of the students. This makes it so paramount to intensify efforts at the higher institutions to get their minds redirected to their God and His truth.

At the end of the course, they acknowledged the fact that they understand better from the workings of the course, the truth of who God wants them to be. They testified that they need to make changes in some of the ways they behave, speak to and treat others, especially, those they feel they are better off than, by borrowing from English language, a prestigious language, that allows mixing and mingling with any other language to ease communication which gives it the colours-Englishes, but does not change its grammar. At the end of the class, and in line with their understanding of the role of English language in making communication possible in different contexts and even mingling and mixing with languages that could be regarded as inferior to it, they

testified that wherever they find themselves, no matter their status in life, they have a duty to adjust to help make things work well for others but that such should not cause them their image of God.

In addition, they admitted to being deceptive to their parents in regards to being a different person from whom their parents believe them to be, as a result of peer influence. They also confessed that it shouldn't be so if they must maintain the image of God in them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, IFL in education calls for a rigorous explication through and beyond these established domains of language to every other area of study to see the Christ connections in all things and in all areas of life. In this sense, the structure of life, the word to be used, the meaning to make out of situations, the sounds of life and the laws that govern man's activity are seen clearly and appreciated. One of the advantages of this method of teaching is that after the explanations were made, they felt uncomfortable with certain products of their engagements with life i.e. the varieties of life they could identify that are incongruous with the image of God that they are. Smith's (2006) view, which posits that generalization of IFL towards spiritual development without taking into account the spiritual and the particular values, concepts, goals, practices and professional cultures into the curriculum might risk missing the insight into the nature of spiritual development which might be provided from perspectives rooted in particular subject areas, is seen clearly in the study. The study recommends an intentional interwovenness of the realities of life in the courses taught in the classrooms, to help the students make right and logical connections about life and life choices.

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