

Does Japan Need a Separate English Norm?

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The ethnographic status of English in Japan

- Unlike in India, English is a foreign language (of the “expanding circle”) in Japan
- It is not an official language and does not function as an elite lingua franca for communication among Japanese
- It is a lingua franca for communication with outsiders
- In communication with speakers of the “inner” or “outer circles,” the latter impose the model variety

Multitude of linguistic models

- ❑ Within Japan, just like in countries of the “outer circle,” teachers are the model speakers, or just anybody else who speaks English already
- ❑ Outside Japan, models vary depending on where the Japanese find themselves (Australia, USA, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, etc.)
- ❑ The situation is not quite the same as for members of the “outer circle,” although they may be stigmatized in the “inner circle”

Norms in the “outer circle”

- If schools of the “outer circle” are endonormative, it is because local norms have evolved on their own from local interactions among non-native speakers
- There are undoubtedly characteristics that may be considered typical of Japanese speakers of English, but they have not normalized and are probably not likely to normalize, unless the ethnographic status of English changes

No particular language-learning process is perfect

- ❑ Constructing a scholastic norm based on common Japanese characteristics is perhaps defeating the purpose for an English practice that is not intended for Japanese among Japanese
- ❑ While there is undoubtedly a “Japanese English,” there is apparently no room for a “Japanese standard” in English, because the language is for external consumption

Thank you!