

HERE AT STONY BROOK - Monday, Feb. 14, 1983

THEME UP AND OUT

The name of this program is "Here at Stony Brook" and it is being brought to you in the English language. English---the language of diplomacy, the predominant language in which mail is written, the principal language of aviation and radio broadcasting. English: the first language of nearly 300 million people, an additional language for perhaps another 300 million, the sole designated official language of 21 countries and the language being taught today in nearly eight of every 10 secondary school classrooms around the world.

Hi, everybody. This is Al Oickle. I'm with the University News Services at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Today, I will be talking about the English language, and its amazing growth, with Professor S. N. Sridhar of the ~~Linguistics~~ Linguistics Program, here at Stony Brook. Later in this program, we will hear from Professor Howardena Pindell of the Department of Art about an exhibit coming this spring at the Art Gallery, here at Stony Brook---an exhibit ~~about~~ that may be one of the most unusual ever presented at the University...an exhibit about...war. Please, stay tuned, here at Stony Brook.

THEME UP AND UNDER

In the 16th Century, Roger Mulcaster wrote: "The English tongue is of small reach, stretching no further than this island of ours; nay, not there, over all." ~~(And yet he said the language was better than any other.)~~ Like Mulcaster, John Adams two hundred years later was to ~~recognize~~ recognize that the English language had a power that would lead it to exceed Latin, Greek and French as, the second U.S. president was to put it, "the most universally read and spoken."

MORE

Professor S. N. ~~Sridhar~~ Sridhar of the Linguistics Program, here at Stony Brook, has been studying this phenomenal growth of a language. Indeed, Professor Sridhar, I believe you are predicting that before long there will be more non-native speakers of this language than there are native speakers.

INTERVIEW SRIDHAR: -- Why this popularity? (secondary school classes: 97% Africa/Asia  
53-57% Europe, USSR, Latin America  
-- See P 309/Spread of English/Joshua Fishman concl.  
-- Impact on English of ~~the~~ non-native speakers:  
e.g. "Singlish"  
African English: Nigerians drop articles ("Let strong football team be organized.")  
Ghanaian; "I am going to Post Office."  
W. Africa: no subject-verb agreement  
American versus British English  
John Adams in 1780 predicted American English would be the most universally read and spoken...  
Noah Webster in 1789 sensed a divergence from British English  
-- Black English

12:09  
13:00

THEME UP AND OUT

The Art Gallery, at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, has been presenting this season a series of exhibits with faculty members from the Department of Art as guest curators. Professor Howardena Pindell is preparing a very special exhibit to be open to the public from March ~~and~~ <sup>in</sup> April. I interviewed the busy artist and teacher ~~between~~ between classes at the Fine Arts Center. We talked about her experiences with the horrors of Hiroshima and how they <sup>SE EXPERIENCES</sup> have led to this extraordinary exhibit coming to Stony Brook, called "The War Show."

TAPED INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR PINDELL

28:00

THEME UP AND UNDER

~~Next week, Here at Stony Brook will discuss some changes under consideration for students -- changes in the teaching of reasoning.~~

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Next week, Here at Stony Brook will bring you a discussion about some changes under consideration for the ~~student~~ <sup>American college</sup> curriculum... a fourth R: Reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and...reasoning. Our guests will be John Truxal, distinguished teaching professor in Technology and Society, and Professor Alan Tucker, who chairs the Department of Applied Mathematics and Statistics, here at Stony Brook. I hope you will join us. Until then, this is Al Oickle. So long, everybody.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STONY BROOK LINGUIST SAYS RAPIDLY INCREASING WORLDWIDE USE OF ENGLISH MAY GENERATE MANY DIFFERENT "ENGLISH" LANGUAGES

STONY BROOK, N.Y.--There are 115 million people throughout the world who speak English as a second language. A little over twice that many (266 million) are native speakers. "But very soon," says Prof. Shakaripur Sridhar of the Linguistics Program at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, "there will be more nonnative than native speakers. That has never happened before with any other language, not even Latin."

What will the effects of this phenomenon be on English as it is spoken currently? Prof. Sridhar is attempting to find out. He has collected data on hundreds of nonnative speakers of English to determine how the language has changed as it is used in countries like India and the Phillipines (which rank first and second in numbers of students learning English as a second language), where it is going, and how those changes ultimately may affect English as it is spoken in the United States.

As the language takes on different forms around the world, will it become so diverse that English speakers will not be able to understand each other? "English may become like today's Chinese," speculates Prof. Sridhar. "There may be one common, written form, like the Chinese Mandarin, but there may be many different spoken languages that once stemmed from English, the way Chinese has broken off into different groups."

He has identified some factors to explain why English speakers of various nationalities may speak differently, even though they all are using the same language. "Culture influences the way words are used to describe certain things," he explains. "In India there are elaborate kinship arrangements, such as 'mother's younger brother' or 'mother's elder brother', that can be cumbersome to describe in English. However, simply using the English word 'uncle' is not sufficient." Therefore, a new word may be created. "This is the case with 'cobrother,' used instead of 'brother-in-law' to describe 'wife's sister's husband'. It may make sense to that speaker, but someone

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from the U.S. or Britain may not understand." Pronunciation and syntax differences between native and nonnative forms of English result from influence of the particular speaker's "mother tongue," says Prof. Sridhar. "In America you'd say 'John will be here tomorrow, won't he?' In India, the same sentence would be 'John will be here tomorrow, isn't it?' That is the influence of Indian syntax coming through." Another distinction is caused by the "teaching tradition" of nonnative forms of English. Puerto Rican speakers of English probably learned the language through contact with the United States, he continues, so their English will sound more American than that spoken in India, where English was learned from the British.

Nonnative forms have already influenced English in Britain and America, he points out. "Our dictionaries are filled with words like 'shampoo', which originally came from the Hindi word champna--massaging the head--or 'punch,' from the Hindi word panch for five."

Prof. Sridhar uses every conversation he holds in English as a potential source of research data. When he is able to identify a nonnative speaker who seems to be using a distinctive form of English, he tries to find others who speak in the same way. Once he establishes that the speech pattern is a legitimately different form of English, he analyzes how and why it differs from native English. To do this he prepares a grammar, a list of rules that govern that particular form.

Although his research can "perhaps help those who speak different forms of English to eliminate misunderstandings and communicate better," he says, it raises more questions. "Now that we know Nigerian English is different from American English, which form should be taught there? Should that be determined by whether you are just going to use it with fellow Nigerians, as opposed to speaking it with Americans?"

He is pursuing these questions, as well as exploring what all the different varieties of English have in common. "I also want to know why English is becoming the preferred language throughout the world. It is now the language of avionics and computers, and everywhere is associated with higher education and prestige."

"Native speakers are happy to hear that it's so popular," he observes. "But they should see that there is a price to be paid for that. The spread of a language will cause it to change."

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January 25, 1983