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## **Foreword**

Welcome to the May 2012 issue of the Journal of English as an International Language!

This issue signposts a continuity/ continuum of conceptualizations, daring intellectual exercises and innovative applications that are consistent with EILJ's declared mission of promoting locally appropriate, culturally sensitive and socially aligned pedagogies and practices in EIL. The voice and agency of our contributing authors from Armenia, Australia, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, Vietnam, and USA assumes special substance and relevance in this issue in that it is synonymous with EILJ's attempts to democratize and dehegemonize the use of English across the cultures of Asia and farther afield in the world.

Ba Ngoc Doan's paper "Contrasting representations of English as an international language (EIL) in two EIL undergraduate programs" presents a comparative view on two undergraduate programs in EIL in two Australian universities: Monash and Bond. On the basis of a study on the titles and content of the courses offered in these programs and a keyword concordance, the author presents an incisive analysis of findings, which suggests that not every program claiming to be EIL is specifically/genuinely designed to address the characteristics of English as an international language. In light of this, the author argues unreservedly that in order to confer acceptability/authenticity to an EIL program, (like the one offered at Bond University) the program should factor in the broad sociocultural, sociolinguistic and political contents representing the theoretical paradigm of English as an international language. Only then can the program serve the aspirations and challenges of the teaching and learning of EIL for international and intranational communication.

Patrick Chin Leong Ng's paper "English in the Singapore's Chinese community: Controversies, concerns and problems" presents a narrative of language loss and undermined identity. Given the spread of English within the Chinese community in Singapore, the author questions unabashedly and spotlights the dwindling enrolment in Chinese-medium schools, the loss of Chinese identity, the linguistic and cultural discrimination against the Chinese speakers, the encroachment of English in the Chinese home environment and the tension that exists between Singlish and Standard English. The study reported in the paper thus becomes a soul-searching exercise and challenges the readership to consider whether the socioeconomic mobility synonymous with the spread of English can serve as a justification for the significant social, political and economic inequalities suffered by its users in the Singapore's Chinese community.

John Lamerson's paper "English Only's Biggest Problem: "English Only" presents an edifying narrative, which highlights the ins and outs of a proposed language legislation (H.B.2205) in Texas/USA. Picking up on a well-informed understanding of the sociopolitical underpinnings that determine the implementability of language legislations/policies, the author alerts us as to how and why the presence of exclusivist titles, terminologies and designations in any proposed language legislation can trigger and foment social disintegration, national disunity, not to mention the attendant outcomes such as loss of agency, voice and identity. In light of this, the discussion of findings in the study signposts the need for using an inclusivist approach to language legislation, in which one discerns the prevalence of titles, terminologies and designations that are well attuned to the sociopolitical realities/ exigencies of a given demographic setting and context. We hope that the study featured in the paper would act as a catalyst for similar investigations into policy formulations and language legislations directed at EIL in different parts of the world, where the ill-informed bureaucrats use language legislations and policies to silence the voice and agency of those people who come under their purview.

Jane Chinelo Obasi's paper "Lexico-Semantic Features of Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes" serves as a fitting testimony to the global spread of the English language as one of the most far-reaching linguistic phenomena of our time. In light of this, the author argues that Nigerian English and Ghanaian English too have attained considerable noticeability in recent times against a backdrop of designations such as world Englishes, new Englishes, modern Englishes, West African Englishes, South African Englishes, and Indian English. The ensuing framework of understanding presented in the paper examines some of the common lexico-semantic features of some distinct varieties of Nigerian and Ghanaian English. In doing that, it points out how these varieties can be traced back to the local tastes of people and the contact of English with their indigenous languages. Given the sociolinguistic sensitivities and sensibilities that the Nigerian and Ghanaian varieties of English espouse, the author makes a bold case for acceptability and codification of these varieties.

Takunori Terasawa's paper "The Discourse of Japanese Incompetence in English based on Imagined Communities: A Sociometric Examination of Asia Europe Survey" challenges the ill-conceived/ misconstrued view that Japanese people are not good at English. Attributing such a view to the hegemonic prevalence of the "so-called non-problematic generalizations" that TOEFL scores attempt and tout, the author signposts a tenable alternative with which it would be possible to obtain a realistic cum humanistic understanding of the issue in question. To this end, he articulates the appropriacy and effectiveness of a data analysis and

discussion of random samplings predicated on the Asia Europe Survey. The author argues that such an undertaking, which analyzes and discusses the data in terms of generational, socioeconomic, and regional factors, can illustrate and confirm the inconsistencies and inadequacies of the assumption that the Japanese lack discourse incompetence in English. In light of this, the author debunks the discourse of Japanese incompetence in English and its underlying ideology of imagined communities.

The paper entitled “THE ELP as a Tool for democratising Language Teaching” is a joint effort of Irena Gyulazyan and Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam. The paper examines the educational potential of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in developing self-assessment skills and learner autonomy in an English language classroom setting where language teaching has undergone a remarkable shift from centralised prescriptivism to a democratisation of teaching and learning processes. Using data from a longitudinal project predicated on the use of ELP in Experimental English Classes at the American University of Armenia, the joint study explored the possibilities of developing learner autonomy and reflective language learning by integrating self-assessment of language competencies into English language learning and teaching programmes. The findings of the study underscore the efficacy of a socially aligned approach to documenting language proficiency in English rather than use “externally drawn tidy scales of proficiency”, which call for a “one size fits all view of proficiency”. The authors hope that the issues and insights discussed in the paper would serve as an impetus for EIL practitioners, who are keen on investigating the dynamics of learner autonomy and exploring language pedagogies/practices in their respective social contexts. In addition, the authors believe that the novelty accruing from a study of this scope can help language policy makers come to terms with the asocial ramifications of their policy making enterprise, which is often out of step with the social dimensions/ implications of EIL as an educational practice.

In closing, I wish to applaud the resolve and resilience with which the contributing authors of this issue have showcased their alternate discourse of current reckoning. Such an endeavour is central to EILJ’s declared mission of creating “a heterogeneous global English speech community, with a heterogeneous English and different modes of competence” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 211). Given this, I am certain that the issues and insights discussed in this issue would serve as a lamp to all of us, who could otherwise be stranded in a “methodological wasteland of EIL”. Read on!

**Dr. Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam, Chief Editor**



# **Contrasting representations of English as an international language (EIL) in two EIL undergraduate programs**

Ba Ngoc Doan

*University of South Australia*

English as an international language, or EIL, is employed to acknowledge current World Englishes around the globe and the functions that the English language plays in international and intercultural communication. Recently, some tertiary education institutions around the world have offered undergraduate and postgraduate programs in English as an international language. Given the offering of these EIL programs, research evidence regarding how these EIL programs reflect or address key characteristics of English as an international language. This paper presents a comparative view on two undergraduate programs in EIL in Australia. Through a study on the titles and content of the courses offered in these programs and a keyword concordance, the analysis suggests that not every program claiming to be EIL is specifically designed to address the characteristics of English as an international language. The analysis also indicates that there are contrasting representations of EIL in these two programs in terms of program design and program content.

Keywords: English as an international language, EIL, Teaching English as an international language, TEIL

## **Introduction**

The expansion of English to different parts around the globe is marked by three important characteristics. First is the development of the language into different varieties, which is captured in the term World Englishes (Bolton, 2006; Kachru, 2000; Kachru & Smith, 1985) and depicted as Circles of Englishes by Kachru (1985)– the Inner Circle (e.g., Britain, the US and Australia), the Outer Circle (e.g., Singapore and India) and the Expanding Circle (e.g., China and Vietnam). Second is the position that English has many more people who speak it as an additional language than as the first language, which is estimated at about three to one (Crystal, 2003a; Graddol, 1997). And third is the adoption of English as an “unmarked choice” for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication (McKay, 2002, p. 38).

These three characteristics reflect the “divergence” and “convergence” of English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, p. 110). On the one hand, English diverges into local varieties—World Englishes (WE) (Kachru, 1985, 2000)—while on the other, it converges into the language for international and intercultural communication. English as an international language (EIL) has been used in recent decades to encapsulate both divergent and convergent of the English language (Jenkins, 2006; McKay, 2002; Sharifian, 2009, 2011; Smith, 1976; Strevens, 1980).

There has been much scholarly discussion regarding the characteristics of English as an international language which recognize the functions of English internationally while acknowledging the pluralistic nature of the language. Kachru, in his seminal speech in 1985, used the term English as an international language to contrast with the conventional term English as a foreign language (EFL). As an international language, English mediates communication between people coming from various national, linguistic and cultural backgrounds rather than just between non-native speakers to native speakers of English as a foreign language (Crystal, 2003b; Graddol, 1997, 2006). By *international*, Kachru (1996) emphasises the functions English performs in international communication: “The language is used internationally, and in that sense it is an international language” (Kachru, 1996, p. 13).

Through its functions in international communication, English is deeply embedded in various cultural and linguistic repertoires, and has, therefore, inherited diverse sociocultural traditions and identities as well as linguistic characteristics from its international speakers (Kachru, 1985, 1996, 2000; Kachru & Nelson, 2001; McKay, 2002; Smith, 1976).

When we say that English is ... “international,” ... what we are indeed referring to is the repository of diversity: It is in this sense that English is British, Scottish, American, Singaporean, Indian, Philippino and, yes, Japanese. (Kachru, 1996, p. 11)

Therefore, the use of English as an international language does not limit to the Englishes in any Circle but represents the plurality of different Englishes and the diversity of identities of different groups of speakers in international and intercultural communication. Diversity and plurality is Kachru’s (2000) fundamental conceptualisation of World Englishes, the WE-ness.

In the use of this term, the emphasis, then, is on the “WE-ness” that is associated with the medium and its multiple messages (mantras). This conceptualization of English, based on the pragmatics of its functions across cultures and languages... (Kachru, 2000, p. 17)

On the basis of the diverse functions the language performs and the diversity of traditions and identities it represents, Kachru strongly argues that English

belongs to its international speakers (Kachru, 2000) and that “[t]hese international uses have not resulted in an international variety of English: There is no *International English*” (Kachru, 1996, p. 13). In other words, EIL is not a variety of English used internationally.

Other scholars (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008; Jenkins, 2006; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004, 2005; Sharifian, 2009; Widdowson, 1994) conceptualise EIL in a similar broad view to encapsulate current situation of plural Englishes, its functions across cultures and national boundaries and the ownership of the language by its international speakers. EIL is the language used by any speaker from any socio-cultural background for the purpose of international and intercultural communication. Clyne and Sharifian (2008, p. 28.11), for example, emphasize that in international communication no group of English speakers, regardless of which Circle they come from inner, outer or expanding, is excluded.

McKay (2002) maintains that

the defining characteristic of an international language rests on its use as the *unmarked choice*[emphasis added] for purposes of wider communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries regardless of whether or not these differences exist within or between national boundaries. (McKay, 2002, p. 38)

This definition highlights the functions of English for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication, whereby English is taken for granted as the tool when people come into contact with each other on an intranational or international arena regardless of which English they are using and where the conversation takes place. McKay (2002, p. 38) continues to argue that EIL functions both as “local language” when it mediates communication within a national boundary and as a “global language” when it is used across national boundaries.

The distinction between the *local* and *international* functions of the English language, as observed by Clyne and Sharifian (2008), however, has become blurred with the current use of technology. An online instant forum may be mediated with a discussion by participants from the local and international communities.

Sharifian (2009) maintains that English as an international language “refers to a paradigm for thinking, research and practice” (p. 2). A fundamental foundation of EIL as a paradigm is that it is not representational of any particular variety of English, but problematises the dichotomy of *native* and *non-native* speakers of English (Sharifian, 2009). Instead, the EIL paradigm is characterised by three, in Sharifian’s term, central themes. First is its recognition of the legitimate status of World Englishes and their respective speakers. Second is its close relationship between English and intercultural communication and the field of research in

intercultural communication. These two themes lead to the third, English language education within the EIL paradigm (Sharifian, 2009, pp. 2-4). Put it another way, the current situation of World Englishes and the roles of English in relation to international and intercultural communication are two key components in English language education. Recognition of World Englishes and the functions of English in international and intercultural communication are central to all scholarly discussion of EIL presented above.

Currently, some tertiary education institutions have set up programs in English as an international language at both undergraduate and (post)graduate levels (EIL programs). Given that, there has not been an investigation into the contents offered by these programs to identify the extent to which these programs address the key topics of World Englishes and functions of English for international and intercultural communication.

To this end, two recently-established Bachelor degree programs in English as an international language, based respectively at Monash University and Bond University in Australia, were chosen for analysis because they provide strongly contrasting representations of EIL in terms of program design and program content.

## **The Study**

The data used for this study were sourced from curricular documents of the two Bachelor degree programs offered by Monash University and Bond University. These documents are published on the websites of the host institutions. Content analysis, in forms of a thematic analysis and a concordance analysis, was conducted on the program description, titles of the courses and on the course synopses and objectives in order to provide an overview of the key focus of the program and to elucidate the content highlighted as EIL representations. The thematic analysis was undertaken using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel and the concordance analysis was initiated using WordStat6.

Titles and sources of information on these programs are as follows.

- *Bachelor of Arts (English as an International Language)* at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bond University, Australia, which is hereafter referred to as *Bond BEIL*. (<http://www.bond.edu.au/degrees-and-courses/undergraduate-degrees/list/bachelor-of-arts-english-as-an-international-language/index.htm?fos=&cl=>, accessed 02/09/2010)
- *Undergraduate Studies in English as an International Language* at the Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Australia, which is hereafter referred to as

*Monash BEIL*. (<http://arts.monash.edu.au/eil/ugrad/index.php>, accessed 02/09/2010)

In this paper, the term *program* refers to a level of degree, for example, a bachelor program, and *course* to refer to subject or content units that are offered within each of these programs.

### **Bond BEIL**

Bond BEIL is a 2-year bachelor degree program, as are most other Bond Bachelor programs except for “some law and medical/health sciences programs”, which are longer (<http://www.bond.edu.au/degrees-and-courses/undergraduate-degrees/about-undergraduate-study/index.htm>, accessed 20/09/2010). The program description states that:

[t]he Bachelor of Arts (English as an International Language) program is a University Pathway program for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The program provides students with advanced level English Language on a for-credit basis. ... After successfully completing two semesters students will be able to enrol most undergraduate (*sic*) degrees offered across the four faculties (*sic*). (<http://www.bond.edu.au/degrees-and-courses/undergraduate-degrees/list/bachelor-of-arts-english-as-an-international-language/index.htm?fos=&cl=>, accessed 02/09/2010)

Three important points are indicated in the above program description. First, this is a pathway program which transfers students to other Bachelor degrees. Second, this program is designed for students from non-English speaking backgrounds only. And third, the key focus of this program is to develop students’ English language proficiency. The program description further indicates that having successfully completed the first two semesters, students have three options: 1) graduating with an undergraduate diploma of university English studies, 2) transferring to other degrees in designated schools within the institution, or 3) continuing with the Bachelor of Arts (English as an international language).

Although the program description indicates developing students’ English proficiency as key focus, there are no other words which suggests any connection in regard to English as an international language. Therefore, the concordance analysis was not conducted on this program. The following discussion is based on the course titles and course synopses.

The program curriculum consists of twenty-four courses, which are structured into five components.

Table 1

*Bond BEIL program structure*

Program structure	Courses
Foundation Subjects	5
University Core Subjects	4
ENIL Subject	1
Second Major	6
Electives	8
Total	24

Students must complete a set of five required courses of Foundation Subjects which are specifically designed to develop four English macro skills—reading, writing, listening and speaking. The following are the extracts of statements of goals of these courses:

The subject aims to provide students with effective academic reading techniques. (English as an International Language 1A\_ENIL11-110)

The subject aims to introduce students to the essential academic writing skills needed for university study. (English as an International Language 1B\_ENIL11-111)

This subject is designed to expose university students...to spoken English, particularly that used at lectures, seminars and tutorials. (Academic Speaking and Listening 1\_ENIL11-114)

This subject... exposes students to advanced academic reading and writing. (English as an International Language 2\_ENIL12-115)

Academic Speaking is a practical course that aims to provide many speaking opportunities and tasks to prepare overseas students to perform competently and with confidence in all their courses. (Academic Speaking and Listening 2\_ENIL12-116)

In emphasizing that these courses are “designed for non-English speaking background students” and who are “in the pathways program”, the five courses of the Foundation Subjects are actually service English courses. This means, these courses focus on preparing English proficiency for students to transfer to other degrees or to move on with their academic work. This is aligned with the focus of the program stated in the program description presented earlier. In other words,

these courses do not offer students opportunities to study the role and/or the functions of English as an international language which are central to the scholarly discussion about English as an international language (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008; McKay, 2002; Sharifian, 2009; Smith, 1976). The development of students' intercultural competence (Sharifian, 2009) is not indicated in this program, either.

In addition to the Foundation Subjects, students must choose one University Core Subject from each of the four disciplines: Communication, Information Technology, Values and Organisations. These courses are offered across "Bachelor-level degrees" (Structure & subjects) within Bond University, therefore, they are not EIL specific.

The ENIL, Second Major and Electives require that students choose the courses mainly from three other schools within Bond University (School of Communication and Media, School of Humanities and School of Social Sciences). Students are allowed to choose up to 4 elective courses from schools other than three specified above. It is notable that of the six ENIL courses, five focus on developing English macro skills and one is chosen from one of the three schools.

The majority of Bond BEIL program curriculum is not designed for the program itself but for other degrees. Nineteen out of twenty-four courses, accounting for about 80% of the program curriculum, are shared with students from across the university. The only given rationale for this curricular structure, as stated in the program description, is that this Bachelor degree is a Pathway program, which prepares students for other degrees rather than being itself a degree program in the content area of English as an international language, such as the sociocultural and linguistic variation of world Englishes (Crystal, 2003b; Graddol, 1997; Kachru, 1996, 2000), the functions of English for cross-cultural communication (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008; McKay, 2002) and the consideration of intercultural communication competence as part of language proficiency (Liddicoat, 2005; Sharifian, 2009).

On the basis of the content analysis and of the literature briefly reviewed earlier, Bond BEIL cannot be described as a program in EIL, but is merely a program for students using English as an international language to achieve their academic fulfillment in other degrees. While EIL is undoubtedly used by the students enrolled in the program, it is not the program focus. By contrast, the Monash BEIL is not a pathway program, and provides very different representations of EIL.

## Monash BEIL

The statement indicates four key features of this program. First, the focus of the program is on “the use of English for international communication”. Second, the goal of the program, relating to that focus, is twofold, requiring both “a practical and theoretical understanding”. In other words, students will study the ways in which English functions and plays out in international communication around the globe. Third, the program expects to develop students’ language proficiency through their content studies, but not through direct teaching of skills, unlike the Foundation Subjects of Bond BEIL. And fourth, students are expected to adopt “a critical and evaluative approach” to the content of the program. In order to identify how this program structured and how these features are dealt with in the range of courses offered, the following analyses were conducted on the course titles, keywords and course contents.

### Course title analysis

The wording of the course titles suggests that each course focuses on one aspect of EIL. The course title analysis is expected to provide the constituents that these courses are attributed to.

Table 2

#### *Monash BEIL program curriculum*

Year	Course	Weight
1st year	EIL: Communication	6 points
	EIL: Language and Critical Analysis	6 points
2nd year	EIL: Language and Purpose	6 points
	EIL: The Language of Spoken English	6 points
3rd year	EIL: Language and Culture	6 points
	EIL: The Language of Professional Communication	6 points
	EIL: Language and Power	6 points
	EIL: The Language of Written English	6 points
Honours	Special Topics in English as an International Language	12 points
	EIL: Methodology and Minor thesis	24 points
	EIL: Multilingual Identity	12 points

The three year program structure does not offer elective courses, which means that key aspects which are deemed important in this EIL undergraduate program



are identified, determined and made compulsory. However, the Honours component does offer flexibility of choice to the students via the *Special Topics in English as an International Language*.

While all the courses can be expected to offer contents which relate to the program focus: the use of English for international communication, the three courses commencing with the words “the language of” suggest a special emphasis on the properties of the English language specific to modes (spoken and written) and fields (in this case professional fields). The incorporation of these courses may particularly attend to the purpose of developing “students’ personal language” as well as international variations in those areas. In addition, the exploration of the language of professional communication signals a belief in the importance of the professions in the use of English as an international language. Therefore, these three courses have been grouped into the first curriculum constituent: Developing EIL proficiency.

The Honours courses *Special Topics in English as an International Language* and *EIL: Methodology and Minor Thesis* do not suggest any specific aspect of or information about the program focus on the “use of English for international communication”. The content of the *Special Topics in English as an International Language* is left open to students’ choices of the topics. The synopsis of this course indicates that students can conduct research activities. Researching is also what the students are required to do in the *EIL: Methodology and Minor Thesis*. Therefore, these courses form the second constituent of the program: Researching EIL. Because no particular information about EIL was included in these courses, they were not included in the keyword concordance and the course content analysis. Since the rest of the courses deal with various aspects of EIL which can provide understanding of nature of EIL, they have been categorised as the third constituent: Understanding the nature of EIL.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Concordance analysis***

The concordance analysis was conducted on two keywords: “use” and “functions” because the program goal statement quoted earlier indicates the program focus through its use of alternative words in the statement. The keyword-in-context feature of Wordstat6 was customised to locate these words and their derived forms used in the program document.

Table 3

*Concordance of “use” in Monash BEIL*

Pre-keyword text	Keyword	Post-keyword text
the complexity of language	use	in relation to its function and cultural specificity.
cultural features within the	use	of metaphor as a means of social communication.
some of the theories of language	use	that examine the cultural, social and ideological functions of language.
the importance of field, tenor and mode as a model of language	use	in a variety of contexts
	Use	their own language background as a resource within the multilingual situation.
the	use	of English around the globe, for local as well as international purposes.
the	use	of English for international communication.
the difference between correct language	use	and appropriate language choice within a variety of professional situations.
the	usefulness	of a genre-based approach to meaning within English text.
situation as an important influence on the system of choices made by the language	user	0
the social and cultural influences that affect the worldview of the multilingual	user	of English
The communicative bond between the	users	of the language has many levels beyond the literal sense of the words and structures.

The word “use” appears in three different forms— use, usefulness, and user(s)—12 times throughout the program document (Table 3).

The eight instances of “use” refer to language use, the use of English for local and international purposes around the globe, and the use of language background by multilingual speakers of English in intercultural communication. These relate to three topic areas: language use being culturally loaded, language use being profession and culture specific, and functional theories of language use. The functional genre-based approach to language is also referred to through the instance of “usefulness”.

The three instances of “user(s)” address three different topic areas. These are: language choices are situation specific, the worldview of multilingual speakers of English is socially and culturally affected or constructed, and language users create communicative bonds through the multi-layered messages they convey.

Through this concordance analysis alone, it has been possible to specify the curriculum understanding of EIL in relation to contexts, cultures and multilingual users of the language. The three instances of users, together with the contextual meanings established about the role of multilingual users of English, suggest that multilingual users of English are focused on in this program. This can be explored further in the second concordance analysis conducted on the word “function”.

The keyword concordance conducted on “function” produced 20 instances in three forms: function(s) as a noun, functional as an adjective, and function as a verb. One instance of “functions” as a noun was removed from the list when it was found duplicated in the course objective from the synopsis.

The term “function” in all these instances refers to purpose in the use of language or of English. The use of attributive adjectives in two instances reveals the types of functions of English concentrated in this program.

the *communicative***function** of English.

the *cultural, social* and *ideological***functions** of language.

The twelve instances of “function” and its derived forms indicate that the functions of EIL are to be studied in relation to the structure and form of language and types of texts/genres. This reflects a systemic functional view of language in which “genres are realised (encoded) through language” and “realizing genres in language is mediated through the realisation of register” (Eggins, 1994, p. 34). In other words the functions of EIL are studied in different genres in which the use of English forms and structures are mediated by field (professions), tenor (communicative bond between users of EIL) and mode (spoken and written language) as indicated in the previous concordance analysis of the word “use”.

Table 4

*Concordance of “function” in Monash BEIL*

Pre-keyword text	Keyword	Post-keyword text
the cultural level of language that acts as a hidden influence within the communicative	function	of English.
some of the complexity of language use in relation to its	function	and cultural specificity.
how often this cultural or worldview is hidden beneath the structure and	function	of the text.
This unit examines how form and	function	in English are seen as part of the interaction between the participants in a language
Identify the cultural basis in the patterns of language choice in a range of	functional	genres applicable to their own language experience.
Reflect on their own writing practices within a wide range of	functional	and creative texts.
a variety of	functional	and creative texts from a range of genres that illustrate the hidden social, cultural and
Create their own texts within a variety of sociocultural frameworks of English	functional	Genre
It is based on a	functional	approach to language study, especially on Halliday's concept of language as a social semiotic.
Work with a variety of specific	functional	genres in English, looking at their structure, content and cultural characteristics.
how the English language	functions	as a unique code of communication.
how meaning is created to carry out a wide range of	functions	in a series of socially and culturally specific genres
some of the unique features of structure and meaning in English are linked to specific	functions	and genres.

how the texts with which they interact have been formed to carry out the	functions	of this discourse community
some of the theories of language use that examine the cultural, social and ideological	functions	of language.
the appropriate English form and structure in a variety of language	functions	0
the course students engage in a critical and evaluative approach to the study of the	functions	of English in a global context
examine the way spoken English adapts to incorporate many	functions	and accommodate a vast variety of registers and contexts
characteristics that identify the various	functions	of speech in English.

Table 5

*Locations of keywords in the program documentation*

Location	Instances	Keyword
Language and Critical Analysis	6	Function /Functional/Functions (2)/Use/Usefulness
Language and Power	6	Function/Functional (2)/Functions/Use /Users
Meaning, Language and Purpose	6	Function/Functional/Functions/Use (2)/User
Program description	3	Functions /Use (2)
Communication	3	Function /Functions (2)
Language and Culture	2	Functional/Use
The Language of Spoken English	2	Functions (2)
Multilingual Identity	1	User
The Language of Professional Communication	1	Use
The Language of Written English	1	Functional

The concordance analysis of the two keywords indicates the philosophical view taken on the functions of EIL, factors influencing the international use of English and the role of multilingual speakers of English and their power relationship in communication. Table 5 shows the locations of these keywords in the original documents.

The two keywords “use” and “function” and their derivatives were found in all 9 courses and the program description, which suggests that the program focus–the use of English for international communication”– is addressed through all courses. Also the location of the word “user” in the three courses: *Language and Power*; *Meaning, Language and Purpose* and *Multilingual Identity* indicate that topics dealing with the role of the multilingual speakers of English and the power relationship between them are attended to in these courses.

### ***Course content analysis***

The following section presents a content analysis of the course synopses and objectives of the nine courses which were designed to translate the program focus on the “use of English for international communication” into curriculum. The length of the synopses varies between 84 and 113 words and that of the objectives between 146 and 248 words.

Five constructs of EIL were identified from this content analysis: Language and culture, Culture and language users, Language and language users, Contexts and language use and Language studies.

#### ***Language and culture***

This construct highlights the relationship between language and culture, which emerged from seven courses: Communication; Language and Critical Analysis; Language and Culture; Meaning Language and Purpose; Multilingual Identity; The Language of Professional Communication and The Language of Spoken English. Topics introduced in these courses reflect three topic areas. First is the notion that language embodies culture (Language and Culture). Second is the position that culture influences language use in international communication. Accordingly, culture affects language choice, structure of meaning and communicative functions of language (Communication; Language and Critical Analysis; Language and Culture; Meaning Language and Purpose; Multilingual Identity; The Language of Professional Communication and The Language of Spoken English). Third is the view that the influence of culture on language use acknowledges the existence of World Englishes associating with different cultures (Multilingual Identity).

### *Culture and language users*

This construct of EIL is about the influence of culture on language users, which is introduced through the ways culture “positions” multilingual speakers, writers, listeners and readers in language situations and contexts (*Meaning, Language and Purpose* and *The Language of Spoken English*). Being positioned in “a whole world of cultural presuppositions” (*Language and Culture*) – those from their own cultural schemas and those from the outside world– multilingual speakers of English learn “to interpret the world differently, to adopt different patterns of thinking and to reflect all of these in our language in a variety of ways” (*Language and Culture*). Part of their reflection is the creation of their multilingual identity in international communication (*Multilingual Identity*).

### *Language and language users*

This construct featured across six courses: *Communication*; *Language and Culture*; *Language and Power*; *Meaning Language and Purpose*; *The Language of Spoken English* and *The Language of Written English*. Topics in the courses *Communication*; *The Language of Spoken English* and *The Language of Written English* highlight the involvement of speakers and listeners and writers and readers in any communication situation. The involvement of the listener and the reader is further emphasised through the introduction of the “role of the listener as an influence in the spoken context” (*The Language of Spoken English*) and “the importance of the reader in the development of the written text” (*The Language of Written English*). Because of the involvement of these participants in language situations, there is always a power relationship in the communicative bond (*Language and Power*), which constitutes “subtler” levels of meaning beneath the surface one– the message content (*Language and Power* and *Language and Culture*). This power relationship is realised through the use of language (*Language and Culture* and *Meaning, Language and Purpose*).

### *Contexts and language use*

This construct highlights the role of contexts and the context of professions. The role of contexts is appreciated through contextual influences on “language choice” (*Meaning, Language and Purpose*), textual coherence (*The Language of Written English*), meaning creation (*Multilingual Identity*) and multilingual identity creation (*Multilingual Identity*). The context of the professions is introduced through the course *The Language of Professional Communication*, which introduces professions as contexts of language use and focuses on “the language expected by various professions in which the students will be engaged on the

completion of their study”, “student's language strategies and textual understanding” and “the difference between correct language use and appropriate language choice within a variety of professional situations”.

### *Language studies*

This construct was identified in seven courses to highlight the following aspects of studies of language. First is the use of a systemic functional approach to language study– field, tenor and mode and a genre-based approach to meaning (*Communication; Language and Critical Analysis; Meaning, Language and Purpose* and *The Language of Spoken English*) and also critical discourse analysis in evaluating the power relationship between speakers of English (*Language and Power*). Second, apart from culture, contexts and language users as evidenced in other themes, studies of language also highlights other factors influencing meaning creation and transmission in both spoken and written messages. These factors include: language features, content, and intertextual links (*The Language of Spoken English* and *The Language of Written English*). Although developing students' language proficiency is intended to be achieved through the studies of sociocultural and linguistic contents across all nine courses, some courses highlighting this theme make this aim explicit in the course synopsis and objectives (*Language and Critical Analysis; The Language of Spoken English* and *The Language of Written English*).

Central to the contents of these courses is the study of English as mediator of the meaning making and transmission process in international and intercultural communication. The term meaning is consistently employed to indicate both the message content and the worldview of the English speaker, which is exemplified in the quote below from the course *Language and power*.

Texts often communicate messages that focus on the world of the sender but they also offer a subtler message that communicates attitudes, feelings, beliefs, values and emotions. These levels of meaning are woven into the message and operate beneath the surface of the content. (*Language and power*)

In this broad sense, meaning creation and transmission is introduced in all nine courses to mean what Liddicoat (2005) refers to as two interwoven processes of information transaction and social interaction. Information transaction involves the creation and transmission of the message content, while social interaction engages with the creation and transmission of multilingual identity and the maintenance of social relationships. During this process, the interlocutors participating in a communicative situation deliberately choose the language to perform their communicative acts, to establish power relationships and to form as



well as to express their identity as multilingual speakers of English. These two processes distinguished by Liddicoat are also identified through the keyword concordance, which highlights “the communicative function of English” and “the cultural, social and ideological functions of language”.

**Monash BEIL: Summary**

The content analysis conducted on the titles of the courses, the keywords of the program description and the content synopses of the nine courses allows the researcher to visualise and present his understandings of the constituents of the Monash BEIL and its representations of EIL Figure 1.

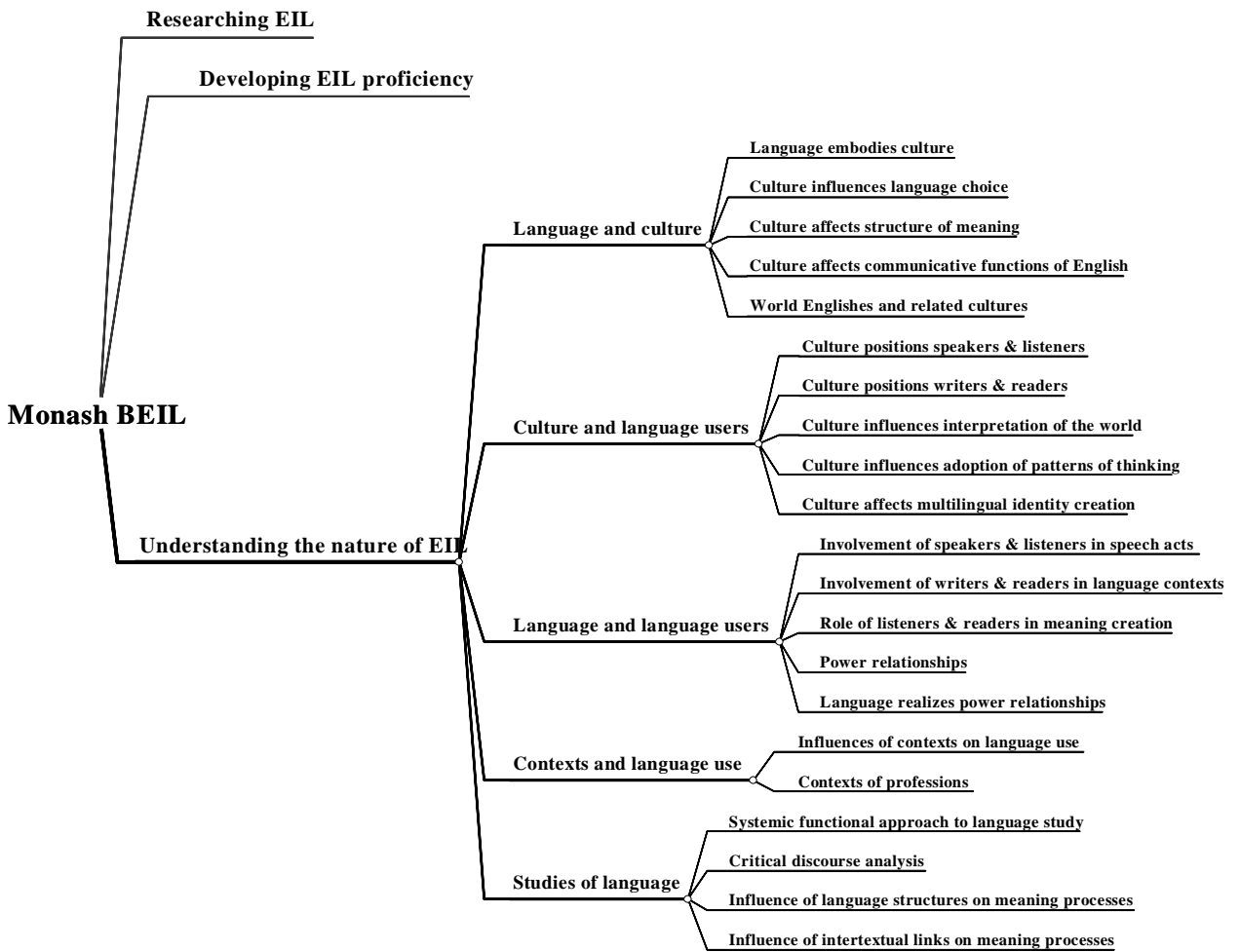


Figure 1. Monash BEIL program constituents and constructs of EIL

- The Monash BEIL attends to three curriculum constituents. These are EIL as a research focus, EIL as a language development focus, and EIL as a content focus.
- The EIL content, which can be seen as central to this EIL program, takes particular views on communicative functions of EIL and social, cultural and ideological functions of EIL. These views are realised in the functions of EIL as meaning creation and transmission and the functions of EIL as multilingual identity formation and transmission.
- The Monash BEIL program is underpinned by a functional approach to language study and language use taking into account the three aspects of the context of situation: field, tenor and mode. The development of students' language proficiency and the study of the functions of EIL in this program are mediated by these three aspects.
- Multilingual speakers of English assume a central position throughout the program. The contents of the nine courses were designed to include the perspectives of multilingual speakers and aim to provide implications for multilingual speakers of English.

## **Conclusion**

The study of these two Bachelor programs in English as an international language reflects two contrasting spectrums of curriculum: one concerning program design and the other concerning program content. The design spectrum contrasts the compilation of existing courses from diverse disciplines with the design of new courses specific to EIL. In the Bond BEIL, the use of a majority of existing courses designed for other degrees does not allow a real concentration on EIL, especially when the selection of these courses is reliant on students' choices. By contrast, the Monash BEIL, where all the courses are specifically determined and designed for an EIL program, is strongly EIL-focused both socioculturally and linguistically. The content spectrum contrasts a focus on language learning with a focus on the role and functions of English in communication in global contexts. This contrast of focus and content reflects two different theoretical and philosophical understandings of English as an international language. At one end of the spectrum the Bond BEIL considers EIL as a pathway or service program focusing on preparing non-English speaking background students for further study in Australia; at the other end of the spectrum the Monash BEIL considers EIL in terms of the communicative, cultural, social and ideological functions of English in its various processes of globalisation and localization, and consequently a relevant study for students from any background.

On the basis of the analysis in this paper, it is possible to state that while the Monash BEIL introduces the broad sociocultural, linguistic and political contents representing the theoretical paradigm of English as an international language proposed by Sharifian (2009), the Bond BEIL does not and therefore cannot be considered as an EIL program in these terms. Nevertheless, its contrasting representation of EIL in terms of curriculum design, content focus and a cohort of international students need not preclude the use of the EIL paradigm to shape English language education for both international and intranational communication.

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## **English in the Singapore's Chinese community: Controversies, concerns and problems**

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The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has witnessed the emergence of English as an International Language of trade and commerce with an official status in various countries. Today English plays a major role in new emerging countries where there is a common belief that English is essential for global communication in business, tourism, information technology and other economic domains. Although English has been embraced as a language of economic advancement in most developing countries, there are ramifications for its use in the local community where English planning is effected. While it is true that English is increasingly emphasized in many countries due to its high capital value, there also exist a number of problems, tensions and conflicting interests with the spread of English in the local linguistic ecology. This paper will address the following issues associated with the spread of English within the Chinese community in Singapore: the dwindling enrolment in Chinese-medium schools, the loss of Chinese identity, linguistic and cultural discrimination against the Chinese speakers, the encroachment of English in the Chinese home environment and the tension that exists between Singlish and Standard English. The paper concludes with a call to consider whether the spread of English is a key to the economic well-beings of individuals or whether it contributes to significant social, political and economic inequalities (Pennycook, 2005).

Keywords: English, Singlish, Chinese community, Singapore, language planning

### **Introduction**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has witnessed the emergence of English as an international language of trade and commerce with an official status in various countries. The importance of English as a global language is evident through its description such as a “Tyrannosaurus Rex” (Swales, 1997), “Trojan Horse” (Cooke, 1988) and the “gatekeeper of positions and prestige in society” (Pennycook, 1995, p. 40).

Today, it seems to be an undisputable fact that English plays a major role in new and emerging countries where there is a common belief that English is essential for global communication in business, tourism, information technology and other economic domains. However, although English plays a pivotal role in economic development, there are also negative effects associated with the spread of English such as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) where the spread of English is perceived as a post-colonial plot for post-colonial countries to exert their dominance over “periphery” countries. There is also a fear that the dominance of English would result in the language death of minority languages (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988; Sonntag, 1975).

Although English has been embraced as a language of economic advancement, there are ramifications for its use in the local linguistic community where English planning is effected. Singapore is an interesting case study for examining the effects of English as it belongs to the Outer Circle of countries where English has a long history of institutionalised functions. In addition, Singapore is also a country where English has been accorded the status of a lingua franca and a language of wider communication within a multilingual society. In this context, the present paper, drawing upon Kachru’s (1991) idea of “Liberation Linguistics”, Phillipson’s concept of “Linguistic Imperialism” (1992) and “Linguicism” (2003), and other scholars’ views on “Killer Language and Language Death of Minority Languages” (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Ortiz, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988; Sonntag, 1975), examines some controversies, concerns and problems associated with the spread of English within the Chinese community in Singapore. The issues under examination are the following: (a) The dwindling enrolment in Chinese-medium schools, (b) The loss of Chinese identity and linguistic and cultural discrimination against Chinese speakers, (c) The encroachment of English in the Chinese home environment, and (d) The tension that exists between Singlish and Standard English.

The paper first provides the contextual background of Singapore focusing on the Chinese community. Next, it will review relevant literature on the repercussions of faulty language planning. It will then provide a discussion on language policy in Singapore with a particular focus on the planning of English. This is followed by a discussion on the ramifications of English within the Chinese community in Singapore. The paper ends with a call to reconsider the spread of English within the linguistic ecology of local communities.

### **The Chinese community in Singapore**

Singapore is a small island (714.3 square km) state located at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. According to the 2010 Census, Singapore’s population was

approximately 5 million (Department of Statistics, 2010). It is a young country of many races whose forefathers were from Southeast Asia, China, India and Europe. The four main races in Singapore are the Chinese (76.5%), the Malays (15%), the Indians (6.5%) and Others (2%), which include Eurasians and guest workers from the region as well as from English-speaking countries. Singapore's racial diversity can be traced to immigration trends that formed as a result of colonial commercial practices.

The dominant ethnic group in Singapore is the Chinese which comprises more than 76% of the country's resident population. Although the Chinese in Singapore form a large demographic majority, they are far from being culturally or linguistically homogenous. According to Lee (2001), the ancestors of Singapore's Chinese residents are from various parts of Southern China who spoke various regional dialects. In the context of Singapore, the term "dialect" refers to a vernacular variety of the Chinese language spoken by various sub-groups of the Chinese community. The major dialects in Singapore include Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka, Hokchiu, Henghua and Shanghainese. In Singapore, all Chinese belong to a dialect group which is inscribed on his or her identity card. Many Singaporean Chinese acquire some knowledge of one or more additional dialects, either through their parents, relatives, friends or neighbors. It is the practice in Singapore to refer to Mandarin as a language, while other varieties of Chinese such as Cantonese or Hokkien are considered to be dialects. Although politicians in Singapore do not recognize dialect as a language, linguists, on the other hand, view dialect as another variety of language.

### **Rethinking English: The negative spread of English**

Scholarly discussions of the role of English often contain paradoxical views. Kachru (1986) contends that knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp which grants access to the linguistic gates of international business, technology, science and travel. In addition, English also promises access to higher education (Mckay, 2002). However, although English is seen as serving a necessary tool for global communication in domains such as trade, business, tourism and information technology, there are also postcolonial and poststructuralist critiques of the role of English. Phillipson (1992) advances the idea of "linguistic imperialism," where the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). Phillipson also introduces the concept of "linguicism," a situation where there is imposition of the cultural, social, emotional and linguistic norms of the dominating society onto the dominated society, thus maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources. According to Phillipson (2003, p. 167),



the advance of English, while serving the cause of international communication relatively well, and often bringing success to its users, can represent a threat to other languages and cultures even portending, perhaps, language attrition and a loss of cultural vitality.

Kachru (1991) has expressed concern with contexts of social injustice faced by non-native speakers of English through his idea of “liberation linguistics.” Similarly, Tollefson (1991) has also raised concerns in relation to the negative economic repercussions of the spread of English. One of the primary concerns is the strong relationship between economic wealth and a lack of education in the English language which can lead to significant social inequalities. As Tollefson (1991, p. 6) puts it:

Those people who cannot afford schooling, who do not have time to attend school, who attend substandard programmes, or who otherwise do not have access to effective formal education may be unable to learn English well enough to obtain jobs and to participate in decision-making systems.

Pennycook (2005) states that while English is linked to forms of institutionalised power, it also functions as a class-based language with tension between local, multiple vernacular languages and the monolingualism of power. Other scholars have explicitly denounced English as a “killer language” leading to the top-down displacement of numerous other tongues (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 144). The dangers of the encroachment of English on indigenous languages has also been highlighted by Ortiz (2006, p. 165) who states that

English has pushed indigenous languages out of the indigenous family, culture, and community, and this has brought about inevitable conflicts that run the gamut of intra-family relationships, tribal governance, and education. This problem and conflict has resulted in damming the flow of cultural and community continuity.

The replacement of local languages with English has also shaped cultural identity of the local community. McKay (2002) argues that the spread of English has led to local traditions being replaced by a largely western-influenced global culture. McKay cites examples of this in countries such as the celebration of Halloween in Chile, the lighting of Christmas trees in Japan, and the sending of Valentine’s Day cards in India where Western traditions have become part of local cultures.

Crystal (1997) maintains that a language achieves global status when its special role is being recognised by official language planners. To date there are over seventy countries in which English has been given special status and priority (Crystal, 1997). The following section will review the special role of English in Singapore’s official language planning policy.

### **Language planning in Singapore: English for economic survival**

Language planning in Singapore is perceived as fulfilling the pragmatic needs of the nation. A policy of multilingualism was developed, resulting in the Republic of Singapore Independence Act of 1965 which decreed that Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English would be the four official languages of Singapore. This means that Mandarin, Malay and Tamil are officially designated as the mother tongues of the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities respectively. For an individual, this means that regardless of what language(s) may actually have been spoken in early childhood, the ethnic group of a child's father must determine which language is officially assigned as his or her mother tongue. Gopinathan (1998) explains that the strategy of multilingualism has been the adoption of a policy of equal treatment which requires that the languages of the different racial groups be formally given equivalent status. As a result, the entire population is officially constituted into four units of equal status: Chinese, Malays, Indians and Others (Eurasians, etc.). The official language policy of Singapore also entails re-conceptualizing the internally heterogeneous communities as each is definable in terms of one single language, paired with one associated culture (Ho & Alsagoff, 1998). Thus intra-group differences among the Chinese, Malay and Indians were radically reduced by the installation of a single language each for the Chinese, the Malays and the Indians (Clammer, 1985).

According to Singapore's official language policy, English was accorded the status of an official language as it is the language of technology and economic development. The use of English has been defended as a necessity for its utility in science and technology, i.e. essential to economic development from the early years of Singapore's independence. The then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew explains the importance of English to Singapore's economic survival:

With barely 700 square kilometres of land, agriculture was out of the question. Trade and industry were our only hope. But to attract investors here to set up their manufacturing plants, our people had to speak a language they could understand. That language had to be English—since World War II ended, the English language had spread. It was the language of international diplomacy, the language of science and technology, and the language of international finance and commerce. Singaporeans would have increased opportunities if they had a strong mastery of English (Lee, 2011, p. 58).

On the other hand, the ethnic mother tongues were decreed by the government to provide Singaporeans an anchor in their cultural traditions, and to prevent excessive Westernization and deculturalization. Although Kuo and Jernudd (1994) agree that the principle of multilingualism in the official language

planning policy does serve the government's goal of establishing equality of all languages, in reality not all languages are equal. However, a major criticism against the multilingual model is that it precludes personal language choice contrary to those laid down by the Singapore government. As a result,

Language Choice comes to be evaluated as normative typical behaviour oriented around the straightforward "natural" official ethnocultural guidelines... Attention is drawn away from the fact that these languages correlate with socioideological dimensions in the larger society that are not equal (Tan, 1998, p. 50).

According to the official language policy, each ethnic group has been ascribed an official mother tongue. Thus the official mother tongue of the Malays is "Malay", of the Chinese "Mandarin" and of the Indians "Tamil". These three languages are also accorded the status of official languages in Singapore to grant linguistic and cultural recognition to the multi-ethnic population (Tan, 1998). Students in Singapore are required to study English and one of the ethnic mother tongues. In school, English is the primary medium of instruction of all subjects except the mother tongue which is learnt as a "Second Language". Although Singapore citizens are non-Anglophone speakers the official working language in Singapore is English (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998).

### **The spread of English in Singapore: The decline of Chinese-medium schools**

Pakir (1994) states that as a result of the status of English as an official language, the popularity of English soared with English becoming a premier language in Singapore as government administration, banking, business, law and accountancy were all conducted through the medium of English. However, the widespread use of English in Singapore also has an enervating effect on the school enrolment of the Chinese language. As a result of the importance of English, Chinese parents stopped enrolling their children in Chinese-medium schools. For example, before the 1950s, the ratio of Chinese stream to English stream students was about two to one. However, by 1954, the ratio was almost one to one. Around 1978, English-educated students began to outnumber their Chinese counterparts by nine to one (Hill & Lian, 1995). By 1987, English education was implemented in all schools resulting in an English-speaking population. English literacy increased from less than half the population (47%) in 1970 to nearly three quarters of the population (71%).

However, the dwindling enrolment in the Chinese-medium schools created resentment amongst the Chinese-educated who shared their hostility towards the growing encroachment of the English language into schools that had once been all-Chinese (Lee, 2011). The Chinese-educated believed that the Chinese

language should receive appropriate attention, and the teaching of the Chinese language needs to be strengthened as

they cannot sit still and watch the standard of Chinese language fall gradually. Neither do they want to see Singapore becoming a monolingual society – a society which speaks and uses only English ... (Lee, 2011, p. 178).

In an attempt to avert the demise of the Chinese language, there were protests from the Chinese community calling for greater use of the Chinese language in public life in the local Chinese newspaper (Lee, 2011). However, the Singapore Government leaders maintained that English is crucial for economic survival in Singapore. The economic utility of English thus led to a decline of the Chinese language in Singapore. Thus we see evidence of linguistic imperialism in which the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson, 1992).

### **Problems of English: Loss of Chinese identity**

The unbridled dominance of English as an official and administrative language has also created another problem within the Chinese community. In the late 1970s, the Singapore government perceived that Chinese Singaporeans were vulnerable to Westernization and were in danger of losing their Chinese identity. This concern was expressed in the following words of former President Wee Kim Wee:

Because of universal English education, a new generation of Singaporeans absorbs their contents immediately, without translating or filtering. This openness has made us a cosmopolitan people, and put us in close touch with new ideas and technologies from abroad. But it has also exposed us to alien lifestyles and values. Under this pressure, in less than a generation, attitudes and outlooks of Singaporeans, especially younger Singaporeans, have shifted. Traditional Asian values of morality, duty and society which have sustained and guided us in the past are giving way to a more Westernised, individualistic and self-centred outlook on life... The speed and extent of the changes to Singapore is worrying. We cannot tell what dangers lie ahead, as we rapidly grow more Westernised. (Ho & Alsagoff, 1998, p. 203)

While the Malay and Indian communities are protected against undesirable Western influences due to the strength of their religions and customs, the Chinese community is the most vulnerable because there is no common religion or culture to unite them. They needed to be reminded of their cultural identity and roots to understand where they came from and thus they needed a cultural ballast to

protect their identity. In response to the dominance of English, the Singapore government thus promoted the “Speak Mandarin Campaign” in 1979 to give Chinese Singaporeans an anchor in their ethnic and cultural traditions.

However, not all Singaporeans were convinced of the negative effects of English. In an article, “Eastern versus Western values”, (The Straits Time, 1992, p. 3), a Member of Parliament, Walter Woon, pointed out that the Eastern versus Western values debate is “sterile” and “dangerously simple-minded.” Woon argued that there can be both good and bad things in every culture, and Singapore, being a cosmopolitan society, is in a position to pick the best from both East and West. The real question is how to promote good values while suppressing bad ones. In a similar vein, Gopinathan (1979), an educator, pointed out that the neat compartmentalization of the Western versus Eastern values, as seen to be transmitted through those languages, does not quite square with reality, for cultural identification and practice are much more complex than suggested by a listing of supposedly characteristic values. Gopinathan contended that

such cultural formulae ignore the obvious fact that truly human values exist in every major culture. Furthermore, talk about the superficialities of western culture seems to have blinded us to the quite evident triviality and pseudo-moralising of much of what passes for Asian culture... [as such], one needs to talk about cultural values with a great deal more caution. (Gopinathan, 1979, pp. 292-293)

I am inclined to believe that the cultural identity of individual Chinese in Singapore is fostered through their involvement at the community level such as participation in Chinese festivals and local Chinese events or observing local customs and practices (birth rites, wedding, Chinese New Year celebration, etc), and not merely through speaking Mandarin. In addition, a majority of elderly dialect speakers still continue to speak dialects within the families and it is unlikely for them to subscribe to the view that speaking Mandarin will help to retain their Chinese cultural identity.

### **Linguistic and cultural discrimination against the Chinese speakers**

Ho and Alsagoff (1998) report that as a result of the spread of English, there are signs of linguistic and cultural discrimination by English speakers against the vernacular languages. As stated by Ho and Alsagoff (1998, p. 205):

Because English has a great deal more status and prestige than any of the vernaculars in Singapore, it is not uncommon for members of the English-speaking elite to show a negative attitude towards the vernaculars and their users. A case in point is their prejudices against Chinese language.

Typically, this problem has been highlighted in the polarization within the Chinese community resulting in the marginalization of the Chinese-educated community (Lee, 2011). The marginalization of Chinese-educated community has a long history.

Chinese education was viewed negatively by the colonial authorities ... and in an independent Malaya ... Graduates from Chinese high schools found themselves in an inferior position – few opportunities were opened to them either for employment or higher education – in contrast to their counterparts from English-medium schools. Growing resentment and frustration eventually led to their political radicalization (Hill & Lian, 1995, p. 71).

During the 1991 election, the ruling PAP party lost an unprecedented four of the 81 parliamentary seats because the Chinese-speaking Singaporeans who constituted the “silent majority” felt neglected by the government and thus voted against the government (Lee, 2011, p. 176). The “silent majority” refers to the 770,000 low-income Chinese-speaking Singaporeans who had suffered years of economic hardships, sociopolitical alienation and cultural dislocation because they could not engage in dialogue sessions conducted in English (Ho & Alsagoff, 1998, p. 206). The Singapore Government is aware of the uneven power distribution between the Chinese-educated and the English-educated and tried to obliterate the tensions by emphasizing the importance of the Chinese language as a legitimate force in the moulding of the Chinese cultural identity (Tan, 2007). In addition, the importance of Mandarin as an economic trade language with China was also drummed into the consciousness of Chinese Singaporeans. The gap between the English-educated and Chinese-educated in Singapore has been described by Wee (2005) as a form of linguisticism, where the imposition of English is equated to the imposition of the cultural, social, emotional and linguistic norms of the dominating society onto the dominated society, thus maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources.

### **The encroachment of English in Chinese homes**

A current concern amongst politicians and Chinese-speaking Singaporeans is the trend towards wider use of English within the homes of Chinese families. Due to the high linguistic capital of English frequently emphasized in Singapore’s official language policy, English is fast becoming the lingua franca of vast swathes of Singapore life with its encroachment in the home domains especially within the Chinese community in Singapore. In an article “Keep Mandarin alive at home”, *The Straits Times* (December 14, 2004, pp. 1-2) reported that Mandarin is gradually losing out to English in the homes. Today, three out of five Chinese pupils entering primary school speak mainly English at home and with their

friends (Lee, 2011). In a study on the language use in the Chinese home domains, Zhao and Liu (2007) observe that the language shift from Chinese to English is due to the fact that English has acquired high values in terms of cultural, social and symbolic capitals in Singapore over the years.

The shift towards English within the Chinese home environment was given due attention in the media recently. In an article dated October 8, 2011, former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew expressed concern with the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue language within the Chinese family. Being aware that parents in Singapore have a deliberate intention to cultivate their child's English ability as a result of the pragmatic and prestigious value accorded to English in Singapore, Lee stressed that Singapore parents should instead adopt Mandarin as a home language. However, Lee's call to maintain Mandarin in the Chinese home domains may fall on deaf ears as parents, being the "invisible planners" (Pakir, 1994) realize that a lack of command in English would deny their children access to the extensive resources available in English as a consequence of globalization (Chew, 1999). In addition, Singaporean parents, being a pragmatic people, will prefer their children to master English well as English is the first language in schools.

The language shift towards English has a repercussion in educational attainments. The widespread use of English at homes is now threatening the learning of the mother tongues in school. A significant number of Chinese Singaporeans (particularly those from English-speaking families) observed that their children had great difficulty coping with Mandarin due to the lack of use of Mandarin in their home environments, and had requested the Ministry of Education to lower the requirement for Mandarin in the Primary School Leaving Examination. As one parent puts it:

I AM a mother of four children in Secondary 2 and Primary 6, 5 and 2. I have tried my best to inspire my children to love the Chinese language – sending them for extra classes and private tuition, and speaking some simple Mandarin at home. However, these methods have not made them love the language. We need to think hard about motivating young learners on the subjects they are learning. I prefer my children to learn less and show more evidence of use of mother tongue in everyday life, and a passion for it. ... Over-emphasizing weighting will at best produce learners "for the test", rather than for love of the culture ("A Mum's Concern and Hope: Cut Mother Tongue", *The Straits Times* dated Sunday, May 2010).

The Singapore Government has been cognizant of the decline of the standard of the Chinese language with the increase of English-speaking families within the Chinese community. In 2001, a simpler Chinese language 'B' syllabus was

introduced as it was perceived that English had become a dominant language in the Chinese household. As former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong explains:

These children (from English-speaking homes) have at least average ability. They have no difficulties with their other school subjects. But they find Chinese in school very difficult. This is despite intensive effort, extra tuition and close supervision from parents (Lee, 2011, p. 183).

However, the Chinese language 'B' syllabus policy has received strong adverse reactions mainly from Chinese-educated community leaders who are worried that the implementation of Chinese 'B' syllabus will further erode the importance of the Chinese language in Singapore (Lee, 2011, p.186).

There is a strong possibility that in the future, more parents are willing to abandon their mother tongue and switch to English as a language of use and preference in the home domains. Given the ever-increasing importance of English in the linguistic ecology of Singapore, it would simply not be viable to substitute Chinese for English. Chew (1999) argues that the spread of English in the twentieth century is the conscious choice of Singaporeans who view its use as a key to their economic survival. Although the Singapore Government is concerned that the widespread adoption of English will result in the loss of Chinese heritage and identity, parents are also worried that a handicap in English will deny their children of the extensive resources available in English (Chew, 1999). For the average local Chinese, to embrace English would mean to identify oneself with a community with more power economically, socially and politically. Thus we see evidence of English as a killer language (Kachru, 2005) resulting in linguisticism, where the mastery of English is considered more important than the mother tongue for the achievement of educational attainments in schools.

### **Current controversy: The destruction of Singlish**

As a result of the universalization of English and a larger population using it as a lingua franca in Singapore, the deterioration of spoken English among Singaporeans has been a growing concern in recent years. It was observed that an indigenized variety of English or Singlish was increasingly entrenched in the repertoire of Singaporeans. Singlish or Colloquial Singapore English is the basilect variety associated with those with a low proficiency in English. It exhibits particular phonological patterning, syntax and vocabulary and draws its roots from several Chinese dialects, Malay, Tamil and English. In contrast to the local Standard English spoken by educated speakers and leaders of the public and private sectors, Singlish is found in colloquial speech in informal domains. In addition, the use of Singlish is also prevalent amongst school teachers (Alsagoff, 2010).



In his 1999 National Day Rally message, the then Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong, emphasized the need for Singaporeans to speak International Standard English so that they would be understood by the British, Americans, Australians and people around the world. It was perceived that in order for Singapore to become global and a first-class world economy, it is necessary for Singaporeans to speak good English to engage in business and communication with the world. In an official speech dated 29 April 2000, Mr Goh warned that if Singaporeans speak a corrupted form of English that is not understood by others, Singapore would lose a key competitive advantage which would eventually spell Singapore's economic downfall.

However, despite the Government's attempt to discourage the use of Singlish, Singlish demonstrates its streak of resilience, entrenching their subtle relevance and political saliency. The use of Singlish has been accepted as a symbol of intra-ethnic identity and cultural integration in Singapore as suggested by a Singlish speaker:

We do want to speak some language fairly perfectly or at least fluently, whether it be English, Mandarin, Malay or Tamil. But there is nothing wrong in, also, speaking Singlish. I commute, quite frequently, between the US and Singapore. I believe I speak English fluently, if not perfectly, as do many of my Singaporean friends, whether here in Singapore or in the States. But when we are just with each other, whether here or in the US, we will speak Singlish for fun, for bonding. (Asiaone.com, 17 October 2009)

Proponents of Singlish affirm that the grammar of Singlish is distinct from Standard English, and that code-switching between Standard English and Singlish is governed by contextual factors, such as formality and the status of the interlocutors (Alsagoff & Ho, 1998). Other Singaporeans argue that Singlish is authentic and homegrown. Some feel that Singlish is a manifestation of the Singaporean identity and binds a people and nation together (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999). Although official language planners recognize that Singlish holds some form of emotional attachment for individual Singaporeans, governmental leaders come out strongly against Singlish and insist that there is no place for Singlish in the local linguistic landscape. The former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong expressed his disavowed distaste for Singlish during his National Day rally speech in 1999:

The fact that we use English gives us a big advantage over our competitors. If we carry on using Singlish, the logical final outcome is that we, too, will develop our own Pidgin English, spoken only by 3 million Singaporeans, while the rest of the world will find it quaint and incomprehensible. We are already half way there. Do we want to go all the way? (Goh, 1999)

Although supporters of Singlish claim that Singlish is part of the national identity and a private domain, the official stance is that linguistic ownership in English is basically a public concern that justifies intervention on the part of the government. As a result, the “Speak Good English Movement” (SGEM) was launched in 2000. The aim of the SGEM was to make Singaporeans discard the use of Singlish and switch to speaking Standard English (SGEM 2000). The attempt by the Singapore Government to eliminate the use of Singlish has been described as a manifestation of creative destruction induced by the hegemonic forces of globalization (Rubdy, 2001).

Advocates of linguistic human rights such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) argue that destroying a language is in reality destroying a people and culture. Arising from a concern with contexts of social injustice faced by non-native speakers of English, Kachru (1991) also called for a “liberation linguistics.” Although Chinese Singaporeans have strong affiliations with Singlish, the solution to arrest a decline in English requires a “linguistic sacrifice” of Singlish. However, the destruction of Singlish raises some questions:

Does the government have the right to decide the variety of English spoken at the local community? Whose interests does the SGEM cater to— the state or the people?

One may argue that Singlish serves as a nativised version of English and provides new forms of identity for disempowered speakers in Singapore (Canagarajah, 2005). Thus, should official language planners be allowed to dictate that Singlish be discarded amongst its users? For years, linguists have called for a language ecology model in language planning acknowledging that multiple languages live together in a specific locale and that people have all uses for all of them (Hornberger, 2003). It appears that the concern over the international intelligibility of Singlish does not seem to square with reality of life in Singapore. The attempt by the Singapore government to eliminate Singlish is perhaps another form of genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

### **Conclusion: Rethinking the role of English in Singapore**

In this article an attempt has been made to highlight some of the negative effects of English within the Chinese community in Singapore. We have seen that under the Singapore’s official language policy, English has been designated the status of official working and administrative language in Singapore. As a result, the popularity of English soared and it became a dominant language in Singapore. However, the popularity of English led to a decline in enrolment in Chinese-medium schools as there has been a pragmatic realisation of the importance of English amongst parents as a consequence of globalisation.

However, the Singapore government perceived the dominance of English as problematic resulting in the inculcation of undesirable Western influences such as an individualistic outlook and the loss of their Chinese cultural identity amongst Chinese Singaporeans. In order to curb the dominance of English, the Chinese language was given more emphasis in schools to stop the erosion of ethnic cultural values. In addition, the dominance of English also provides evidence of linguistic hegemony of English in the local linguistic landscape as the Chinese-educated within the Chinese community feel marginalised due to their low command of English. The loss of intergeneration transmission of the mother tongue amongst Chinese families also bears testimony to the destructive power of English as a “killer language”. The pitching of “good English” against “Singlish” also illustrates the tension between local vernacular languages and the monolingualism of language power (Pennycook, 2005).

There is a constant need to emphasize the importance of the Chinese language to contain the negative effects of English. For instance, with the rise of China as an economic powerhouse, the government should seize the opportunity to promote Mandarin as an economically viable language for business dealings with China to strike a new balance between English and Chinese in the linguistic capital field. In addition, there is also a need to provide more spaces for the Chinese language in institutional contexts which will help to increase Chinese students’ valuation of their mother tongue and motivate them to learn the language. As suggested by Canagarajah (2005), official language planners in education should strive towards a more localized orientation considering the tensions, ambiguities and paradoxes within the community in which language planning is effected.

However, this is not an easy task as the economic utility of English is well entrenched in Singapore. As Zhao and Liu (2007) suggest, Singaporean parents, acting as “invisible planner” (Pakir, 1994) will continue to embrace English as a language of use and preference. The future challenge for language planners in Singapore is to come to grips with the social, cultural and linguistic impact of the dominance of English in the linguistic ecology of Singapore.

The ramifications of the use of English in the local Chinese community thus lead us to wonder whether the spread of English is a key to the economic well-being of individuals or whether it contributes to significant social, political and economic inequalities (Pennycook, 2005). Within the Chinese community in Singapore, and elsewhere, the widespread use of English – and whom it benefits and whom it harms – will be a site of ongoing struggle. Thus we need to question whether English is a completely neutral tool without weight of its own:

Is access to English equivalent to possessing the fabled Aladdin’s lamp which grants linguistic power? (Kachru, 1986) or,

Does the spread of English equate to a Trojan horse that can perpetuate colonialism and dependence? (Canagarajah, 1999)

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## **English only's biggest problem: "English Only"**

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Sun Tzu once wrote: "Every battle is won before it is even fought." No battle has made this axiom more of a truism than in the battle over legislation to make English the official state language of Texas. In effect, the proposed legislation (H.B. 2205) would designate English as the official language of Texas, and it would mean that "a state agency is not required to provide documents, publish written materials, or provide website content in any language other than the official language of this state." Debate over this legislation has been very intense, with proponents claiming the law will increase both inefficiency and national unity, while opponents claim the law is useless and thinly-veiled Hispanophobia. This paper investigates whether different terminologies (English Only, English First, English as a National Language, English as Lingua Franca, etc.) affect people's willingness to support H.B. 2205, regardless of the text of the bill. A total of 155 students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution were given the text of H.B. 2205 along with seven possible titles for such legislation. The paper determines that more official and inclusive titles will meet greater approval whereas politically charged or academic terms will meet with greater disapproval, both almost across every demographic category.

Keywords: English language legislation, Hispanophobia, English Only, priming

### **Introduction**

English language legislation has been one of the most highly-controversial linguistic topics over the past two decades. Some linguistic scholars oppose such legislation on the grounds that it is racist, reactionary, and pandering, while supporters believe that such legislation will increase efficiency, national unity, and economy. Twenty-eight states have passed legislation making English the official state language. Two others have made English an official language, in conjunction with another language. Texas is not one of these thirty states, and as of yet there is no current Texas law designating any language as an official state language. However, pressures to enact such a law exist. Several bills have been



brought to the floor of the Texas Legislature, but none have yet made it to a final vote. The bill that received the most traction was H.B. 2205, brought before the legislature in 2007. If this bill became law, it would designate English as the official language of Texas, and “a state agency is not required to provide documents, publish written materials, or provide website content in any language other than the official language of this state” (p. 1).

Opponents and proponents of the legislation exist in the general public, but the sharpest debates over the legislation may be among linguists themselves. Perhaps the easiest way to differentiate linguistic opponents of H.B. 2205 from its linguistic proponents is not the rhetoric of the two sides, but their terminologies. Opponents of this legislation tend to term it as “English Only” legislation, while proponents tend to term it with the more flowery label “English as Lingua Franca” (Seidlhofer, 2001). Some may say that the differences in terminologies are minute compared to differences in substance. However, this paper will demonstrate that the title of English language legislation can massively affect public support of it across all demographic lines. Specifically, more inclusive or official-sounding terms such as English as Official Language, English as National Language, Official English Legislation, and U.S. English will meet with support from students, almost regardless of demographic, whereas more politically charged or academic terms such as Language Ecology, English Only, or English as Lingua Franca will meet with disapproval, again almost regardless of demographic. This study demonstrated that the title of English language legislation can affect support for it, even in the most hardline supporters or detractors.

### **How titles affect content**

How does the title of legislation affect its support – through psychological priming. Psychological priming is a means by which a subject can be unconsciously biased either for or against a position, including an ideological position, by first subjecting her or him to certain stimuli (Gladwell, 2005). In other words, even if all other circumstances are the same, one person first primed with certain stimuli will behave differently than someone first primed with different stimuli.

Psychologist John Bargh published a famous study regarding priming (see Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). In this study, Bargh studied three groups. Group 1 was exposed to words associated with rudeness, such as “rude,” “impolite,” and “obnoxious.” Group 2 was exposed to words associated with politeness, such as “respect,” “considerate,” and “polite.” Group 3 was exposed to neutral words. All three groups were told to go to a professor’s office, where the next part of the test

would be administered. In the office, the professor (who was a part of the experiment) kept the group members waiting while he discussed personal issues on the phone for ten minutes. Group 1, who were primed with the rude words, interrupted the conversation 67% of the time. Group 3, who were primed with neutral words, interrupted 38% of the time. Group 2, who were primed with the polite words, interrupted only 16% of the time.

What does this mean in terms of English language legislation? If proponents can prime the electorate using terminology that a group finds positive, voters will be primed to support such legislation. Likewise, if opponents prime the electorate using negative terms, voters will be primed to reject such terminologies. The following study details what terminologies a sampling of Texans have determined to be positive and/or negative.

It is important to note that this paper is not commenting on the psychological, social, or educational reasons underpinning priming. Each student's attitude is the product of external conditioning that helped develop the student's individual opinions. Instead, the purpose of the present study is to demonstrate that terminology itself can influence attitudes.

## **The study**

### ***Methodology***

A survey of a demographically diverse group of students at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, a Hispanic-Serving Institution in South Texas was conducted. The students given the questionnaire were those enrolled in freshman composition courses. The freshman composition courses were chosen as they are more likely to contain an accurate demographic mixture than other classrooms, and because these students are more likely to maintain opinions similar to their families and communities than students in more advanced stages of their education.

The questionnaire attached in Appendix A was distributed to 155 students enrolled in freshman composition (ENGL 1302) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Table 1 details the basic demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

*Basic demographic information of the participants*

Demographic variables	Categories	Frequency
Sex	Female	87
	Male	68
Fluency	English Only	83
	English/Spanish <sup>1</sup>	53
	English/Other <sup>2</sup>	19
Ethnicity/Race	African-American	6
	Asian	10
	Caucasian	72
	Hispanic <sup>2</sup>	58
	Other <sup>4</sup>	9
Age	Below 18	32
	18-19	97
	20-21	14
	Above 21	12

<sup>1</sup>Includes those who speak languages beyond English and Spanish

<sup>2</sup>Includes those who speak multiple languages other than Spanish

<sup>3</sup>Includes those who self-identified as Puerto Rican or Latino

<sup>4</sup>Includes those who self-identified as mixed-race

The questionnaire consists of four sections. First, students provide their demographic information: age, sex, ethnicity/race, and whether they can speak a language in addition to English. Students were asked to self-identify as it relates to their inclusion in these demographic groups, and this survey was not designed or developed to provide distinctions beyond these basic ones. Second, students were asked whether they were aware that legislation existed that would make English the official language of the state of Texas (yes or no?). Third, the text of H.B. 2205 was provided to students, and students were asked to rate their opinion of this bill, with 1 meaning “strongly disapprove” and 6 meaning “strongly approve.” Fourth, students were provided eight titles, and they were asked how likely they would be to vote for legislation based solely on the title of the legislation, with 1 meaning “very unlikely” and 6 meaning “very likely.” The eight titles were (1) Language Ecology; (2) English Only; (3) English First; (4) English as Lingua Franca; (5) English as Official Language; (6) English as National Language; (7) Official English Legislation; and (8) U.S English.

Each student had the responsibility of reading the questionnaire and filling out the answers – no instructor help as to terminology was given. Students then returned the questionnaire to the instructor.

## Results and Discussion

### *Awareness of English language legislation*

About half of the students were unaware of legislation that would make English the official language of Texas (54 of 101). A slight majority of students are opposed to English language legislation.

Table 2

#### *Overall opinions of English language legislation*

Scale of 1-6	Frequency
1: Very unlikely	34
2	18
3	29
4	19
5	23
6: Very likely	32

As Table 2 demonstrates, 81 of the 155 students stated that they would likely oppose H.B. 2205 (those who selected 1-3), while 74 stated that they would likely support it (those who selected 4-6). It is interesting to note that while the arithmetic medians were at the poles of the survey (1 and 6), the majority of participants chose a rating that was more tempered (2-5). This means that, while many students' opinions may be strongly fixed, the remainder may remain open to persuasion. In addition, the arithmetic mean of a 1-6 scale is 3.5. To calculate the mean, subtract  $\frac{1}{2}$  the difference between the poles from the highest pole (e.g.,  $6 - 1 = 5$ .  $5/2 = 2.5$ .  $6 - 2.5 = 3.5$ ). The arithmetic mean of the students' ratings was 3.48, which means that, not only is the majority that opposes English language legislation slight (52.3%), but the fervency of the opinions held is also near the arithmetic mean.

The data become more interesting when we break it down by knowledge and demographics. Table 3 takes the demographic information gathered from students (age, sex, ethnicity/race, and fluency) and their awareness of English-language legislation, and it breaks down support or opposition to English-language legislation on those various grounds.

Table 3

*Opinions of legislation breakdown by demographical groups*

Demographic groups		Oppose English- Language Legislation (n=81)	Support English- Language Legislation (n=74)
Unaware of Legislation		57	43
Aware of Legislation		24	31
Sex	Female	52	35
	Male	29	39
Age	Below 18	22	10
	18-19	42	56
	20-21	7	6
	Above 21	10	2
Fluency	English as Sole Language	33	50
	English/Spanish	37	16
	English/Other	11	8
Ethnicity/Race	African-American	1	5
	Asian	7	3
	Caucasian	23	52
	Hispanic	46	12
	Other	4	2

The conclusions and implications that can be drawn from these demographic data are as follows:

- 1) The greatest support for English-language legislation generally comes from college students who are male, between the ages of 18-19, only speak English, and/or Caucasian or African-American.
- 2) The greatest opposition for English-language legislation generally comes from college students who are female, below 18 or above 21, fluent in Spanish, and/or Asian or Hispanic.
- 3) The percentage of proponents of English-language legislation who are familiar with the legislation (41.9%) tends to be higher than opponents of English-language legislation (29.6%).

### *Voting for legislative titles*

The fourth section of the survey asked students to “vote” on legislation based solely on the title of the legislation. It is important to note that only two students (subjects nos. 85 and 89) voted the same across the board for the various titles (they voted “1” and “6” respectively). The other 153 students varied their answers depending upon the title of the legislation.

Table 4

#### *Opinions of proposed legislative titles*

Title of legislation	Average student rating <sup>5</sup>	Equivalent percentage of approval
Language Ecology <sup>6</sup>	3.33	47.6
English Only	3.36	48.0
English First	4.08	58.3
English As Lingua Franca <sup>7</sup>	2.79	39.9
English as Official Language	4.09	58.4
English as National Language <sup>8</sup>	4.21	60.1
Official English Legislation	3.86	55.1
U.S. English	4.02	57.4

<sup>5</sup> Mean of 1-6 scale is 3.5. To calculate percentage of approval, divide the Average Student Rating by twice the mean (7.0).

<sup>6</sup> Mean of 1-6 scale is 3.5. To calculate percentage of approval, divide the Average Student Rating by twice the mean (7.0).

<sup>7</sup> 5 students left this blank. This was taken into account in determining the Average Student Rating.

<sup>8</sup> 1 student left this blank. This was taken into account in determining the Average Student Rating.

Each of these titles has been used to describe English-language supremacy (either in the Texan, national, or global context). “English Only” and “English First” tend to be used pejoratively as it relates to English-language legislation, while “English as Lingua Franca” and “English as Official Language” tend to be used positively. “Language Ecology” is not a common term used by either supporters or opponents, although it is a term closely associated with opponents of English-language hegemony. Table 4 details how students voted for each title.

Table 5

*Percentage likelihood of voting for proposed titles by sex, age, fluency and ethnicity/race*

Demographical groups		“Language Ecology” <sup>9</sup>	“English Only”	“English First”	“English as Lingua Franca” <sup>10</sup>	“English As Official Language”	“English as National Language” <sup>11</sup>	“English Language Legislation”	“U.S. English”
Unaware of Legislation (n=101)		45.5	50.5	62.4	29.7	62.4	69.3	55.4	66.3
Aware of Legislation (n=54)		42.6	48.1	55.6	25.9	64.8%	66.7	61.1	53.7
Sex	Female (n=87)	45.9	45.9	57.4	26.4	63.2	64.4	54.0	57.5
	Male (n=78)	41	47.4	49.4	24.1	55.1	64.1	53.8	58.9
Age	Below 18 (n=32)	59.8	37.5	50	28.1	46.9	56.3	50.0	46.9
	18-19 (n=97)	42.3	56.7	64.9	25.8	70.1	73.2	61.9	70.1
	20-21 (n=14)	50	42.9	64.3	57.1	71.4	78.6	71.4	71.4
	Above 21 (n=12)	41.7	33.3	33.3	16.7	41.7	50.0	25.0	25.0
Fluency	English as Sole Language (n=83)	46.9	59.1	73.5	26.5	72.3	71.1	63.9	67.5
	English/Spanish (n=53)	49.1	37.7	43.4	32.1	50.9	62.3	45.3	58.5
	English/Other (n=19)	36.8	42.1	52.6	26.3	57.9	73.7	63.2	47.4
Ethnicity/ Race	African-American (n=6)	66.7	83.3	83.3	83.3	83.3	83.3	83.3	83.3
	Asian (n=10)	30.0	40.0	50.0	30.0	50.0	70.0	80.0	50.0
	Caucasian (n=72)	47.2	65.3	70.8	27.8	75.0	72.2	69.4	69.4
	Hispanic (n=58)	41.4	29.3	43.1	22.4	43.1	56.9	34.5	51.7
	Other (n=9)	77.8	44.4	66.7	33.3	100	100	66.7	66.7
<b>Average percentage of approval</b>		47.4	49.7	60.0	29.3	63.2	68.8	57.4	61.9
Difference in H.B. 2205 approval and title approval <sup>12</sup>		+0.3%	+2.0%	+13.3%	-18.4%	+15.5%	+21.1%	+9.7%	+14.2%

<sup>9</sup> Three responses were left blank

<sup>10</sup> Five responses were left blank

<sup>11</sup> One response was left blank

<sup>12</sup> The difference is obtained by subtracting Average percentage of approval from percentage of students who approval of H.B. 2205 which is 47.7%.

According to averages of these eight titles, students said they would be most likely to vote for “English as National Language” and least likely to vote for “English as Lingua Franca.” However, as Table 5 demonstrates, the data are more complex than that. Table 5 breaks down the students’ opinions according their demographics (age, sex, ethnicity/race, and fluency) and their awareness of English-language legislation.

The results show that a majority of students oppose English language legislation such as H.B. 2205. The sex, age, race, national origin, fluency, and political awareness of students are all factors in which opposition or support may be based. Students who identified as female, below 18 years old, bilingual, born outside of the United States, non-Caucasian, and unaware of H.B. 2205 were more likely to oppose the bill. Students who identified as male, above 18 years old, unilingual, born in the United States, and aware of H.B. were more likely to support the bill. These results are not surprising.

What was surprising was students’ likelihood of voting for H.B. 2205 could be influenced by the title of that legislation. Specifically, all but two students provided variable responses to the seven commonly used terms for English-language legislation. Terms like “English First” and “English as a National Language” provoked positive responses from students (primarily female, bilingual, non-Caucasian, etc.) who were opposed to H.B. 2205. Students who supported H.B. 2205 (primarily male, Caucasian, unilingual, etc.) reacted negatively to terms such as English as Lingua Franca, which is commonly used by supporters of legislation like H.B. 2205. Indeed, a majority of students in all demographic groups stated that they could support legislation titled “English as a National Language” and a majority of students in almost all demographic groups stated that they were unlikely to vote for legislation titled “English as Lingua Franca.”

## **Conclusions**

The conclusions and implications of the findings are as follows:

- 1) Although only 47.7% of students stated that they approved of H.B. 2205, 68.8% of students stated they would be likely to vote for legislation titled “English as National Language,” based solely on the title. That is a difference of 21.1%. Additionally, a majority of all demographic groups stated they would be likely to vote for legislation titled “English as National Language.”
- 2) A majority of students stated they would be likely to vote for legislation titled “English First,” “English as Official Language,” “English as National Language,” “English Language Legislation,” and “U.S. English.” Although



two of these terms (“English as National Language” and “U.S. English”) are not likely to be used in Texas legislation, the other three could. Supporters of English-language legislation should probably use the terms “English First,” “English as Official Language,” and “English Language Legislation,” to define the debate. Opponents of English-language legislation should probably avoid them.

- 3) A majority of students stated they would not be likely to vote for legislation titled “Language Ecology,” “English Only,” and “English as Lingua Franca.” This is probably because the titles “Language Ecology” and “English as Lingua Franca” are not easily defineable, and the term “English Only” carries negative connotations. Opponents of English-language legislation should probably continue to use the term “English Only” to define the debate. Supporters of English-language legislation should probably avoid it.
- 4) Although the term “English First” is used negatively by linguists who oppose English-language legislation, 60% of students would vote for legislation titled “English First.” Likewise, although the term “English as Lingua Franca” is used by supporters of English-language legislation, only 29.3% of students would vote for legislation titled “English as Lingua Franca.”

As stated above, if a person can be primed with a term that he or she considers positive, that person’s opinion can be conditioned by such priming. As such, proponents and opponents of English-language legislation may be able to prime voters with the terms demonstrated above to be most persuasive to the demographic groups they are looking to persuade.

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**Appendix A**

**Survey Form**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: M / F

Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity/Race:

Question #1:

Were you aware that legislation existed that would make English the official language of the state of Texas?

\_\_\_\_\_ (yes or no)

Question #2:

The proposed legislation (H.B. 2205) would designate English as the official language of Texas, and it would mean that: “a state agency is not required to provide documents, publish written materials, or provide website content in any language other than the official language of this state.” On a scale of 1 to 6, 1 being disapproval and 6 being approval, how would you rate your opinion of this legislation?

1 2 3 4 5 6

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 6, 1 being disapproval and 6 being approval, your opinion of the following terms:

1. Language Ecology: 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. English Only: 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. English First: 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. English as Lingua Franca: 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. English as Official Language: 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. English as National Language: 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. English Language Legislation: 1 2 3 4 5 6

8. U.S. English: 1 2 3 4 5 6

## **Lexico-semantic features of Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes**

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The global spread of the English language as one of the most far-reaching linguistic phenomena of our time is already an established fact. Evidence of this worldwide phenomenon of language contact, variation and change can be seen through such designations as world Englishes, new Englishes, modern Englishes, West African Englishes, South African Englishes, Indian English, to mention just a few (Ajani, 2007). Nigerian English and Ghanaian English have also become apparent even in recent times. This illustrative examines some of the common lexico-semantic features of some distinct varieties of English known as Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes. These varieties have been traced to the local tastes of people and the contact of English with their indigenous languages. This paper concludes by making a clarion call for acceptability and codification of these Englishes which linguists like Bamgbose (1998), Eka (2000) and Udofot (2003), among others, have earlier demonstrated.

Keywords: Englishes, Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, Lexico-semantic features and codification

### **Introduction**

The documentation of the various features of world Englishes has continued to attract the attention of linguistic scholars. Like other varieties of non-native Englishes, West African English has received considerable attention. For instance, Anchimbe (2006), Bamgbose, Banjo and Thomas (1995) and Igboanusi (2002), among others, have written about these new Englishes. As each country exhibits a predominantly hegemonic variety identifiable with it (Ajani, 2007), a number of West African Englishes have emerged, such as Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, Gambian English, Liberian English. Though linguists in and outside Nigeria have written and published much on Nigerian English, not much has been published on Ghanaian English, especially on its levels of nativisation. The interest of this paper is on Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes.

The English language in Nigeria and Ghana like every other West African countries have undergone several innovations which can be traced to the local tastes of the people and the contact of English with indigenous African languages

as well as colonial influence. Due to a mixture of forces – the work of Christian missionaries before and during colonialism and the colonial educational schemes of the British – English has undergone processes of indigenisation which are visible not only in the amount of native background language words in the language, but also in speakers’ creative strategies within the English language itself. These processes of indigenisation are prominent at the levels of syntax, lexis, grammar, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, idioms, among others. This is because “the history of a language is a function of the history of its speakers and not an independent phenomenon that can be thoroughly studied without reference to the social context in which it is embedded” (Thomason & Kaufman, 1998, p. 4)

The subsequent sections focus on features identifiable in meaning changes at the lexico-semantic level in both Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes with broad focus on its historical past.

### **The Nigerian English**

Nigerian English is one of the new Englishes which emerged as a result of the global spread of English that began with British colonialism during the nineteenth century (Ajani, 2007; Crystal, 1997; Jenkins, 2003; McArthur, 1998; Trudgill & Jean, 2002). According to Ogu (1992), Walsh (1967) was among the first to draw attention to the existence of a variety of English Language known as “Nigerian English”. While Jibril (1982) saw Nigerian English as part of the continuum of “West African English”, Odumuh (1987, 1993) recognized Nigerian English as one of the new Englishes and had this to say: “Our position is that there exists at the moment a single superordinate variety of Standard English in Nigeria which can be regarded as ‘Nigerian English’”. Several other linguists (e.g., Adegbija, 1989, 2004; Bamiro, 1991, 1994; Eka, 2000, 2005; Jowitt, 1991; Kachru, 1982, 1987, 1992; Udofot, 2003) have either written about or made passing references to this variety of English language. Moreover, one of the foremost African linguists of our time, Bamgbose, who has written on matters dealing with language and society in Africa, not only recognizes the existence of Nigerian English, but also has written extensively on this variety of English Language. For instance, his article “Standard Nigerian English: Issues of Identification” (1982), not only identifies Nigerian English, but also analyses some of its identifying features. The literature points to the existence of a distinct variety of the English Language known as “Nigerian English”.

Nigerian English, as one of the varieties of global Englishes “is that variety of English used by Nigerians to communicate across socio-cultural boundaries, which is different from that of the native speaker” (Brownson, 2007, p. 69). It is a well-known sociolinguistic fact that when two or more languages and cultures

come into contact, different types of sociolinguistic chemistry take place. Sometimes, a diglossic situation may result or language shift, attrition or even language death may result. In some other instances, it can lead to the formation of a pidgin, a Creole or even the birth of a new language altogether (Sebba, 1997).

Eka (2005) through an analysis of performance identified four groups of varieties within Nigerian English as *Sophisticated Nigerian English*, *educated Nigerian English*, *basic Nigerian English* and *non standard Nigerian English*. Eka (2005, p. 49) also observed that through an analysis along the lines of the 153 languages and clusters known to exist in Nigeria are varieties along the ethnolinguistic lines which have within their subsets *Hausa English*, *Yoruba English*, *Ibo English*, *Ibibio English*, *Edo English*, *Tiv English*, among others, constituting subsets within the Nigerian English. Therefore, English in Nigeria is alive, and an ever greater number of Nigerians are writing it, albeit with varying degree of competence.

Most importantly, Eka (2005) demonstrated that in Nigerian English “the questions of “correctness” or “wrongness” have vanished into the annals of history and that “acceptability”, “intelligibility” and “communicativeness” are the building forces for all Englishes ...” (p. 53). Udofot (2003) suggests that the uneasiness and negative sentiments surrounding attitudes to English in Nigeria because of its colonial antecedents may be laid to rest if a change from English to “Ninglish” is made. Udofot borrowed this idea from the North German variety of English which is called “Minglish”, coined from the name of the North German Language *Missingch + English* (Martens, 1990, pp. 261-269, as cited in Udofot, 2008, p. 9). Udofot further cites Kujore (1995) who espoused the idea that the viable varieties of English can become a form of cultural and national identity (as cited in Udofot, 2003, p. 50).

In all, Adekunle (1985) states that the English language has as a result of many years of active use in the Nigerian speech community become “...part of Nigeria’s contemporary environment and behavior” (pp. 30-38). He further stated that the English Language is an artifact whose foreign derived components have in the process of its evolution combined with native Nigerian elements to make it local.

### **Lexico-semantic features of Nigerian English**

As the vocabulary of Nigerian English continues to broaden, shifts in reference and sense have continued unabated. The flexibility of Nigerian English lexico-semantic features is apparent in its promotion in the Nigerian (African) literature as noted by Schmied (1991), among others. Teilanyo (2001) observed that the increase of lexico-semantics in Nigerianisms is further prompted by the fact that

“a class of Nigerians are gaining greater awareness of the patterns in their languages through increased formal study and with linguistic nationalism, they would feel no qualms in transferring patterns from their languages into English” (p. 19).

Nevertheless, at the level of lexico-semantics in Nigerian English, for instance, transfers are observed from the local languages (especially the three major regional languages – Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa). The transfers are mostly in the following areas: music, clothing, indigenous foods, traditional religious beliefs, local institutions, flora and fauna. The transfers from the local languages are also through different creative strategies such as the lexification of acronyms, neologisms and semantic extension. Generally, most of the items from music, clothing and foods are left intact in their substrate forms for want of better terminology (Ajani, 2007). These features are illustrated below:

- 1) The incorporation of vocabulary items from the Nigerian language into English – garri, agbada, buba, juju music, akara, amala, tuwo, eba, egusi soup, ewedu and ogbono. For example, agbada is a flowing gown (a Nigerian English coinage). It is to the Yoruba what the suit is to the British and Americans. It can also be worn during formal occasions, including official government functions, in place of the British introduced suit.
- 2) The creative coining of words (neologisms), such as been-to, suffer-head, cash madam, go-slow (traffic jam), senior brother (elder brother), co-wife, take-in (become pregnant) and off head (in place of offhand).
- 3) Lexical creativity (acronyms) such as JAMB, NEPA, ABU and NITEL.
- 4) Analogization – formation of words on the basis of the pattern of an existing word or pattern in English (e.g., decampee, arrangee, standee).
- 5) Semantic shifts in words and expressions such as fellow, long-leg (to wield power or influence) and academician (for an academic or University teacher).
- 6) Affixation such as Awoism, Zikism, Buharigate and Enweremgate. The semantic extension of kinship terms or transfer of culture, sense or meaning from the native language into English or interpretation or extension of an existing meaning in English to cover new areas of experience in Nigerian English like father, mother, uncle and auntie.
- 7) The semantic extension of these kinship terms take on additional meanings in the Nigerian context (Wigwe, 1990). For instance, in Nigerian English, an auntie or an uncle could be just a term of respect for any older female or male person who may have no connection at all with one’s immediate or extended family (Ajani, 2007). The terms “father” and “mother” can be used in reference to one who is not a biological parent, “well-done” may be said to

- someone passing by and not engaged in any work or “sorry” when one is not responsible for what happened.
- 8) The non-native use of standard idioms as to “take in” (to become pregnant), instead of to admit or deceive somebody, “to wet the flowers” (instead of “to water”).
  - 9) Coming of modification of idioms such as “to deliver a baby” in place of “to be delivered of a baby”, “to put to bed” (to give birth to a child), “to be on seat” (to be in one’s office).

Another very common case is the use of terms of address, “Sir” and “Ma”. Although, this is a classic case of semantic extension, it is driven by socio-pragmatic considerations based on local socio-cultural norms. In British English, these two terms are used very restrictively, generally in formal situations, especially in greetings. “Sir” was originally a form of address reserved for highly respected persons in British English. Gradually, it became extended in usage as people began to use it in formal and official greetings. “Sir” and “Ma” have become expressions of respect and politeness in Nigeria. Hence, the repetitive use of these terms while talking to an older person is very common in Nigerian English usage (Ajani, 2007).

### **The Ghanaian English**

Ghana is one of the English-speaking West African countries. Having secured its independence from Britain in 1957, the processes of colonization, linguistic imperialism and neocolonialism have ensured that the English language remains Ghana’s official language of government, administration, law, business, commerce, education and interethnic unification up till today (Bamiro, 1997, pp. 105-112). Ghana is a country which has up to 50 indigenous languages and a population of nearly 19 million. Ghanaian English has several regional and social dialects such as Akan (Fante and Twi), Ewe and Ga, among others. Like other Englishes, Ghanaian English incorporated speech patterns from different Englishes, especially, British English and quite recently, American English (due to the rise of the United States as a political and economic power). Ghanaians’ English speech patterns are influenced by their level and type of education, social and economic backgrounds, regional or geographical locations and personal motivation. Moreover, their attitude to the English language is in line with current trends in Second Language Acquisition and general Sociolinguistics (Adjaye, 2008). According to Dako (2003), “Ghanaianism is a vocabulary item peculiar to Ghana. It may be an English item that has undergone a local semantic shift; an item of local origin used consistently in English or a hybrid of the two” (p. 1).



It is pertinent to point out that from the entrance of English during the colonial period; English in Ghana (like other Anglophone West African nations) has taken various forms ranging along a continuum from Pidgin English to BSE with innumerable hybrids in between those two poles. Those common forms of English have always threatened to alter ideas of “correct” English in Ghana and so have been denounced by most Ghanaian educators who enforce the British standard as the only appropriate form for written English in Ghana and who denounce all linguistic deviations from BSE as “pidginizations”. Other scholars however, see the resistance to cultural modifications as futile and insist that a “Ghanaian Standard” be recognised as equally as legitimate as the British standard. And these defenders of the Ghanaian Standard have made considerable progress in meeting the charge to “systematically distinguish” Ghanaian English as a “New English” (Ahulu, 1994, p. 27).

Similarly, Owusu-Ansah (1996) observed that “the Ghanaian variety is thus different from other varieties, because the norms of pronunciation, syntax, lexis, etc are different (p. 27). He recognized this as not merely “elevating errors into Ghanaianisms” as Spencer (1973) thought, but made this statement in particular reference to those aspects of the language which are not considered to be errors by even conservative speakers, notably, school authorities (Owusu-Ansah, 1996, p. 27). Furthermore, negative attitudes of scholars towards the new Englishes as have been pointed out in the section of Nigerian English in this paper are also observable in Ghanaian English. For instance, commenting on the state of English in Ghana, Gyasi (1990) says that “English in Ghana is very ill. The cancerous tumors are countless; false concord; poor spelling due to unfamiliarity with the word or mispronunciation...” (p. 24). In reaction to this observation by Gyasi, Bamgbose (1997, p. 18) asks, “Isn’t it just possible that no matter how they originate, some of the features stigmatized in the quote above have become indexical markers of Ghanaian English?” (as cited in Udofot, 2003, p. 48). In all, there remains an immense impediment in Ghanaian English – ethnic sensitivities. If the loanwords and expressions in Ghanaian English do not represent the identity of the many ethno linguistic groups in Ghana, those unrepresented groups will be hostile towards the idea of accepting Ghanaian English as a national lingua franca. For instance, the verb “to destool” means to overthrow (a chief); “to enstool” relates to the Akan “stool”, (the sacred seat of Akan chiefs), and they are commonly used as equivalents of “to enthrone” and “to dethrone” with derivatives “enstoolment” and “destoolment”. However, Ahulu (1994, p. 18) warns that these words which do not recognize the cultural practices of other Ghanaian ethnic groups like (Ewe and Ga) are “capable of arousing strong ethnic sentiment” as soon as it is labeled “Ghanaian”. Also, if these particularities do not give fair representations of the multiple ethnolinguistic cultures in Ghana –

probably an impossible task, this Ghanaian English will never be deemed an acceptable English language (De Bruijn, 2006).

In Ghana, the contention between BSE and Ghanaian English instantiates the larger international argument over Standard English and New Englishes – a dispute that “may be one of the longest running linguistic debates in this century” (Ahulu, 1994, p. 18). Some linguists in Ghana have described the “notion of ‘Standard English’ as a forced violation of educated Ghanaians’ linguistic rights”. One writer advises that the “borrowed language be butchered” (Duodu, qut, as cited in Ahulu, 1994, p. 27). Recognizing this proposal as absurd for a nation that aspires to improve international relations, other scholars like Gyasi consider it necessary to keep the British Standard English free of all linguistic deviations: “We should not, therefore, elevate bastardization into the status of legitimacy and call it ‘Ghanaian English’” (Gyasi, 1991, p. 27). But convinced that a variety of English that reflects the cultural distinctiveness of Ghana is necessary, the champions of Ghanaian English urge that “the floodgates [be] opened to allow English to find its own mode in Ghana” (Dako, 2003, p. 3).

Another key problem that the proposed Ghanaian English encounters is that all lexical deviations from BSE are subject to being stigmatized as unacceptable pidginizations. To get a sense of the gravity of this stigmatization, Ahulu (1995) clarifies that linguists use pidgin to refer to “a simplified language used for restricted communicative purposes by people who normally have no language in common” (p. 36). Ahulu also indicated that currently, Pidgin English is used by only a small percentage of the Ghanaian population who are uneducated in British Standard English. Nonetheless, Dako (2003) glossary of over 2500 Ghanaianisms displays the extensive borrowings of indigenous lexical items in English in Ghana and it reveals numerous lexical creations and uses of English words that are distinctive to English use in Ghana. Her methodology of compiling these items involved the systematic notation of Ghanaian vocabulary in written English over a ten-year period. To satisfy the demand for a “Ghanaian Standard”, one that ensures that the variation can be “systematically distinguished” from other English forms (Ahulu, 1994, p. 27), she includes cultural borrowings such as consumables, personal appellations, religious beliefs and cultural implements which dominate words that carry specific cultural meanings for which Standard British English has no equivalent (Dako, 2003). These lexical items in Ghanaian English are further illustrated below.

## Lexico-semantic features of Ghanaian English

Kari Dako, one of the loudest supporters of Ghanaian English, highlights “Ghanaianisms” as predominant peculiarities of this New English. She introduces these as “lexical items of both English and local origin” (Dako, 2001, p. 23). Ghanaian English words are for the most part adopted from Twi, an Akan language, or reflect aspects of the Akan culture. To use one of Dako’s choice examples, waakye (/wɔtʃɪ/) is a local dish of rice and beans cooked with a hot pepper paste. Although all Ghanaians including the higher sector always refer to this food as waakye in conversation and even though it consistently appears as such in state-recognized printed texts (like newspapers) and literature in English, still, university instructors insist that this item be referred to as “rice and beans” – an obviously inadequate replacement in written English as it is taught in the education system. For instance, “outdooing” (a word referring to a Ghanaian animist sort of christening) is a lexical item in Ghanaian English that even educated Ghanaians do not realize is distinctive of English in Ghana. Also, “sika” appears along with the Standard English word, “card” in the compound “sika card”, which refers to a debit card in Ghana. Other deviations from Standard English include semantic changes to Standard English lexemes such as the distinction of a lady as a woman with a formal education from a woman, who could be illiterate or educated (Dako, 2003).

In all, Ghanaian English, like Nigerian English is rich in lexico-semantic features. These features are made prominent with the publication of *A Dictionary of Ghanaian English* (Blench, 2006) as illustrated below:

- 1) The incorporation into English of vocabulary items from Ghanaian language. For example, Banku (fermented maize cooked in leaves); Cafre (boiled maize dough); Penin (elder); Okyeame (head, spokesman) as seen in (Udofot, 1999, p. 99). Achumo (popular street food); Adua (stately Asante dance); Akpele (unfermented maize porridge) ; Bo-fruit (round doughnut) ; Dundu (small drum squeezed under arm to vary tones).
- 2) Lexical creativity (acronyms) such as KVIP (public ventilated pit latrine); T.Z - an acronym from Hausa “Tuwon Zafi” (porridge of millet, sorghum or maize); VC-10 (alcohol fermented from sugar cane or palm wine).

Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Appendix A further illustrate some of the lexico-semantic features of Ghanaian English.

With the analyses of the distinctive lexico-semantic features of Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes highlighted in this paper, it is therefore a known fact that in language contact situations, a second language (English) is bound to be influenced by its linguistic environment (Bamgbose, 1982).

## Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to discuss and analyze the lexico-semantic features of Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes. These features have emerged as a result of the innovations which English in Nigeria and Ghana have undergone. These innovations have been traced to the local tastes of people and the contact of English with their indigenous languages. As English continues to spread through education, the media and administrative institutions, the distinctiveness of Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes are becoming more evident and the varieties are also becoming more recognized as legitimate and acceptable by both their own users and the rest of the English speaking world. This paper, therefore, brings to bare the “creative ingredients” of the Nigerian and Ghanaian Englishes with broad focus on the resources of local languages as well as English Language to create new expressions and idioms. However, the features identifiable in these varieties should neither be not seen as “errors of usage” nor “bad English”, but should rather be identified and set apart from the grammatically well-formed features which call for acceptability among the speakers. It will also be rewarding if these Englishes (Nigerian and Ghanaian English) which have attained world recognition are codified in the form of variety-specific grammar and the common grammar of new Englishes. This; Bamgbose (1998, p.4) tags the “acceptability factor”.

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### **Note on Contributor**

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## Appendix A

Table 1

*Semantic shifts in the use of everyday words and expressions*

Words	Explanation
Stool lands	lands associated with Southern chief ship
Stool	seat of power in the South, sign of chief
Spark	to turn on the ignition
Skin pain	Jealousy
Skin	the chiefly throne, political
Senior	older in family situation thus senior mother, father, brother, wife, etc.
Roam	to be adulterous, going after men
Rival	Co-wife- any wife of a polygamist calls the other wife or wives, Rival(s).
Brutal	exciting, fun, enjoyable
Blood	strength
Air Condition	lacy blouse
Jump	outdoor dance on Saturday afternoon at hotels
Win	illegal mining of gold, collection of sand

Table 2

*Semantic Extension of Kinship Terms*

Words	Explanation
Brother	actual brother or male of the same generation in an extended family. Applied by extension to those of a comparable status in ethnicity, religion, politics, etc.
Mother	term of respect for older women
Sister	female sibling, cousin, girlfriend, friend, fellow female church member.
Queen Mother	female senior elder in matrilineal royal family



Table 3

*The creative coining of words (Neologisms)*

Words	Explanation
Moon die	end of the month, pay day
Middle school	school between primary and secondary
Men's thing	Walking stick, goat skin bag, shrines, magical objects (esp. property of a man).
Long mouth	gossipy, garrulous
Low hair	Hair shaved close to the head, characteristic of school children.
Golden stool	main royal ancestral shrine of Asante
Enskin	to be officially appointed a chief (north)
Enstool	to be officially appointed a chief (south)
Deskin	to remove from chiefly office in the north
Destool	to remove from chiefly office in the south
Chew and pour	nickname for method of revising for exams, (Some students chew over their book at the last minute and pour out the information in the exam the next day).
Bungalow	poor man's sandals made from truck tires
Book doctor	PhD
Body-condom	any very tight clothes on a young person
Bitter tomato	garden egg, local egg plant
Banana	fashionable hair-style
Outdoor (v.t)	to formally appoint somebody to celebrate the birth of a baby. (e.g., the chief was outdoored last week).
Driver's mate	driver's assistant, loads passengers, and takes money
Motor way	bald head/person
Petrol shell	filling station
Sleeping money	Small amount given to girlfriend/wife after sex.

Table 4

*The coining or modification of idioms or coining of entirely new idioms*

Words	Explanation
Taking the lead	Going ahead
Face becomes dark	Angry
Beg for the road	ask for permission to leave (response-the road is there).
Free range	Defecating in bush
Sweet head	luck
Greet the chief	euphemism
Kill me quick	Euphemism for hair style, local gin
Take seed	To become pregnant (cf. Blench, 2006, pp.1-43).

# **The discourse of “Japanese incompetence in English” based on “Imagined Communities”: A sociometric examination of Asia Europe survey**

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This paper examines the idea that Japanese people are not good at English (the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse), by statistical cross-national comparison. This view is usually based on invalid data such as TOEFL scores; therefore it is still uncertain whether the view properly reflects the realities of Japan and other countries. This paper, therefore, empirically examines this by statistically analyzing the data of Asia Europe Survey, which is well suited for this purpose. The results indicate that, although many Japanese do not have proficient English skills, it is not necessarily true that only Japanese people are at the lowest-level of English skills in the world, because some countries (especially East Asian and European ones) also show a quite low percentage of people with English skills. This result, which seems to be inconsistent with the assumption of the discourse of Japanese incompetence of English, is explained by analyzing the data in terms of generational, socioeconomic, and regional factors. The analysis reveals that the Japanese incompetence among the other countries becomes obvious when comparing young people, people with high socioeconomic status, and urban residents. Based on these findings, the author discusses that the discourse is constructed largely by an ideology of imagined communities. In addition, the validity of using TOEFL scores for cross-national comparison will be discussed.

Keywords: English language skills, Japanese people, imagined communities, Sociometric analysis

## **Introduction**

According to Seargeant (2009), it is well known internationally, perhaps even notorious, that Japanese people are not good at learning foreign languages, especially English, and this view is widely held by not only foreign people but also by Japanese people themselves. As seen below, Japanese policy makers, ELT researchers, and, of course, the general public often claim that their English skills are generally at a lower level than people from other countries. Indeed, some

studies on learners' beliefs about language learning indicate that Japanese are more likely to disagree with the statement that "people in my country are good at learning foreign languages" than Korean, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong Chinese (Kim, 2001; Peacock, 2001; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1999). Therefore, this view, which Seargeant (2009, p. 146) calls "a discourse of Japanese foreign language incompetence," is one of influential ideas on English education in Japan.

### **Cross-national comparison based on TOEFL scores**

For instance, two white papers in the late 1990s reported by Economic Planning Agency of Japan (1996, 1999) point out Japanese people's low-level skills of English based on cross-national comparison of a score of Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Moreover, white papers by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2002, 2010) also refer to a relatively low average TOEFL score of Japan, bringing "into doubt the international competitiveness of Japan's universities in particular" (2002, p. 212) and proposing educational reform. Furthermore, the Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century, which is known for its controversial proposition to make English the second official language in Japan, also warned against low-level English abilities of Japanese people, referring to the average TOEFL score of Japan in 1998 (The Prime Ministers' Commission, 2000). On the other hand, academic work on English education in Japan also sometimes makes a cross-national comparison of TOEFL scores as proof of the views that the Japanese are incompetent in English, asserting underachievement of English language education in Japan, and suggesting its reform (e.g. Koike, 2010; McVeigh, 2002; Otani, 2003; Yoshida, 2003).

Their statements are true indeed, as far as the TOEFL score is concerned. The average TOEFL score of Japanese test-takers is relatively low when compared to other countries, especially in recent years. As clearly shown by Figure 1, which depicts the chronological change in the TOEFL scores of some Asian and European countries, Japan has consistently belonged to the lowest-score group in the world; Japan's score is much lower than not only former-colonies of English speaking countries such as Singapore and Philippines but also some European and East-Asian countries. For example, whereas Japan's Computer Based Test (CBT) score in 2000-2001 test year is 183, the counterparts of China, South Korea, and Taiwan are 211, 202, and 193 respectively, and this difference has been basically maintained during 2000s.

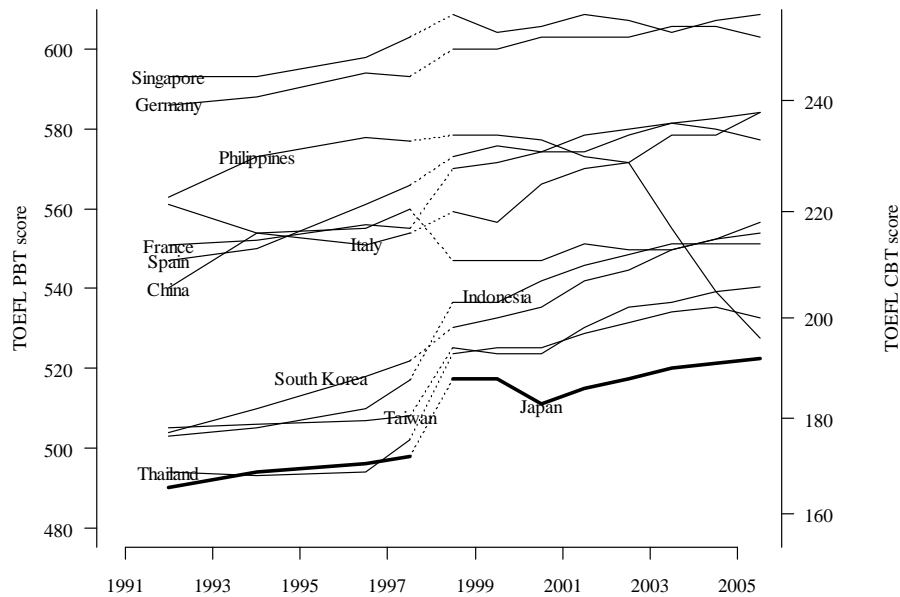


Figure 1. TOEFL PBT scores (-1998) and CBT scores (1998-) Source: TOEFL Test and Score Data Summary, each year

However, it is also true that the test-takers by no means represent the *entire population* of their country, but rather they probably originated from a specific social group (e.g., students who want, and are possibly rich enough, to study in North America). Therefore, it is very difficult to estimate an average level of English skills of its nationals by analyzing the results of a test such as TOEFL (the same problem is encountered when analyzing, for instance, the International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, and the Test of English for International Communication, or TOEIC).

Despite the fact that there are already many criticisms against inadequacy of such a cross-national comparison based on TOEFL scores (e.g. Yamada, 2003, p. 108), there is little empirical work which has examined whether or not the “Japanese incompetence in English” view properly reflects the reality of Japanese. In order to examine this, then, it is indispensable to analyze the relationship between English skills and nationality based on data which appropriately represents the whole population of each country. It is true that some researchers have already empirically examined the relationship between the two variables (e.g., Koiso, 2011; Shimauchi & Terasawa, 2012; Sonoda, 2009), but their primary interest lies in examination of the effects of English language skills on a variety of social and political factors (i.e. English proficiency is an

independent variable), so they do not sufficiently reveal the difference of English skills among nations.

Based on the discussion above, the present paper aims at examining the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse, by cross-national comparison based on adequate, i.e. unbiased, data. In particular, this study statistically analyzes data which properly represents the whole population of each country, and examine whether the average level of English skills of Japanese people is generally lower than other non-native speakers.

### **The Study**

For the purpose of this study, data require, at least, an unbiased design (i.e., its samples are randomly extracted), and, of course, two important variables, English skills and nationalities. Although there are a few datasets which meet these requirements, an exception is the Asia Europe Survey 2000<sup>1</sup> (hereafter, ASES)<sup>2</sup>. This survey was conducted by Japanese political scientist Takashi Inoguchi in 2000 for the purpose of a cross-national comparison of social and political attitudes. The survey was conducted in 18 East Asian, South-East Asian, and European countries: Japan, China, Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Portugal, Sweden, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom, and about 1000 respondents in each country participated in the survey<sup>3</sup> (see Inoguchi, 2004, and the website of ASES<sup>4</sup> for more information). What should be noted, however, is that this survey is already over a decade old, so the result of this study might fail to reflect the recent situation of each country. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that what this study reveals is just social conditions in 2000.

#### ***Variables: English skills***

One important difference between ASES and a general English test (e.g. TOEFL) is how English skills are evaluated: whereas the latter usually assesses examinee’s skills objectively, the former is self-reported, as shown in Table 1 (Note that this wording is based on the English version of the survey although the survey was usually conducted in respondents’ first language).

Table 1

*Questionnaire item of English skills*

---

Q. How well can you speak English? (Circle one answer)

---

- (1) None/not at all
  - (2) Enough to understand signboards, etc. but cannot speak
  - (3) Enough to speak basic expressions required in daily life
  - (4) Enough to understand generally what is written
  - (5) Enough to read books with ease
  - (6) Native fluency
- 

Since the answer is based on the respondent's subjective impression, it may seem to lack reliability of assessment compared to other objective language tests. However, according to Blanche and Merino (1989) and Ross (1998), which review the literature on accuracy of self-assessment of second language proficiency, learner's self-ratings have a considerable degree of correlation with their skills objectively assessed (the average correlation coefficients reported by the two studies are about  $r = 0.50 \sim 0.60$ ). Although the studies report considerable variation of the correlations, they also reveal that the self-test items which contain "descriptions of concrete linguistic situations that the learner can size up in behavioral terms" (Blanche & Merino, 1989, p. 324) correlate with the objective assessment compared to the self-test items with abstract descriptions. Since the most choices in Table 1 have concrete descriptions, the self-rating scale in this study does not seem to lead to serious flaws.

Furthermore, as far as the research question of the present paper is concerned, analyzing the respondents' self-rating is partially adequate for the purpose of this study. When people talk about the "Japanese incompetence in English" discourse, many of them probably do not refer to the abstract linguistic competence which many language tests are assumed to evaluate, but rather they pay much more attention to actual language use and discuss its ability/inability. Therefore, in order to examine a gap between an image of Japanese people and other non-native speakers (i.e., how good at English they *are imagined* to be) and a statistical reality of their self-assessment (i.e., how good at English they think they are), it is significant to analyze such a subjective answer, which ASES includes.

However, it is true that the subjective answer is, more or less, dependent upon sociocultural conditions; people in one country might tend to consider their English skills to be better than people in other country even if both are actually at the same level, for example. Therefore, it is necessary to cautiously interpret the

difference between each country (even if it is statistically significant). A small difference should not be deemed as a *real* difference, but rather it is necessary to modestly interpret results by focusing on a clear difference and a general trend. Furthermore, the cross-national studies introduced earlier also use self-report scales of English proficiency (e.g., Koiso, 2011; Shimauchi & Terasawa, 2012; Sonoda, 2009). Therefore, taking into consideration the characteristics of English skills of each country they have revealed, the author attempts to provide a robust result.

### ***English skills and nationality***

This section examines an average level of English skills by country. One methodological problem here is the design of the questionnaire item above (Table 1); in spite of the fact that it did not allow a multiple answer, it does not seem to form an ordinal scale. For example, there are likely to be people who “understand generally what is written” in English (i.e. Choice 4) but cannot “speak basic expressions required in daily life” (i.e. Choice 3). In order to avoid this problem, therefore, we recode it in the following way. As shown in Table 2, the six original choices are categorized into four levels. We regard the respondents who chose 1 as people without any English skills; 2 as people with only limited knowledge of English; 3 and 4 as people with low-level skills; and 5 and 6 as people with high-level skills. Then, it is natural to consider the respondents who chose 3, 4, 5, and 6 as people who have basic skills of English at least.

Table 2

*Variable: English skills recoded*

Original	Recoded
(1) None/not at all	→ People without English skills
(2) Enough to understand signboards, etc. but cannot speak	→ People with only limited knowledge of English
(3) Enough to speak basic expressions required in daily life	→ People with low-level skills of English
(4) Enough to understand generally what is written	→
(5) Enough to read books with ease	→ People with high-level skills of English
(6) Native fluency	→



## Results

Based on the definition of English skills above, an average level of English skills by country is shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4.<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 shows a percentage of respondents with a high-level of English skills, i.e. those who chose 5 or 6. In the figure, each point indicates the percentage and each arrow depicts an upper or lower side of 95% credential intervals of the percentage.

As Figure 2 reveals, Japan is one of the countries in which only small numbers of respondents recognize that they have a high-level of English abilities, which is in harmony with the view of “Japanese incompetence in English.”

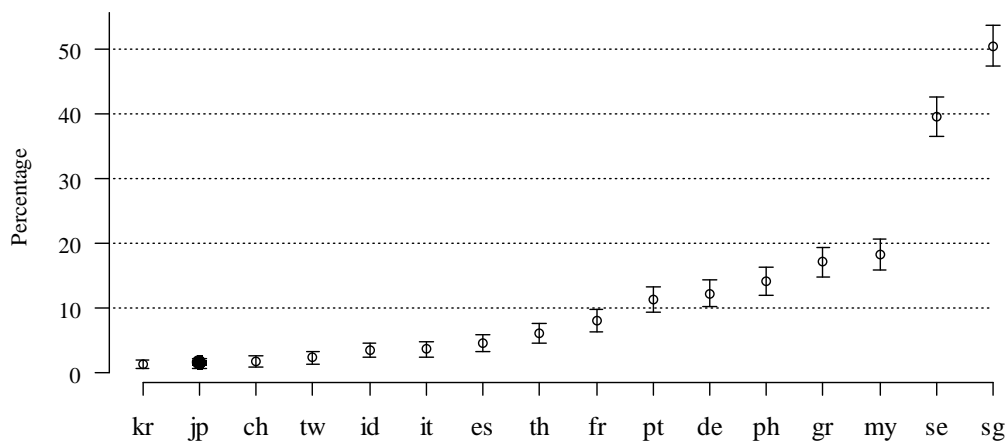


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents with a high level of English

The same trend is evident in Figure 3, which depicts a percentage of respondents with *at least* basic skills of English, i.e. those who chose 3, 4, 5, or 6. This figure also implies that many Japanese do not have even basic skills of English. What should be noted here, however, is that these results do not necessarily mean that Japanese are the *most* incompetent in English in the world because the figures also show several countries whose percentages are almost as small as the Japanese one; some countries such as China, Indonesia, Italy, Korea, Spain, and Taiwan, and Spain, for example, do not seem to show an obvious difference with Japan. Especially in Figure 2, many countries do not show even 10% or more, clustering around a very low percentage. What this result suggests, therefore, is that Japan belongs to the lowest *group* in terms of a country’s English ability, but it is hard to conclude that their inability is the *most* obvious in the world, which is sometimes assumed by the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse.

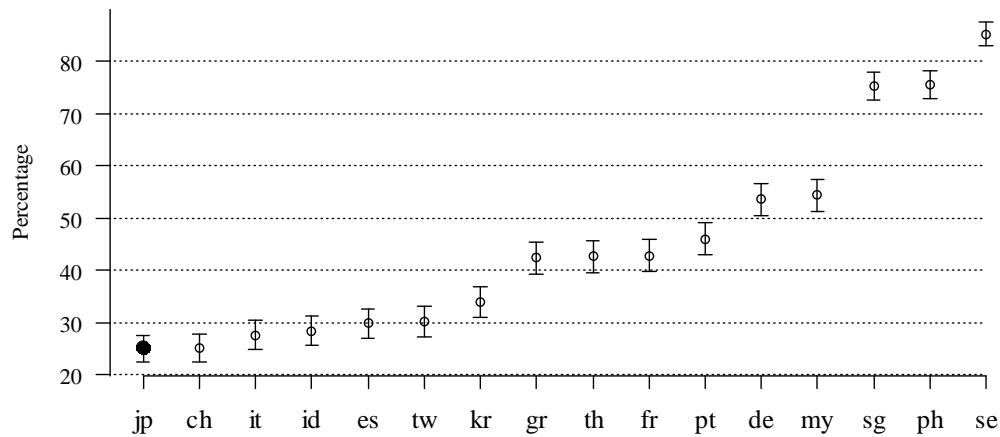


Figure 3. Percentage of respondents with at least basic English skills

If we compare the countries in terms of another definition of English skills, however, a different picture appears. Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents who answered that they could at least “understand signboards etc.” in English, i.e. people who did not regard their English skills as “None/not at all.” This can be regarded as the percentage of people with more or less some rudimentary knowledge of English. As Figure 4 reveals, Japan is one of the countries in which many people have some familiarity with English. Moreover, among countries without a history of colonization by an English speaking country, Japan shows the second highest percentage. This result seems to be a sharp contrast with the oft-claimed image of Japanese people.

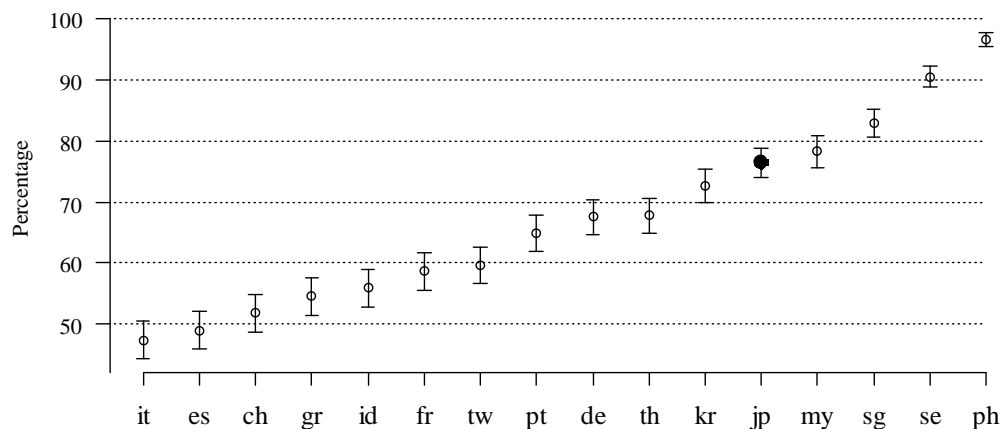


Figure 4. Percentage of respondents who can at least understand a signboard in English

Table 3

*English skills by generation*

	Born in 1921-45				Born in 1945-64				Born in 1965-82			
	I	II	III	<i>n</i>	I	II	III	<i>n</i>	I	II	III	<i>n</i>
jp	38%	48%	14%	461	16%	57%	27%	384	10%	50%	41%	284
tw	83%	12%	5%	196	48%	31%	22%	358	16%	36%	48%	448
it	84%	9%	8%	250	53%	21%	26%	388	32%	26%	42%	378
es	82%	9%	9%	317	48%	22%	29%	309	27%	25%	48%	377
cn	76%	15%	10%	200	56%	30%	14%	385	28%	30%	42%	417
kr	70%	19%	11%	179	28%	44%	27%	383	9%	42%	49%	448
pt	71%	17%	12%	257	35%	26%	39%	295	14%	15%	70%	448
th	73%	14%	13%	177	37%	25%	38%	364	13%	30%	58%	459
id	63%	23%	14%	127	46%	28%	26%	369	38%	28%	34%	515
gr	79%	7%	15%	322	47%	18%	35%	309	16%	12%	72%	387
fr	64%	13%	23%	303	40%	18%	43%	336	24%	16%	60%	367
my	49%	25%	26%	157	29%	24%	46%	341	8%	23%	69%	502
de	53%	15%	32%	290	32%	15%	53%	366	17%	12%	71%	369
sg	56%	7%	36%	140	18%	12%	70%	472	2%	3%	96%	394
se	26%	10%	64%	313	2%	4%	93%	364	1%	2%	96%	323
ph	6%	28%	66%	103	4%	25%	72%	380	2%	17%	80%	517

Group I : People who do not understand English at all, i.e. (1) in Table 1

Group II : People with only limited knowledge of English, i.e. (2)

Group III: People with at least basic skills in English, i.e. (3), (4), (5), or (6)

Thus, although the results in this section partially verify the “Japanese incompetence in English,” more importantly, they do *not* demonstrate an obvious difference between Japan and some countries (especially East-Asian countries such as China and Taiwan, and Western European ones such as Italy and Spain). Therefore, it is difficult to affirm that Japanese proficiency of English is by far at the *lowest*-level in the world, in spite of the fact that this is often asserted by citing TOEFL scores, for instance. The results also reveal an interesting characteristic of English skills of Japanese people. As suggested by a great change in the rank of Japan from Figure 2 and Figure 3 to Figure 4, many more Japanese people cannot speak English well, but at the same time, they are not completely unfamiliar with it; they have limited knowledge of English at least. The similar

pattern is recognized in only South Korea, and the other countries show almost the same rank among Figures 2-4.

### ***Generational trend***

As revealed in the previous section, although Japan has relatively few people who are good at English, it is not necessarily true that their incompetence is more obvious than people from some other Asian and European countries, whose average level of English proficiency is also as low as Japanese one. This result seems to be considerably inconsistent with the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse as well as the cross-national trend of the TOEFL scores in Figure 1. But how should we explain this contradiction? Exploratory analysis has revealed one of the most powerful determinants of English skills, a generational factor. A cross-national comparison by generation, seen below, can provide a convincing explanation for the discrepancy between the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse and its statistical fact.

In order to examine the generational trend of English skills, the sample is clustered into three age groups: (1) those born in 1921-45, (2) those born in 1946-64, and (3) those born in 1965-82<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, they are also categorized into three groups based on their English skills: people with at least basic skills in English, i.e. those who chose 3, 4, 5, or 6 in Table 1 (Group III in Table 3); people with only limited knowledge of English, who chose 2 (Group II); and people who do not understand English at all, who chose 1 (Group I). The percentage of each group is shown in Table 3.

Although Table 3 seems to suggest many important implications, however, it contains too much information to interpret generational differences at a glance, so it is illustrated in line graphs. Figure 5 plots a percentage of people with at least basic English skills. As the figure clearly indicates, younger people are generally better at English, suggesting that the average level of English skills has increasingly improved over time in every country<sup>7</sup>. Of more importance here, however, is that Japan’s improvement is smaller than that of other countries. In the oldest generation of non-former-colonies of English speaking countries, there are only a few countries (Sweden, Germany, and France) which exceed 20%, implying that, in many countries including Japan, people born before World War II are generally unfamiliar with English. In the two younger age groups, on the other hand, many countries show a much larger increase than Japan (Japan’s rank has dropped from 9th in the oldest age group among the 16 countries, to 13th in the middle age group, to 15th in the youngest age group). Thus, the groups which show the most obvious difference between Japan and other countries are the

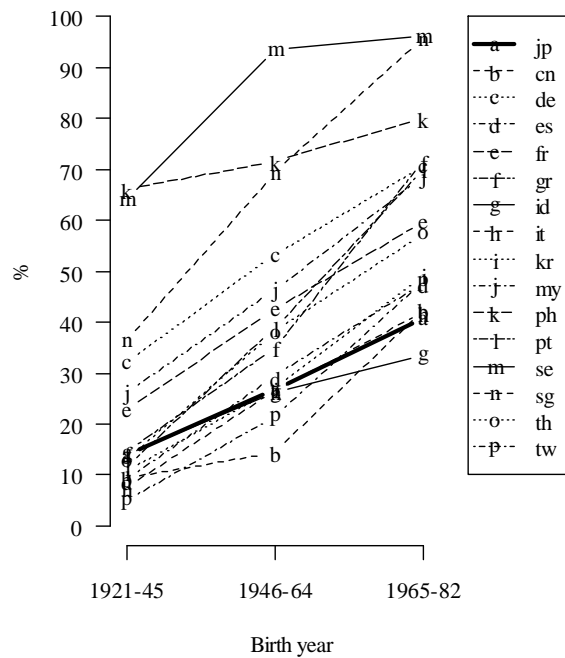


Figure 5. People with at least basic English skills

younger age groups. This suggests that the attention given to young Japanese, whose English proficiency is not as strong as their contemporaries from other countries, is one of the factors which construct the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse.

This is convincing if we consider how this discourse works. What the discourse intends in most cases is *not* to make a descriptive or neutral cross-national comparison, but rather to express a sense of crisis about Japan’s current situation of English language education. Indeed, such reasoning can be found in a variety of literature in Japan. For example, the report published by The Prime Ministers’ Commission on Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century (2000) “The Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium” emphasizes that Japanese low-level proficiency of English can potentially decrease the international presence of Japan, so Japanese people should study English more intensively. Since the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse often involves such a rationale (see Butler & Iino, 2005), it is natural that the discourse has an orientation toward children or young people, the unborn generations who will play a central role in society in the future.

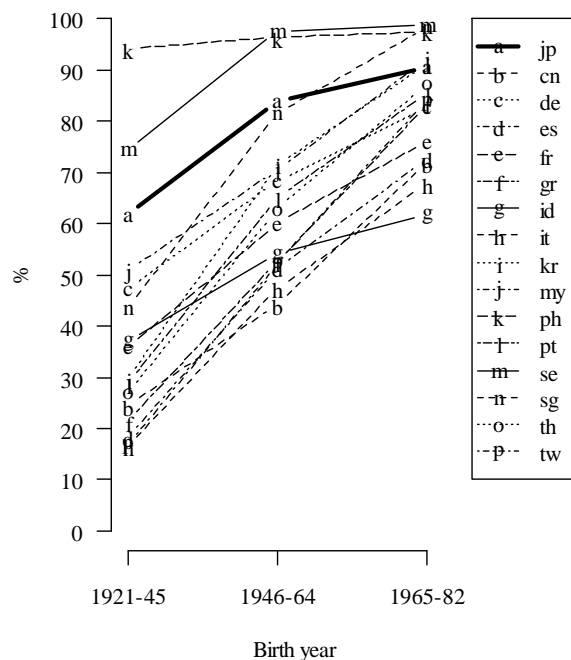


Figure 6. People who can understand signboards in English

Interestingly enough, if we focus on another aspect of English skills, we can obtain a different impression. In Figure 6, which depicts a percentage of people who can understand signboards, etc. in English (i.e., those who chose 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 in Table 1), Japan shows a relatively higher percentage even in the oldest generation (60%) and its rank is consistently higher (3rd → 3rd → 5th) than many other countries. Since the figure here represents a percentage of people who are *not completely unfamiliar* with English language, this result suggests that Japan has fewer people who do not know English at all than other countries, and its gap between the old and young generations is relatively small. This characteristic of Japan seems to imply that the English language was popularized in Japan much earlier than in other countries, although this did not serve for improvement of English skills in the following generations (see Figure 5). This might indicate that what the popularization really caused in Japan was not aspiration for practical performance in English, but orientation toward, in Sargeant’s (2009) term, its symbolic value, that is, English which is served as a symbol of social and cultural status (Takashi, 1990).

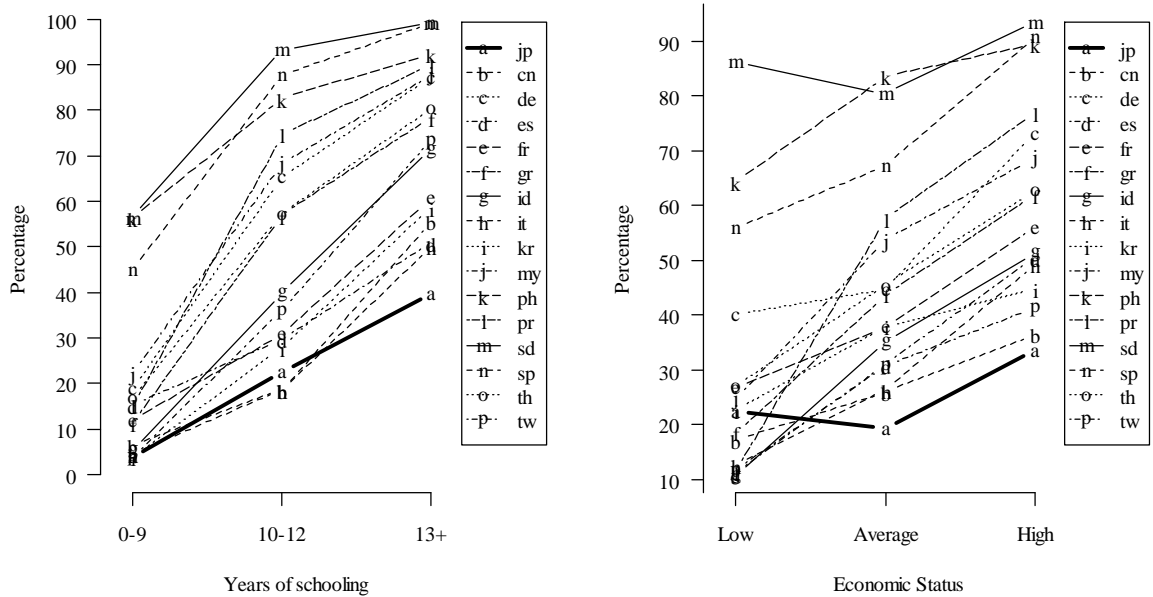
### *Social factors*

As revealed by the previous analysis, the “Japanese incompetence of English” discourse is considerably inconsistent with the statistical fact in that not only Japanese but also the populations of other countries such as China, Indonesia, Italy, and Spain generally do not have high-level skills in English. But why has the discourse prevailed so widely and why have many people accepted it? One account for this is that the discourse might reflect attention exclusively on a specific social group within the population of Japan and other countries. In other words, relative Japanese incompetence might become obvious only by a focus on a specific social stratum, rather than on the whole population, of Japan and other countries. Therefore, the present paper from now on aims at examining the contexts in which the image of Japanese incompetence becomes vivid. Exploratory analysis has found that it becomes apparent in two contexts: one is concerned with high socioeconomic status, the other with urban residence.

### *Socioeconomic status*

It is quite natural, especially in an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) country, that highly educated people are more likely to have good English skills. Likewise, since an educated person is more likely to obtain high economic status, it is also unquestionable that economic status correlates to English skills in many countries, except English-speaking ones. Although such a trend can be recognized in the following analysis, however, it reveals an interesting characteristic of Japanese people. This peculiar position of Japan seems to be an important factor of the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse. Based on this discussion, how English skills relate education and economic status in each country is illustrated in Figures 7-8.

Figure 7 shows a percentage of people with English skills by their education level. In the figure, the samples are classified into three groups based on years of schooling (those with 0-9 years, 10-12 years, and 13 years or more<sup>8</sup>), and a percentage of those with English skills (those who chose 3, 4, 5, or 6 in Table 1) is estimated. As the figure indicates, although Japan shows a relatively small percentage in all groups, the smallness is the most remarkable in the highest educated group, those with more than 13 years of schooling. By contrast, for the lower education group many countries are clustered around Japan; China, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Italy, Spain, and France show almost the same percentage as Japan in the two low-educated groups<sup>9</sup>.



(Left) *Figure 7.* Percentage of people with English skills by education

(Right) *Figure 8.* Percentage of people with English skills by economic status

This feature of Japan is also evident in the comparison by economic status. The present paper, by using principal component analysis, merges two ASES questionnaire items for a proxy of respondent's economic status: One is a household income level reported by the respondents themselves (see Table 4), the other is the interviewer's subjective judgment of a respondent's richness (see Table 5); their Kendall's rank correlation is .496 ( $p < .001$ ). Then, according to a score of the first principal component of these variables, the samples are classified into three groups: high (the score is over 0.5), average (-0.5 ~ 0.5), and low (below -0.5) (see Table 6)<sup>10</sup>.

Table 4

*Household income level*

	N	%
High	406	2.2%
Relatively high	1911	10.5%
Average	12260	67.2%
Relatively low	2807	15.4%
Low	860	4.7%
No answer	9	0.0%



Table 5

*Richness (interviewer's judgment)*

	N	%
Seems rich	750	4.1%
Seems relatively rich	2773	15.2%
Seems to be average	11974	65.6%
Seems relatively poor	2387	13.1%
Seems poor	340	1.9%
No answer	29	0.2%

Table 6

*Economic status*

		N	%
High	( $0.5 < score$ )	4124	22.6%
Average	( $-0.5 \leq score \leq 0.5$ )	9835	54.0%
Low	( $score < -0.5$ )	4256	23.4%
Missing value		38	

*score* : Score of the first principal component

Figure 8, based on the definition above, shows a percentage of people with English skills. As the figure indicates, whereas, among the people with low economic status, Japan does not show any clear difference with many countries, its relative incompetence is evident among the people with average or high economic status.

The results of the two analyses above suggest that *not all* socioeconomic groups in Japan are obviously inferior in terms of English skills to the other countries; their inability is evident only in the relatively higher social strata. To be more exact, although, in many countries, the higher education level or economic status one has, the more likely he or she is to obtain English skills, Japan does not show a marked improvement even in the group with a higher socioeconomic status. The “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse, therefore, can be created by focusing on the relative incompetence of English skills among people at the upper socioeconomic strata.

### *Residential area*

ASES includes two variables about respondent's residential area: administrative district and city size. The latter variable, as a result of exploratory analysis, has been revealed to be an important determinant of English skills. What should be noted here is that each country has different choices about its city size (for example, Japan has 5 categories from "Rural areas" to "13 largest cities," whereas Italy has 10 categories from villages with "Up to 2001 [people]" to cities with "Over 250,000")<sup>11</sup>.

Figure 9 shows a percentage of people with English skills (again, people who chose 3, 4, 5, or 6 in Table 1) by city size of each country (Note that Singapore is excluded due to a lack of the question item of city size). The numeric symbol in the figure indicates relative largeness of each city (the larger the number is, the larger a city is). This result shows a general correlation between a percentage of people with English skills and city size (its rank correlation is 0.642). Of more importance here is the difference between Japan and other countries. The percentages of larger cities in Japan (i.e. 3: "50,000 to less than 150,000," 4: "150,000 or more," and 5: "13 largest cities") are not so different from the percentages of small cities in other countries. For example, even in Greece, whose nationals seem to be relatively proficient in English according to Figure 2 and Figure 3, the small villages and towns (1: "0-2,000 Rural" and 2: "2,001-10,000 Semi-urban") show around 25%, which is not a very high percentage compared to Japan's mean. Since a city size can be deemed as the degree of urbanization, this result indicates that "Japanese incompetence in English" is idealized largely by comparison between Japanese people and *urban residents* of other countries.

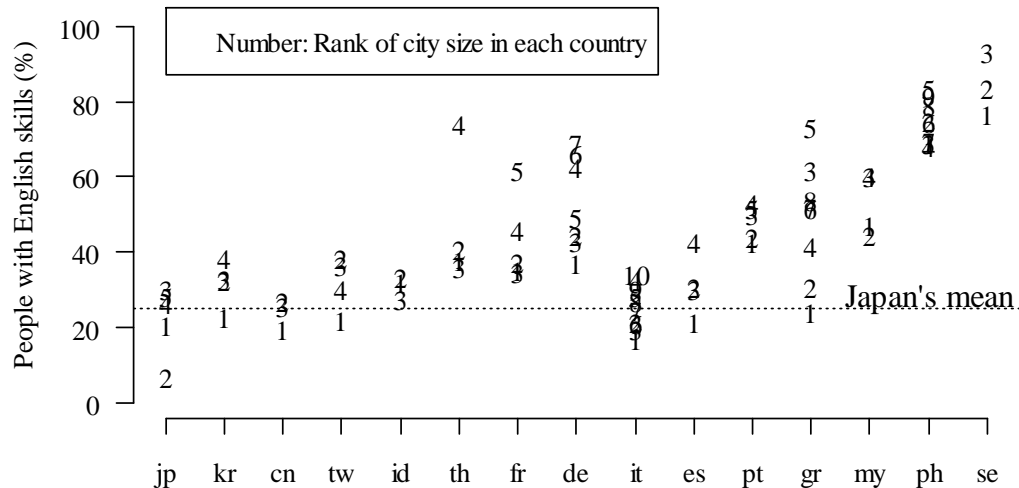


Figure 9. Percentage of people with English skills by size of city of residence

This section has revealed the context in which “Japanese incompetence in English” becomes obvious; it is best highlighted by the cross-national comparison between people with high socioeconomic status and between urban residents. This result is convincing if we consider how (Japanese) people can construct the idea of “Japanese incompetence in English.” This view is by no means expressed based on a strict statistical analysis like this study but rather it is probably created by people’s naive judgment based on their experience such as communication in English with foreign people or watching those fluently speaking English on television. Such a foreign person who plays a distinct role in international communication or international news report in mass-media, for instance, probably tends to have high socioeconomic status, live in urban, or both. Such naive comparison based on unconsciously biased selection of foreign and Japanese people, i.e. a relatively large amount of media-exposure of this type of foreign people, or relatively much experience of communicating with them, may create the image of “Japanese incompetence in English.”

## Discussion

### *Cross-national comparison based on imagined communities*

The present paper has revealed that the “Japanese incompetence in English” discourse does not reflect statistical realities of English user/non-user in the

world, but rather it is constructed largely by paying much attention to young, highly-educated, and economically-rich, urban residents.

Of course, it is quite difficult for people including English language teachers, who are not academic researchers or professional statisticians, to have a precise image of world realities. In spite of the difficulty, however, they often make international comparison without much hesitation, and claim, say, that Japanese are less proficient in English than people from other countries. In other words, the image, despite the fact that it is by no means based on statistical realities, *feels* real to many people.

What makes this naive cross-national comparison possible? One explanation is the powerfulness of the variable of nationality. That is, when people evaluate someone's English skills, for example, in face-to-face communication or while watching television, they are attributed to his or her nationality, rather than to social background behind him or her. In spite of the fact that, especially in some East-Asian and European countries, one's generation and social backgrounds have much higher explanatory power than his or her nationality, this is not recognized so well. That is, here is an imagined communities ideology (Anderson, 1983) which makes people misrecognize a representative of the young, the educated, or urban residents, as a representative of the nation, because it is necessary to imagine homogenous and stereotyped nationals if the nationality feels more plausible than social factors.

The imagined communities ideology seems to be relevant to the following Phillipson's (2010) critique against "English as a world language."

Only a tiny fraction of the population of most countries in the world, including those often described as 'English-speaking' countries in Africa and Asia, actually speaks English, meaning that terms like 'English as a world language' grossly misrepresent the reality of the communication experience of most of the world's population. More seriously, such terms ... conceal the fact that the use of English serves the interests of some much better than others. (p. 28)

Then, the findings of this paper suggest that it can be overgeneralization that the current situation of English language in the world is described as, in Phillipson's term, "English as a world language." It is more precise to view it as it were, "English as a young-people's language," "English as an upper-class language" and "English as an urban-resident's language." Although English language is often represented as a symbol of unity of the world, what it really unites is, as far as the ASES's 2000 data is concerned, a specific social group, not the world. We should be cautious that such an ideology exists behind the seemingly-harmless, or even beneficial, notion of "English as a world language."

### *Validity of cross-national comparison of a TOEFL score*

This study has revealed that the results of the cross-national comparison based on the randomly-sampled, i.e. unbiased, data are rather different from the ranking of the TOEFL score of Japan and some other countries. As discussed in the first section, some educational policies and academic research in Japan have deemed the country's average score of TOEFL as a proxy of the average level of English skills of the country. Such an assumption, furthermore, is also made by non-Japanese social scientists. For instance, Kim and Lee (2010) and Snow (1999), who examine determinants of the average level of English skills of each country, use each country's TOEFL score as a proxy for it. However, the TOEFL is completely different from a test for cross-national comparison of a certain ability, like PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) or TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), because TOEFL's primary purpose is to assess whether one has enough English skills to study in a higher education institution in North America. Therefore, since its average score can be heavily dependent upon the trend of students going there to study, it might be inappropriate for the purpose of such cross-national comparison. Thus, it is significant to empirically examine TOEFL score's validity for an indicator of the country's English skills.

If the TOEFL score is a good indicator for the country's English skills (to be more exact, the people's self-recognition of their own English skills), it should show a close relationship with the results of ASES, whose data, again, was extracted by random-sampling. Table 7 shows a correlation between the percentage of ASES's respondents with English skills (two definitions: those with high- or low-level skills and those with high-level skills; see Table 2) from the 16 countries and their TOEFL score in 2000-2001 test year, and its correlation coefficients (Pearson and Spearman) are estimated by generation and education level. This result reveals that most groups have a moderate (i.e.  $.400 \leq r(\rho) \leq .700$ ) or strong (i.e.  $.700 \leq r(\rho)$ ) correlation, implying that the TOEFL score can be more or less a predictor of the country's English skill. In addition, the degree of the correlation is generally higher in the younger generations than in the older generations. This finding is unsurprising because, since most of the TOEFL test-takers are usually students, it is quite natural that its association becomes strong in the young generation.

Table 7

*Correlation between a TOEFL score and a rate of people with English skills*

		Low/high <sup>(a)</sup>		High <sup>(b)</sup>	
Years of schooling		<i>r</i>	$\rho$	<i>r</i>	$\rho$
Born in 1921-45	All	.513	.562	.646	<b>.835</b>
	0-9	.425	.669	.523	.685
	10-12	.438	.408	.543	.585
	13+	.414	.380	.644	.625
Born in 1946-65	All	.638	<b>.733</b>	.610	<b>.742</b>
	0-9	.561	<b>.818</b>	.463	.534
	10-12	.616	.664	.541	.540
	13+	.576	.637	.665	<b>.779</b>
Born in 1966-82	All	<b>.723</b>	<b>.727</b>	.657	<b>.780</b>
	0-9	<b>.700</b>	<b>.746</b>	.560	.609
	10-12	<b>.700</b>	<b>.717</b>	.621	.672
	13+	.627	.661	.687	.677
All		.655	.683	.650	<b>.750</b>

*r*: Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient

$\rho$ : Spearman's rank-correlation coefficient

**Bold**: strong correlation (.700 or more)

<sup>(a)</sup> <sup>(b)</sup> See the definition of English skills in Table 2

Note: Probability of each correlation coefficient is not estimated due to its small sample size

However, what should be noted here is that it is still questionable whether such strengths of association can be regarded as a proof that the TOEFL is an *excellent* indicator for the country's English skills, because several outliers can be still recognized. This is clearly evident in Figure 10, which plots TOEFL scores (y-axis) and the percentage of highly-educated young respondents with high-level skills of English (x-axis). Since most TOEFL test-takers are probably students who hope to study in the higher education in North America, and since the TOEFL usually requires a high-level of English proficiency, it is natural to expect that a percentage of highly-educated young people with a high-level skills of English abilities correlates with a TOEFL score better than others. Figure 10 suggests that although we can recognize a general logit-linear relation<sup>12</sup>, several countries also have relatively large deviance. In particular, France, Spain, and Italy show a low percentage of people with English skills as compared with its relatively high TOEFL score. In contrast, Greece and Malaysia show a rather higher percentage than the percentage predicted by its TOEFL score. Indeed, in

spite of the fact that almost the same TOEFL score is recognized in these five countries, a gap of their percentages is rather great (about 30-40%). This result can be interpreted in two ways: (1) Greek and Malaysian people are far more likely to consider themselves to be good at English than French, Spanish and Italian people, although there is almost no difference in their *true* average levels of English skills among the five countries, or (2) TOEFL scores cannot predict the country's English skills so accurately. Unless only the former interpretation is true, it is safe to say that the TOEFL scores are useful only for obtaining a general picture, and, unless two or more countries have a considerably large difference between their average scores, it is invalid to conclude which country's people are better at English based on a comparison of the scores.

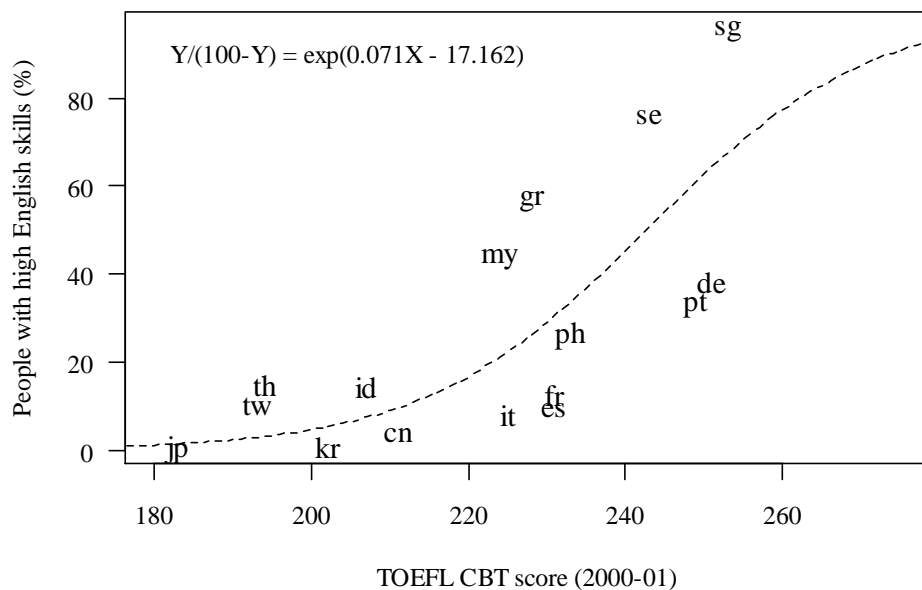


Figure 10. TOEFL score and English skills of highly-educated young people

## Conclusions

This paper has statistically examined the discourse of “Japanese incompetence in English” by analyzing the data of ASES, and revealed that this discourse is not so much a mere reflection of statistical realities of English users in the world but a construct created by a hope for the younger generation and by a focus on a specific social group (in particular, highly-educated and economically rich urban residents). Put it another way, this discourse does not pay fair and equal attention to *all* people in the world. In this gap between the discourse and the statistical

fact, a significant role can be played by the ideology of *imagined communities*, which forces us to (mis)recognize individuals' behaviors or attitudes from a perspective of *nation* and *nationality*. In addition, we have examined the validity of the TOEFL score for the cross-national comparison. As a result of the analysis, we can conclude that, although the TOEFL score can roughly predict the percentage of English users in each country estimated by the data of ASES, its accuracy is not very high, therefore, the scores should be interpreted carefully.

These conclusions, however, are obtained by analyzing the data extracted in 2000; therefore, they might be largely different from the recent relationship between English language and people of each country. In order to examine more recent realities, it is necessary to conduct some social surveys which include a questionnaire item on respondents' English proficiency and conduct a cross-national analysis.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The data for this secondary analysis, "Asia-Europe Survey (ASES), Takashi Inoguchi," was provided by the Social Science Japan Data Archive, Information Center for Social Science Research on Japan, Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

<sup>2</sup> However, the samples of Britain and France are selected by non-random sampling (quota sampling), so the results should be carefully interpreted.

<sup>3</sup> Note that although in most countries the survey was conducted in nationwide, the following countries are not the case:

- China: Only 8 large cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqui, Xian, Nanjing, Dalian, Qingtao)
- Malaysia: Only Malay Peninsula
- Indonesia: Only Java

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.asiaeuropesurvey.org/>

<sup>5</sup> This paper basically uses the following country codes (Ireland and United Kingdom are excluded): “cn” denotes China, “de” Germany, “es” Spain, “fr” France, “gr” Greece, “id” Indonesia, “it” Italy, “jp” Japan, “kr” South Korea, “my” Malaysia, “ph” Philippines, “pt” Portugal, “se” Sweden, “sg” Singapore, “th” Thailand, and “tw” Taiwan.

<sup>6</sup> The reason for the different age range of each group is that the sample is divided so that the number of respondents of each age group is as equal as possible.

<sup>7</sup> This trend of the European countries is consistent with the survey result of Eurobarometer (2001, p. 17).

<sup>8</sup> The three groups are respectively correspondent to Japanese educational system of the post-War era. In Japan, the first group (years of schooling = 0 ~ 9) experienced only compulsory education (elementary and lower secondary school), the second group (10 ~ 12) upper secondary education, and the third group (13+) tertiary education. In addition, some respondents answered too many years for their schooling (the number of respondents who answered 25 years or more is 80 (0.44%) and the five highest values are 79, 75, 74, 74, and 72). It is natural to regard such answers as a mistake, therefore the author excludes the cases who answered their years of schooling are over 25.

<sup>9</sup> This is also verified by a cluster analysis which uses Euclidean distance and a ward clustering method (its detail is omitted here).

<sup>10</sup> The estimation is based on variance-covariance matrix of the two variables (the number of valid samples is 18,215). Standard deviation of the first principal component is 0.891 and its proportion of variance is 0.760. Its loadings are 0.712 for the household income level and 0.702 for the interviewer’s judgment of respondent’s richness.

<sup>11</sup> See for its detail ASES’s “Fieldwork Report” in the website: <http://www.asiaeuropesurvey.org/fwreport.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Since the logit model is better fitted ( $R^2 = .565$ ) than the linear model ( $R^2 = .472$ ), a fitted curve based on the former is illustrated in Figure 10.

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## **THE ELP AS A TOOL FOR DEMOCRATISING LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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The aim of the present study was to examine the educational potential of the European Language Portfolio in developing self-assessment skills and learner autonomy in an English language classroom in a setting where language teaching is undergoing a shift from centralised prescriptivism to democratisation of teaching and learning processes. Data are drawn from a long-term project of using the European Language Portfolio in Experimental English Classes at the American University of Armenia. The study explored the possibilities of developing learner autonomy and reflective language learning by integrating self-assessment of language competences into English language learning and teaching programmes through the use of the European Language Portfolio. It is our hope that the presented results will motivate language teachers wishing to promote learner autonomy and explore their foreign language pedagogy in their own contexts.

Keywords: self-assessment, learner autonomy, European Language Portfolio

### **Introduction**

After the fall of communism, the Armenian educational system has had to undergo significant changes. For nearly 70 years, the Russian language served as a political and ideological tool in the centralised educational system and functioned as an integral element of the Soviet identity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, English, as an international language, started to gain prestige and has since been paving a way for Armenia's integration into the global economy. The growing importance of English language teaching and learning on the one hand and the need for shift from centralised prescriptivism to democratisation of teaching and learning processes on the other hand have required implementation of educational reforms in the form of structural changes in English language

teaching curricula and syllabi with notable emphasis on learner-centred teaching methods and learner autonomy.

As a member of the Council of Europe Armenia has agreed to indicate a strong commitment to common European standards and values by ensuring adequate and appropriate access to education which is considered to be a basic human right of individuals.

The Council of Europe Secretariat (Directorate of Education) and the Ministry of Education of Armenia have agreed on the Framework Programme of Co-operation in order to co-ordinate and focus the support of the Council of Europe in reforming their legislation, policy and practice in the field of education. (Council of Europe, 2001a)

Among the projects and activities proposed in the Framework Program of Cooperation is the introduction of the European Language Portfolio into the Armenian educational system. The Ministry of Education of Armenia has agreed to support the introduction of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio as a basis for curriculum development and benchmarking.

### **The Common European Framework of Reference**

At the Council of Europe Intergovernmental Symposium “Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe: Objectives, Assessment and Certification” held in Rüşchlikon, Switzerland in 1991, delegates from twenty-seven member states recognized the need for “the development of a comprehensive, flexible framework of reference for the definition of objectives and of levels of certification for language learning in Europe” (Schärer & North, 1992, p. 3). Thus, The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language learning, teaching and assessment at all levels was developed to “promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries”, “provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications” and “assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts” (Council of Europe, 2001b, pp. 5-6). The Framework describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. According to the recommendations of the Rüşchlikon symposium (Council of Europe, 1992), the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in turn would be related to this shared framework of reference and thus would help to harmonize the recognition and reporting of language learning achievement in multilingual Europe. It was further proposed that the development of the ELP

could significantly help to motivate learners, to increase the coherence and transparency of the language learning process, and to value and reward achievement.

The Common European Framework of Reference incorporates scales of language proficiency for five skills, i.e. reading, writing, listening, oral interaction and oral presentation. On this scale six proficiency levels have been identified (Council of Europe, 2001b):

- A1 (Breakthrough)
- A2 (Waystage)
- B1 (Threshold)
- B2 (Vantage)
- C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency)
- C2 (Mastery)

These levels describe communicative proficiency in terms of the activities learners can perform and provide a basis for assessment of learners' communicative proficiency in different languages in relation to the criterion of real world language proficiency. The criteria for assessment are in a form of "can do" descriptors, which are formulated in a positive way by putting the emphasis on what a learner "can do" in a particular language and not what he/she cannot do. The "can do" approach "recognizes lower levels in the scale as having a place of functional importance" (Hudson, 2005, p. 205). The "can do" approach is considered to be one of the CEFR's most important innovations since the same descriptors can be used (1) to define a curriculum, (2) to plan a language teaching/learning program, and (3) to guide the assessment of language learning, which implies that curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment can be more closely related to one another than has traditionally been the case (Council of Europe, 2004, p. 14).

The Common reference levels in the CEFR form the basis for the descriptions of levels and for self-assessment grids and scales included in the ELP. According to Schneider and Lenz (2001), in order to be reliable, all information documented in the ELP should be related to the Common Reference Levels in the CEFR wherever possible.

### **The European Language Portfolio**

The European Language Portfolio "represents a new departure, offering an instrument which independently of any given syllabus or any given set of materials is a vehicle for communicating to teachers and learners about their

language teaching and learning and encouraging them to formulate their own views, aims and paths” (Council of Europe, 2002, p. 171).

The ELP consists of three main components (Council of Europe, 2000):

- A Language Passport (presents the learners’ language proficiencies in an internationally transparent manner). It contains a description of the learner’s language skills, his/her level of communicative language proficiency, significant language and intercultural learning experiences and formal qualifications and certifications obtained. This section is meant to form the basis for formal recognition of achievements across schools systems and national borders. To secure pan-European recognition and comparison, the assessment of the learner’s skills always is related to the six levels of the CEFR. The Council of Europe has established a standard passport for adults.
- A Language Biography (presents documents and information regarding the learner’s language learning history). This section is used to set language learning targets, monitor learning progress, and record specifically important language learning and intercultural experiences (Little, 2002). The learner has to reflect on his/her learning and to evaluate independently his/her competences in listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing using the “can do” checklists which are based on the CEFR. Learners are able to set language learning goals and later evaluate whether they have achieved them or not. This section may include reports about visits and exchanges as well as work experience abroad.
- A Dossier (documents and samples of learner’s work illustrating language proficiency). The dossier is the place for the learner to keep samples of his or her work (in a form of written texts, audio or video recordings) that reflect their achievements, which they have recorded in the passport and learner biography sections. This section includes documentation on language programs such as language course records and exchange program certificates.

According to the ELP guide for teachers and teacher trainers (Little & Perclová, 2001), the three parts can be used in interaction with each other so that language learning begins with self-assessment and proceeds to goal setting. In the dossier, the learners put together the outcomes of their language learning and further evaluate these outcomes in the biography. This evaluation forms the basis for setting new goals, carrying out a new learning task, evaluating it and collecting the outcome in the dossier. For example, the learners involved in the piloting of the ELP at the Linguistic Lyceum of Moscow State Linguistic University (Koriakovsteva & Yudina, 1999) stressed that in particular the language biography helped them to clarify the learning objectives and develop their ability to self-assess language proficiency, as well as highlighted their



problems in language learning and promoted their self-confidence in language learning and use. Thus, the process of developing the ELP provides a means for learners to get involved in the design and running of their own language learning process and to achieve a fuller awareness of their development as language learners by being able to have a clear view of where they stand and what they are aiming toward and by realizing that all their achievements are being valued. Such a degree of learner involvement in the language learning process – as well as the recognition of partial qualifications – helps to motivate learners since the overall learning appears to be more relevant to learners.

Referring to ELP experiments in some Finnish upper primary schools, Kohonen (1999) affirms that a clear majority of the students can take an active and responsible role as they learn to set their goals and generally work hard to reach them. He further states that self-direction increases the meaningfulness of language learning for students, citing as evidence students' comments on their own work. Thus, as a planning and self-assessment instrument, the ELP provides a means to make the learning process more visible to the learners and as such involves them more in the process of learning (Schärer, 2001).

The ELPs developed in the different countries and different educational settings may differ in their appearance, but they all must consist of the above main three components. At the same time, they should be based on the CEFR reference levels. The Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Cooperation has established a European Validation Committee for the validation of ELP models (Council of Europe, 2002). The ELP has been developed to fulfill two functions:

- **Reporting.** The ELP presents information about the owner's experience of learning and using foreign languages and provides concrete evidence of his/her achievements in acquiring linguistic and cultural skills in foreign languages (including both formal and informal learning) by relating them to the proficiency levels of the CEFR. In its reporting function the ELP supplements the certificates and diplomas that are awarded on the basis of formal information. The reporting function is mainly fulfilled through the Language Passport, which involves the ELP owner in summative self-assessment with relation to the six reference levels of the Common European Framework. However, this reporting function is also fulfilled by the Biography section and the Dossier section. Completing the reporting parts of the ELP helps students realize their responsibility for keeping an up-to-date self-report of their foreign language learning achievements and intercultural experience (Little, 2005).

- Pedagogical. The ELP is intended to make the learning process more transparent to learners by promoting the development of their capacity for reflection and self-assessment and gradually fostering the development of learner autonomy. The development of learner autonomy is viewed as one of “the cornerstones of education for democratic citizenship and lifelong learning” (Council of Europe, 2000, p. 2). Learner autonomy is fostered since the ELP supports reflective learning in which goal setting and self-assessment plays a central role (Little, 2005). Using the self-assessment checklists the learners themselves can establish their own language learning goals. The pedagogical function is mainly fulfilled through the Language Biography and the Dossier.

According to the ELP principles and guidelines (Council of Europe, 2000), these two functions of the ELP are interdependent and complement each other. For example, the Dossier can be used to fulfill the reporting function of the ELP through providing an opportunity for the learner to select relevant documentation to demonstrate his/her language knowledge and skills. At the same time, Kohonen (2000) states that in language portfolio experiments carried out in Finland it became apparent that the pedagogical function of the Dossier is vital for developing portfolio-oriented foreign language learning since it makes language learning more visible to the learners by allowing them to assess the language learning outcomes they presented in the Dossier and thus to reflect on their own language learning. Little and Perclová (2001) in their ELP guide for teachers and teacher trainers examine the possibilities of using the Dossier as an instructional tool to promote reflective learning. Thus, the ELP’s potential to promote language-learning lies in both its pedagogical and reporting functions.

In fact, one of the major advantages the ELP is the fact that it is based on a set of common standards such as the Reference Levels of the Common European Framework. As such, the ELP functions as a logical development of CEFR, providing support for learners, which is coherent with the principles of learner-orientation, transparency and flexibility (Council of Europe, 2002). The fact that the ELP is based on the CEFR levels makes it possible to document progress, mainly through self-assessment. “Visible progress gives a feeling of success, which generates motivation and a positive circle: success-motivation-success” (North, 1999, p. 28). The learner is also encouraged to regularly include reliable entries about their self-assessed foreign language proficiency. The ELP gives both the learner and the teacher an opportunity to systematically set language learning goals and to evaluate learner’s achievement with reference to the set goals instead of having to compare the individual learner with the other learners. Thus, the reference to CEFR is particularly valuable in helping learner self-assessment, teacher assessment, and external assessment adjust themselves towards the same

behavioral descriptions (Little, 2005). In addition, according to Little and Perclová (2001), the self-assessment checklists of the ELP can be used to plan a course of learning and thus serve as a syllabus for teaching foreign languages.

The ELP is regarded as a tool to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism (Council of Europe, 2000) and is meant to document all the language learning and cultural experience of a learner. The ELP provides a means to relate learning in a formal context with self-directed learning since while developing the ELP learners are asked to report their ability to communicate in languages, which they have not been formally taught. Thus, learners realize that language learning does not only take place in formal contexts (i.e., schools, universities) and they become conscious of the possibility to advance their foreign language skills by using the language independently of the school context. The ELP encourages them to learn to value and to take advantage of every available opportunity to be exposed to a foreign language (e.g., visits to foreign countries, the Internet, the literature and mass media in a foreign language, personal contacts with other users of the language). Through the use of CEFR descriptors, the ELP makes it possible for teachers and learners to describe and record language ability across the full range of levels (Hasselgreen, 2005). It enables the learners to record and present different aspects of their language knowledge and skills. The ELP provides learners with a means to keep a record of their progressing plurilingual competence by documenting language learning experience of all kinds over a wide range of languages which may otherwise be unattested and unrecognized (Council of Europe, 2002). For example, Slovak teachers Gyöngyösi and Majercsik Tóthné (2000) while describing their experiences with the ELP in Hungary in a minority language (Slovak being the mother tongue of the majority of 640 inhabitants in Lucfalva) reported that the ELP provided an opportunity to turn the limelight on learning Slovak and gave them a more detailed picture of the learner's knowledge of the language by covering the whole range of activities and aspects relative to learning and using the language. In addition, Khaleeva (1999, p. 20) states that the ELP "has every reason to be accepted in plurilingual and pluricultural Russia with its 150 nationalities, each having its own language and culture" and believes that the ELP will familiarize Russians with European methods of assessment of language proficiency. Thus, the ELP can serve to motivate the learning of languages throughout life by giving value to language knowledge and skills in all languages that have been acquired in both formal and informal learning environments.

The current study deals with the educational potential of ELP in developing self-assessment skills and learner autonomy in the English language classroom in a setting where dynamic shift toward language-centred teaching and learning is needed.

## **Methodology**

This research project involved four teachers teaching the Experimental English Classes at the American University of Armenia. Overall, there were six groups with an average of 20 students in a class. The students were from two age groups: 9-11 year-olds (n = 56, 48.7%); 11-13 year-olds (n=59, 51.3%).

The structure of the ELP itself with its main emphasis on self-assessment and reflection called for a cyclical type of research with recursive planning, reflection, action and observation. The pedagogical functions of the ELP served as cycles of the research procedure. In the first phase of the research project, the teachers used the ELP as a means to clarify learning objectives with the learners and make the learners aware of their own goals and preferences about learning English. After having reflected on the learning objectives, the learners proceeded to identifying their position with regard to the learning objectives through the self-assessment checklists and grids. Compiling the dossier section of the ELP was meant to develop a reflective approach to language learning since the learners by having to create and select materials for this section of the ELP began to monitor their own learning process. At the end of the 10-week language course, the learners were brought back to reflecting upon the previously clarified learning objectives and to evaluate their own learning in terms of these objectives. They were asked to self-assess through the “can do” statements and had to repeatedly refer to the dossier for evidence for their self-assessment. In the last cycle of the research the learners filled in the questionnaires to reflect upon their experiences of working on the ELP.

The project employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods: the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project Group Learner Questionnaires, examination of learners’ filled-in ELPs, discussions with learners, teacher notes and observation techniques. The questionnaire was translated and adapted for the young learners. It included both closed- and open-ended questions. The data collected were analyzed in relation to the ELP’s pedagogical functions (i.e., clarifying language learning objectives, self-assessment, developing learner autonomy, enhancing motivation).

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Clarifying learning objectives***

As reported by learners (83%), the fact that they were involved in the process of decision making helped them to become aware of the targeted learning outcome. This, according to teachers, helped the learners to take a more responsible attitude

toward learning right from the beginning of the course. Around 85% of the learners agreed with the statement that the ELP helps to know what they already know and what they still need to learn. The learners' ability and their enthusiasm in setting individual learning goals became evident through the biography section where pupils had to put down their individual goals for English language learning. In addition, the parents were able to follow children's progress by reviewing children's writings, drawings, and recordings. Thus, the ELP has demonstrated a potential to serve as a means for joint learner-teacher reflection on language learning objectives. This is crucial in the stage of moving from authoritative method of teaching to a learner-centred classroom and is likely to have a qualitative effect both on learning and teaching.

### *Developing self-assessment skills*

Successful pedagogical implementation of the ELP depends on developing learners' capacity for self-assessment (Council of Europe, 2001b). As Harris (1997) points out that after the initial stages of learning a language, learners may feel that they are getting nowhere (or even that they are going backwards) since progress in skills such as listening and speaking can seem highly intangible. To be encouraged and motivated to put further effort in learning languages young learners need to clearly see progress in terms of communicative objectives.

As it appeared from the self-assessment grid of the learners' ELPs, young learners are able to evaluate their skills using the self-assessment checklists by indicating whether or not they can perform concrete tasks. The majority of pupils (91%) stated in their questionnaires that the ELP helped them to assess their skills and support their assessment by including appropriate items in the Dossier. They emphasized that setting targets and evaluating their achievement with regard to these targets had helped them to learn to reflect on their language competence.

The analysis of the ELPs showed that the self-assessment grid in the passport section and the self-assessment checklists in the biography section were used by all pupils. Pupils appeared to be able to complete the checklists and grids in terms of marking the boxes, filling in the corresponding dates, putting symbols to show the learning goals. In response to the question "What do you like best about your ELP?" 54% of the pupils wrote down "self-assessment" (Appendix B, table 1).

The teachers repeatedly stated in their notes that learners' self-assessment helped them to reflect upon and to evaluate their teaching and to obtain more information on learners' learning. This allowed them to adjust their teaching methods to learners' needs.

### ***Documenting language proficiency and recognizing progress***

Most of the learners (90%) were able to perceive progress in their learning. As observed by teachers, seeing the progress was crucial for learners' motivation. The fact that the ELP describes language competence through positive "can-do" statements helped the learners to see what they can already do which in turn served as an encouragement and motivated further effort to learn foreign languages. This is considered by Nunan (1988, p. 5) to have a number of positive outcomes for the learners among which is the fact that self-evaluation becomes more feasible and skills development is seen "as a gradual, rather than an all-or-nothing process." This, according to teachers' reports, was especially important for the learners who were not confident enough about their language learning abilities. A learner reflected on their dossier work: "I see progress when I compare my present work with my previous work and I can show this progress to my teacher and parents." Thus, the ELP with its emphasis on positive self-assessing 'can-do' descriptions allows learners to keep track of their own gradual progress in acquiring a foreign language.

### ***Developing learner autonomy***

To develop autonomy, learners need to use the target language as a means of classroom communication, channel of learning and tool for reflection (Little, 2004). From an early age the ELP is likely to help the child to acquire skills for self-assessment and to learn to reflect upon his/her own learning processes. This is expected to foster the child's development as an autonomous learner.

According to Table 1, 78% of the learners reported that the ELP stimulated them to participate more fully in the language learning by allowing self-reflection and 86% of the learners believed that the ELP helped them to reflect on language and on how and why they learn it. From the total number of the learners, 85% thought that they took more responsibility for their own learning because of the ELP. A total number of 83 learners (81%) seem to readily accept the added responsibility for their own learning. As the above-mentioned results suggest the use of the ELP has led to an increase in learners' responsible participation in the language learning process.

Table 1

*Learner responses to closed choice questions*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
1 Does the ELP allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?	105	2	8
2 Does the ELP help you understand the learning objectives?	95	5	15
3 Does the ELP help to know what one still needs to learn?	95	5	10
4 Does the ELP help you assess your language skills?	104	2	9
5 The ELP helps to evaluate where one stands.	98	6	11
6 Has the ELP helped you to see progress in learning?	103	4	8
7 Has the ELP helped you to learn better?	100	6	9
8 Does the ELP stimulate you to participate more fully in the language learning process?	90	6	19
9 Do you feel the ELP puts more responsibility on you as learner?	98	7	10
10 The ELP helps to reflect on language learning.	99	6	10
11 Do you like added responsibility for your own learning?	83	7	25

***Enhancing motivation***

The potential of the ELP is reflected in the response to the question “What do you like best about your ELP?” - 43% of the pupils wrote down “learning the language” (Table 2). In addition, 87% of the learners (n=100) reported that the ELP had helped them learn better. The ELP appears to enhance motivation for language learning as a result of the fact that even the weakest pupil could see some progress. The dossier was identified as the best part of the ELP by 30% of learners. The examination of learners’ ELPs allowed to conclude that the dossier

section of the ELP functioned as a motivational tool for the learners since it allowed them to demonstrate their progress through creating and collecting language learning evidence.

Table 2

*Learner responses to open-ended question “What do you like best about your ELP?”*

<b>Response category</b>	<b>Frequency of occurrence (N=115)</b>	<b>%</b>
Self-assessment	62	54
Seeing how much I can do	20	24
Learning the language	49	43
Present my work in the dossier	34	30
Everything	25	29
Don't know	15	17

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study demonstrate that the ELP appears to function as an efficient instrument for assessing and documenting language proficiency and as a valuable tool for improving English language learning and developing learner autonomy. The ELP appears to assist in promoting reflection on language learning from early stages and serves as a useful tool for moving towards a learner-centred language teaching. In addition, fostering self-assessment the ELP develops a culture of “responsible language learning” and “reflective teaching”. The new educational attainment targets described in the new legislation of the Ministry of Education of Armenia intend to make foreign language education more learner-centred, transparent and internationally comparable. However, as it is usually the case, reforms are implemented by people who face their own opinions and biases, and so micropolitics may frustrate innovation and change (Pižorn & Nagy, 2009). Therefore, it was necessary to examine the potential of the ELP as viewed by learners and teachers before incorporating it into the English language classroom. The proposal for a dynamic shift suggested by the implementation of the ELP and the positive attitude towards the ELP described in this study provide enough basis for integrating the ELP as an instructional tool. For this to happen the findings should be disseminated to serve as incentives for language practitioners in countries currently undergoing educational reforms as well as raise the awareness



of policy makers at national and international level. It is even more essential to publicise the outcomes of activities and efforts of various individuals and institutions from such countries as Armenia from where little information is widely available in order to provide an internationally coherent picture of English language education developments throughout the world.

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### **Note on Contributors**

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