THE POLITICS OF ENGLISH

South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific

EDITED BY *Lionel Wee, Robbie B.H. Goh and Lisa Lim*

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The Politics of English

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South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific

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Preface

In August 2009, the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore hosted a workshop on "The Politics of English in Asia: Language Policy and Cultural Expression". The participants of the workshop consisted of established and emerging scholars. All were especially invited on the basis of their expert knowledge of specific Asian countries. The format of that workshop was simple yet extraordinarily effective: each country was discussed by at least two different authors, one providing a critical assessment of that country's language policy on English, and the other an analysis of the use of English in some cultural domain(s). The discussion that followed was lively, insightful and provocative, resulting in a heightened appreciation of the issues facing various Asian countries and also leading to a general interest in cross-comparisons across these countries.

This collection of essays is inspired by that workshop. We say "inspired" because these essays are not proceedings that directly reflect what went on in the workshop. Rather, subsequent to the workshop, the authors writing about a particular country were asked to read each other's essays, engage with the ideas therein, and revise their essays accordingly. Moreover, not all the essays in this volume have their origins in the workshop, and a few significant workshop presentations are not part of this volume. Elaine Ho and Arjuna Parakrama, who spoke about Hong Kong and Sri Lanka respectively (and Kingsley Bolton who was ultimately unable to participate in the workshop with his essay on Hong Kong) were unable to contribute their essays to this collection, and their absence from this volume is regrettable. We feel very fortunate however to be able to complement the other Sri Lanka essay by including an essay by renowned Sri Lanka scholar D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, which is a revised version of an essay that first appeared as "The Interface of Language, Literature and Politics in Sri Lanka" in *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*, edited by Christian Mair (2003). In this regard, we thank Rodopi, and Ms Esther Roth, for kindly granting permission to reprint this essay.

Nevertheless, the organization of this volume does reflect the successful format adopted in the workshop. Consequently, the essays here can be seen to engage a number of related concerns: the ways in which the language policies of Asian countries attempt to manage the presence of English, and how the states of affairs envisaged in these policies compare with actual English language practices in these countries.

These concerns are not new, of course. Indeed, various scholars in earlier works have observed that a recurring challenge for language policies in Asia is managing the presence of English (Pennycook 1994; Rappa and Wee 2006; Tsui and Tollefson 2007), with the English language still having strong association with higher education, internationalism, modernity, job mobility and career development in all Asian societies (Bolton 1992). Most of the studies in this area to date have focused mainly on the domain of education. What is needed, therefore, is a broader-based coverage of the different social domains in which English is making its presence felt. This is an issue of increasing importance, and it takes on a special resonance as Asian countries grow – in their demographic profile, with the total English-using population of Asia now more than that of the Inner Circle, and English the main medium in demand for bi-/multilingualism in the region (Kachru 2005: 15), in economic importance, and in cultural confidence – in what is sometimes described as the "Asian Century". The present collection of essays provides this much needed broad coverage. The countries discussed come from South Asia (India, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore) and the Asia Pacific region (Japan, South Korea), and thus represent different levels of penetration of English in the different societies. The domains discussed range from political discourse to language teaching to creative writing, and the tensions therein.

Inevitably, in a volume such as this, it has not been possible to cover every single country that might be considered "Asian". Whatever the final choice of countries, we realize that there will undoubtedly always be concerns that some countries have been omitted despite their significance (e.g. Hong Kong, China, Indonesia) or that some countries should have been included precisely because they have tended to be marginalized (e.g. Vietnam). There are also practical constraints, of course, since sixteen essays is already a lot for a single volume, and any attempt to exhaustively cover all "Asian" countries would probably call for multiple volumes.

In order to address this issue of coverage, rather than add more countries, we have added a concluding chapter that provides a linking discussion of the themes in the preceding chapters and also brings in some of the countries that have been left out. This concluding chapter, together with Pennycook's introductory chapter, which provides an overview of specific conceptual and practical issues surrounding the cultural politics of English in Asia, make for interesting and thought-provoking "bookends". Together with the country-specific chapters, we believe that this volume of essays is at once both a presentation of original research and a reference work.

This volume benefited from the careful attention of anonymous reviewers. Our thanks also go to Lily Kong, who, as Director of the Asian Research Institute, was the prime mover in getting the workshop going, and to Humphrey Tonkin, for his support and comments in making this a much more coherent volume than it would otherwise have been.

Lionel Wee
Robbie B. H. Goh
Lisa Lim

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CHAPTER 1

Language policies, language ideologies and local language practices

Alastair Pennycook

Discussing a number of examples of language practices in different Asian contexts – from a job advertisement for English teachers in Vietnam, to injunctions to speak good English in Singapore, from mission statements on a Philippine convent wall, to an article about temple elephants in India – this paper argues that it is not so much language as language ideology that is the object of language policy. While ostensibly dealing with the distribution and regulation of languages, language policies are generally about something else entirely, be it educational, ideological or cultural regulation. Local language practices, meanwhile, may appear to be subject to language policies, but since language policies are always about a different understanding of language, it is this understanding rather than the practices themselves, that are at stake. By insisting on the plannability of language, state authorities insist that a sterile and state-serving view of language is the language ideology we should adhere to. State language policies, therefore, have more to do with the regulation of language ideologies than with the regulation of local language practices, which, despite attempts to contain them, always exceed confinement.

To note that state language policies and the cultural and linguistic practices of the people within that state may be at odds is a largely unremarkable observation: What people do with and make of language in their everyday practices is always likely to be distant from the abstractions of state planning. This concern was captured in the observation a number of years ago that "[w]hile language, in the sterile sense linguistics has attached to it, can be 'planned', discourse cannot" (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 39). More recently, Elana Shohamy encapsulates the distinction well in the introduction to her book on the hidden agendas of language policy: "While language is dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries, there have always been those groups and individuals who want to control and manipulate it in order to promote political, social, economic and personal ideologies" (2006: xv). Taken together, these two comments present us with several difficulties in relation to language policy and planning: They suggest that language planning is inevitably involved with a sterile version of language that leaves out discourse and all those personal, dynamic and uncontainable aspects of language that are outside this definition of language. Perhaps this is a very obvious observation: We can only plan the plannable. So it also pushes us to ask what actually is being planned? If unplannable language always escapes the net of language planners, and this is the stuff of everyday language use, what are in fact the language effects of language policy and planning?

In this essay I shall argue that it is not so much language as language ideology that is the object of language policy. By insisting on the plannability of language, state authorities are in fact insisting on certain language ideologies, insisting that a sterile and state-serving view of language is the language ideology we should adhere to. State language policies, therefore, have more to do with the regulation of language ideologies than with the regulation of local language practices, which, despite attempts to contain them, always exceed confinement. While ostensibly dealing with the distribution and regulation of languages, language policies are often about something else entirely, be it educational, ideological or cultural regulation. And to this extent, they may also be attempts to plan discourse as well as language. Local language practices, meanwhile, may appear to be subject to language policies, but since language policies are always about a different understanding of language, it is this understanding rather than the practices themselves, that are at stake.

We need to complicate this picture, however, since the dichotomous framing of state and local language practices – as if this were easily framed as a relation between the state and its citizens – needs to be considered more carefully. Language policy operates at multiple levels and through multiple agents, from those working to maintain a language in the face of state support for other languages, to commercial interests promoting particular versions of a language. If we look at job advertisements for English teachers, for example, it is common to encounter something along the lines of the following: In a recent job advertisement from Vietnam, there are two different salary scales: "Teacher from US, England, Australia, Canada: 1200–1500 USD/month" and "Teacher from India, The Philippines, South Africa and countries where people are bilingual: 700–1000 USD/ month" (Total ESL 2011). This is not, of course, despite appearances, really offering less money to those who are bilingual, but rather sending a partially coded message that the job is for native speakers of certain varieties of White English, rather than World Englishes (Kandiah 1998: 79–80). Language schools and advertising agencies may be more involved in the promotion of such language ideologies than state institutions. Whether as educators, language instructors, interlocutors, academics, customers, language school owners, or business owners, we are all involved in the production and reproduction of language ideologies, so we need to be cautious about juxtaposing language policy and cultural expression as if these inevitably happen at macro and micro levels of the social order.

We also need to consider the extent to which local language practices are overtly in opposition to normative policies, and to what extent they are inevitably yet inadvertently different. If language planning is inexorably concerned with the promulgation of language ideologies, then a question that emerges is whether the ideological struggle we may identify in local language practices is an overt reaction to statist language ideologies or merely the way things happen locally. One domain in which I have pursued this question is in those forms of cultural expression that are common in rap music. While rap in standard language has immediate authenticity problems – if rap is an expression of urban youth street identity, it cannot adhere to orthodox language policies – it also seems to be the case that the cross-linguistic boundary breaking to be found in the work of a number of artists, is an overt challenge to ortholinguistic practices rather than just a case of "keepin' it real" (Pennycook 2007a, 2007c). While this cannot be taken as representative of language use more generally, it does suggest levels of language awareness and of language politics that may render local language practices an explicit challenge to orthodox language ideologies.

A major concern for linguistics is that it has long been complicit with such language ideologies, promoting visions of languages as structured and ordered objects that can be described and planned while eschewing local language practices as divergent, exceptional and deviant. Indeed, the development of linguistics and the growth of statist language ideology are deeply intertwined. If we are interested, however, in a less "sterile" view of language, if we want to understand the relation between language as plannable object and language as unplannable resource, we need to incorporate an understanding of language as a local practice (Pennycook 2010). This view of language urges us to take seriously language ideologies as the different ways in which languages are understood, language practices as something people do as part of other social practices, and locality as the relation between language, place and movement. In order to shed light on this struggle (not so much between local language practices and language policy but rather between the language ideologies that underpin the ways of understanding them) I will look in this chapter at several contexts of local language practices: Singaporean websites to encourage good English, Philippine primary school vision statements and Indian newspaper articles on temple elephants. The aim here is to shed light on the deep disparities in the meanings given to languages and different language uses.

Language planning and the regulation of interaction

The language battles of Singapore are well known and widely documented, and it is useful to remind ourselves that in a time when the role of the state is purportedly being eroded by globalization and new regional affiliations, some states still play a very important role in their citizens' lives (Wee 2005, 2008; Lim, Pakir and Wee 2010). The following example comes from the "Speak Good English Movement" website. Much has been written about this movement, focusing largely on the disparity between the advice on the website and the English used in Singapore (Bruthiaux 2010; Gupta 2010). This campaign aims "to encourage Singaporeans to speak grammatically correct English that is universally understood", though as Bruthiaux claims, it is better understood as "a slick but confused, confusing, outdated, and ultimately irrelevant case of governmental overreach" (2010: 104). Of particular interest here is the type of recommendation being given for speakers of Singaporean English. In the section advising how customers should be treated in shops, for example, "Cannot Try. Dirty How?" is criticized as "grammatically wrong" and for not being "very pleasant for customers to be turned down this way". The phrase "will also not make any sense to foreigners who aren't familiar with the non-standard English phrases common in Singapore". Instead, shop assistants should use: "I'm sorry but we do not allow customers to try these on for hygiene reasons". Similarly, assistants are advised to avoid using a phrase such as "Very cheap already. Don't believe, you go and see other shops" on the grounds that "the phrases are grammatically incorrect and may appear rude to some customers". The preferred response is "I'm afraid we cannot reduce the price any further. I do believe our prices are competitive and you can count on our reliable sales support".

Several points are worth dwelling on here. Aside from the problematic claims that these phrases are ungrammatical (to make sense, such a claim needs to specify in relation to what grammar since these phrases do seem to be grammatical in Singapore English) and the sheer strangeness of the advice (do the makers of these materials seriously expect people to adopt these pompous, British-sounding phrases for everyday interactions?), of interest is the overall picture of what is at stake here. Although couched within discourses about grammatical correctness, the website makes clear that this is centrally about being "tactful", that is to say, it is the perceived abruptness of these phrases, and especially when directed to "foreigners" that is the problem. Centrally, then, while dressed up as a discussion of grammar, this is about behavioural change aimed at market participation. While much has been written recently about the way English has become a commodity, it is also important to observe the ways in which the regulation of English may also be about the regulation of service interactions within the global economy: The commodification of English renders it a language through which social control is enacted (Tan and Rubdy 2008; Stroud and Wee 2012).

The bubbling up of language from below (Singlish) is largely unplannable, and given Singapore's capacity for regulatory injunctions, the battle between Singlish and state-sanctioned English is one of the clearest examples of what can be planned, what always escapes planning, and the language ideological struggles at work. Despite all the efforts of the government to control and regulate Singlish, it seems it will continue to develop as a marker of Singaporean identity. The "Speak Good English Movement" has always been about more than "speaking good English": It is a matter of governance, commodification, and a specific orientation not only to language varieties but also to particular behaviours and ways of being. When we plan language, we are always planning something else too. The language ideologies of this movement are not only normative language orthodoxies, but are also wider forms of governmentality: This is aimed not so much at "good grammar" as at the regulation of service encounters (see Cameron 2003; Friginal 2009; and further discussion below). These are local language policies that seek to regulate language and behaviour in particular ways.

Viewed together with the Vietnamese job advertisement, we can see how language policy may operate locally and at multiple levels; that it is always about a range of concerns of which language regulation is just one; that while language variety and difference will keep bubbling up from below, the interests of language planners in the regulation of such diversity is always connected to other economic, cultural and political goals; and that the language ideologies behind speaking "Good English" are deeply bound up with the ideologies of the service industry. In terms of the wider argument in this essay, it is important to observe that while Singaporean language policies may appear to focus on a narrow and sterile version of language, they are in fact aimed at the planning of discourse and the regulation of interaction. Whether they can be successful in such planning remains an open question, but it is clear that it may be possible not only to promote language ideologies that maintain a distinction between good and bad English but also at least to try to plan discourse.

Language plans, discursive overflows

To explore the plannability of discourse, I turn now to a different South East Asian context: mission statements on the wall of an old convent in the Philippines. "Molding Hearts … Leading Minds … Touching Lives", reads the vision statement of the St Isidore The Farmer Catholic School in Lazi, a small town on the island of Siquijor in Negros Oriental in the central Philippines. Printed in white text against a blue background, the statement is fixed to the faded wall of the former convent, built using coral stone and local hardwood between 1857 and 1891. Below this vision, the mission statement explains that the school aims to "Provide a wholistic and holistic development of students through an effective basic education curriculum that would prepare them to pursue higher levels of learning and assume a vital role in building the family, the church, and the community". The mission statement is supported by a series of objectives, such as "Strengthen school-faculty-parent-community relationship" to "Deepen the students spiritual life through effective religious instructions, retreats and liturgical celebrations" or "Heighten one's abilities in and appreciation for the arts, culture and sports".

This blue glossy mission statement is a revised version of the older, hand-painted statement fixed further along the wall. Here the vision is less succinct: "To be dynamic Catholic institution of basic education in the municipality of Lazi, offering high quality academic education molding citizens on the tenets of Christian virtues so they become worthwhile and God-centred citizens of the country". In the older version, there are four mission statements instead of the one, starting with "To develop well-disciplined and well-rounded students guided by the Christian virtues of love, brotherhood and peace". Many of the objectives have been sharpened considerably in the later version, and now the mission of the school is not only to ensure that pupils acquire the necessary skills, but also, for example, to "Enhance leadership and management skills of administrators and faculty members through conferences, in service trainings and other related activities". Other objectives have changed less, so the vocation-oriented "Acquire productive and entrepreneurial skills, a work ethic, and occupational knowledge essential both for making an intelligent choice as regards one's career and for specialised training in one's occupation" has only received minor modification, to "Provide for the development of livelihood and entrepreneurial skills and occupational knowledge essential both for making an intelligent choice of a career and for specialised training in one's occupation".

There are several different elements interacting in these texts. Two of the major imports here are well known: Catholicism came during the Spanish colonial occupation of the Philippines from the mid 16th to the end of the 19th century, and has long been deeply embedded in many aspects of Philippine life. English came with the American colonial period in the first part of the 20th century and was consolidated under different regimes following independence, so much so that it is now, alongside Filipino, an official language, playing a major role in education (as part of a bilingual education policy), the media, business, the export of workers, the growth in call centers, and many other parts of Philippine life (Rappa and Wee 2006; Tupas 2008; Friginal 2009). Indeed, while we may see both English and Catholicism as imports to the Philippines, they have also been profoundly relocalized in Philippine lives, localities and letters. These mission statements, however, are clearly more recent appropriations, apparently drawing on the corporatist world of mission statements. While both the form and language of these statements echo this world of corporatism – "Develop a cohesive and committed team of teachers" – they also incorporate elements of other discourses, especially a blend of the religious and the educational (Graham, Luke and Luke 2007).

There are many things going on in these vision statements: the changes from the old to the new, the interdiscursive and intertextual echoes of other texts and discourses, the use of generic textual form (vision, mission, objectives; to provide, initiate, deepen, enhance, and so on), the placement on the exterior walls of the convent, the production of a particular way of thinking about a relationship between school and community. At one level it matters that these texts are "in English" since English plays a significant role in the Philippines and particularly in education (Tupas 2006). Yet at another level, as Kramsch (2006) suggests, the use of different languages may be of less importance than the language practices we are engaged in. If one American speaks of "options and opportunities" and the other of *optiones y opportunidades*, they may in a sense be speaking the same language. "Many Europeans", she suggests, "talk the same globalspeak even as they speak German, Italian or Dutch about minority rights, women's rights, race and ethnicity concerns. Many Chinese or Koreans now speak an American neo-liberal discourse of consumerism, entrepreneurship and economic competitiveness even as they speak Chinese or Korean" (Kramsch 2006: 102). As Cameron similarly observes, "A McDonald's restaurant in Budapest must serve its customers in Hungarian, but it will be Hungarian spoken according to the same norms of interaction which govern the company's service in Chicago" (2003: 33).

So we might observe that when we consider Philippine language policy, which in complex ways – a result of direct American colonialism, post war economics and politics, regional affiliations, rule by a pro-American and pro-English elite, and a range of other local and regional factors – has made English a major language of the Philippines, this can only tell us a small amount about these mission statements. It does matter that they are in English, but it also matters that they are in neoliberal business-speak, mixed with Catholic and educational discourses. Major international languages such as English facilitate the use of such discourses – they are readily available and portable via English – and these discourses facilitate the use of English – this is the dominant language in which such discourses need to appear for their effect. These mission statements, then, add a further complication to the issues of language and discourse planning: as with the example of the Singaporean "Speak Good English Movement", there is a relation here between English and particular discursive formations, in particular neoliberal corporate discourses developed to promote efficient working practices. While on the one hand these statements may be viewed as a result of the effects of pro-English language policies and the incursion of corporate discourse into

Philippine lives as part of its role as a major service provider (call centers, domestic workers; see Lorente 2011) within the global economy, on the other hand these statements also suggest degrees of localization: Like English and Catholicism, the interweaving of mission statements with educational and religious discourse suggests a particular form of Philippine appropriation. It also suggests that while the relation between language and discourse is a complex one, discourse can nevertheless be planned.

Language as already local

To talk of local cultural expression, appropriation or localization urges us to consider the idea of the local in greater depth. If we use the idea of the local to describe what people really do, in this place, at this time, on a small scale, in opposition to the state, the global, the large scale, we run the danger of overlooking the point that everything happens locally. As Fuchs reminds us, "everything that happens happens locally, at a certain place and time. All that exists exists empirically, and only until further notice" (2001: 337). In this sense, a state language policy may also be local since on the one hand locality is always relative (the state is a local part of the region, for example) and on the other, the making, the writing, and the implementing of any policy happen at a certain place and time. To talk of local language practices, therefore, is on one level to talk of all language practices (there are none that are not local), although it is also to point to the specificity of place and time in which they occur (they do not happen elsewhere).

The notion of the local suggests that we need to take seriously a relational understanding of space in which:

> [L]ocal places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. Understanding space as the constant open production of the topologies of power points to the fact that different "places" will stand in contrasting relations to the global. (Massey 2005: 101)

Space, Thrift explains, is "no longer seen as a nested hierarchy moving from 'global' to 'local'. This absurd scale-dependent notion is replaced by the notion that what counts is connectivity" (2007: 174–75). The local, from this point of view therefore, incorporates a strong account of locality, of place, and is always about a far more complex set of connected relations than merely the big and the small. What is local, then, may be a contextual instantiation of something larger (Singapore English as a form of English) or something that happens in different places but not on a much wider scale (Hokkien in Singapore, Taiwan and China, for example) but it needs to be understood in its deep relation to place. It is important, then, when we invoke the local not to see it as inevitably juxtaposed with something global, international or cosmopolitan, nor to suggest some, static, fixed or limited context, but rather to understand the particularities of locality.

In a local newspaper (*The New Indian Express)* article from Kerala, in India's South, "Jumbos driving Tripunithuraites crazy", we are informed that "With festive season round-the-corner, Tripunithuraites are gearing up to welcome some of the prestigious tuskers who will line up to carry the idols of gods and goddesses" (Varma 2006: 3).[1] As the article goes on to explain:

> On January 3, Thiruvambadi Shivasundar will carry the *thidambu* of Lord Siva of Kannankulangara Mahadeva temple as part of *thiruvathira* celebrations. The festival committee of Pottayil Bhagavathy temple is busy designing attractive flex boards of three tuskers, Thechikkottu Kavu Ramachandran, Pambadi Rajan and Naanu Ezhuthassan Sreenivasan, as part of the annual festival of the temple on February 28. Thechikottu Kavu Ramachandran, the famous tusker from Bihar, will leave the town only after attending the *thalappoli* of Muradu Kottaram Bhagavati temple in the first week of March. (Varma 2006: 3)

Although Kachru and Nelson (2006) argue that there is considerable variation across writing conventions and genres in different varieties of English around the world, we might nevertheless observe that there is little here in terms of grammar or text type that is particularly remarkable: It is a regular and recognizable announcement of an upcoming event, common to many local newspapers. It is clearly in the domain of vocabulary that this becomes more interesting. From the point of view of describing Indian English, we might point to the use of "tuskers" and "flex boards" as regional variants (though tuskers is used elsewhere in parts of Africa), or to the term "yesteryear" (below) as a survivor from older styles of English. Yet its distinctiveness lies surely in the local references to festivals ("*thiruvathira* celebrations") and temples and elephants. The locality of this article derives therefore not so much from the use of "flex boards" but from the fact that the local temple is busy designing such boards with pictures of famous elephants.

What we have here, then, is a range of local religious practices involving elephants (which are named and well known in the region). As a subsection of the article explains:

> From time immemorial the most famous tamed tuskers in Kerala were the senior-most members of the Aana Tharavadu (Punnathoor Kotta) of Guruvayoor Devaswom. The tusker that topped the list in yesteryear was the celebrated Guruvayoor Keshavan. Now Guruvayoor Padmanabhan tops the list.
> (Varma 2006: 3)

1. I am indebted to Arjuna Parakrama for pointing out the need to clarify what I mean by claiming this newspaper and this language use are "local" as if, say, Indian language practices are somehow more local than others.

Height of elephants is important but only in the context of overall body proportion, shape of the tusks and number of nails in the fore limbs: "Thechikottu Kavu Ramachandran with a height of 10.3 ft is second in demand. Though he stabbed the celebrated tusker Thiruvambadi Chandrasekharan, Ramachandran is still the hot favourite". But there is also strong support for local elephants. Thus "Among the nadan (born and brought up in Kerala/Mysore forests) tuskers, Pambadi Rajan tops the list. With more than 10 ft height, fleshy trunk that touches the ground, beautiful tusks and wide ears, the tusker enjoys the status of the most ideal tusker from Kerala forests" (Varma 2006: 3).

Despite its occasional gloss (the explanation of "nadan" for example), the article largely assumes local knowledge, and an appreciation of local practices and elephant aesthetics. Its "localness" derives particularly from the relations to place and practice (Kerala and temple elephants). Rather than looking at this in terms of Indian or Keralan English, therefore, with the assumptions that this is part of global English made local, I prefer to come at this from the opposite direction, the relocalization of local practices in language. Van Leeuwen views discourse as "recontextualised social practice", that is to say, when we put something into language (discourse), we are recontextualizing social practices in another medium (2008: 1). Looking at language use as it moves through organizations (particularly medical) Iedema (2001) shows how:

> (unstable) agreements reached in and through embodied talk are conventionally "resemiotisised" into alternative and less negotiable semioses such as written summaries, courses of action, or more durable materialities. Importantly, it is often thanks to their resemiotization that particular understandings and agreements attain organizational status, explicitness, and relevance. (2001: 25–6)

Rather than Iedema's (2001, 2003) resemiotisization, with its focus on the reorganization of meaning across modalities, or Van Leeuwen's recontextualization, with its focus on the social or the linguistic as context, however, I prefer to operate with the idea of relocalization, because it is the *locality* of the new meaning practices that is central. By not turning modes or discourses into contexts in themselves, this maintains a focus on all language practices as local (Pennycook 2010).

It is more useful, therefore, to look at this example in terms of the relocalization of local practices rather than in terms of Indian English. A similar point can be made about Singlish: It may be less useful to view Singlish as a localized variety of English and instead to view those language practices that the "Speak Good English Movement" seeks to regulate as local, multilingual practices, relocalized in English. This relocalization does include English as part of this language practice, and doubtless this use of English would not have occurred but for the role of English under colonialism, the subsequent role of English in India and Singapore, and the more recent dominance of English as a global language. And yet, this is surely also more than a localization of English. The temple elephants and the customer service relations are local practices relocalized in English. The local practices surrounding temple elephants in Kerala are here relocalised as a set of language practices in a newspaper, just as the local language practices of shop assistants in Singapore are relocalised in the "Speak Good English Movement" website.

This notion of relocalization of language practices is central to an understanding of relations between language and locality, and, as I have been suggesting, this raises some important questions for an understanding of language policy and planning. It is often argued that English has become localized in such contexts, that English, as a language that has spread around the world, here takes on local characteristics. From the point of view of language as a local practice, however, we need to look at this from a different direction. Instead of starting with prior assumptions about languages as lexical and grammatical arrangements with peripheral variations, we can start by looking at local practices as they are relocalised in language. In the same way that thinking in terms of practices may reverse assumed relations between language and its realization in discourse (discourse produces language rather than the other way round), so this perspective may reverse assumptions about the notion of spread and localization (the local produces the spread rather than the spread becoming local). For language policy, this perspective draws attention to the point that when a particular language is being promoted, it is being made available as a medium through which local practices may be enacted.

Language as semiotic resource

This argument for a reversal of direction in how we think about language – language is a product of discourse, and practices are relocalized in language rather than languages being localized in different contexts – ties to a larger set of concerns about how we consider language. I have already raised the issue above that to think in terms of different languages may obscure the question of discursive similarity. In order to explore this question further, we need to unravel the ways in which languages and metalanguages have been constructed as part of modernist and statist narratives. To account for current ways of constructing language policies, we need both to make salient the linguistic ideologies that form and are formed by such policies and to consider other ways of thinking about diversity. As Heller and Duchêne remark, we need to "rethink the reasons why we hold onto the ideas about language and identity which emerged from modernity" (2007: 11).

Current approaches to language policy and multilingualism continue to use the underlying ideology of countability and singularity, where language-objects are physically located in concepts of space founded on a notion of circumscribed territory (Makoni and Pennycook 2005, 2007).

The description of languages such as English "derives from the dominant assumptions of linguistics, informed by the modernist philosophical movement and intellectual culture in which they developed. To begin with, the field treats language as a thing in itself, an objective, identifiable product" (Canagarajah 2007: 98). By focussing on form, on language as a "tightly knit structure", descriptions of English neglect "other processes and practices that always accompany communication" (Canagarajah 2007: 98). The question that has started to emerge, then, is whether these old categorizations of language – varieties, code-switching, bilingualism, mother tongue, multilingualism – as well as the identities that are assumed along lines of language, location, ethnicity and culture really work any more. There are two sides to this: on the one hand, the changing realities of late modern life, with enhanced mobility, shifting populations, social upheaval, health and climate crises, increased access to diverse media, and engagement with new forms of popular culture, are leading to fresh language mixes and possibilities. On the other hand, a serious consideration of the ways in which ideas about language have been constructed and invented forces us to consider anew not only emergent language mixes but the terms in which we think about them.

Looking at English in different domains in East Africa, Higgins argues for the need to look not so much at local forms of English, but rather at ways of thinking about how "languages work together in multilingual societies by placing multilingual practices at the theoretical center" (2009: 2). Focusing on English as a local language, Higgins thus draws attention to the ways in which English participates in local multilingual practices, how "East Africans exploit the heteroglossia of language to perform modern identities through localizing global linguistic and cultural resources while generally maintaining the multiple layers of meaning from both the global and the local" (2009: 148). Rather than thinking in terms of English and its peripheral varieties, therefore, this work moves towards an understanding of local language practices that draw on a range of language resources, whether these be from different varieties, registers or languages. This is, consequently, an attempt to move away from nation-based models of English and to take on board current understandings of translingual practices across communities other than those defined along national criteria. The interest here is in "the communicative practices of transnational groups that interact using different languages and communicative codes simultaneously present in a range of communicative channels, both local and distant" (Jacquemet 2005: 265).

Jørgensen's (2008) analysis of "polylingual languaging" among children and adolescents in Denmark comes to a similar conclusion: It makes more sense to look at the use of diverse language resources, or *features*, than to consider whether a phrase is in one, or two or three languages. Jørgensen and Møller propose the notion of *polylingualism* in place of *multilingualism* in light of the idea that "speakers use features and not languages" (Jørgensen 2008: 166). As Møller asks, "What if the participants do not orient to the juxtaposition of languages in terms of switching? What if they instead orient to a linguistic norm where all available linguistic resources can be used to reach the goals of the speaker?" (2008: 218). If indeed the local understanding of language use does not fit an externally imposed notion of code-switching, then "it is not adequate to categorise this conversation as bilingual or multilingual, or even as language mixing, because all these terms depend on the separatability of linguistic categories. I therefore suggest the term polylingual instead" (Møller 2008: 218).

In the same vein, and in order to avoid the pluralization in all these terms – multilingualism, plurilingualism, polylingualism – Emi Otsuji and I have been looking at urban language use in terms of *metrolingualism* (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010). Drawing on Maher's (2005: 83) notion of *metroethnicity* – "a reconstruction of ethnicity: a hybridised 'street' ethnicity deployed by a cross-section of people with ethnic or mainstream backgrounds who are oriented towards cultural hybridity, cultural/ethnic tolerance and a multicultural lifestyle in friendships, music, the arts, eating and dress" – we understand metrolingualism in terms (typically) of language use that draws on the multiple semiotic resources of the city. Metrolingualism describes the ways in which people of diverse backgrounds linguistically landscape the city. Following studies that focus on transgressive language use – from Rampton's (1995, 2006) studies of *crossing* and the language of late modernity in school classrooms, or Lin's (2000) and Luk's (2005) studies of language play in Hong Kong, to studies of multilingual creativity in hip-hop (Lin 2009; Omoniyi 2009) – metrolingualism takes us beyond ideas such as hybridity (with their necessary underlying assumptions about entities that are mixed together) and instead assumes the use of diverse resources to be the norm.

A metrolingual view of language raises several questions for the retrolingual framing of much language policy. As with Canagarajah's discussion of Lingua Franca English (LFE), it does not assume the pre-existence of languages that are then used by speakers (as do common understandings of English as a Lingua Franca), but instead suggests that language "does not exist as a system out there. It is constantly brought into being in each context of communication" (2007: 91). From this point of view, "there is no meaning for form, grammar or language ability outside the realm of practice" (Canagarajah 2007: 94). That is to say, LFE, or any other language, has to be located in forms of local practice to have any meaning.

"LFE is not a product located in the mind of the speaker; it is a social process constantly reconstructed in sensitivity to environmental factors" (Canagarajah 2007: 94). Looking at language use in terms of metrolingual practices, therefore, questions the ontological status of English or any other language, and looks instead at ways in which linguistic resources are mobilized across (translingually) what are commonly conceived as languages (Pennycook 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009). This is akin to Blommaert's (2010) insistence that a sociolinguistics of globalization needs to move beyond a focus on languages in order to focus on styles, resources, genres, discourses and practices. Metrolingualism defies retrolingual ideologies, and by so doing presents new possibilities for language, identity and politics (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010).

Conclusion

Where does this leave us? Clearly the ways of thinking about language outlined above are deeply at odds with most approaches to language policy. To think in terms of poly- or metro-lingualism, to view languages in terms of overlapping sets of multimodal semiotic resources, is to take a view of language very different from those that seek to define the languages of the state, or to plan languages as clearly differentiable entities. This leaves us, however, only with the incommensurability of language policy and cultural practices, with a sterile version of language juxtaposed with language as it actually happens. As I said at the beginning, it is perhaps an all-too-obvious point that the language of language policy is not the language of everyday use. Returning to the two statements with which I opened this essay, however – that while a sterile version of language can be "planned", discourse cannot (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990), and that while language is dynamic and unbounded, policy makers seek to control it for various political ends (Shohamy 2006) – the examples in this essay have suggested we need to modify this view somewhat.

In the various examples above, I have tried to show how language policy is not just inevitably at odds with local cultural expression, but also reproduces very particular language ideologies. This is both good and bad news for language users: On the good side, it means that however much states try to regulate the linguistic and cultural practices of their people, there will always be a great deal that escapes definition and regulation. On the down side, however, we have to accept that language policies are often as much about access, governance and institutionalization as they are about language. The mobilization of limited visions of language may work very well for such purposes. Language policies have more to do with the production of language ideologies than the languages they purport to deal with.

And discourse, both in relation to language, and in relation to other domains of cultural life, may be more plannable than has been suggested. It is not really the case, therefore, that language is free and dynamic but regulated by authorities, since we are really dealing with quite different concerns in each case. Rather the struggle is over what view of language should prevail.

There is also an upside and a downside to questions of language policy that are not state-sanctioned, be they decisions by hip-hop artists to rap in a creole, or people working to maintain or revive a threatened language. On the downside, progressive language policies designed to support diversity and minority languages all too often miss a great deal of what matters (Mufwene 2010). One reason that language maintenance projects often achieve so much less than hoped is that, in addition to struggling against a range of economic, social and political concerns that they are often not well equipped to deal with, they also operate with a narrow view of language purity and discreteness that does little good for the local language practices in which people engage. If language planning and policies for minority languages let themselves be confined by the same language ideologies that have evolved in linguistics and state language policies, they will at best succeed in the institutionalization of moribund language codes. On the upside, however, a reconsideration of language that avoids assumptions about codes, location and identity, and looks instead at practices, resources and possibilities, opens up new considerations for the rejuvenation of language practices and opens up an alternative battleground over language ideology. Where language policy is developed to assist people in their cultural, educational and economic goals, a less sterile understanding of language can surely only be to their advantage. So let us acknowledge that languages have never really been languages, and language policies have never really been language policies. It has always been a question of the promotion of certain language ideologies at the expense of an understanding of practice, discourse, discrimination and difference.

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PART I

South Asia

CHAPTER 2

The politics of Hinglish

Anjali Gera Roy

After being subjected to 'the imperialism of language' for centuries like other colonized people through the media, education and other instruments of colonial power, educated Indians have 'decolonized' English through the invention of a new hybrid formed through the mixing of English with Hindi, which was followed by mixing with other Indian languages. Although Indian English has always been used out of innocence or ignorance and has been normalized as a register of English, Hinglish, a mix of Hindi and English, was first used to great effect by a film tabloid called *Stardust* in the 1970s under the editorship of the popular fiction writer Shobhaa De (nee Rajadhyaksha) and entered the vocabulary of educated, middle class speakers. But it was only when Salman Rushdie employed a non-Standard register of English, a mix of Hindi/Urdu with English, in his novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) that Hinglish acquired literary respectability. Through comparing "the stylish language of Bollywood, of FM radio and of national advertising" with the "aspirational language" of speakers of *bhashas* [Modern Indian languages] disdainfully described as "vernacs [vernaculars]" by elite speakers of English, this essay focuses on cultural politics of different varieties of Hinglish in India to argue that while ushering in linguistic democratization, Hinglish has not been able to bridge social difference.

"*There is a different reality*", she said, "*and that is my reality. There is an India beyond the begging bowl. It's about time that somebody projected another India*". (De quoted in Gargan 1993)

Indian English novelist Gurcharan Das, pointing out that "for a hundred years the upper middle classes have mixed English words in their everyday talk", claims that "the present media argot is the creature of new satellite and cable channels". He believes that "Zee, Sony and Star, supported by their advertisers, have created this uninhibited hybrid of Hindi and English" and defines "the fashionable collision of the two languages", Hindi and English, as "Hinglish" (Das 2005). Strictly a mix of English with Hindi, Hinglish's scope has expanded over the years to include Urdu and Punjabi and has engendered new mixes with other Indian languages such as Tamil, Punjabi and Bengali to produce “Tamlish”, “Punjlish” and “Bonglish”. Hinglish is often confused with Indian English but Indian English is a non-standard variety of English that reflects Indian “vernacular” patterns whereas Hinglish is a new hybrid.[1] Das argues that Hinglish should in fact be called Inglish because it is increasingly pan-India’s street language but warns that “it is not easy to define … what exactly is Inglish” and that this proposition needs empirical research (2005). Speculating whether its base is English or Indian *bhashas* or languages, he concludes it could be both depending on the user. For the upwardly mobile lower middle class, “it is *bhasha* mixed with some English words”; for the upper and upper middle classes, “the base is definitely English” while “the middle middle class seems to employ an equal combination” (Das 2005). Das discerns a radical difference between “mixing English with our mother tongues” that “has been going on for generations” and Inglish, which “has become both the aspirational language of the lower and middle middle classes” and “the fashionable language of drawing rooms of the upper and upper middle classes” (2005). Through comparing “the stylish language of Bollywood, of FM radio and of national advertising” with the “aspirational language” of speakers of *bhashas* disdainfully described as “vernacs [vernaculars]” by elite speakers of English, I shall focus on the cultural politics of different varieties of Hinglish in India to argue that despite its ushering in linguistic democratization, Hinglish has not been able to bridge social difference (Das 2005). Observing a continuum between English language print and broadcasting media, advertising, music and the Indian English film and the diaspora or “crossover” film, I will trace the history of the emergence of Hinglish in India. Having done that, I shall situate the English language and ‘crossover’ film within “the fashionable language of drawing rooms of the upper and upper middle classes” to show that in differing from “the aspirational language of the lower and middle middle classes” used in the Hindi *masala* film it reflects the politics of language in India (Das 2005).[2]

1. While the term vernacular is used to refer to regional Indian languages, it has been critiqued for its suggestions of derivativeness leading to the adoption of the Sanskrit term *bhasha* to refer to Hindi and other Indian languages.

2. An important distinction needs to be made between the Hindi *masala* film known as Hindi cinema or Bombay cinema and the new crop of Bollywood films made by the new generation of Hindi film directors led by Karan Johar, who share the economic and socio-cultural milieu of the English language film. Similarly, the “crossover” films produced by diasporic filmmakers of South Asian origin like Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Gurinder Chadha must be differentiated from the Indian English films of Aparna Sen, Dev Benegal, Kaizad Gustad and others. While making these distinctions, however, it must be kept in mind that, despite the intersections between the different categories, they use different kinds of Hinglishes.

The journey of Hinglish: From Stardust to Star TV

Long before it attracted the attention of the western media and academia and made it to the new edition of the Collins English dictionary, Hinglish, "the fusion of Hindi and English words", was being spoken with confidence in Indian metropolitan cities, as David Crystal had observed during his visit to Indian cities in 2005, even though the confidence level might have been augmented with the increase in the number of Hinglish speakers and India's rising economic power (2005: 1).[3] The world was forced to take notice of a new language in the making and accord it formal recognition with Crystal prophesying that the number of Hinglish speakers would exceed those of English in a few years (2004). But anglicized youth on the Indian subcontinent had long been taking great pleasure in breaking their "disciplining" in Standard English, often with ruler and cane, in missionary institutions by turning to Hinglish outside the classroom (Das 2005). The borrowing of this register in the gossip columns of a new English language film magazine called *Stardust* by its then-young editor Shobhaa Rajadhyaksha made it enter the print media in 1971 (Kasbekar 2006: 94).[4] With Salman Rushdie's deconstructing of the structures of Standard English through Hinglish in his Booker Prize winning novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) a decade later, Hinglish acquired literary recognition. When Star TV came to India in 1991, India's satellite invasion ushered in a new language of broadcasting reflecting the speech patterns of its viewers (Butcher 2003: 71; Juluri 2003: 5). With the departure of Irish nuns and Anglo-Indian nursery schoolteachers and the gradual disappearance of the generation of English speakers tutored by white schoolteachers, Anglo-Indian towns, the last bastions of Standard English, collapsed under the twin assault of Indian English and Hinglish. Similarly, the world of Hinglish expanded to encompass Britain with the arrival of South Asian immigrants, leading a reporter in *The Independent* to comment: "In the long run, we can expect Hinglish to influence in many fields in the same way Latin and French have over several centuries" (Garner 2005). It was only a matter of time before Hinglish became a conspicuous presence in South Asian cinema

3. At least 26 new words of joint Hindi and English derivation – including "badmash" (Hinglish for naughty or bad), "freshie" (a new immigrant to the UK from the Asian subcontinent) and "*haramzada*" (a male born of unmarried parents or an obnoxious or despicable male) – have found their way into the dictionary ("Hinglish Makes a Debut in English Dictionary," *The Guardian*, June 9 2005).

4. Asha Kasbekar's reminder that it was the feisty journalist Devyani Chaubal who set the trend for mixing Hindi slang with English and not De, who is credited with inventing Hinglish, in "Pop Culture India!" that jogged the memory of the readers of Chaubal's witty gossip columns (*Pop Culture India! Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* 2006: 93).

and a number of filmmakers broke new ground by making films in Indian English and Hinglish.[5] Interestingly, David Crystal's belief that "Hinglish will soon become more widely spoken outside the continent" is predicated on "the growing popularity of Indian culture around the world, including Bollywood movies" (2004).

Amit Chaudhuri's short story "Prelude to an Autobiography" offers a rare revisiting of the variety of English used by products of missionary run schools called "convent schools" or "convents" from Chandigarh to Chennai in the 1970s, who used different permutations and combinations of English with an Indian *bhasha* (2001: 86). His protagonist, a housewife, begins with the confession "the only language I have is English" and recalls her growing up in upmarket Napean Sea Road, located on Malabar Hill in Mumbai (2001: 89): "The English we spoke in, I now realize, was garnished with Hindi words for effect, it all sounded very clever clever [sic]. 'Didn't do too well in my Chemistry paper. *Chalta hai*, *yaar*'!"[6] She continues:

> This was our esperanto, and we never thought to think in anything but English: it wouldn't have done to speak in any other kind of English. The girls who spoke in 'perfect' English were slightly ridiculous, and were supposed to be 'goody goody'. (Chaudhuri 2001: 90)

Chaudhuri's story also makes a mention of Shobhaa De's incorporation of this "esperanto" in the newly launched movie magazine *Stardust* to gossip about film personalities. Asking the reader, "there was something impolite about that language, wasn't there?", Chaudhuri's character's amazement, which is reflected in her question "all right for schoolgirls to speak in, but to *write* in?", is a telling comment on the tabloid's transformation of Hinglish into a national *lingua franca* (2001: 90). An avid reader of the magazine has reproduced the following bits from the "catty" gossip column "Neeta's Natter" on the web through revisiting bound volumes of the magazine his mother appears to have preserved for posterity (Chaudhuri 2009):

> Another 'cheez' (a hit or miss case) whose publicity pictures I failed to recognize was the *Zaroorat-wali* – Reena Roy. Looks like her *Zaroorat* for showing us these undelectable views of her stripped down to her clumsy underthings, are over (thank God)! Gone are those adolescent pimples and the 'starlet' hair-style (untidy

5. While Indian English and crossover films set the trend for Indian English and Hinglish in South Asian cinema, a number of new Hindi film productions, liberally peppered with Hinglish dialogues, have further complicated the language dynamics.

6. "You will wonder at the inverted commas, but, in the Seventies, so much of what we did was in inverted commas: 'sex', 'love', 'going all the way'; we all talked about it, but half of it was conversation and fantasy, we didn't go all the way" (Chaudhuri 2001: 89).

> bangs of hair framing the face). Now she has that smug I-know-I've-made-it (so what if its [sic] only in C-grade films) look, a new wig, a new complexion and I hope a better bra and panties wardrobe.
>
> Says a furniture-*wallah* friend who's doing Jaya's [Jaya Bachchan *nee* Bhaduri] flat up, 'Arre, everytime I go to her house, I find that Bachchan [Amitabh Bachchan] chap lying stretched out on the carpet in her bedroom!' Do you knock before you enter, friend?[7] ("Neeta's Natter" in Chaudhuri 2009)

Although it is highly unlikely that Salman Rushdie followed the gossip in "'Neeta's Natter'", his "chutneyfied" English in his novel *Midnight's Children* had an uncanny resemblance to the film tabloid launched by the former editor of *Stardust* who later metamorphosed into India's bestselling writer of pulp fiction, Shobhaa De (née Rajadhyaksha). In his essay "Indian Pulp Fiction in English: A Preliminary View from Dutt to De", Tabish Khair connects the rise of De with the rise of Rushdie and makes the important observation that De's literary career has to be understood with reference to the rising popularity of post-Rushdie Indian English fiction and to the pre-Rushdie phenomenon of film and gossip magazines like *Stardust* (2008: 66). Arguing that "the languages of both De and Rushdie are rooted in the growth in numbers (or at least in confidence) of a certain kind of Indian urban middle class", Khair concludes that "De was made possible by the same sociolinguistic factors that created Rushdie" (2008: 66). The Mumbai born author's "interest in creating a literary idiolect that allowed the rhythms and thought patterns of Indian languages to blend with the idiosyncrasies of 'Hinglish' and 'Bambaiyya', the polyglot street-slang of Bombay" recalled "the Hindi-laced Bambaiyya English" that Shobhaa Rajadhyaksha, Ingrid Albuquerque and others had transformed into a *lingua franca* (Rushdie 2006). Despite *Stardust*'s launch preceding Rushdie's Booker prize-winning novel by nearly a decade, it was *Midnight's Children* that

7. The passage refers to a well-known Hindi film actor and two emerging stars of the 1970s and the gossip columnist, who wrote under the pseudonym Neeta, would essentially have to draw on *Stardust's* readers' knowledge of Hindi films as well as of Hindi and Hindi slang to be able to pun on the title of Reena Roy's first successful film with an adult theme, *Zaroorat* (*Necessity 1992*), to be able to pun on the starlet's bold pictures in the film and the necessity to strip for success. "Cheez" (Hindi, Punjabi, thing) was used to refer to a "sexy" woman until the mid-nineties, for instance, in the song "*tu cheez badi hai mast* mast" ("You are an intoxicating thing") in the film *Mohra*. Its displacement by "*tota*" (Punjabi, piece) in *New York* (2009) reflects the essentially dynamic nature of slang terms as well as the changing demographics address of the new Bollywood audience and films. The second titbit is about the relationship of Jaya Bhaduri, one of the reigning female actors in the 1970s, with the then budding actor Amitabh Bachchan whom she married a year later. Through the insertion of the Hinglish "furniture-*wallah*" and the exclamation "*arre*", the columnist attempts to mirror the speech of the Mumbai middle class.

"put 'Hinglish' on the world map" and "some of the Hindi/Urdu words used in the novel have since become part of the 'official' English vocabulary" (Suroor 2008).

A decade after the publication of *Midnight's Children*, Hinglish became naturalized as the *lingua franca* of the nation and invaded the electronic media following India's satellite invasion. This happened with the newly launched television channels like Star TV and Zee TV expressing a preference for English as it is spoken in India over the Queen's English favored by state-owned Doordarshan (Butcher 2003: 121; Juluri 2003: 34; Das 2005). Channel V's tag line in Indian English "V are like that only" reflected similar trends in advertising, journalism and everyday conversation (Juluri 2003: 34). As Das points out, "similar attempts in the past were down-market and contemptuously put down by snobbish brown sahibs. But this time Inglish is the stylish language of Bollywood, of FM radio and of national advertising" (2005). He might have been alluding to Sagarika Ghose, the author of *The Gin Drinkers* (Ghosh 2000), who discerns a "dumbing down" effect in Hinglish and puts forward the view that advertising slogans like "'*Humko Binnie's Mangta*' or '*Cincinnati Bublaboo*' or '*Surfte reh jaoge*' or the '*josh* machine' or '*dandruff dho dalo*' are valuable if they exist as the rebellious younger brother of another more serious, more profound method of communication" (Ghose 2001). He might also have been referring to Nilanjana S. Roy who confesses: "Thanks to a convent education (the kind usually summarised in the matrimonials as 'convented'), I have arrived at adulthood saddled with the accent of an Indian upper class twit" (Roy 2004). Ghose's nostalgia for "a previous longing to acquire a British or American accent" that "has disappeared along with the sneers once prompted by mispronunciation" ignores the ground realities in India where "local attitudes towards imperfect English have changed" (Roy 2004). The confidence of Hinglish or Indian English speakers that Crystal, Das and Kothari have observed is corroborated by Amrit Dhillon: "Now, whenever an Indian habit or idiosyncrasy is being discussed, the standard reaction is to laugh and say: "V are like that only" (2004).

Until the 1990s, a handful of films had been made in English in India mainly by the Bengali filmmaker Aparna Sen. It is interesting that the celebrated Bengali actor began her directorial debut with *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) – a film in English interspersed with little Bengali dialogue – and has made a few more highly acclaimed films in English since then.[8] However, with the emergence of the diaspora film or films made by filmmakers of South Asian origin such as Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta, Gurinder Chadha and others, and the unprecedented success enjoyed by *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), *Bend it like Beckham* (2002) and *Bollywood Hollywood* (2002) in the new millennium, a number of other filmmakers in India,

8. A few films had indeed been made in English including Dev Anand's *Guide* among others.

too, experimented with films in English with varying degrees of success. The films in English, which often dealt with themes regarded as “untouchable” by commercial Hindi filmmakers and were unambiguously targeted at the anglicized upper middle class or upper class urban elite, found a niche in the newly opened multiplex cinemas in Indian metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The section that follows establishes the continuity of these films that pepper English with strong doses of dialogue in Hindi and other Indian languages with the Hinglish world produced by the film magazine *Stardust* in the 1970s, Rushdie's fiction in the 1980s and Star TV, Sony and Zee TV in the 1990s.

Hinglish according to the Indian English and the diaspora film

Although a distinction must be made between the films of the Indian diaspora produced by filmmakers like Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Gurinder Chadha, and the Indian English films produced in India, they are structured by the framework of “another India” that De unapologetically identifies with. “‘The problem with so many Indians’, she added, ‘is that affluence is so suspect. “Rich” is the dirtiest word in the Indian language’” (quoted in Gargan 1993). The English language film appears to reflect the “different reality”, “an India beyond the begging bowl”, “another India” that Shobhaa De shares with the elite multiplex viewers of these films. Along with the English language media, the Indian English film produces a public sphere in which the English speaking upper class elite and intelligentsia speak to each other. It reflects the views and priorities of the global “us” who mediate the experience of “local others”. But the local, mediated through a global, upper middle class perspective, disrupts the complacence of the global self through the protagonist’s encounter with a different order.

While the Indian English or diaspora film is not necessarily the province of the rich, it emerges from the English base of the social and cultural elite making it generically different from the Hindi base of the average Hindi film. Hinglish in the Indian English film is embedded in the English base of the Pepsi slogan “*Dil maange* more” or “V are like that only” of Channel V. “Unlike my generation, today’s young are more relaxed about English and think it a skill, like learning Windows”, Das avers (2005). The Indian English film that destabilizes the structure of Standard English by capturing the rhythms of Indian speech is, in Das’s words, “relaxed about English”, which must be attributed to the filmmakers’ fluency in English that facilitates the play with the colonial language through the injection of vernacular *bhashas*.

Those who consider Dev Benegal’s adaptation of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English August: An Indian Story* (1988) as the first Indian English film display an amnesia towards a large number of films in English that were made in India earlier. Yet they are right in a certain sense because the "Raj" films produced by the celebrated Merchant Ivory Team are primarily British films with an Indian setting in which Indian English spoken by Indian characters appears to be out of place in the imperial British setting. Dr Aziz, played by Victor Banerjee in *A Passage to India* (Ivory 1983), the charming Prince played by Shashi Kapoor in *Heat and Dust* (Ivory 1984) and the "rickshaw-*wallah*", played by Om Puri in the *City of Joy* (Joffe 1992), all speak in a register of English that the West understands as Indian English, which stands out in sharp relief against the clipped British accents of the British characters. A few films produced in the 1980s that have disappeared from public memory despite the wide national acclaim they received are Aparna Sen's *36 Chowringhee Lane*, Pradeep Krishen's *Massey Sahib* (1985), and *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* (1989). Out of the three, *36 Chowringhee Lane*, dealing with an Anglo-Indian schoolteacher and her Bengali Hindu student, makes a brilliant transition from the Raj films of the 1960s and 1970s through the sympathetic portrayal of the Anglo-Indian character played by Jennifer Kapoor who starred in a number of Merchant Ivory films. While Pradip Krishen's *Massey Sahib* had rustic characters speaking dialects of English, his *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones,* set in a school of architecture, introduced a new college slang. Though the three films went on to win international awards, their limited address to the upper and upper middle class English-speaking audience excluded the average Hindi film audience. Although they could be regarded as the beginning of a genre of films known as Indian English, they were less "relaxed about English" than those that have appeared more recently. While Sen's Anglo-Indian character, as the last vestige of the Raj, spoke the Queen's English in a "*chi chi*" accent, Sen's interspersion of English with the Bengali dialogue of the Bengali characters was a novel experiment in Indian cinema.[9] Krishen's "campus film" invented a new register of English borrowing Indian campus slang. The colonial hangover was most visible in Krishen's *Massey Sahib* in which most characters speak "*propah*" British English. However, Krishen's introduction of a pidgin-speaking protagonist, who was an Indian version of the bumbling, gullible Massey character of Joyce Carey's novel of the same name, and his "silent" tribal wife, played by Arundhati Roy, was a novel experiment. Rather than addressing the imagined audience of the Hindi film, the altered addressee of these films highlighted the divide between the elite makers of the films and the non-elite audience of Hindi films.

Despite the awards his films *English, August*, *Split Wide Open*, and *Road Movie* garnered and their being considered as landmarks in Indian cinema, the restricted

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9. "*Chi chi*" accent is a term that came into use during British colonialism to refer to the accent of Anglo-Indians or people of India who had an Indian and a European parent.

address of Dev Benegal's films prevented them from crossing his elite coterie of viewers. In contrast to Benegal's films that were screened for a small audience in festivals and state-owned exhibition spaces, *Hyderabad Blues* (1998), produced by Nagesh Kukunoor, a chemical engineer turned film director from Hyderabad who had recently returned from the United States, which engaged with the then off-beat theme of arranged marriage, did not only have a commercial release in theatres in the South but also screened to packed houses. *Hyderabad Blues*, in which Indian English was peppered with Telugu and Hyderabadi Urdu, struck a chord in a wide variety of young educated Indians despite its pronounced Hyderabadi milieu. Kukunoor's cosmopolitan hero, played by Kukunoor himself, focuses on the theme of arranged marriage to examine the dilemma of a significant number of young Indian men and women caught between tradition and modernity. While *Hyderabad Blues* crossed linguistic barriers, its critical look at the institution of arranged marriage foregrounded its class aspect. In its choice of theme and style, *Hyderabad Blues* anticipated Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*, which made the Indian English film enter the global imagination. In Mira Nair's "ode to Delhi", Hinglish traveled up North and Hindi and Punjabi displaced Telugu and Hyderabadi Urdu. But despite the ethno-linguistic difference underpinning the two films in the wedding genre, the theme of the young man educated overseas returning home to marry a woman of his parents' choice was carried over. Gurinder Chadha's *Bend it Like Beckham* and Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood Hollywood* that followed a year later confirmed the Indian diaspora's compulsive obsession with the theme of arranged marriage, spawning the new wedding genre in the process. Nair's film *The Namesake* (2006) and Revathi's *Mitr My Friend* (2002) approached the same theme from the perspective of Bengali and Tamil young women who are married to "suitable boys" by their families and did so in an English interspersed with Bengali and Tamil respectively. In contrast to the diaspora film's fixation on arranged marriage or inter-racial romance, Indian English films produced in India display a wider and broader range of themes.[10] Yet the similarity of their address – the English speaking elite – makes films of the diaspora and the Indian English appeal to a cosmopolitan global audience.

While the confidence with which the Indian English film speaks challenges the domination of Standard English, it distances itself from Hindi based Hinglish speakers through the self-reflexivity with which English is spoken and its tone

10. The films of filmmakers of South Asian origin such as Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Gurinder Chadha have been defined as diaspora, crossover or intercultural films. But several films (*Mr and Mrs Iyer*, *Boom*) were produced in English in India during the same time, though they have been overtaken by a new wave of Hindi films that may be described as Hinglish as they use English titles and switch between Hindi and English.

of amused indulgence towards vernacular transliterations such as Laloo Prasad Yadav's famous clarion-call, "*Pataliputra is coming*!" (quoted in Ghose 2001). The audience of Indian English are like Nilanjana S. Roy who "spoke or aspired to speak BBC English" for eons (2004). Despite their realization that "since pretty much everyone who spoke the language sounded like upper class twits" and it being "a culturally bizarre choice", Macaulay's children's ability to pronounce "vanilla" (vu nee laah) or "hero" (he ro) right is still a matter of distinction as well as privilege (Roy 2004). In Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*, the upward mobility of the father of the bride is captured in a non-Standard English usage that makes him the object of ridicule in the eyes of the groom's sophisticated family. The nervous father, in his anxiety to welcome the groom and his family, effusively leads the young man by the arm greeting him with "We are all in the family way now" producing much mirth in his visitors and in the film's audience. Yet Nair manages to compress in that single inappropriate usage the warmth and hospitality of the individual as well as of Punjabi culture. In Nair's film, upward mobility is directly related to a supreme indifference to competency in English, which is highlighted in the incident when the bride's young cousin goes to one of her uncles, inquiring the meaning of a difficult English word and is dismissed by him with a breezy "there's no such word, it must be a spelling mistake". Yet Nair envisages a deep divide between the English speaking economic and cultural elite and speakers of vernacular languages. Both English and Hinglish are signifiers of the social distance between those the English media in India have labeled the "*chatterati*" and the non-elite speakers of Indian languages. English's disdainful contempt for Hindi is nowhere as well illustrated as in the studio sequence at the beginning of the film when the transliterations of English in dubbed versions of English films produce laughter in the television channel's English-speaking audience at the expense of the Hindi dubbing artiste. The English-speaking elite's slip into Hinglish, Hindi or vernaculars is unambiguously differentiated from the speakers of these languages who have little command over English. The event manager P. K. Dubey and the maid Alice, whose romance forms a sub-plot in the film, "gatecrash" into the film and the lives of upwardly mobile Punjabis bringing grim reminders of the "other" India of Hindi and other Indian languages that exists only to service the middle and upper classes. As the camera follows the event manager from the farmhouse to the dingy quarters of Old Delhi across narrow, crowded lanes, the viewer is made aware of the gap between Hindi and English. While the speakers of English slip as often into Hinglish as those of Hindi and other languages, the language common to the masses and the elite appears to heighten or intensify the social difference, leaving one in great doubt about Hinglish's potential for "the quiet democratizing of English", as Das has argued (2005). P. K. Dubey's citing his being engaged in "event management" as the reason for the delay in his arrival provokes a caustic, "Event Management? Isn't this event management?" from his client Lalit Varma.

While English words like "sorry", "thank you", "no problem", "e-mail", have entered the vocabulary of the non-elite speakers of Indian languages, the base of their Hinglish is Hindi rather than English. While Indian English speakers and those of Hindi and other languages both borrow the same Hinglish words, the difference in their base alters the status of Hinglish. It is quite clear that when "the aspirational language of the lower and middle middle classes" meets "the fashionable language of the drawing rooms of the upper and middle classes" in the Indian English film, it produces mirth and laughter instead of democratizing English.

If the Bombay or Hindi commercial film offers, as Ashis Nandy put it, "the slum's eye-view of the world", the Indian English film presents a condominium or farmhouse's eye-view of India in which Hindi and its speakers appear either as charming locals or embarrassing country cousins (1998: 2). The base of the Indian English film being English rather than Hindi, the aspirational language of the lower and middle middle classes is mediated through the fashionable language of the drawing rooms of the upper and middle classes. While the Indian English film often exhibits a greater concern for the underprivileged that has been unmistakably evident from *Salaam Bombay* (Nair 1998) to *Firaq* (Das 2009), it frames them within the concerns and priorities of the urban middle and upper classes. At other times, it represents India from the eyes of the "returnee" as both exotic and repelling, as in *Hyderabad Blues* or *Bride and Prejudice* (Chadha 2004). Like Kukunoor's character Varun, who returns to his birthplace Hyderabad after twelve years to find a home that has become "unhomely" after his sojourn abroad, Varun's ethnographic gaze that documents the strange ways, customs and behaviour of the city he called home distances him from the speakers of both vernacular Telugu and of Indian English. Like Kukunoor, Nair takes an affectionate look at the city she lived in, but her gaze, adoring or critical, remains that of "the foreign returned" (a commonly used phrase in Indian English which means someone who has had exposure to the west through travel abroad) or convent-educated outsider. Amritsar, Delhi, Hyderabad are coloured by the nostalgic imagination of the migrant into quaint curiosities with their street life, intriguing mix of tradition and modernity, and diverse variety of people. *Hyderabad Blues*, *Monsoon Wedding* and *Bride and Prejudice* present India from the perspective of the returnee or the English educated upper middle class whose distance from the working classes is accentuated through their speech, which seamlessly alternates between Indian English and Hinglish.

Linguistic registers are indicators of class location in the Indian English film. While English or Hinglish signifies an upper middle class location, incorrect English denotes lack of social or cultural capital. Vernacular Telugu, Punjabi, Tamil or Bengali have a distinct class location except as languages of intimacy when spoken with members of the family and friends. Like the working classes, the speakers of vernacular languages make a cameo appearance in these films as domestic helpers, men and women on the street, and other service providers. While incorrect English invites amusement, vernacular languages are treated with veneration or disdain depending on the speaker and the context. But the English-speaking protagonists differentiate themselves from the speakers of both ungrammatical English and of Indian languages. *Monsoon Wedding* mocks, albeit affectionately, the aspirational English of the wife's brother, a dandyish character named C. L. Chadha, who inevitably makes a fool of himself by saying and doing the wrong things in the wrong accent. His lack of social graces and etiquette is emphasized in the pre-wedding festivities that he presides over, leading the groom's mother to inquire, "Who is that joker" and the son acknowledging him as his father with great embarrassment. As in *Hyderabad Blues*, family retainers in *The Namesake* and *Monsoon Wedding* converse in the local language, with *Monsoon Wedding* making the rare gesture of fleshing out the characters of the maid Alice and the "decorator" P. K. Dubey. But the working classes play a bit role in these films, echoing their marginal position in the lives of the middle classes except as service providers. Occasionally, they are allowed to have a say as the Nepali caretaker in *Mr and Mrs Iyer* (Sen 2002) who counsels the young woman not to quarrel with her husband. Other than Mira Nair in *Salaam Bombay*, very few Indian English films have turned to focus on the lives of the people on the streets or of the vernacular elite.

While the Indian English film locked in the universe of English or Hinglish rarely addresses itself to the *aam admi* or the ordinary person, the world outside English excised from the frame, it remains a looming presence ever threatening to disturb the harmony of the world of English. Only a couple of films, like Aparna Sen's *Mr and Mrs Iy*er or Nandita Das's *Firaq*, have dared to explore the rift between the two worlds and critiqued the middle class intelligentsia's apathy towards the larger life outside. Raja Chaudhury and Meenakshi Iyer, in Sen's *Mr and Mrs Iyer*, inhabit modern, secular India where ethnicity and religion is an accident of birth until their encounter with the communal realities of *Bharat* (the Hindi name for India) in which the wrong name can be life threatening.[11] In a manner very similar to Jehangir Chaudhury in *Mr and Mrs Iyer*, whose nickname Raja and surname produce a confusing ambiguity, Samir Shaikh's first name in *Firaq* helps him pass as a Hindu.[12] While Jehangir Chaudhury, grateful to his Tamil Brahmin companion

11. The Indian media in English has represented the divide between the English-speaking classes and the non-English-speaking masses as that between India and Bharat, the two names for the nation in English and Hindi respectively.

12. In South Asia, not only surnames but also first names indicate linguistic, caste and sectarian locations. But the use of common nicknames that are used across all communities, particularly in Bengal, can confuse identities – a fact that Aparna Sen uses to great advantage in her film *Mr and Mrs Iyer*. Jehangir is a distinctly Muslim first name while Samir is more typically Hindu.

for giving him a new life through a new name, comes home to the reality of ethno-linguistic and religious difference outside the charmed circle of the *chatterati*, Samir Shaikh is moved by his conscience into acknowledging his Muslim identity following communal riots in Gujarat. Except for Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* about street children and Deepa Mehta's *1947: Earth* (2002) in which the child protagonist Lenny's Hindu *ayah* plays a significant role, the Indian English film marginalizes the working classes while focusing exclusively on the concerns of the middle and upper classes. Films such as *Boom* (Gustad 2003) about three fashion models, *Oops* (Tijori 2003) about a Mumbai male stripper, or *Freaky Chakra* (Prakash 2003) about a cantankerous widow deal with themes emerging from the lives of the upper class elite. Notwithstanding its indifference to the large majority that constitutes the Indian populace and the jokes it tells at their expense, the Indian English film displays at once confidence and anxiety. While distancing itself from Standard English by injecting Indianisms and Hinglish phrases, it betrays a crisis of belonging. Acutely conscious of the limits of the world of English or Hinglish, its anxiety is rooted in an absence of belonging both to the world of Standard English as well as to that of the Indian languages or *bhashas*.

Hinglish: Democraticizing or widening social difference?

Das connects dualisms characterizing India's "upper vs. lower caste, urban vs. rural, India vs *Bharat*" with "the saddest divide" between those who know English and those "who are shut out" (2005). Arguing that "in Inglish, perhaps for the first time in our history, we may have found a language common to the masses and the classes, acceptable to the South and North", Das considers Hinglish "as the quiet democratizing of English" (2005). He sees exciting possibilities in Inglish's ability "to unite the people of India in the same way as cricket" (2005). Speakers at a Conference on Hinglish held in 2008 similarly deliberated on the unifying potential of Hinglish and concluded that Hinglish had bridged the divide between the classes and masses:

> Over the years, there has been a polarized relationship between English and Hindi. At one time, the country was divided on the issue of English usage in the country. During research, I found that the battle has been interestingly resolved without much effort, thanks to Hinglish. We have given up the pretense of sounding like English and no longer want to speak the Queen's English. And Hindi cannot help but borrow certain words from English. Moreover, this has become the language of the urban youth and campuses across the country and we aim to give a serious treatment to this mixture through the conference.
>
> (Kothari, quoted in Unnithan 2008)

As Das himself pointed out, the difference in the base, English or the vernacular *bhashas*, is reflective of social status. Irrespective of similarity in speech structures, the vernacular *bhasha* base of Das's newsboy's "*Mein aaj* busy *hoon*, *kul bill doonga* definitely" (I am a little tied up now. I will bring you the invoice tomorrow) and a domestic helper's "*aap thoda* adjust *kar lijiye*, *mujhe meri beti ko* time *dena hai*" (Please adjust the timings as I would like to give my daughter some time), a middle class gentleman's "sister *thodi* heavy *hai*" (Sister is a bit "heavy") and the English base of "Hungry *Kya*" (Are you hungry?) in the Macdonald's advertisement in India inscribe a wide social chasm that cannot be bridged linguistically. While elite speakers' fluency in English gives them the poetic license to tamper with the grammar of Standard English, grammatical errors or incorrect usage would produce mirth when employed by speakers of vernacular *bhashas*. While the ungrammatical "I *to* …", a transliteration of the Hindi "*main to* …" effectively worked as a password to elite high school girls' clubs in Delhi in the late 1970s in the same way as "like" does among some American school girls, the self-introduction by a Bihari schoolboy "Myself Raj Mani Prasad" in an elite Indian institution still produces instantaneous laughter in the new millennium.

While agreeing with Das and Kothari about the unifying potential of Hinglish through which the classes and masses can converse, I view Hinglish as the site for the contestation between "the aspirational language of the lower and middle middle classes" and "the fashionable language of the drawing rooms of the upper and middle classes" (Das 2005). While Hinglish might be the preferred register of all these groups, the fundamental difference lies in mixing Hindi or *bhashas* with English out of innocence and the intentional play on English through injecting a *bhasha* phrase. The class divide between the vernacular speakers of Hinglish named by Das and the elite speakers of Hinglish is widened through its serious deployment by the "vernacs" as the elite speakers of English call them and the "Englishwallahs" as they are christened by the other group. Notwithstanding its facilitation of mutual intelligibility that Das and Kothari have emphasized, the use of Hinglish by non-elite speakers has not bridged the socio-cultural gap between the classes and masses in India.

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CHAPTER 3

Globalization and multilingualism

Text types in the linguistic ecology of Delhi

Viniti Vaish

Though the main story of globalization in Applied Linguistics is the spread of global English and the loss of indigenous languages, this paper emphasizes the less commonly known view that globalization supports multilingualism. I argue that despite the onslaught of globalization in India, there is language maintenance and not language shift. In keeping with the contentions of Dor (2004), Soh (2005), and Bhatia and Richie (2004), the entrenchment of Hindi is explored in detail. Using a grounded process of data analysis, 200 photos and artefacts depicting the linguistic ecology of Delhi are qualitatively analyzed. Though in the monoliterate text the spread of English is palpable, all other biliterate text types are illustrations of the entrenched nature of Hindi.

The capital city of Delhi, where this study is situated, has a rich linguistic history.[1] Called Indraprastha, which is Sanskrit for "the city of the gods" in the ancient epic *The Mahabharata*, Delhi used to be the seat of a Hindu empire which stretched across northern India in the Aryan age. It was the cultural and administrative hub of the Islamic Mughal Empire till the mid 1800s and then of the British colonial empire till 1947, at which point it became the capital of independent India. Thus the linguistic ecology of Delhi is a mélange of the languages and scripts of all these historical eras like Sanskrit and Hindi written in Devanagari, Persian, Arabic, and Urdu written in Arabic, Punjabi written in Gurmukhi and English written in the Roman script.

1. Delhi is one of the most developed parts of India. Though according to the 2001 census 65% of India is literate, the literacy rate of Delhi is 82% (http://www.censusindia.net). With a population of about 14 million in the 2001 census (http://www.censusindia.net), and a density of nearly 1000 persons per square kilometer, Delhi is one of the most bustling metropolises in the world (Government of the NCT of Delhi 2006).

Table 1. The country's 22 main languages, and the number of speakers for each one from 1971 till 2001 (*Census of India* 2001)[2]

Language	Persons who returned the language as their mother tongue				Decadal percentage increase		
	1971	1981	1991	2001	1971–81	1981–91	1991–2001
Assamese	8,959,558	**	13,079,696	13,168,484	**	**	0.68
Bengali	44,792,312	51,298,319	69,595,738	83,369,769	14.52	35.67	19.79
Bodo	556,576	**	1,221,881	1,350,478	**	**	10.52
Dogri	1,299,143	1,530,616	#	2,282,589	17.82	#	#
Gujarati	25,865,012	33,063,267	40,673,814	46,091,617	27.83	23.02	13.32
Hindi*	202,767,971	257,749,009	329,518,087	422,048,642	27.12	27.84	28.08
Kannada	21,710,649	25,697,146	32,753,676	37,924,011	18.36	27.46	15.79
Kashmiri	2,495,487	3,176,975	#	5,527,698	27.31	**	**
Konkani	1,508,432	1,570,108	1,760,607	2,489,015	4.09	12.13	41.37
Maithili	6,130,026	7,522,265	7,766,921	12,179,122	22.71	3.25	56.81
Malayalam	21,938,760	25,700,705	30,377,176	33,066,392	17.15	18.20	8.85
Manipuri $	791,714	901,407	1,270,216	1,466,705	13.86	40.91	15.47
Marathi	41,765,190	49,452,922	62,481,681	71,936,894	18.41	26.35	15.13
Nepali	1,419,835	1,360,636	2,076,645	2,871,749	−4.17	52.62	38.29
Oriya	19,863,198	23,021,528	28,061,313	33,017,446	15.90	21.89	17.66
Punjabi	14,108,443	19,611,199	23,378,744	29,102,477	39.00	19.21	24.48
Sanskrit	2,212	6,106	49,736	14,135	176.04	714.54	−71.58
Santali	3,786,899	4,332,511	5,216,325	6,469,600	14.41	20.40	24.03
Sindhi	1,676,875	2,044,389	2,122,848	2,535,485	21.92	3.84	19.44
Tamil	37,690,106	**	53,006,368	60,793,814	**	**	14.69
Telugu	44,756,923	50,624,611	66,017,615	74,002,856	13.11	30.41	12.10
Urdu	28,620,895	34,941,435	43,406,932	51,536,111	22.08	24.23	18.73

Note:

* For Hindi the published figures in 1971, 1981 and 1991 differ due to exclusion of Maithili figure from Hindi. Maithili is included in scheduled Languages in 2001 following the 100th Amendment of the constitution of India.

** Full figures for Tamil, Assamese and Bodo for 1981 are not available as the census records for Tamil Nadu were lost due to floods and the 1981 census was not be conducted in Assam due to the disturbed conditions then prevailing there. Therefore, the decadal percentage increase of Tamil and Assamese and Bodo are not given.

\# Full figures for Kashmiri and Dogri for 1991 are not available as the 1991 census was not conducted in Jammu & Kashmir due to disturbed conditions. Therefore, the decadal percentage increase of Kashmiri is not given.

$ Excludes Figures of Paomata, Mao-Maram and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur for 2001.

2. These are called "Scheduled Languages" because they appear in the VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Scheduled languages are guaranteed language rights in that they are represented in the education system and, more importantly, the state allocates funds for their maintenance and acquisition. Besides these 22 languages, there are 100 Non-Scheduled languages spoken in India. Though these are mentioned in the Indian Constitution in a separate list their speakers do not have

All schools in India, private and government subsidized, follow the Three Language Formula (TLF), which is the country's language-in-education policy. According to the TLF children must study three languages: one as medium of instruction which is supposed to be the mother tongue of the child, English as a

Table 2. Languages spoken in Delhi from 2008–2009 (*Census of India 2001, Statement 2.*)[3]

Language	Number of speakers	Percentage
Assamese	6,329	0.05
Bengali	208,414	1.51
Bodo	222	0.01
Dogri	6,974	0.05
Gujerati	45,145	0.33
Hindi	11,210,843	80.94
Kannada	10,525	0.08
Kashmiri	21,325	0.15
Konkani	1,767	0.01
Maithili	85,331	0.62
Malayalam	92,009	0.66
Manipuri	2,020	0.02
Marathi	26,472	0.19
Nepali	44,367	0.32
Oriya	29,178	0.21
Punjabi	988,980	7.14
Sanskrit	288	0.01
Santali	364	0.01
Sindhi	42,841	0.31
Tamil	92,426	0.67
Telugu	28,067	0.20
Urdu	874,333	6.31

the rights given to speakers of Scheduled languages. The purpose of Table 1 is not only to introduce the linguistic ecology of India but also to point out language stability, which is an idea that I will take up again in the discussion section. Hindi, currently spoken by about 422 million within India, has consistently shown a decadal percentage increase since 1971. The trend is the same for all the other languages in Table 1 with a few exceptions like Sanskrit, leading to the belief that "when Indian languages are in contact, language maintenance is the norm and shift is a deviation" (Mohanty 2006: 263).

3. This table is based only on Scheduled Languages, which are the official languages of the various states in India, and does not include the Non-Scheduled Languages spoken in Delhi. As this table shows, Hindi is the main language of Delhi with more than 11 million speakers, followed by Punjabi. Only the mother tongue of the residents of Delhi, and not their multilingual repertoire, is shown in Table 2. However it is likely that literate Hindi speaking persons in Delhi will know how to read and write functional English, read and recite from memory some Sanskrit and understand spoken Punjabi and Urdu.

language of wider communication, and either a classical language like Sanskrit or Arabic or another Modern Indian Language (MIL) which is not the mother tongue of the child. The second and third languages are introduced in secondary school. The TLF is undergoing enormous changes under the pressure of globalization, the impact of which on the government school system has been explored in depth by Vaish (2008a).

Though Tables 1 and 2 do not contain any information on English, because it is not a scheduled language, we can make inferences on the penetration of English based on results of the *National Readership Survey of 2006*. Predictably the two dailies with the largest readership in India are in Hindi: *Dainik Jagran* with 21.2 million readers and *Dainik Bhaskar* with 21 million. The English daily, *The Times of India*, has a readership of 7.4 million and is the 9th most read newspaper in the country. *The Hindu*, another English daily, is next with 4.1 million readers. The point to note is the gap between the readership of Hindi versus English newspapers: 41.2 million vs. 11.5 million respectively (National Readership Studies Council 2006). Also, the growth area according to the *National Readership Survey of 2006* is not English but the Hindi reading public:

> The Hindi belt has been witness to intense activity from large dailies and is an indicator of the general growth in vernacular dailies segment. To elaborate, vernacular dailies have grown from 191 million readers to 203.6 million while English dailies have stagnated at around 21 million.
>
> (National Readership Studies Council 2006)

This information casts a shadow of doubt over blanket statements about the spread of global English which are often made without substantial data.

In 1991 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh initiated a series of economic reforms to transform the socialist economy of India to a more market driven one and thus ushered in an era of economic globalization as defined by Bhagwati (2004). This has fundamentally affected the linguistic landscape of Delhi by altering the positionality of English. Whereas in the TLF English was taught only in secondary school, now schools are offering dual medium education in Hindi and English from primary grades, as parents demand earlier access to the linguistic capital of English. The increasing use of English in the national school system is swelling the number of "English knowing bilinguals" who respond favourably to advertisements and other texts in which there is considerable use of English. By the phrase "English knowing bilinguals" I mean those who can read and write English but not necessarily speak the language fluently.

Hindi *vis-à-vis* English in India

Hindi and English are official languages of India. Hindi is also the *de facto* national language though there is no statement in the Indian Constitution regarding this, making India a nation without a national language. Though Hindi has numerous varieties, between 1920 and 1940, *Khari Boli* Hindi became prominent in the public sphere and was successfully promoted as that version of Hindi which would later be accepted as the national language (Orsini 2002). Like other Indian languages e.g. Tamil, Hindi is highly diglossic and has a high and low variety. The high variety of Hindi is usually used by anchors in national news bulletins, by Hindi speaking politicians, and on religious TV serials like *The Ramanyana*, *The Mahabharata* by B. R. Chopra and *Ravana*. Its low or colloquial variety, called Hindustani, is extremely "loan prone" and encourages mixing not only with English but also with Urdu, Arabic and Sanskrit. Hindustani is spoken by actors in Bollywood movies, talk show hosts on TV, video jockeys (VJs) and by people in markets, workplaces and within the home amongst family and friends.[4]

In 1835, under the influence of Thomas Babington Macaulay, an officer in the British East India Company, the General Committee on Public Instruction (GCPI) decreed that English would be the medium of instruction in all government schools and colleges (Zastoupil and Moir 1999). There is a vast literature in postcolonial studies and sociolinguistics about this event which is not the purpose of this chapter to review. What is important to note is that English has been part of India's linguistic ecology, albeit as an act of linguistic imperialism to start with, for 177 years. Attitudes towards English amongst young people in present-day India are that English is linguistic capital that can break the constraints of caste and social class and not a colonial imposition (Vaish 2008b).

In this chapter the specific real world problem in the field of applied linguistics I am concerned with is globalization and the maintenance of languages other than English, in this case, Hindi. I show that globalization also supports bilingualism/biliteracy and not just the spread of global English, which has been written about at length. I begin with a review of the literature on globalization's impact on multilingualism followed by a review of how biliterate texts in the public domain,

4. "Bollywood" refers to the Indian movie industry located in the city of Mumbai. The city was called Bombay in colonial times thus the term "Bollywood". All Bollywood movies are musicals in which actors lip synchronize to playback music. It is the largest movie industry in the world producing about a 1,000 movies per year watched not only by nearly 1 billion people in India but also by diasporic Indians, Malays and Indonesians. Bollywood movies are increasingly collecting revenues in keeping with Hollywood movies. *Om Shanti Om*, the latest Sha Rukh Khan blockbuster, collected US$19 million in the first week of its worldwide release.

especially advertising, have been researched and analysed. Though aware of the concept of "linguistic landscape", as used by Gorter (2006) and Huebner (2006), I prefer to use the theoretical underpinnings of globalization for two reasons. Firstly it is this process that is considered responsible for the spread of global English. The second reason is methodological and concerns the type of data I have used. I will explicate this point further under methodology. Using a classificatory scheme I divide the texts in my data set into monoliterate and biliterate and discuss the increasingly pervasive use of English and Hindi in these texts and the ways in which the languages and scripts are intertwined. Through photographic evidence I trace patterns in the way Hindi and English are mixed in texts which are in the public domain of Delhi. In the concluding section I revisit the idea that in the specific sociolinguistic situation of India, the processes of globalization not only result in the spread of English but also support the entrenched nature of Hindi.

Globalization and multilingualism: A review

Globalization has been defined somewhat differently by economists, sociologists and anthropologists but they all agree on the high level of connectivity in this phenomenon between countries, corporations, social groups united by religion, sports, and individuals (Bhagwati 2004; Castells 1996, 1997, 1998; Appadurai 1996). Pieterse, the cultural anthropologist, in a definition which encompasses many of these views writes that globalization

> is an objective, empirical process of increasing economic and political connectivity, a subjective process unfolding in consciousness as the collective awareness of growing global interconnectedness, and a host of specific globalizing projects that seek to shape global conditions. (Pieterse 2004: 16–17)

As a phenomenon, the journalist Friedman points out that globalization is not new; in fact it is a process that started around 1492 and has manifested itself in three phases so far (Friedman 2005). In the first phase, 1492–1800, globalization involved imperial forces acquiring colonies by brute force; the second phase, 1800–2000, saw the rise of multinationals and the early version of the world wide web; and finally since 2000 globalization is about individuals participating in the global economy, leading to what Friedman controversially calls a "flat world" or level playing field.

The outcomes of globalization that concern applied linguists are the spread of English as a *lingua franca*, and issues related to this like the increasing use of English as media of instruction in national school systems. A question that haunts applied linguists is this: does globalization, as it is manifested in the spread of global English, threaten the world's linguistic ecology and create a form of linguistic imperialism? The considerable literature on this and related issues from critical applied linguists supports the "yes" answer to this question (Phillipson 1992, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas 2003). Data from numerous African countries provides evidence for the work of these critical applied linguists (Mair 2003). However, a view that has not yet gained currency is that processes of globalization, depending on the cultural context in which they are situated, also support multilingualism. I think the cultural context of Asia has produced a different story regarding globalization.

Dor's thesis is that

> the forces of globalization do not have a vested interest in the global spread of English. They have a short-term interest in penetrating local markets through local languages and a long-term interest in turning these languages into commodified tools of communication. (Dor 2004: 98)

He predicts that the internet "is going to be a predominantly non-English-language medium" (Dor 2004: 99). In 2004 there were 280 million English users and no less than 657 million non-English users and this gap is widening in favor of the latter. A similar view is expressed by Indrajit Banerjee, secretary-general of the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), at Nanyang Technical University in Singapore, who comments:

> One would think that globalization in Asia would mean going English but that's not the case … The diasporic market means you can have international newspapers, international TV and radio channels which are completely based on local languages. This is what I call the globalization of the local. (Soh 2005: 29)

In keeping with Dor's thesis Bhatia and Ritchie comment that:

> Although the global dominance of English is self-evident, and is growing rapidly, it is premature to claim that other major languages of the world are dying and English is the killer language. In fact, the ten most widely spoken languages of the world are rapidly catching up with English in the arena of global electronic communication and media. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004: 519)

Bhatia and Ritchie also conclude that globalization actually supports an exponential rise in bilingualism because companies want to increase their market share by advertising in languages other than English.

A specific illustration of the way globalization supports languages other than English is the rise of Mandarin. Goh makes a case for Mandarin as the next global language based on the increasing economic importance of China in world markets, though without any data to support this view (Goh 2000). Ho reports that approximately 30 million people are learning Chinese as a foreign language and this number is expected to hit 100 million by 2010. This learner pool will require four million teachers. In keeping with this trend 180 Confucius Institutes have sprouted all over the world to promote Chinese language and culture (Ho 2007). Kelly-Holmes looks at the websites of the top 10 global brands to conclude that, along with English, internet advertising is also increasingly being conducted in Arabic, Chinese, French and German (Kelly-Holmes 2006). Thus there is some evidence that economic and cultural globalization can support languages other than English.

Code mixing in texts in the public domain

I now turn to a review of literature that analyzes the biliterate or multiliterate aspect of advertisements. In the context of code mixing between Hindi and English in written texts, specifically advertisements, the discussion has already been initiated by Bhatia (Bhatia 1987, 1992). The 1987 article analyzes language mixing in Hindi advertisements in a weekly Hindi magazine: *Dharamyug*. Bhatia's main finding is that English is mixed into Hindi with the goal of appearing modern, western and scientific, Sanskrit is mixed to appear reliable and traditional, and Persian or Urdu is mixed for the product to appear luxurious. In the 1992 article Bhatia attempts a typology of English mixing in advertisements in Asian versus European languages. He compares advertisements in Hindi, Japanese, Chinese, French, Italian and Spanish and finds that in closed languages like Japanese and Chinese as in open languages like French and Italian there are similar patterns of mixing with English.

A theme that runs through the literature on biliterate advertisements is that of hybridity. Lee's analysis of Korean TV commercials shows how hybrid linguistic forms are linked to a modern identity in Korean advertisements mixed with English (Lee 2006). Advertisements that use only Korean emphasize tradition and Korea as a nation, rather than a modern identity. Kachru and Lee analyze popular music in India and Korea respectively to show how hybrid forms of fusion music are ways of indexing identity (Kachru 2006; Lee 2004). Kachru uses the word "nativization" to mean hybridity and hypothesizes that Hindi-English mixing is a playful way in which bilinguals can be creative with language and satirize Western lifestyles (Kachru 2006).

Despite a growing body of literature on this topic there is still a dearth of studies on how divergent scripts are intermeshed in literacy to create hybridity. An exception is Angermeyer's study on the way Cyrillic and Roman scripts are mixed in New York City, and Ladousa who studied Hindi/English advertisements regarding schools on billboards and newspapers in the Indian city of Benaras (Angermeyer 2005; Ladousa 2002). However there is no in-depth study on the level of mixing in Hindi-English texts and how these texts can be separated into those where there is a high level of hybridity versus those where, though two languages are used, they are kept discrete. Ladousa's dataset includes advertisements from street/shop signage and newspapers but does not include screen shots from TV, and advertisements from magazines. Also, Ladousa does not discuss a high level of hybridity where Roman and Devanagari scripts are fused into a single word or texts where the Roman script is made to look like the Devanagari. Finally most of the literature in this field, with the exception of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), supports the idea that globalization is only about the spread of English and not about the maintenance of other languages.

Given this theoretical framework I explore the way English and Hindi are mixed in text types in the public domain in New Delhi. Specifically I ask: What is the nature of code mixing in these texts at the level of language and script? How can such texts be classified according to the nature and level of language mixing? And finally how does this data from India substantiate the view that globalization, in this specific cultural context, supports multilingualism and is not the driver for language shift?

Methods and data sources

My database for this essay consists of over a hundred photos and roughly the same number of artefacts. The photos are of those texts that cannot be acquired like advertisements on public walls and billboards. I refer to texts, like flyers, forms, newspapers, that can be physically collected in the original, as artefacts. This methodology is another reason why I have not used the theoretical hook of linguistic landscape as the scholars in this field tend not to use artefacts as data. My data set is part of a larger project where I have discussed how globalization has affected the urban disadvantaged in India through changes in language-in-education policy in the national school system (Vaish 2008a). In that larger project I linked biliteracy practices in the classroom with text types that the children see in their life outside the classroom. The focus of the data and discussion was biliteracy in school, whereas in this chapter I explore an extended data set from outside the classroom, most of which has not been used before.

Tables 3A and B show the types of photos and artefacts that have been analyzed. The numbers in the right hand column denote the number of photos/artefacts in the data set:

Table 3A. Photos[5]

Street signs	15
Shop signs	16
Graffiti and wall advertisements	9
Notices on walls in government offices, airports, banks, police stations, schools, Hindu temples, etc.	23
Signs on the school campus/grounds	11
Billboards/Hoardings on roads	16
Photos (screen shots) from popular TV channels	20
Photos of advertisements of Bollywood movies (billboards, posters stuck on public walls, etc.)	25

Table 3B. Artefacts

From *Navbharat Times*, the leading Hindi newspaper	11
From *The Times of India*, the leading English newspaper	18
From *Greehshobha*, the leading Hindi women's magazine	6
From *Stardust*, the leading English Bollywood magazine	7
Texts in Delhi homes: calendars, phone bills, flyers	22
A free newspaper distributed in East Delhi called *East* (*Hello East*)	5
From *India Today*, the leading English language political magazine.	15
Forms to be filled out from government offices, airports, banks, police stations, schools, etc.	13
DVD covers of TV serials and Bollywood movies DVDs of popular TV shows (not used in this essay), for instance: B. R. Chopra's *Ramayana*. DVDs of Bollywood movies (the movies are not used in this paper but photos of DVD covers are)	10 main ones were analyzed out of a total of about 50

Diagram 1 shows the way text types have been classified in the discussion.

The classification in Diagram 1 is a result of grounded analysis in that it emerged from the data itself and not from *a priori* assumptions that I brought to the data. In the first instance I divided all the texts into "monoliterate" and "biliterate" based on script. Each of these categories is not totally water tight and even highly monoliterate texts can have a few words from another language. Over all, "monoliterate" is an umbrella term for texts with predominantly one script in one language. Under "biliterate" were clustered all those with noticeably two scripts and/or extensive use of transliteration though only one script is used. Thus some

5. Photos of advertisements in this essay have been digitally cropped to hide the name of the product/company/person for copyright purposes.

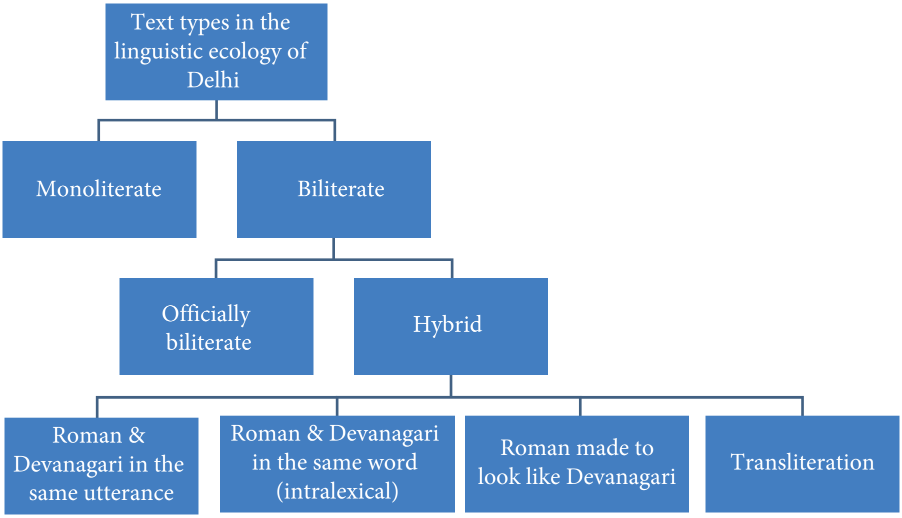

Diagram 1. Classification of text types

biliterate texts can look like monoliterate ones but they would be impenetrable to those who do not know how to read both Hindi and English. Biliterate texts were further subdivided, because of the various types and levels of language mixing therein, into "officially biliterate" in which Hindi and English are kept discrete and "hybrid", in which the two languages are intermeshed. Finally, I found four main types of hybridity: mixing in the same utterance, intralexical mixing at the level of orthography, Roman disguised as Devanagari, and transliteration.

Data analyzed in this chapter does not include multimodal texts, i.e. texts which include sound and movement, such as those analyzed by Kachru and Lee. These authors analyze popular music in terms of code mixing between Hindi-English and Korean-English respectively. A text which has multiple modes of representation, in which the main mode is music, is not the same as a literacy artefact which has fewer affordances. For instance a newspaper advertisement cannot have sound or movement which an advertisement on TV can. Though Lee brings to life the TV advertisements she analyzes by discussing not just the copy and language but also the action that accompanies them, Kachru does not mention the music in the film songs that she is analyzing (Lee 2004, 2006; Kachru 2006). Though my dataset includes DVDs of TV serials and Bollywood movies in which music and action are also modes of representation, I have excluded them from this data set as the visual presentation of such data merely through photos and the printed word is challenging.

Since I am focused on giving an in-depth sociolinguistic analysis of the nature and level of mixing between languages and scripts in Hindi-English texts my approach to data collection and analysis is qualitative. It is different from the approach of Piller (2001), Angermeyer (2005), Cheshire and Moser (1994), Banu and Sussex (2001) and Ustinova (2006) who quantitatively analyze much larger data sets. Thus Piller, who quantitatively analyzes a data set of 600 commercial broadcasts on German TV, also makes claims on the frequency of certain types (Piller 2001). For instance she comments: "Multilingual advertisements accounted for 60–70% of all advertisements released on various television networks" (Piller 2001: 153).

Data and discussion: Monoliterate texts

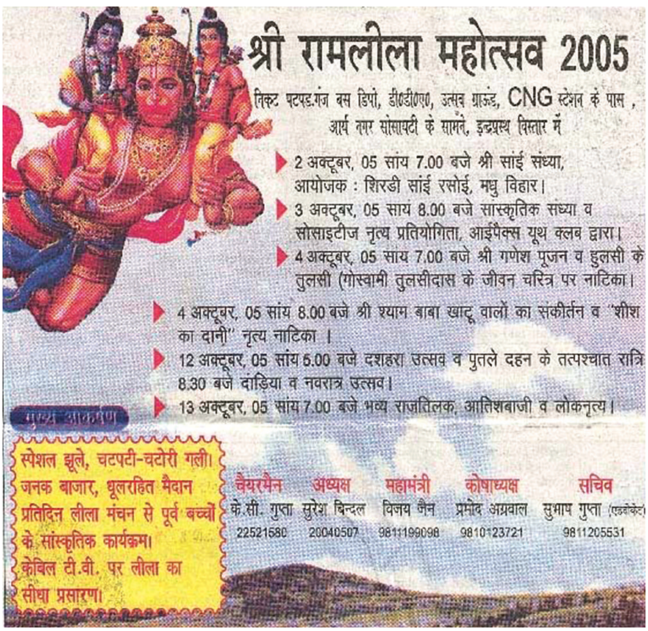

Figure 1. Advertisement for religious Hindu meeting from *East* (September 24th – October 1st 2005)

Monoliterate texts in Hindi-only predominate in the domain of religion. Photo 1 is entirely in Devanagari, except for the numbers and the "CNG" acronym in the second line. In recent language planning Devanagari numbers have been replaced by numbers as they are written in the Roman script. This artefact is an advertisement for the Sri Ramlila Festival 2005, and appears in *East*, a biliterate weekly newspaper, distributed free to those living in East Delhi. *The Ramlila* is a play that depicts the main events in the life of Sri Rama, the central character in the Hindu epic *The Ramayana*.

The artefact in Figure 1 is mainly in the high variety of Hindi, also called "*shudh* (pure) Hindi", in which equivalent words from the low variety, or Hindustani, are eschewed. For instance there is an extensive use of Sanskrit words like *Raatri* instead of the colloquial *Raat*, *Sanye* instead of *Shaam*, *nritya* instead of *naach*, and so on. The artefact in Figure 1 also contains six to eight words in the low variety of Hindi. This is typical of most such texts; otherwise they will become impenetrable even for educated native Hindi speakers.

In religious Hindu texts words from Urdu or Arabic, languages associated with Islam, are proscribed. As Bhatia points out, words from Urdu, Persian and Arabic project an image of a licentious, wealthy and luxury loving reader, which is not the impression this advertisement wants to convey (1987: 39). Also, many such words will carry Islamic connotations which might offend conservative Hindus. There are only two Urdu words in this text: "*aatishbaazi*" meaning fireworks and "*bazaar*". I consider both these words "bivalent" between Hindi and Urdu. Woolard defines bivalent words as those which are difficult to slot as belonging to one language or another (1999: 8). There are also a few English words used in this artefact, transliterated into Devanagari. These have also become commonplace borrowings in Hindi like "bus depot" and "DDA" which stands for Delhi Development Authority.

The Hindu religion is a domain where the entrenched nature of Hindi is palpable. In Delhi, and indeed, throughout the Hindi speaking belt of northern India, the language of Hinduism in temples, on TV, *kirtans* (religious meetings with singing) is *shudh* Hindi, though with enough colloquial Hindi so that the text is intelligible to people with basic literacy.

Figure 2. Advertisement for Call Center Training from *Hindustan Times*, Tuesday December 19, 2006

Figure 2 is an advertisement for training in call centres and job placement entirely in English and Roman script. Call centres, where multinationals outsource services to leverage on an inexpensive English-speaking workforce, are the mark of a globalizing Indian economy. In this case, undoubtedly, it is the processes of globalization that have resulted in an English-only text. That there is no Hindi in this advertisement at all indicates that it is targeted only for those who already know how to read English though they might not be fluent in spoken English. Such readers, who tend to be from disadvantaged social groups, have attended subsidized government schools where English is taught as a second or library language.

Figure 2 and other such monoliterate texts in Roman script are illustrations of the spread of global English in India. Though this artefact is from the *Hindustan Times*, such monoliterate advertisements for call centres, occur in all types of newspapers and magazines. For instance the same advertisement also occurs in *East*, the biliterate newspaper itemized under artefacts in Table 3B. Along with call centres such monoliterate advertisements are also common in the beauty and fitness industries, and other types of Business Processes Outsourcing (BPOs) like copyediting, which are growing at a tremendous rate since India's economy changed from a socialist to a more market driven mode of production. The target audience for such advertisements are "English knowing bilinguals" who can be trained to speak English.

Signs of biliteracy

Figure 3. Street sign in Delhi

Figure 4. Sign in a dual medium school


महा नगर टेलीफोन निगम लिमिटेड दिल्ली
MAHANAGAR TELEPHONE NIGAM LTD. DELHI
टेलीफोन बिल प्रत्रक / TELEPHONE BILL FOIL

CA NO. 2071723352 CLASS : INDIVIDUAL L537
CATEGORY NON-OYT GENERAL (TF)
NAME S. C VAISH
ADDRESS FLAT NO A 408
EXTA VIHAR COOP
9 PATPARGANJ DELHI 110092

टेलिफोन नं॰ TELEPHONE NO. 2723352 बिल नं॰ BILL NO. 1077044946 बिल की तारीख BILL DATE 15/02/2002

टेलिफोन कटने और अधिभार से बचने के लिए
TO AVOID DISCONNECTION AND SURCHARGE
कृपया नियत तिथि के अंदर भुगतान करें। 13/03/2002
PAY BY DUE DATE

TO AVOID POSSIBILITY

Figure 5. Telephone bill

Figure 6. Advertisement on Public Wall

Figures 3, 4 and 5 are illustrations of official biliterate texts in which translation is the key mode of communication. For instance in Figure 3 the name of the same road is written in the four most widely spoken languages of Delhi: Hindi, English, Punjabi and Urdu. These are represented through the Devanagari, Roman, Gurmukhi and Arabic scripts respectively. Figure 4 depicts the entrance of the Chemistry lab in a dual medium Hindi-English school in Delhi. Figure 5 is part of a phone bill from the Mahanagar phone company, a government-owned corporation, in Hindi and English, in which nearly every statement is written in both languages.

Official biliterate texts, as in Figures 3, 4 and 5, are usually created by government organizations like schools, state-owned banks and other public service companies. There is a top down, official feel about these texts in which an all-powerful state is talking down to the common man. The narrator of such texts is a voice of authority that commands respect, propagates linguistic purity and keeps hybridity to a minimum. The school, in particular, is an organization that through its textbooks and assessment practices tries to keep the languages in the Three Language Formula discrete. Signs like Figure 4 all over the school are illustrations of this linguistic purism. The text in Figure 4 is a result of globalization which has resulted in government schools changing their medium of instruction from Hindi to English.

In Figure 5 all English words, even bivalent ones, are translated. At the bottom left of Figure 5 is the phrase "to avoid disconnection and surcharge" in which "surcharge" is translated as "*adhibhaar*". Similarly on the top right of this bill the English word "foil" is translated as "*pratrak*", which is a word drawn from Sanskrit. Most Hindi speakers will borrow "surcharge" and "foil" as bivalent words into their Hindi sentence instead of using the Sanskritized words given in this bill. This extreme form of translation gives the text a tone of linguistic purity in which the writer/creator of the text is forcing the two languages apart despite natural crossovers. Though Khubchandani (2000: 47) points out that the low variety of Hindi is extremely "loan prone", the natural loan proneness of Hindi is kept to a minimum in such official biliterate texts.

Figure 6, which was one of the texts that at first did not seem to fit into the "officially biliterate" category, is of a wall advertisement in Yamunapur, a disadvantaged neighborhood in Delhi. In this photo the Bajaj Eye Hospital Pvt. Ltd. is advertised on a public wall. The first line describes this hospital as "the ultra modern multispecialty hospital of Yamunapur". In the third line the services offered by this hospital are outlined. These include "ENT", "Skin and VD" and "cosmetic surgery". Each of these services is written in English/Roman and translated in Hindi/Devanagari.

Though the text in Figure 6 is not as organized as the phone bill or road sign, because it is after all painted on a public wall, it has the main attribute of an official biliterate text which is an emphasis on translation. It is for this reason that I decided to place Figure 6 under "official biliterate texts" rather than "hybrid texts", though its mode of representation is likely to have many attributes of the latter. The text in Figure 6 is written for the vast majority of Indians who have minimal understanding of English. In fact most residents of the Yamunapur neighborhood read practically no English though they would be able to recognize that many of the words in this advertisement are in the English language. Thus the purpose of English here is to provide symbolic evidence that the Bajaj Eye Hospital is "ultra modern". The association of English is with the latest innovations in medical science; the very presence of words in Roman script signals that the Bajaj Eye Hospital is modern, efficient and run on the latest technology imported from the West.

In the biliterate texts (Figures 1–6) described in this section we can see the entrenched nature of *shudh* and colloquial Hindi. The target audience here is the 422 million Hindi-speaking Indians, shown in Table 1, who make up a stable and growing linguistic group. Since 1971 this linguistic group has been growing by about 28% every ten years and if this trend continues, as it is likely to, this group will cross the 500 million mark by the next census. There is no data on the number of English knowing bilinguals in India in the 2001 census but this group is still extremely small. To some extent the size of this linguistic market can be judged by the size of the English language news industry. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, "English-language programming accounts for less than 1 percent of total television viewership in the country, and English language news has just one-tenth the viewership of Hindi news channels" (Gentleman 2005: 9). Gentleman also reports that the media mogul Tony O'Reilly, owner of the British newspaper *The Independent* and of *The Belfast Telegraph*, paid US$34 million for a 26% stake in *Jagran Prakashan*, a Hindi language daily publisher and television broadcaster (2005: 9).

The point to note in these data is that though officially biliterate texts use English, they are written for the majority which are Hindi speakers. Multinationals are aware of the market potential of the Hindi linguistic group and are keen to tap into its buying power. Kelly-Holmes notes that Hindi is not visible on the internet as one of the languages in which the top 10 global brands are advertised (2006: 507). However, I think this is a deliberate strategy by companies like Coke as computer penetration in India is still one of the lowest in the world. According to data from the United Nations Development Program for every 100 persons in India there are only 1.7 internet users and 0.3 subscribers; computer ownership is 0.6 for every 100 persons (*Digital Review for Asia Pacific* 2006). However in non-internet-based advertisements the Coke company uses Hindi mixed with English, as I will show in the next section.

Orthographic hybridity

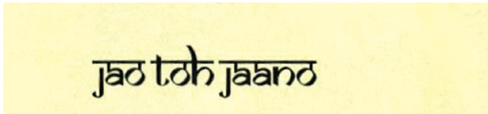

Figure 7. Part of Advertisement from a popular Bollywood English magazine

Figure 8. Screen-shot from a popular Hindi television serial on Z TV

Figures 7 and 8 are illustrations of how the Devanagari and Roman scripts are orthographically hybridized. Figure 7 is the text of an advertisement for travel to a Southeast Asian country, a very popular spot for middle class Indians, especially honeymooning couples. The transliterated line reads "*jaao toh jaano*", meaning "if you go then you will know". However these Roman letters have been presented such that the script looks like Devanagari. Specifically the line running on top of the letters, and the extension of the letter "h" over this line to resemble a *maatra* or vowel, makes the Roman script look like Devanagari. Also the letters "a" and "o" are connected to the line running on top just as in Devanagari letters.

In Figure 8 both Devanagari and Roman scripts are fused in a single word. The word in the photo is pronounced "*Raakhi*" and is the title of a serial on Z TV. "*Raakhi*" is the name of a Hindu festival celebrated around September or October every year (according to the lunar Hindu calendar the date of a festival will change somewhat every year) in which sisters tie an auspicious thread called *Raakhi* on the wrists of their brothers. In Figure 8 the first letter of the word "*Raakhi*" is in Devanagari and is shown as "r". The rest of the word is transliterated in Roman as "*akhi*". Though the whole word looks like it has been transliterated into the Roman script, those who are not biliterate in Hindi and English will not be able to read it, because of the first letter which is in Devanagari. As in Figure 7, here too there is a line running above all the letters to make the whole word look like it is written in Devanagari. Under the word "*akhi*" is a Hindi phrase transliterated in Roman script: "*atoot rishtey ki dor*" meaning "the thread of an unbreakable relationship".

Code mixing within an utterance

Figure 9. Advertisement for plastic storage boxes

An advertisement for plastic containers, partially displayed in Figure 7, appears in *East*, a tabloid for North East Delhi, which carries stories in both English and Hindi. The name of this paper, which uses two scripts, signals that some of the stories herein will be in English/Roman script and some in Hindi/Devanagari script. However, each story in this tabloid uses only one script, though with extensive use of transliteration. The advertisement in Figure 9, on the other hand, fuses two scripts into one single utterance. The question on the left of this advertisement is in both Hindi and English meaning "Do you know that broken plastic containers can be replaced free of cost?" This hybrid question reads exactly the way a code-switching bilingual would utter it, thus giving the text a lively quality.

Hybridity in transliteration

Figure 10. From *Sunday Navbharat Times* (September 11, 2005)

Figure 11. Part of Advertisement for a internationally recognized soft drink from *The Times of India* (September 25, 2005)

The name of the newspaper in Figure 10 is a Devanagari transliteration of "*Sunday Navbharat Times*" in which "Sunday" and "Times" are English words. The Hindi word for Sunday is "*ravivaar*" and the Urdu word, which is used more than the Hindi one, is "*itvaar*", but the newspaper chooses not to use these. The main news item in this paper can be transliterated into English as "Life style *se teya hogaa* car *ka* premium" meaning "life style will be used to decide the premium for cars". In this headline the words "life", "style", "car" and "premium" are transliterated into Devanagari.

In the artefact in Figure 10, hybridity is created by transliterating English words into Devanagari. Here we can clearly see the loan proneness of Hindi in a fairly conservative text like a daily Hindi newspaper. The audience for this newspaper is the the literate population in Delhi and the Hindi speaking belt of northern India, which contains a sizeable proportion of English-knowing bilinguals, though it is not possible to quantify the size of this group. By using English words, even when Hindi or Urdu equivalents are available, the newspaper projects a bicultural identity; one which is rooted in the national language but global enough to understand key English words associated with middle class lifestyle.

The artefact in Figure 11 is an illustration of the languages in which a top 10 global company advertises for a popular cola in India. The main heading for this advertisement is "*Thande ka Dhamaka*", meaning "a blast of coolness". At the bottom left of this advertisement (not shown in Figure 11) is "*Label lao Jashn manao*" meaning "bring a label and celebrate". The word "*jashn*" is from Urdu and carries connotations of hedonism. Though this text might appear monoliterate in English the bold words from Hindi and Urdu make it biliterate and illustrate that use of Hindi and Urdu is important for a multinational company even in an elite English newspaper. When a similar advertisement appears in *The Navbharat Times*, the balance of words will shift in favour of Hindi but the text will still remain hybrid.

Advertisements for Bollywood movies, whether they are in the form of billboards, magazine advertisements, or on the covers of DVDs, are usually transliterations in Roman script. For instance one of the biggest box office hits for 2001 was Karan Johar's *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham,* meaning *Sometimes Happiness*

Sometimes Sorrow.[6] The poster for this and other Bollywood movies can be viewed online as they cannot be printed in chapter for copyright reasons. Though the titles of Bollywood movies are transliterations, in the movie itself, i.e. in the songs and dialogues, the use of English is carefully controlled so as not to lose market share, as extensive use of English will repel audiences who do not understand English. The purpose of transliteration in the Roman script is to give the lifestyle choice of watching Bollywood movies a middle class aura.

Orthographic and transliterated hybridity illustrates Bhatia and Richie's contention that globalization not only spreads English but is also one of the drivers supporting bilingualism (2004). In a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the advertisement for "Fair and Lovely" cream sold in India they found a marked increase of English in the 1990s version of this advertisement as compared to the 1980s version. Indeed, English is present in all the texts in Figures 7–11, and some, like the one in Figure 7, even appear monoliterate in English.

However, the spread of English is only one aspect of the outcomes of globalization, the other outcome being the maintenance of other languages in unique cultural contexts. Hindi is an integral part of all the texts shown in this paper except the artefact in Photo 2. In fact monoliterate English advertisements entirely in the Roman script and only in the English language, as shown in Figure 2, are still quite rare and are dominant only in advertisements for selected jobs. *Shudh* Hindi's entrenched nature in the domain of the Hindu religion and colloquial Hindi's firm foothold in advertising are apparent in texts from 1 till 11. Hindi is also evident in Bollywood posters which can be viewed online. Even when the advertisement appears in an English language daily like the soft drink advertisement (Figure 11), Hindi is used because a monoliterate advertisement will limit the reach of the product. All the texts from Figures 7–11 have been created with a bilingual/biliterate Hindi-English audience in mind though the level of bilingualism/biliteracy varies from the reader who is merely able to recognize that the word is probably written in English to the reader who is completely fluent. For instance the wall advertisement in Figure 6 is for an audience with practically no literacy in English. Also for Bollywood movie posters, knowledge of English is not really necessary, as the actual product, i.e. the movie, is in Hindi. The target audience for

6. Transliteration of Hindi words in Roman script is not standardized thus the word "*Kabhi*" in this photo is spelled in two ways. As it is becoming easier to use the Devanagari script on computers and TV, there is no move to standardize the transliteration. However, the market itself has created some standard norms; for instance, the Hindi word which means heart or soul is always transliterated as "*mann*" and never as "*man*" to avoid confusion with the English word of the same spelling.

all the figures from 7–11 is the 422 million Hindi speakers and not the tiny pool of English-knowing bilinguals.

Conclusions

This essay has taken a qualitative approach to analyzing biliterate advertisements in Hindi and English in the public domain of Delhi. Though many of the texts used here, for instance from *The Times of India* and *The Navbharat Times*, are not exclusive to the city of Delhi, many of the other texts are. Also, since linguistic ecology in India can change drastically from one city to another, I prefer to situate my analysis in the context of Delhi and emphasize that this data cannot speak for any other city. The main theoretical thrust of this essay has been to show that the processes of globalization support bilingualism and languages other than English in unique cultural contexts. This essay has classified texts in the public domain in Delhi into monoliterate and biliterate along with various subdivisions within biliterate texts with the purpose of showing the nature and level of mixing between Hindi and English. The qualitative approach and methods of data collection do not encourage generalizable claims and therefore this study is specific to the Hindi language and its maintenance.

Hindi is deeply entrenched in the linguistic ecology of India and is steadily growing. There can be many reasons for the growth of Hindi: a rapidly increasing population, immense language loyalty, and increasing literacy in the Hindi-speaking belt of India. Whatever the reasons might be, my point is that the spread of English due to globalization is not killing Hindi. On the contrary Hindi in India is growing, as is English. Hindi will remain for the foreseeable future one of the largest languages in the world. Though the spread of global English is palpable in the domain of key employment sectors in the globalizing economy, Hindi in both its high and low varieties is dominant in Hinduism and officially biliterate texts, and present in varied forms in advertising.

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CHAPTER 4

Kaduva of privileged power, instrument of rural empowerment?

The politics of English (and Sinhala and Tamil) in Sri Lanka

Lisa Lim

The politics of English is inseparable from the politics of other languages in multicultural, multilingual (South and Southeast) Asia; in few other places is this more painfully felt than Sri Lanka, where ethnolinguistic issues have embroiled the country in civil war for a quarter of a century. A source of this conflict, its origin in British rule, is the provision of English education, as a scarce commodity, affording better employment opportunities and socio-economic advancement. With the Tamil minority viewed as privileged in the colonial system, more protectionist measures were sought in independence for the Sinhala ethnic majority through a 'Sinhala Only' language policy, all this leading to the country's polarization. Crucially, English has continued to be the major instrument of the dominant bilingual westernized elite, the *kaduva* (Sinhala 'sword'), with the power to divide those with and without access to the language. More recent state discourse, however, reframes English as a functionally different tool, one for communication for knowledge and employment. Two aspects are notable: (i) that English be delivered and desired purely for its utility value, while Sinhala and Tamil associate with cultural values and identities; and (ii) that English be an important tool (along with ICT) for rural empowerment, with user-friendliness rather than correctness of grammar and pronunciation emphasized (contrasting interestingly with Singapore's situation). Such a shift, in users and competence in English, beyond the exonormative, elite minority may mean a development of Sri Lankan English(es) more in line with the broader multilingual ecology, holding intriguing possibilities for its evolution and appropriation.

The politics of English is inseparable from the politics of other languages in multicultural, multilingual (South and Southeast) Asia; in few other places is this more painfully felt than Sri Lanka, where ethno-linguistic issues have embroiled the country in civil war for more than a quarter of a century, a conflict which has claimed more than 70,000 lives. Speaking of the country's language context and terrorist situation in the same breath is a given. On February 13 2009, the president of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa, at the ceremonial launch of "2009 – Year of English And Information Technology", declared that

> 2009 is our country's Year of English and IT. With the liberation of our people from the clutches of terrorism which destroyed our country for more than 25 years, 2009 will also be our country's Year of Peace, our country's Year of Reconciliation, and our Year of true Independence.[1]

This essay will trace the evolution of the politics of English in Sri Lanka, from colonial times up until the recently declared "Year of English". In such an endeavour, "peace" and "reconciliation" are indeed not irrelevant, as the positioning of the two other main languages in the ethno-linguistic conflict, Sinhala and Tamil, must necessarily be considered, and this essay will do so through a periodization of modern history, examining the situations during the colonial period, the era after independence, and the current period of liberation.[2] A quick introduction to the ethnicities and languages of Sri Lanka comprises the following. The population of 21.3 million consists of Sinhalese (74%), Tamils (18%), Muslims (both Moors and Malays) (7%), Others (Burghers, descendants of European colonists, and aboriginal Veddahs) (1%). The Sinhalese, who moved from north India and conquered the island in the 6th century, are divided into two groups: the low-country Sinhalese, subjected in coastal areas to greater colonial acculturation; and the Kandyan Sinhalese, the more traditional upland dwellers, named after the Kingdom of Kandy, which resisted European encroachments until 1815–1818. The Tamils are divided into Sri Lankan Tamils (12%), who have been on the island since early historic times, circa the 11th century, and who settled in the northern and eastern parts of the island; and Indian Tamils (5%), who were brought by the British in the late 19th century from south India as tea and rubber plantation labour, and remain concentrated in the "tea country" of the south-central

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1. While such a statement was already boldly made in February 2009, it was only later in May 2009 that the war can be seen to have ended. Then, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, briefly addressing parliament, and declaring Sri Lanka "liberated" from terrorism, was political in his choice of languages used. In the Tamil language, he said the war was not waged against the Tamil people, but rather, that "Our intention was to save the Tamil people from the cruel grip of the LTTE. We all must now live as equals in this free country". Speaking in Sinhalese, he added, "We have liberated the whole country from LTTE terrorism".

2. When searching for the underlying causes of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, students of ancient history tend to refer to the battles between the Sinhalese King Dutugemunu and his Tamil counterpart Elara more than 2,000 years ago; others, this paper included, look to more recent history.

highlands (WWW Virtual Library 1996–2003). About 60% of the people speak Sinhala only, 22% Tamil only, and 0.3% English only; 10% speak both Sinhala and Tamil; 6% speak English and Sinhala or Tamil; 3% speak all three languages.

Given the sociopolitical complexity of the country's history, the account in this essay is necessarily an abridged but hopefully not over-simplified one, and readers are directed to the various sources mentioned for further details. In examining the status of English against the two main warring languages in Sri Lanka, Sinhala and Tamil, we take as a theme how English has been viewed as a tool for various purposes: for many decades, a sword that divides; in the most recent discourse, an instrument that empowers.

Colonial period: English privilege

The British East India Company took control of the island of Ceylon in 1796. Its goals in Ceylon were, as in the other exploitation colonies of the East, primarily commercial, with support directed to establishing and maintaining primarily tea plantations, as well as rubber and coconut plantations. The second main goal of British colonial policy in Sri Lanka was the promotion of British culture via the English language (Fernando 1996: 487). The colonial education system was intended to provide the British government with local personnel, and was therefore neither a mass nor an egalitarian system of education, and in fact forcefully opposed the widespread teaching of English, since educating the masses would pose a threat to the status of the elite ruling classes (Brutt-Griffler 2002: 80; Goonetilleke 2003: 340). Until 1946, the opportunity of learning English was open only to a privileged minority whose function was the same as that of their Indian counterpart: to provide the British administration – largely employees for the Ceylon Civil Service that functioned in English – with "local residents proficient in the language in lower-level administrative posts", "to interpret to the masses in the language they spoke as their mother-tongue the thoughts and aims of their white rulers" (Lott 1974: 6; Canagarajah 1995: 193, cited in Fernando 1996: 486). From Table 1 we estimate the proportion of the population with some knowledge of English in the 1940s to be around 6.5%.

Table 1. English language competence in Imperial Sri Lanka (*Census of Ceylon* 1946)

Language(s) used	%
Ability to speak English only	0.2
Ability to speak English and Sinhala	2.9
Ability to speak English and Tamil	1.0
Ability to speak English, Sinhala and Tamil	2.4

Up until now, not much of the description seems particularly different from the other British Asian colonies. But here is where the first significant historical accident emerges. It has been argued that opportunities for the learning of English were generally better in the Tamil areas of the north, due to the existence of a larger number of missionary (hence English-medium) schools in that part of Sri Lanka – the Northern Province had about 20% of English educational institutions in Sri Lanka, whether missionary-run or state-run, and such institutions were more common in Tamil areas than Sinhalese areas (Manogaran 1987; Dharmadasa 2007: 128; Saunders 2007; Rajandran 2009). With this advantage (over the Sinhalese) in English literacy, the Tamils made better headway and were, in proportion to their numbers, more represented in select professions such as law, medicine and engineering, and also slightly more in the Ceylon Civil Service (Dharmadasa 2007: 128; Thangarajah and Hettige 2007: 158). It is said that the Tamil elites preferred to concentrate on work in the public sector and professions as it was hard to farm the Northern Province from where most of them hailed (Wilson 1988: 42).

The second point of note is that, while in some other colonial countries such as Singapore, enrolment in English-medium schools increased drastically over the decades even during the colonial era, in Sri Lanka, access to English continued to be restricted (see e.g. Lim 2010). By the late 19th century, most students were still taught in vernacular schools that exclusively used Sinhala or Tamil; while some 4,000 vernacular schools were in operation during the colonial period, at its largest number only 255 English schools existed (Brutt-Griffler 2002: 216). The situation continued through the 20th century, with little increase in English education: in 1914, at the height of the colonial era, only 37,500 pupils attended English schools, while 347,500 were registered in vernacular schools, i.e. a proportion of 1:10; when universal franchise came in, there were 84,000 pupils in English schools, while 476,000 went to vernacular schools, a proportion of 1:6; and even on the eve of independence, the proportion was just 1:4, i.e. some 180,000 pupils were found in English schools, while 720,000 attended vernacular schools. We see the effects of this in the next era.

Nationalism and independence: Sinhala protectionism, ethnic polarization

Rajandran distinguishes the period after colonial rule by the gradual decrease of English and the gradual increase of Sinhala in the public sector, seeing it divided into two phases of 1944–1956 and 1956–1987 with "Sinhalese nationalism … consolidated before and during the first phase, [and] Sinhalese nationalism … validated in the second phase" (2009).

1944–1956

Leading up to independence in 1948, with D. S. Senanayake as Prime Minister – who was extremely concerned about ethnic and religious harmony and who envisioned a multicultural, secular democracy and a multiracial state that did not favor any ethnicity or any section of any ethnicity – the Legislative Council in 1944 made Sinhala and Tamil the official languages of Sri Lanka (de Silva 1984: xx; Vittachi 1995: 5).[3] In spite of the official line, there was a continuing emphasis on English as the language of administration; it remained an important language in the public sector, which was a major source of employment (Fernando 1996). This led to the perception that many Sinhalese, both those Sinhalese scholars who were educated in Sinhala, as well as the bulk of the Sinhalese, who were from poor and rural backgrounds – viewed as the most neglected segment in society around independence – were prevented from participating in the new state since the English language was a necessary condition for access, and its lack was thus a hindrance to their economic and social improvement (Vittachi 1995: 7). As long as the state functioned in English, this also alienated them: citizens had to depend on people who knew English even to decipher information about income tax and inheritance (Manogaran 1987: 46). The proportion of English users during this period can be seen in Table 2 to be about 9.6% of the population.

Table 2. Languages spoken by persons three years of age and over, 1953 (Department of Census and Statistics 1960: 604)

Language(s) spoken	%
Sinhala only	58.9
Tamil only	21.6
English only	0.2
Sinhala and Tamil	9.9
Sinhala and English	4.2
Tamil and English	2.0
Sinhala, Tamil and English	3.2

This can be seen to have had at least two consequences. First, the Sinhalese nationalists responded by taking an anti-English stance that soon became an anti-Tamil stance, since, as mentioned earlier, the Tamils' knowledge of English was viewed

3. The absence of Britain saw the primordial concepts of "race", language and religion raise their heads, and Senanayake's vision of a multicultural democracy and a multiracial state was not shared by the Sinhalese nationalists and even by some in Senanayake's United National Party (UNP) (de Silva 1984: 496; Wilson 1988: 22).

as having had long given them an advantage over the Sinhalese in employment and education; the Tamils thus became guilty by association with English (Bose 1994: 58). In actual fact, the non-elite Tamils were in the same boat as most of the Sinhalese, with both groups losing out to the Sinhalese and Tamil elites educated in English (Thangarajah and Hettige 2007: 156). The second and related consequence was that the situation of the Sinhalese with their perceived lower economic and social positions compared to the Tamils fueled insecurity about their political position in an independent state, which then fueled fears about the survival of Buddhism and Sinhala in Sri Lanka, thus fanning the embers for Sinhalese nationalism which would burgeon in the next phase (Kearney 1985).

1956–1987

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike used as his political base the *pancha maha balavegaya* "five great forces", namely the *ayurveda* doctors, farmers, teachers, workers and Buddhist clergy. These were the elites for rural Sinhalese society who felt excluded from political and economic participation as they were more rural than urban and were educated in Sinhala, not English, and they shared a common belief that Sri Lanka was inherently Buddhist and Sinhalese (Vittachi 1995; Mahindapala 1999; Obeysekaran 1979, cited in Manogaran 1987: 33).[4] Although the focus for Sinhalese nationalism included language, religion and ethnic survival, language came to dominate it as Sinhala was the vehicle for Sinhalese culture and religion. Sinhala also enabled vertical integration as it would unite the Sinhalese across caste, class, regional and religious barriers (Fishman 1968).

The new coalition government led by Bandaranaike in 1956 thus won on the basis of "Sinhala Only" that promised to proclaim Sinhala – the majority native language used by the majority ethnicity – as the sole official language of Sri Lanka.[5]

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4. This belief stems from the Mahavamsa, a historical poem about the early Sinhalese kings, in which Lord Buddha said to the King of Gods, Sakka, that Buddhism would be spread in (Sri) Lanka and Sakka was to protect both Buddhism and the Sinhalese there (cited in de Silva 1984: 4). Through this the Sinhalese believed they had a claim to the island that the other ethnicities lacked, which would form the basis for their nationalism and justify nationalistic policies, including those for language.

5. The Sinhala Only Act was passed in 1956 and among others required public servants to know Sinhala but provided a 4-year grace period if implementation could not be done immediately (Saunders 2007). This permitted corpus planning as Sinhala was a language of culture, literature and religion but it was not yet fit for modern demands. The activities during the second phase were geared towards maintaining, reinforcing and enriching Sinhala, common for the nationalist period (Fishman 1968). The Constitutions of 1972 and 1978 reiterated Sinhalese

It has been said that this was more a political ploy to fish for Sinhalese votes, catering to the large rural Sinhalese electorate, allowing the Sinhalese scholars to enter political and economic domains (de Silva 1984: 501; Manogaran 1987: 43). "Sinhala Only" was also seen to be rectifying past injustices as English would no longer hamper Sinhalese economic and social development. With the state's pursuit of nationalization from 1956, 65% of the economy came to lie directly in state hands by 1975, making the state the largest employer in Sri Lanka (Fernando 1996: 81).[6] The new language policy thus alienated the minority ethnicities in Sri Lanka like the Tamils, reducing their chances for employment in the public sector since not many knew Sinhala (Rajandran 2009). Whereas in 1956 Tamils dominated the old colonial administrative system (disproportionately to their proportion of the population) through the advantage of their English education, occupying 30% of the senior bureaucracy, 50% of the clerical field and 60% of the technical and professional fields, their numbers declined in these fields as the years passed due to the requirement to know Sinhala (Sambandan 2006, in Rajandran 2009). Where the private sector was concerned, as the nationalization of banks, insurance companies and oil companies made them state concerns, even if theoretically the private sector was not regulated by the Sinhala Only Act, these companies also had to function in Sinhala as dictated by the Act (de Silva 1984: 535). A decrease in teaching and learning English after independence was also recorded. In the 1950s, while English was not officially banned from education, it was widely believed that it was forbidden to have an English stream in schools and English-medium schools were considered illegal (Gunesekera 2005: 76–77).[7] All this became even more pronounced after Sirimavo Bandaranaike became prime minister in 1960 as she promoted the use of Sinhala (Rajandran 2009).

Ironically, English continued to be a valuable language because it was the language of commerce, science, technology and a host of other functions in Sri Lanka and beyond. In particular, when the state decided to liberalize the economy in 1977, the public sector shrank with the privatization of many state-owned

nationalism by proclaiming Sinhala as the only official language and gave Buddhism a preferred position. Exception was only made for the Northern and Eastern Provinces where Tamil was permitted to be used as they had a Tamil majority populace.

6. Even if officially the public sector converted to Sinhala during this period, it is claimed that English still dominated there for nearly twenty years after 1956 as public servants were not proficient enough in Sinhala and the corpus planning for Sinhala did not match the status planning done for it (Fernando 1996: 494).

7. It was only at the end of the last century that English was reintroduced to be taught at schools and as a compulsory subject for GCSE "A" level exams, as a condition to be admitted to university (Saunders 2007).

companies (Hettige 1999: 303). At this point, many Sri Lankans, who had received public education in Sinhala or Tamil and thus had little or next to no English competence, had to face stiff competition for jobs in the private sector which required English, or now limited jobs in the public sector. Those who had the advantage in employment in particular in the private sector were thus the children from the elite or rich and urban Sinhalese or Tamil families who had received private education and had learnt English. Nationalism had simply reinforced elitism and exclusivism for English in Sri Lanka.

It is during this period – and not during colonial rule – that Kandiah explains that English is seen as *kaduva*:

> The term crystallises the socio-political-psychological attitudes of the underdog to all this, of the man who has no chance of beating the English-dominated system and of rising by means of the language to the positions that, in the kind of society he finds himself in, will help him realise and preserve his self-esteem. To him, the English language is only too evidently a sword, the symbol of power. But this is not all, there is a further dimension to his awareness. The sword, he knows, if grasped firmly in his own hands, will endow him with the power to be truly free, to be himself and to live with dignity on terms of equality with other men; in someone else's hands, it remains the instrument of his oppression, the means of his subjugations. And with bitterness he realises that in the profoundly inegalitarian society in which he lives, for all the half-hearted pretences that are made to offer it to him, the sword is forever destined to remain in someone else's hands. Note that the attitudes that the terms expressed could not quite have developed under British rule, when the ordinary man was not deluded into believing that he would ever grasp power in his own hands. It is only after independence, when the middle class leadership found it expedient, in pursuing their various power ploys, to raise the expectations in him that he would participate in a real way in the exercise of power, that this happened. And the expectations thus raised were sharpened when, through the expensive English teaching programme, he was persuaded to believe that he would be given a real chance of grasping the instrument of that power, namely the English language. The term *kaduva* emerged out of the sense of disillusionment that he felt on awakening from that tantalising dream of hope that he had entertained for a brief moment. (Kandiah 1984: 139–140)

The nationist period

The exclusivity of the English language starts being addressed, at least at the level of state discourse, when English is made the link language in 1987, at the start of what has been termed the nationist period (1987–2009). During this time Sri Lanka attempted to reintroduce English to the public sector and the nation at large. The impetus for nationism was the civil war (1983–2009) led by the Liberation

Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Among the initiatives to bring peace to Sri Lanka was the Indo-Lanka Accord signed between Sri Lanka and India in 1987, one of whose resolutions was to have Tamil and English as national languages, besides Sinhala. In other words, the government's attempts to integrate the Sinhalese and Tamils used English in a crucial role: this is made explicit in the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which made Tamil an official language with Sinhala, and English the link language, and which reconfirms the implicit role English had played in inter-ethnic communication in and for Sri Lanka, albeit among the elites, since colonial times. Obviously, as in all other postcolonial contexts, the identification of English as, in this case, the link language was appropriate, it being the one language that was viewed as neutral, not favoring either Sinhalese or Tamil ethnic groups. It should be noted, though, that many educationists were in fact skeptical of the supposed neutral role of English as link language in view of the non-functional English-Sinhala/Tamil bilingualism of the majority; Gooneratne adds that the 1988 promulgation would in fact mean that it would be "the English-educated of the next decade [that would be] agents of national unity" (1992: 27).

The change in language policy in fact did not lead to clear changes in language use on the ground, with English not extending to many domains. In the first place, the definition of "link language" was left rather opaque, at least until the 16th Amendment in 1987 detailed the position of English as used in administration and legislation if citizens wish to be served in English (Constitution of Sri Lanka 2003); a decade later in President Kumaratunga's 1997 letter, "Implementation of the Official Language Policy", the provisions for English were made more explicit with making it compulsory to have signboards, forms, instructions and regulations for the public in Sinhala, Tamil *and* English (Official Languages Commission 2005: 10). Moreover, the actual implementation of English as the link language in the public sector was slow: public servants comprised 91.69% Sinhalese in 2000, with only 8.40% and 19.81% of public servants knowing Tamil at the state and provincial levels respectively. Increasing public servants' competence in Tamil helped convince the Tamils that the state was accessible to them and helped win them over to the government's side in the civil war (Sambandan 2006, cited in Rajandran 2009). Thus there was a greater need to function in Tamil (besides Sinhala) than in English, and the priority was to introduce Tamil to the public sector instead of English (Rajandran 2009).[8] In general, there was no pressing

8. Fernando in fact recommends that it is better for the Sinhalese and Tamils to learn each other's languages for a stronger sociocultural identity instead of learning English that is related to colonialism and elitism (1996: 508). Rajandran adds that there might also be resistance to learn Sinhala and Tamil from the Tamils and Sinhalese respectively, after nearly three decades of civil war, even though the state encourages and sponsors programmes to learn Sinhala and Tamil among public servants (2009).

need for English in the public sector as most public servants (apart from those in public servants in Customs, Emigration and Immigration, Foreign Affairs, Health Services, Industry and Technology, and Trade and Commerce) did not need it in the daily discharge of their duties, and the intellectual and technological activities for which English is essential were restricted to professionals, doctors, engineers, lawyers, researchers, and technicians in the upper grades, with the majority of Sri Lankans accessing the fruits of modernization at a lower level, for instance handling money orders, cheques, etc., and engaging in vocation-related technologies, via Sinhala and Tamil (Fernando 1996: 507; Rajandran 2009). This state of affairs together with the decrease of English in public education – a recent survey by the Presidential Secretariat found that there were nearly 21,000 untrained English teachers at the primary and secondary levels – has translated to a situation in which the majority of Sri Lankans in general have little proficiency in English (Official Government News Portal 2008, cited in Rajandran 2009).

Nonetheless, the Department of Official Languages (DOL) and Official Languages Commission (OLC) have been charged by the state to expand knowledge of Sinhala, Tamil and English among public servants, with English courses provided, and incentives to encourage participating in and passing these courses; public servants are given a monthly stipend based on their English qualifications, with those knowing English given preference in promotion (OLC 2005: 19, 27; Rajandran 2009). Other measures to promote English include creating the National Language Training Institute to teach Sinhala, Tamil and English to public servants (Official Government News Portal 2007, cited in Rajandran 2009).

Liberation: Rural empowerment

Most recent state discourse reframes English as a functionally different tool from the "sword" viewed as dividing the haves from the have-nots, namely a tool for communication for knowledge and employment. As already noted in the quotation at the start of this chapter, President Mahinda Rajapaksa in February 2009 announced Sri Lanka's Year of English and Information Technology, emphasizing the role of English in providing a means for the society towards globalization.[9]

> In the 'Mahinda Chintana', my election manifesto, which received the endorsement of the people, we recognised the importance of rapidly creating a knowledge society in Sri Lanka. To make the idea of the global village more meaningful to our people, we stressed the importance of linking the villages and townships in all the

9. In all the quotations in this chapter, italics are mine for emphasis.

> provinces and districts of our country with the outside world of knowledge. And to achieve this objective, the 'Mahinda Chintana' lays emphasis on the unmistakable need *to urgently equip the people, especially the youth, with proficiency in the English language* on the one side and to provide them with access to computers and internet facilities, through the rapid development of use of information technology, on the other … When marching forward into the future as a single people, it is my view that the Sinhala and Tamil speaking people should engage with one another in each other's language. I therefore visualise for the future a bi-lingual Sri Lankan society … *English, on the other hand, will be our language to reach out to the world and access the global pool of knowledge and technology*. As the national initiative on English gathers momentum and achieves desired results, I visualise, in fact, a tri-lingual Sri Lankan society in the long run. (Rajapaksa 2009)

In what follows, we examine extracts of Rajapaksa's speech (Rajapaksa 2009). Two main aspects are notable. First, in declaring English (along with ICT) an important tool for rural empowerment, what is emphasized is user-friendliness rather than correctness of grammar and pronunciation. As discussed in the previous section, the English language is viewed as having been the *kaduva*, the sword, that has the power to divide, in particular as its access has been largely restricted to the privileged elite due to the emphasis on maintaining an exo-normative standard.

> As for English, which we recognise to be another important tool of rural empowerment, its penetration across the country and especially, into the rural hinterland has been held back by constraints of a very different nature [from those of IT]. English was and still continues to be perceived and delivered as a gateway to elite status and an emblem of class and privilege. The curriculum and teaching methods followed in our country, *which place importance not on the use of it for communication, but on its rules of grammar, and on perfect pronunciation, have only served to maintain it as the exclusive preserve of a selfish, privileged class and a tool of social repression.* (Rajapaksa 2009)

What is significant is that, even while the official discourse in Sri Lanka underlines globalization and economic mobility, with a "common goal of development and prosperity", there is no link made between that and *standard* English; rather, there is a recognition that intelligibility is necessary, but also that an inflexible aim at a "standard" is not.

> The Presidential Task Force on English and IT has adopted several radical measures to transform English teaching method and curriculum in our schools *to make the language user-friendly* and less elitist. Thus, English will progressively be perceived and delivered to the children of Sinhala and Tamil speaking homes, no more as a 'subject' but as a 'tool of communication', for speaking and for seeking knowledge and employment. (Rajapaksa 2009)

The second notable aspect in the country's recent stance on the politics of English is that, while Sinhala and Tamil associate with cultural values and identities, English is delivered and desired purely for its utilitarian value.

> Our government's policy framework, Mahinda Chintana, clearly lays down our policy on language. The strong link between language and culture is recognised and respected. To the people of my country, *Sinhala and Tamil are not mere tools of communication. They encapsulate our values and world-views, give expression to our inner feelings and define our cultural categories. They embody the soul of our people. They confer to us our distinct identity* … Therefore, the Presidential Task Force on English and IT will ensure that the national initiative should be designed in such a way that *English is delivered purely as a 'Life Skill' that is desired for its utility value*, as a vital tool of communication with the outside world of knowledge, and a skill that is required for employment. We will ensure that there will be a complete break with the past, where in our country English was rolled out as a vehicle for creating disaffection towards our national cultures, national ethos and national identity, for alienating our people from their roots and for creating social and cultural divisions among them. (Rajapaksa 2009)

Here we see a parallel with Singapore's English-Mother Tongue bilingual policy, where English has been thus far presented as the neutral language, with the Mother Tongues meant to provide cultural ballast (see e.g. Wee this volume). Execution of this language policy is already in evidence in both the urban contexts and the rural areas.

In education, citing "the dramatic success of India in the fields of IT and English in recent years", Sri Lanka has looked to India for models and expertise, for example, establishing in September 2009 the Sri Lanka India Centre for English Language Training (SLICELT) in Peradeniya, comprising collaboration with the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in Hyderabad, India, in a programme of re-training of teachers in the delivery of "Spoken English" to schools (UNESCO Bangkok 2009; Lanka Everything 2010). These "master trainers" of the "Presidential Initiative of English as a Life Skill" who received training from EFLU, and, crucially, who come from Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking rural homes, have subsequently trained teachers of the country's elite urban schools to teach spoken English to their students (Fernando 2010). In September 2011, Sri Lanka and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding for setting up a 'Three-Tier English Language Training System in Sri Lanka', involving setting up a language laboratory in each of the nine provinces of Sri Lanka (Official Government News Portal of Sri Lanka 2013). A few things are of note here. First, Sri Lanka has not looked to a former colonizer for help, but to a sister country, one whose cultural and spiritual partnership goes back some two millennia. Second, India has broken with the British educational system and distinguishes two different subjects: English – Communicative, and English – Language and Literature (CBSE India

2009). Third, it is a local (regional) variety that is being actively pursued by Sri Lanka as a model, echoing the call for pluricentric models for World Englishes in the literature. This contrasts interestingly with the situation in Singapore, for example, where a rigid adherence to an exo-normative standard is the directive, at least officially (e.g. Lim 2009; Wee this volume).

Other activities include language laboratories equipped with all modern state-of-the-art facilities to be set up in all universities and higher educational institutions, with the president vowing to ensure that all graduates acquire proficiency in the English language within three years (Rajapaksa 2010). In the country's capital, while staff in the tourist industry have long had very good English competence, there have been very recent additional thrusts to promoting English. Large hotels such as the Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo have their employees follow special English courses, and they have also inaugurated events such as "English Day" (*Explore Sri Lanka* 2010).

Efforts to reach the rural populations have also intensified. In addition to the Hyderabad-trained rural Sri Lankans mentioned above, at the Defence Ministry 605 cadet officers have trained as English teachers, and have been assigned to teach English at schools in remote areas such as Moneragala, Batticaloa, Ampara, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (UNESCO Bangkok 2009). In rural areas of the country, where the linguistic landscape comprises signage almost exclusively in Sinhala and/or Tamil, advertisements for English classes (in English) can be found displayed along the roads. And external initiatives include the following: the launch of the "Rural Voices Unlimited" project, funded by the US Embassy in Sri Lanka and promoted through the Rotary Club of Colombo West, in which the Toastmasters conduct programmes in five outstation (rural) cities in English communication and leadership skills; and a post-war Trincomalee-based project funded by the German government and in collaboration with the Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils focusing on public servants and locals working in NGOs, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds – from Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities, rural and urban districts, central and devolved government and from different age groups – to provide English language training as a link language and a tool for conflict transformation (*Sunday Times* 2009; *Daily FT* 2010; Kennett 2010).

Implications

A number of interesting implications may be seen to arise from these recent politics of English in Sri Lanka. This section elaborates on two developments: the evolution of Sri Lanka English, and the functional allocation of languages in Sri Lankan.

Sri Lankan English

The policies and practices aimed for in Sri Lanka's recent discourse mean a shift in users and competence in English, beyond the exo-normative, elite minority (of about 10% of the population) to a larger community of speakers. What is significant is that these new users of English engage much more in multilingual practices and do not have English as a first or dominant language. This will almost certainly mean a development of Sri Lankan English(es) more in line with the broader multilingual ecology, holding intriguing possibilities for its evolution and appropriation.

Until now, (Standard) "Sri Lankan English" (SSLE) has been the nativized variety of westernized, urban, upper classes, mostly Sinhalese Sri Lankans, uniting its speakers and used as a marker of upper class identity (Gunesekera 2005: 115).[10] Speakers of SSLE are highly influenced by exo-normative standards and typically claim to speak "British English", believing this to be the original and therefore only correct variety. The English spoken by the non-English educated masses is termed derogatorily "Not Pot English", frequently referred to as if it were a "disease to be prevented or cured" (Gunesekera 2005: 114, 125). Typically these speakers were not taught English at school, but acquired some knowledge of English through other means, e.g. tourism or self-teaching.

We may perhaps make a parallel with Singapore some two to three decades previously. Until that time, English was a preserve of the elite too – the Eurasians, the Peranakans, the students who went to mission schools, where it was their first or dominant home language (see Lim 2010). When English was made a compulsory language in all schools, it began to be used by speakers who actually had a much more multilingual repertoire; this in no small way contributed to the rapid evolution and stabilization of a more colloquial variety of Singapore English, or Singlish, which exhibits far more features of the local languages, such as Bazaar Malay, Hokkien, and Cantonese, with which English came into contact, alongside a more standard Singapore English that was already recognized as existing prior to that. Indeed the identification of SSLE and Not Pot English is a parallel to Singapore's SSE and Singlish (see e.g. Lim 2004, 2010).

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10. The recognition of a Lankan English was in fact already made decades ago by Passé (1948) and Kandiah (1980, 1981a, b, 1996, 1999), and then more recently in Gunasekera (2005) and Meyler (2007). Interestingly, it is the opinion of many English speakers in Sri Lanka that SLE does not exist as a variety in its own right, with some Sri Lankan linguists also arguing that labeling a variety as "Sri Lankan English" (SLE) authorizes and promotes an inferior or deviant form whose features are simply errors (e.g. Fonseka 2003).

The current and future spread of English to the broader society, in particular the more rural, multilingual and non-English dominant communities of Sri Lanka, will certainly result in the evolution and spread of a variety of SLE showing more contact features (probably equivalent to the so-called "Not Pot English"). The increase in the use of such a variety will serve to stabilize it, as the number of its users reaches a critical mass. Alongside the evolution of a more endo-normative, stabilized variety is also the development of a sense of ownership of and identification with SLE. Such legitimization both of linguistic features and of attitudes and identification of SLE will also certainly be reinforced by scholarship, such as the ongoing work in creating the Sri Lankan component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-SL), which has been reported widely in the local press, such as the country's *Daily Mirror* and *Daily News* (Algama 2010; Mudalige 2010).

It is also very likely that plurilingual practices such as code switching in English and Sinhala/Tamil, not unlike the Englishized Tamil documented in Jaffna, will evolve to become more prominent and widespread in the country than at present – though note that, as pointed out by Canagarajah (1995, 2009), the plurilingual tradition has long flourished in South Asia (as well as in other regions such as Africa and South America).

Languages and functions

The clear declaration of Sinhala and Tamil as encapsulating the people's values and world views and defining their cultural categories and identities is probably more true in Sri Lanka than in many other places. The designation of roles for the various languages – where English is to be desired for its utility value – seems to echo Singapore's language policy at independence. The difference is that in Singapore there was no bloody history of English as a vehicle for creating social and cultural divisions.

The interesting question is this. Can this functional allocation of languages work? While various scholars, such as Rajandran (2009) strongly support such an approach, not only because "it gives the native languages and English their respective spaces in Sri Lanka's linguistic repertoire that is most importantly exclusive and non-competitive", but also because "the Sinhalese need not fear the deterioration of Sinhala as it would be used for domains that are closely related to them like culture, literature and religion", a number of challenges should be borne in mind. First there are communities for whom some other language, and not Sinhala or Tamil, is the mother tongue, the vehicle of cultural values and identity. The Sinhalese and Tamil elite, for example, as mentioned above, have long been English-dominant, as have been the Burghers. After independence, as a consequence of the removal of English as Medium of Instruction in schools, families with the resources shifted to English from their vernacular in the home domain; this occurred in the Sri Lanka Malay urban community, for whom Sri Lanka Malay was the vernacular for generations but who now also are English-dominant (Lim and Ansaldo 2007; Ansaldo and Lim forthcoming). For such communities, English would be the mother tongue. Second, in a generation or two when English starts becoming a dominant language for more Sri Lankans, it will also not be a mere tool of communication, but a language with which they feel identity. In other words, the division of labor between Sinhala and Tamil as bearers of cultural values and identity and English as a utilitarian tool for knowledge and employment will not hold. In this sense, it is quite possible that the Sri Lanka language situation will mirror what has already occurred in Singapore, where, with some communities, such as the Eurasians, lobbying for having English officially recognized as a mother tongue, the discourse of English as "neutral" language in the statal narrative is challenged; but such groups cannot be permitted to make such a challenge since this would run counter to the English vs. Mother Tongues divide (Wee 2002). Second, it is increasingly recognized that in plurilingual communities there is no discreteness of "languages" (e.g. Englishized Tamil; Canagarajah 2009; Sri Lanka Malay, Lim and Ansaldo 2007; Ansaldo and Lim forthcoming). If indeed, with the spread of English to the majority multilingual population, plurilingual practices become more prominent, then it may well be the case that clear functional boundaries between the various languages will be less stable.

Concluding thoughts

Years of conflict and tension between the ethnic communities has meant that speakers prefer to distance and distinguish themselves from one another rather than unite in creating an integrated multilingual Sri Lankan identity, with the majority of the population preferring to identify themselves as Sinhala or Tamil rather than Sri Lankan (Gunasekera 2005: 19). Even at the end of the civil war, the ethnic tensions remain: one hears reports of Sinhalese taunting Tamils in Colombo with "Muthu, you khalas" 'Muthu, you are finished' (Velloor 2009). There have been scholars who have suggested, perhaps naïvely, that if Sri Lankans were to accept and embrace SLE as their own, it could be a powerful unifying force and a source of nationalistic pride (Gunasekera 2005: 21).

In any case, the most recent discourse on the politics of English (and Sinhala and Tamil) in Sri Lanka is certainly a clear and decisive step in one direction. To recapitulate, two aspects are notable: that English be delivered and desired purely for its utility value, while Sinhala and Tamil associate with cultural values and identities; and that English be an important tool (along with ICT) for rural empowerment, with user-friendliness rather than correctness of grammar and pronunciation emphasized. If such a shift, in users and competence in English, does indeed manifest itself, beyond English as the possession of the exo-normative, elite minority, this may mean a development of Sri Lankan English(es) more in line with the broader multilingual ecology, holding intriguing possibilities for its evolution and appropriation.

Yet the flip side of the coin sees the issues of ideology, power, and hegemony paraded in reactions to "non-native" varieties of English, with the responses of Sri Lankans somewhat opposed to proponents of a Sri Lankan variety of English. Articles written, for example, in response to a recent symposium on "Speak English Our Way" (in January 2010), take up the metaphor in arguing that "the enemy's weapon has to be acquired accurately first to use it effectively. Making the *kaduva* a domestic knife, a *manne*, and making the user believe that they both will do the same thing with same effectiveness is simply wishful thinking" (Boange 2010). Nonetheless, in spite of naysayers, a living, breathing language, used increasingly widely, by a growing body of multilingual users, will take on a life of its own – as has been seen in the case of Singapore's Singlish. In that case, even with governmental opposition, Singlish has thrived; in the case of Sri Lanka, with all the support and initiatives on the part of the government, it may well be that the domestic *manne* will serve its people well.

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CHAPTER 5

The interface of language, literature and politics in Sri Lanka

A paradigm for ex-colonies of Britain

D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke

During colonial times, the English language occupied a dominant position, but the colonial educational system was not a mass or egalitarian system. The presence of the colonial masters had a suffocating effect on the creative energies of the local inhabitants and literature in English emerges paradoxically from the growth of nationalist currents. In its early phase, this literature can be termed mimicry. The potential insurgency of mimicry is evident in an adoption of an indigenous identity at times. When writers began to feel nationalist currents keenly, their central problem was reconciling their own sensibility, indigenous traditions and realities, on the one hand, and Western literary and other traditions and influences, on the other. Once this clash of cultures phase was over, the poets wrote out of their personal situations. For some writers, the choice or adoption of English was a major problem, while it was not so for others. But both groups had to adapt English to express realities alien to it and convey their own indigenous spirit. We have now moved beyond the "Prospero-Caliban syndrome".

> *English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption – well, yes, there was adoption, but it was I who was adopted by the genius of the language.* (Conrad 1960: v)

In its continuing and growing vitality over the last four decades, Sri Lankan literature in English seems to be disproving the pessimistic views expressed periodically with regard to it. For instance, in 1981, it was asserted: "For the most part, the prognosis for creative writing in English in Sri Lanka is gloomy … creative writing in English is unlikely to have the chance for survival that its counterpart in India has" (Obeyesekere 1981: 17). Actually, "its counterpart in India" has had similar views expressed in regard to it. For instance, in 1963, it was Buddhadeva Bose's considered opinion:

> As late as 1937, Yeats reminded Indian writers that "no man can think or write with music or vigour except in his mother tongue"; to the great majority of Indians this admonition was unnecessary, but the intrepid few who left it unheeded do not yet realize that "Indo-Anglian" poetry is a blind alley, lined with curio shops, leading nowhere. (Bose 1963: 150)

During colonial times, the English language, the language of the colonial masters, occupied a dominant position. The vernacular languages were downgraded in the classroom. When Ediriwira Sarachchandra (1914–96), who lived to see himself acclaimed as the doyen of Sinhala letters as well as the leading novelist in English, was employed in the early 1940s as a Sinhala teacher at St Thomas's College, still the leading private school in Sri Lanka, the young Westernized students nicknamed him "Tagore". Sarachchandra considered this a compliment but to the students this was an expression of the fact that they found him amusing. R. K. Narayan's account of the situation in India is corroborative:

> In the classroom neither of these two languages (Sanskrit, the classical language of India, and Tamil, his mother tongue) was given any importance; they were assigned to the poorest and the most helpless among the teachers, the *pundits* who were treated as a joke by the boys, since they taught only the "second language", the first being English as ordained by Lord Macaulay when he introduced English education in India. English was important and was taught by the best teacher in the school, if not by the ruling star of the institution, the headmaster himself. (1965: 120)

The teaching of English itself was conducted in the carrot and the stick approach, and English was the passport to a bright future. When Sarachchandra was a boy, a child could be fined five cents for speaking a word of Sinhala or Tamil in school (Sarachchandra 1991: 692). Five cents was a significant sum in those days. At Royal College, the premier government male school founded by the British in 1835 as the Colombo Academy, the top prizes were the Governor-General's Prize for Western Classics, the Stubbs Prize for Latin Prose (Stubbs was a British Governor), the Shakespeare Prize and the Prize for English Essay. There were no special prizes for Sinhala and Tamil. This system at Royal College (the name itself significant) continued even after Independence (1948). Ngugi wa Thiong'o records the same kind of situation as prevailing in Kenya (in a harsher form):

> English became more than a language; it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM

> STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. And how did the teachers catch the culprits? A button was initially given to one pupil who was supposed to hand it over to whoever was caught speaking his mother tongue. Whoever had the button at the end of the day would sing who had given it to him and the ensuing process would bring out all the culprits of the day. Thus children were turned into witch-hunters and in the process were being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one's immediate community.
>
> The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became *the* main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education. (1994: 438)

Reggie Siriwardena's poem "Colonial Cameo" creatively depicts this kind of linguistic situation in the home, the English school and society in Sri Lanka:

> My father used to make me read aloud
> in the evening from Macaulay or Abbot's *Napoleon* (he was short,
> and Napoleon his hero; I, his hope for the future).
> My mother, born in a village, had never been taught
>
> that superior tongue. When I was six, we were moving
> house; she called at school to take me away.
> She spoke to the teacher in Sinhala. I sensed the shock
> of the class, hearing the servants' language; in dismay
>
> followed her out, as she said, "*Gihing ennang*."
> I was glad it was my last day there. But then the bell
> pealed; a gang of boys rushed out, sniggering,
> and shouted in chorus, "*Gihing vareng*!" as my farewell.
>
> My mother pretended not to hear the insult.
> The snobbish little bastards! But how can I blame
> them? That day I was deeply ashamed of my mother.
> Now, whenever I remember, I am ashamed of my shame. (1989: 12)

The contrast between the phrases "*Gihing ennang*" (I will go and come [again]) and "*Gihing vareng*!" (Go and come!) depends on a feature of diglossia. In many speech communities, two or more varieties of the same language are used by the same speakers under different conditions. A striking feature of diglossia is the existence of many paired items, one high, one low. "*Gihing ennang*" is a polite, customary form of salutation in Sinhala on leaving and is used between equals; "*vareng*" is an impolite, imperative form and is used to those considered social inferiors (for instance, servants). Siriwardena refers to Sinhala as "the servants' language" because English had become the language upstairs.[1] The poem points to other hard social facts: it is implied that the father feels that English is the key to his child's prospects and that the students and the upper class have been brainwashed. The poem is written in post-colonial times and concludes with the poet-persona's post-colonial revision of his colonial attitude. This kind of change, conceding the importance and dignity of the mother tongue, is now found among the English-educated Sri Lankan intelligentsia.

Though English did enjoy a privileged position in Sri Lanka in colonial times, it would be a mistake to imagine that English education was implemented widely and satisfactorily. The colonial educational system was neither a mass system of education nor was it egalitarian; it was meant to provide the colonial masters with native personnel to man the intermediate rungs in the ladder of employment both in government and in private enterprises undertaken by Europeans, the superior posts being reserved for the ruling race.

> In the colonial era, English was taught only in "English schools" which were attended by only a tiny minority of school children. Thus, in 1914, at the height of the colonial era, only 37,500 pupils attended English schools, while 347,500 were registered in "vernacular schools". In 1931, when universal franchise came in, there were 84,000 pupils in English schools while 476,000 went to vernacular schools. On the eve of independence, some 180,000 pupils were found in English schools, while 720,000 attended vernacular schools. (de Souza 1969: 6)

In later colonial times, the teaching of English was expanded, but never more than modestly, to cater to selected higher echelons in the administration and professions. In his well-known minute on education (1835), which launched English education in India, Thomas Babington Macaulay stated:

> It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern. (1835: 55)

Leonard Woolf's account of education in Africa confirms the typicality of this colonial situation:

> It is no exaggeration to say that no European government in Africa had made a serious attempt to begin the education of the native so that eventually he might be capable of taking his place as a free man in the new economic and political society, which Europeans have introduced into Africa. Out of an estimated

1. As in England even as late as the 14th century, the French even of Stratford Atte Bowe was more genteel than English, and in Russia, where, with no political pressures involved, Russian was relegated to a position inferior to French.

> revenue of nearly two million pounds in 1924, the Kenya Government allotted pounds 44,000 to be spent on prisons and pounds 37,000 on education. I deny that any European Government in the twentieth century can claim to be civilised if it spends 20% more on providing penal servitude and hard labour for its subjects than it does on providing them with education. The population of Kenya includes nearly 2,500,000 Africans, 36,000 Asiatics and 10,000 Europeans. The Government spends pounds 37,000 on the education of the 2,500,000 Africans and pounds 25,000 on the education of 10,000 Europeans. (1928: 29)

It is important to pay attention to Woolf's observation of "the new economic and political society which Europeans have introduced" as well as to the failure of the European powers to meet the admitted "obligation to education", indicating that imperialism brought about social change and that self-interested economic and political motives were the main forces behind imperialism (Woolf 1928: 88).

As commonly in the ex-colonies, in Sri Lanka the presence of the colonial "masters" had a suffocating effect on the creative energies of the local inhabitants. English literature in Sri Lanka emerges from the growth of nationalist currents. Its counterpart in India comes of age earlier because the nationalist movement on the subcontinent developed, and assumed the character of a mass struggle, earlier. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 and Gandhi launched the non-violent, non-cooperation movement in the 1920s; understandably, the Big Three of the Indian Novel in English (before Salman Rushdie arrived on the scene), Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao could write significant novels and mature in the 1930s.[2] On the other hand, a national consciousness was born in Nigeria later, in 1938, with the return of Nnamdi Azikwe and H. O. Davies after their education and experience in the West. Cyprian Ekwensi published his first novella, *When Love Whispers*, in 1948, but the phenomenal growth of the West African novel came after Chinua Achebe, widely regarded as the patriarch of the modern African novel, published *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, the first African novel to enjoy a wide international readership. Nigeria won Independence in 1961, whereas India did so in 1947.

Mainly as a consequence of the freedom struggle in India, Sri Lanka was granted Independence by Britain a year later. Because its independence was acquired more easily – in fact, too easily – Sri Lankans did not forge as strong a national consciousness as the Indians. After independence, the ruling and social elites in Sri Lanka were formed by the "brown sahib" class, whom Macaulay categorized as "interpreters". He described them as "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (1835: 56).

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2. Of course, the origins of the Indian novel in English predate the nationalist struggle. The first Indian novel in English, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*, was published in 1864.

One could substitute "Sri Lankans" (or "Africans") for "Indian". So a Macaulay-style English education had put wealth and power in Sri Lanka into the hands of the English-speaking alone. In 1956, Mr S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike harnessed the grievance/envy and aspirations of the Sinhala-speaking (that is, the lower middle class and those of still lower social status), the *Pancha Maha Balavegaya*, the five great forces – *Sangha* (the Buddhist clergy), *Veda* (the practitioners of indigenous medicine), *Guru* (the teachers in the vernacular), *Govi* (the farmers) and *Kamkaru* (the working classes), forces which represented the true majority of the people, and dislodged the United National Party which had ushered in Independence and remained in power since then. Elected Prime Minister in that year, Mr Bandaranaike had released not only populist but also nationalist currents, which had been stimulated earlier by Anagarika Dharmapala. Bandaranaike restored the Sinhala language, the language of more than 73% of the population, to its position of authority in the country, in education and the administration. Sinhala became both the national and official language. Thus, English was displaced from its pre-eminent position as the official language and medium of instruction in schools and universities. English had to be relegated to the status of a second language after Independence, sooner or later, despite the regrets of the English-educated classes, but it was not properly treated as such. It was neglected for two decades and even reviled. The English-educated, however, remain/ed the decision-makers. But faced with the change in the power structure at several levels and a significant diminution in their status and privileges, they became more aware of themselves and the social, cultural and literary context in which they lived. Their response to the changes of 1956 was negative rather than positive, yet it led to fruitful results in the field of creative writing.

This historical explanation is not the complete story. The Department of English in our single university in the 1930s, 40s and early 50s made a positive impact. The influence of its critical work and standards spread beyond the portals of the University. The University Dramatic Society, under the guidance of the then Professor of English, E. F. C. Ludowyk, was the leading theatre group in the country and set the standards in the production and choice of plays. At that time, young graduates founded journals such as *Harvest*, *Symposium*, *Community* and *Points of View*, which gave expression to their critical and creative preoccupations and maintained credible standards. Their counterparts in the media dealt with literary matters on the same high level. All this created a climate for writing and the beginnings of a literary tradition. Naturally, the imaginative writing itself, as it later turned out, came from those who had been to university (such as Patrick Fernando, Yasmine Gooneratne and Chitra Fernando) as well as from those who had not (such as Punyakante Wijenaike, James Goonewardene and Lakdasa Wikkremasinha).

The Department of English also produced a negative impact. Its rarefied and colonial influences made its perspective Eurocentric. The function of university drama seemed to be essentially intellectual, to interpret distinguished Western drama – an academic "trip" to the West. Ludowyk defended his position in later life in these terms:

> Perhaps there was some snobbery, some arrogance and some narcissism involved, but I still think that it is worthwhile keeping the lines open for internationalism. After all, that is, by definition, one of the functions of a university, and we were a University society. (1971: 7)

Nevertheless, he did admit in the same article:

> I remember Nicholl Cadell telling me, as we talked on the lawns of King George's Hall (of the University College) after a performance of *Lady Precious Stream*, that he'd have been better pleased at seeing something written by a contemporary playwright in Ceylon. He was right … I think this was something the Dram Soc should have tried to do. It has, I think, to be put down to the debit side. (1971: 6)

Thus, the Department of English had an inhibiting effect on creative writing – of plays as well as other forms of literature. It produced only one significant writer, Patrick Fernando, during the whole period; he produced only one volume, *The Return of Ulysses*, and that too as late as 1955.

Fernando was a Roman Catholic and he read Western Classics at the University of Ceylon in Colombo; these constitute the background for his poetry. He was English-educated and belonged to the middle class. Language (English) and class in that period served to insulate him from the world around him; even the momentous changes of 1956 were not important in his case. The framework for his poetry is not Sri Lankan as such. His is an alienated sensibility but, uncommonly, an acute one. Early in his career, he wrote classical poems, which captured the spirit of the originals and also possessed a contemporary interest, such as "The Lament of Paris":

> In the quiet arbour of your high-walled soul, Love
> Shall gently pluck the hidden strings and sing
> Of him who distilled blood of heroes just to paint
> Red, the rosy toe nails of his runaway Grecian girl. (1955: 12)

In these poems, Fernando is basically writing of such permanent themes as the enduring power and tragic destiny of love. His later satirical poems are his best efforts. In "Chorus on Marriage", he contemplates the decline of feelings in a human relationship in terms of an allegorical framework of the vicissitudes in a kingdom resulting from the deaths of successive rulers:

> Swiftly their love sickened, and patiently,
> Without one murmur, in a year or two,
> Departed. The grave was dug in memory.
> A faint awareness stood as monument.
> No epitaph except the world's wild guess:
> The wise observed a searing of the will,
> The pious blamed a lack of timely grace,
> While cynics certified love mortal. Still,
> How magnificent love's coronation –
> The virtues all attending, all princes present,
> And roads dizzy with dancing!
> So limited a reign forecast by none. (1984: 32)

The couple are not particularized and this facilitates a general application of the poet's theme. The incongruity between the elevatedness of the allegorical framework, the imagery, and the ordinariness of the human realities generates a satirical tone and reveals the satirical standpoint of the poet which both controls and inhibits the feelings of pathos. The poem descends briefly from fantasy to the real world in the last stanza:

> He scans the share list, chuckling now and then,
> And she is knitting socks for charities,
> Both dreaming of a girl known long ago. (1984: 34)

The scene is conventionally Western rather than Sri Lankan, and conveys the poet's view here, that marriage finally deteriorates into mere convention without love.

Fernando's poetic world is often non-specific. His language is polished and minted, approximating to Standard British English as closely as a Sri Lankan could do so. His forms are well crafted and orthodox. His poetry is written to British specifications, and he met the stringent Leavisian poetic standards. He published his volume in London. Thereby, he made his mark as a poet. He illustrates on the literary plane the process which Homi Bhabha has termed "mimicry", whereby the colonized subject is reproduced as "almost the same but not quite", as having an identity "almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 1994: 86, 89). The flaw in the "colonial mimesis", whereby "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English", and the potential insurgency of mimicry are revealed in his genre pictures of Negombo fisherfolk (Bhabha 1994: 87). Here Fernando ruptures his Anglicization and comes closest to being identifiably Sri Lankan. In "The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife" (1955: 4–5), he is external to the fisherfolk, but in "Sun and Rain on the West Coast", he seems to be virtually amidst them:

“Your father was different – dew or no he used to go.”
“That’s why he was drowned; and who drove him to it?”
“Jesu Maria! Manuel, Manuel, stop sinning so.”
“Don’t cry, I only asked a question, mother.”
“Cecilia, bring your brother his tea, girl.”
“Hurry up, but mind the ants in the sugar.” (1987: 32)

Fernando’s dialogue captures the sharp interchange between son and mother; their characters, individualistic and conventional, respectively; their styles of speaking, the son laconic, the mother tending to garrulity; the last line seemingly a resolution to the altercation, yet not quite that because “the ants in the sugar” is literal as well as a metaphor, for their kind of life and life in general, its serious implications radiating beyond the immediate scene. The insurgency latent in mimicry was carried further by Yasmine Gooneratne, who was stimulated by Fernando into becoming a poet both like and unlike him, and still further by Lakdasa Wikkramasinha, who, in turn, was encouraged by Gooneratne and was more radical than both.

Yasmine Gooneratne was sensitive to the English language in relation to the social/political situation; her poetic world is specific. Her first volume of poetry, *Word Bird Motif*, was published in 1971, the year of the insurgency launched by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP or the People’s Liberation Front), which mobilized the Sinhala-educated rural youth with no prospect of employment and no faith in the existing order of things. The volume contains no reference to it, yet the poem “Peradeniya Landscape” is surely significant, pointing forward to the insurgency:

… though one knows quite well the future dawns
Less brightly for them, and a muttering
Protest hushes birdsong on these well-kept lawns. (1971: 43)

“Them” refers to the undergraduates with a Sinhala background of the beautiful university campus at Peradeniya – cut off from jobs by lack of English as well as by being monolinguals with no prestigious connections. In “Post office Queue”, Gooneratne’s feelings are more ambivalent as she confronts a Sinhala speaker:

Let me say quickly, before you criticize
Me, that it isn’t really my fault
For all my shortcomings I humbly apologize
That your life lacks salt
…
But to ask *in English* for a stamp is not yet a mortal sin
Your insular virtue need not make me dirt. (1971: 59, my emphasis)

Gooneratne is aware of her upper class, cosmopolitan and English affiliations and of the Sinhala speaker as being deprived but belonging more to the island. Her defensiveness is part of an ambiguous, complex and unresolved attitude.

The insurgency itself and the social/political situation which engendered it, appear strongly in her long poem *The Lizard's Cry*, published in 1972. In a section depicting a journey, there is a scene on a train when a compartment is invaded, the mother passing biscuits to her daughters:

> … Feeding them, maternal sparrow drab and intent
> she stares at a newspaper's erected tent
> opposite, seeing without seeing them the headlines, *elegant*
> *tall* English fences that she cannot see beyond.
> Or get behind as the paper's owner has done
> determined she shall not look into his eyes, none
> of her belongings *touch* his, breathe his breath, con his page
> in the intimacy of what is now her carriage. (1972: 30–1, my emphasis)

These lines dramatize the class divide between the world of the monolinguals and those whose first language is English. Class appears as bad as caste – a virtual "untouchability" comes into play. An earlier section deals directly with the insurgency:

> Now in this dark, forgotten legends move
> upon the leaf: your fiery youth embrace
> Death till it seems the Princess "fair of face
> and amorous" courts again her taloned love.
> See, as the grace and vigour of your race
> sport in a gun's eye, her soft fingers rove
> deliberately the honey-coloured flank …
> to slay their shaggy sire as a new breed
> of beast-begotten heroes, man-hood's seed
> proven by parricide, brazenness the tester
> of female faith, set up murderous deed
> Once more for target. (1972: 28)

Rumour probably fuelled by verbal propaganda deliberately distorting the rebels' policy towards reactionaries, was current especially in remote villages, though not actually believed, to the effect that the guerrillas intended killing everybody over the age of forty. Gooneratne connects this with the legend of the origins of the Sinhala race as related in *The Mahavamsa*, a chronicle written in the 6th century A. D., and elsewhere. According to the story, Suppa Devi, the daughter of the king of Vanga, present-day Bangladesh, joined a caravan "desiring the joy of independent life", to quote Geiger's accurate translation; however, a lion attacked the caravan in the forest; all fled save the princess who stroked the lion who grew amorous and carried her to his den; there she lived and bore him a daughter and a son (1960: 51). When impatient of confinement, the son broke out and led the women back to civilization where a king wedded Suppa Devi. The lion returned and discovered their absence. Crazed with grief, he ravaged the kingdom and none could stand against him until his son Sinhabahu slew him, won the offered reward, wedded his sister and founded a kingdom named Lala. His grandson Vijaya, literally Victor, led the Sinhala or lion's blood people to Sri Lanka. Gooneratne sees the JVP, in whose ranks women in blue trousers fought alongside their male comrades, prefigured by the lion's offspring.

Much later in the day, Sumathy Sivamohan in her poem "In a Foreign Tongue" is able to catch the same kind of linguistic/social/political complex in a wider net, in a manner less rich and more direct:

> My teacher
> talked of a
> Sri Lankan English
>
> Where is this
> thing?
> Tons of Shakespeare, Shelley and Shaw
> Press upon me
> how to clean rice in English?
>
> Unfound it in the
> parched land planted with paddy
> Strewn with shots of
> Justice protest hate revenge
> the ending is not coming. (1987: 90)

Sivamohan suggests that the decision-makers who speak (and most often, think) in English do not base their policies on the needs of the cultivators in a predominantly agricultural country. They find alien ideas closer to their Eurocentric thinking than the realities faced by their non-Colombo countrymen. English barely penetrates these areas. This mismatch, it is intimated, leads to revolution – a sense of "(in) justice protest hate revenge" fired the J. V. P. insurgencies of 1971 and 1988–1989.

Sivamohan's reference to her teacher who "talked of a Sri Lankan English" is of interest. Since Professor H. A. Passé made a case for "Ceylon English" as a dialect in his doctoral dissertation titled "The English Language in Ceylon", presented to the University of London in 1948, and taught this to students at the University of Peradeniya in the 1950s and early 60s, younger linguists have spent considerable energy in developing Passé's thesis, arguing, for instance, that Sri Lankan English is an "independent, distinctive and fully-formed linguistic system adequate for the communicative and expressive needs of its users" (Kandiah 1981: 102). This kind of post-colonial subversion of British English as the absolute Standard is found in India, Africa, Australia, Canada, Singapore, indeed in all the ex-colonies of Britain, starting with the United States.

Far more intractable and fearful than the JVP insurgencies was the so-called "ethnic" problem which spanned three decades and has been followed by four years of peace and reconstruction since the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on May 19 2009. The LTTE received foreign support and had its own well-organized international network, though it was categorized as a terrorist group by the US State Department, by Britain, Australia and India. Jean Arasanayagam was preoccupied with this problem. She is a Burgher, of mixed descent (Dutch, Tamil and Sinhala), and is married to a Tamil Hindu. She was concerned with how this problem affects identity, as in her poem "Murals":

> We walk through barriers
> Seeing our *new identities* at checkpoints
> …
> rapid scripts form in our minds, a stammer of
> dialogue or silence that make us snail retract
> Into the shell we knew to be so brittle
> …
> Somewhat carelessly looking into the barrels of
> guns and noticing off-handedly that the lips
> of the young soldier are chiselled finely like the
> statue of David or Apollo in some Roman square. (1994: 56, my emphasis)

The poet was probably around 61 years of age in 1994 and is very accustomed to the earlier period when there were no communal divisions that really affected any individual. Though the violence, except for occasional suicide bombers and other LTTE cadres slaughtering civilians in Colombo, was localized in the North and East of the island, security measures such as "checkpoints" reflected it in other parts of the country and kept it in the forefront of our minds. Sri Lankan English poetry has consistently reflected the interface of language, literature and politics.

Yasmine Gooneratne confessed in "The Second Chance":

> A man may travel very far
> In body or in mind
> And never be unfaithful to
> The land he leaves behind.
>
> But poetry, the way I went,
> Gave me a better view
> I learned to see, and love at last
> A land *I never knew.* (1971: 52, my emphasis)

The poet's honesty is striking. Gooneratne has discovered her inheritance through art. But the sensibilities of several English writers remain remote from Sri Lankan realities and remain Western. The anglicized Punyakante Wijenaike, James Goonewardene and Romesh Gunasekera in *Reef* see the villagers as not like their sensitive, educated selves, but as much the Other (inarticulate, violent, irrational, sex-ridden, cunning yet mindless) as the natives were to the *sahibs* and the *bwanas*.

When Sri Lankan writers began to feel nationalist currents keenly after 1956, whatever their reaction to them, their central problem was that which faced all writers in ex-colonies at the same stage of literary development – that of reconciling their own sensibility, indigenous traditions and realities, on the one hand, and Western literary and other traditions and influences, on the other. The problem can be extremely difficult and lead to cultural dislocation. In his poem "Stanley meets Mutesa", David Rubadiri clearly wishes to suggest that the meeting of the two men represents a penetration of his own culture by the West, but the poem verges closely on the stereotyped Western account of the coming of the white man. But Gabriel Okara, in his poem "Piano and Drums", is able to present the conflict of cultures more effectively from an African point of view:

> And I lost in the morning mist
> of an age at a riverside keep
> wandering in the mystic rhythm
> of jungle drums and concerto. (Halpe & de Silva 1972: 28)

The two central symbols of the poem – the piano as a symbol of Western ways and the drums of African ways – are used in this climactic final stanza to convey how both the poet and his society are lost in this cultural conflict central to both.

In Sri Lanka, Lakdasa Wikkramasinha's poem "To My Friend Aldred" reveals, at an unconscious level, the split in the personalities of our poets caused by their attempt to reconcile their Eastern and Western legacies. The poem is written in a vein of high-spirited fun:

> My dear Chap,
> In this Kandyan weather there is
> no shame in having in your bed
> a servant maid –
> the same passion moved others too, famous in time –
> when there were servant maids about:
>
> Achilles for one – who gave his heart to
> Briseis, a milky slave,
> & Tecmessa: enemy blood, as Horace has it;
> and Agamemnon fired Troy and burnt his heart to a
> cinder, hot for a virgin there. (2007: 185)

Although the poet had a penchant for dwelling on his lineage, Ezra Pound is one of the ancestors Wikkramasinha never acknowledged and his poem leans on “Homage to Sextus Propertius: XII” – in its ironic tone, in its blend of classical allusion and colloquial idiom:

> Who, who will be the next man to entrust his girl to a friend?
> Love interferes with fidelities;
> The gods have brought shame on their relatives;
> Each man wants the pomegranate for himself;
> Amiable and harmonious people are pushed incontinent into duels,
> A Trojan and adulterous person came to Menelaus under the rites of hospitium,
> And there was a case in Colchis, Jason and that woman in Colchis;
> And besides, Lynceus,
> you were drunk. (Pound 1936: 92)

Wikkramasinha describes the woman thus:[3]

> Breasts like gourds, and ripe and Oh
> nodding like geese. Thighs
> like plantain trunks.… (2007: 186)

Wikkramasinha’s use of local imagery and references, in a style of self-conscious comedy vis-a-vis the classical metaphor and allusions, as in the opening of the poem quoted above, is employed with relaxed grace, showing that he is more at home in the Western part of his inheritance, that it is more integral to his personality.

Given this kind of conditioning, it came naturally to a poet in the 1960s, Gamini Seneviratne, to write of his personal predicament in this vein in “Two Songs of Myself”:

> Am a lone wolf
> In the winter forest gnawing
> the ice
> If I should see a man
> Stamping into warmth on covered thighs
> I’d pull him down
> And tear at him. (1974: 12)

It is not illegitimate for a poet to use culturally alien (in this instance, extended) imagery. The poet has the right to exploit every area of experience and every resource of language, alien or not, and this kind of Western experience and language may even be regarded as having become international through common

3. Sinhala Poetry, drawing on Sanskrit conventions as well as sight, conventionally compares breasts to “*hansa*” (swan or goose) and thighs to plantain trunks, rounded, smooth and silky to touch (“*vata-mata silutu-vatora*” – rounded, sleek thighs – the Kuveni *asna*).

knowledge and currency. In a way, the crucial question is whether the poet communicates his meaning and, in this case, Seneviratne certainly does on his own rather adolescent level. But all this is less than complete justification, and *how well* he conveys his meaning is an important question. That Seneviratne should write in this manner is evidence of his deracination and his style is thereby less immediate.

It has been widely accepted that post-colonial literatures "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft 1989: 2). It thus became a commonplace in literary criticism to adopt the position that "the most characteristic problem of the Commonwealth poet is that of being caught between old and new, between inherited and acquired" (Halpe and de Silva 1972: 4). It is stated as if this problem is everywhere and always true of post-colonial poetry. Actually, this is only partly true, and the problem ceased to be central or important a decade or two after independence from colonial rule. With "the clash of cultures" phase now over and behind them, the poets in the Commonwealth such as Jean Arasanayagam in Sri Lanka, write as do their counterparts in Britain or America – out of their personal situations.

Another commonplace of literary criticism concerns what is regarded as a major problem for the post-colonial writer, the choice or adoption of language, English. In the words of David Carroll (referring to African writers): "We are faced with the paradox of a people describing and identifying themselves by means of a foreign language which embodies the values and categories from which they are seeking to free themselves" (1986: 2). In Sri Lanka, Lakdasa Wikkramasinha in a "Note" to his first book of poems *Lustre* wrote:

> I have come to realize that I am using the language of the most despicable and loathsome people on earth; I have no wish to extend its life and range, enrich its tonality. To write in English is a form of cultural treason. I have had for the future to think of a way of circumventing this treason; I propose to do this by making my writing entirely immoralist and destructive. (1965: 51)

Wikkramasinha was twenty-four years old at this time, still immature, and there is an element of attitudinizing in his ideology, but his radical spirit remained with him to the end. He was "immoralist" in the sense of reacting against the colonial morality of the English-educated. This could lead to powerful mature poetry:

> Don't talk to me about Matisse, don't talk to me
> about Gauguin, or even
> the earless painter Van Gogh,
> & the woman reclining on a blood-spread
> …
> the aboriginal shot by the white hunter Matisse. (1975: 5)

The coinage "blood-spread" (substituted for the predictable "bed-spread"); "the aboriginal", an artistic as well as colonial stereotype; the ambiguity of words that follow it; all serve to suggest imperialist exploitation in the guise of art, poetry more rich and strong than mere pro-Third World, anti-imperialist propaganda. Here Wikkramasinha's poetic skill is destructively directed. On the other hand, he appears to have attached positive values to native tradition, partly perhaps due to the wound of alienation apparent in his flamboyant declaration of anti-British feeling, partly due to vague, half-formed impressions and memories which prompted him to cherish his aristocratic Sri Lankan ancestry (there is no irony when he praises the feudal lady in "From the life of the Folk-poet Ysinno"). He tries to be a cultural nationalist, to find a positive sense of connection, if not identification, with the life of his country.

On the other hand, Yasmine Gooneratne's attitude to the controversial question of writing in the English language is different from Lakdasa Wikkramasinha's – not "cultural treason". It is stated most explicitly in her poem "This Language, This Woman: A Lover's Reply". She discloses that it "was written out of irritation at the continual denigration of English by Sinhala writers who had no conception of its range (and very little competence in it) that was a feature of the literary milieu in Sri Lanka during the 1960s and 1970s" (Gooneratne 1979: 24). It was during this period that the term *kaduwa*, the Sinhala for "sword", to refer to the English language, was coined and gained a currency which continues till today. Sinhala-speakers perceive/d English as a weapon to cut them down, to intimidate and control them. Gooneratne's voice in her poem is that of one highly literate in English:

> If you should try to take her from me
> I'd launch no thousand ships to bring her back
> the *braggadocio* of the imperial theme
> that shielded her being now a derelict wreck.
> …
> now the distorting old connection's done
> fit her to be your Mistress, and my Muse. (1971: 47)

She dissociates the English language from Sri Lanka's colonial past and approaches it as a lover. The spiritedness of her defence makes an impact through the deflationary use of classical metaphor and Marlovian allusion and the dual meaning of "Mistress". She has a counterpart in India in V. K. Gokak who espoused English in the midst of the language debate there in his poem "English Words":

> Speech that came like leech-craft
> And killed us almost, bleeding us white!
> You bleached our souls soiled with impurities.
> You bathed our hearts amid tempestuous seas
> Of a purer, dearer, delight.
> …

> Fathomless words, with Indo-Aryan blood
> Tingling in your veins,
> The spoils of ages, global merchandise
> Mingling in your strains! (Gokak 1947)

It is Indian souls that are "soiled with impurities"; English comes as a cleansing agent. English has "Indo-Aryan blood", a brother to Indian languages. It is recognized by Gokak early in the day as "global merchandise".

Raja Rao wrote: "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (n.d.: 5). R. K. Narayan's position is essentially the same: "We are still experimentalists … We are not attempting to write Anglo-Saxon English. The English language, through sheer resilience and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization … it has served my purpose admirably" (1964: 140–141). Similarly, Chinua Achebe stated: "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the burden of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (1994: 434). Es'kia Mphalele's position is consistently close to Achebe's. On the other hand, Ngugi adopted a radical stance in regard to language and saw English as a "means of spiritual subjugation" and imperial domination (1994: 435–55). He stopped writing in English and took to writing in his mother tongue, Gikuyu, though he makes a concession to English as a pan-African and world language by providing translations of his works in English. Really, few writers have a choice in regard to the language of their creative work or are good bilinguals. Achebe admits that he had "no other choice" (1994: 434). Lakdasa Wikkramasinha wrote in Sinhala, but his Sinhala verse is laboured and awkward, often padded with idiosyncratic coinages not rooted in the language; it is far inferior to his English poetry. In Sri Lanka, among the hundreds of post-colonial writers, there seem to me only three true bilinguals – Ediriwira Sarachchandra, Tissa Abeysekere and Sita Kulatunga. In India, Arun Kolatkar writes poetry in both English and Marathi and often translates from one language to the other. Kamala Das writes poetry in English and fiction both in English and Malayalam, her mother tongue. But she has remarked: "It's my poems that are my life and not my prose" (1994: 332). Nissim Ezekiel expresses the position common among writers in English in India: "I cannot write in any Indian language" (1969: 153).

The diverse responses of creative writers to English and their tendency to make to make the language of literature an issue, especially during the earlier stages (that is, immediately after Independence) of post-colonial literature are valid, but not the arbitrary and simplistic demands of critics. It is the generally accepted view of 20th century poets and critics that the language of poetry is most effective, if not only effective, when it reflects the idiom of everyday speech. T. S. Eliot argued that

> poetry has primarily to do with the expression of feeling and emotion … Emotion and feeling are best expressed in the common language of the people – that is, in the language common to all classes; the structure, the rhythm, the sound, the idiom of a language, express the personality of the people which speaks it … a poet must take as his material his own language as it is actually spoken around him. (1971: 19, 22)

W. B. Yeats thought: “In literature, partly from the lack of that spoken word which knits us to normal man, we have lost in personality, in our delight in the whole man – blood, imagination, intellect, running together”, and he sets out to make good this supposed loss in his own later poetry (1961: 266). F. R. Leavis, perhaps the most influential critic of the 20th century and the counterpart of Johnson, Coleridge and Matthew Arnold in their day, consistently lauds the poets who employ the “utterance, movement and intonation … of the talking voice” (1953: 11).[4]

But it seems to me that this point of view is vulnerable. It ignores key questions, though it is true that modern poets made a contribution to literature by re-introducing conversational tones after these had been virtually banished for a long time in Romantic rhetoric and musicality (during the Victorian period). Modern linguistics has sharpened our awareness of the varieties of speech and dialects, of regional, class, group and individual variations in speech of the same language within single countries. From which kind of speech should the language of poetry draw sustenance? Can there be universally applicable touchstones? How much does it account for the achievements of modern poetry itself? Despite Yeats’ declared view and though F. R. Leavis praised Yeats’ later poetry for employing “the idiom and movement of modern speech”, the language of Yeats’ great poems such as “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Among School Children”, though incorporating elements of polite educated speech, is basically and in an overall way, stylized (1942: 42). Really, what matters is whether poetry works as poetry, whatever the kind of language that is employed.

Sri Lankan critics have adapted the position in the West in regard to the language of poetry. It is argued that the language of the Sri Lankan writer should reflect “in an ideal form the actual rhythms and idiom of living Ceylon English speech” and even further that the language of the Sri Lankan writer in English gains vitality if “derived from Sinhala”, from the vernacular (Kandiah 1971: 91: 92). The argument is also put in a crude and dogmatic form: “No Lankan poet, seeking to evolve through his work a Lankan identity, can hope to do so without an equal commitment to the Lankan language” (Ismail 1984: 24). My criticism of Western writers and critics applies to their Sri Lankan counterparts. Moreover, to be so

4. Donne, Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, for instance.

conscious of language and pay it special attention is to separate language from content and experience, whereas, in the case of a truly creative writer, his experience will find the language that comes naturally to it; this will determine its components, whether Sri Lankan or British or whatever mix. Lakdasa Wikkramasinha is often eulogized for employing Sri Lankan English in his poetry, yet his use of language is not a simple matter of doing so but is original, incorporating expressions derived from a variety of sources. Moreover, as Wole Soyinka said in an interview, "We are now beyond the 'Prospero-Caliban' syndrome of the complexities which attend the adoption of a language of colonial imposition", "the 'Prospero-Caliban' syndrome is dead" (Jeyifo 1984: 1730–31). Soyinka went on to amplify his point of view:

> English of course continues to be my medium of expression as it is the medium of expression for millions of people in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Kenya, who I want to talk to, if possible. And I want to talk also to our black brothers in the United States, in the West Indies. I want to talk also even to Europeans, if they are interested in listening. But they are at the very periphery of my concerns. I do know that I enjoy works of literature from the European world, I'd be a liar if I said I didn't. And I also enjoy literary works from the Asian world, Chinese literature, Japanese literature. I teach Japanese drama. I've taught Chinese poetry, when I was in the literature department. I always interjected the translations of poetry from the Asiatic world because I wanted to open up that vast area. I enjoy the works of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Gogol, etc. So, I find no contradiction, no sense of guilt in the fact that I write and communicate in English. (Jeyifo 1984: 1731)

In our own region, Kamala Das in her poem, "An Introduction", expresses the right spirit in regard to these matters:

> Why not leave
> Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
> Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
> Any language I like? The language I speak
> Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
> All mine, mine alone. (1965: 16)

Creative writers in ex-colonies of Britain have reached a stage when the use of English in creative work has ceased to be an issue, and critics have now to think beyond the parameters to which they have been long accustomed. English has become a naturalized language in a great many countries. It has come to stay, is spreading, and literature in English is set to proliferate in every conceivable direction. Indeed, the world language will, in time, generate a world literature.

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PART II

Southeast Asia

CHAPTER 6

Governing English in Singapore

Some challenges for Singapore's language policy

Lionel Wee

A critical assessment of Singapore's language policy, focusing specifically on issues and challenges that arise from the government's positioning of the English language, shows how the policy needs to be understood in relation to the government's attempt to maintain harmony in an ethnolinguistically diverse society while ensuring that the society as a whole is economically competitive in a globalizing world. A number of particular challenges for the language policy are discussed as regards the management of English. The paper ends with some observations about how this policy might ultimately have to be modified in order to address these challenges. In particular, it suggests that there is a need for greater autonomy in language policy, in order to accommodate the increasingly diverse identities and experiences of Singaporeans.

Independence: Aiming for ethnic harmony and economic prosperity[1]

Singapore is an ethnically and linguistically diverse society with a population totaling about 3.7 million. Officially, its ethnic composition is roughly 74.1% Chinese, 13.4% Malays, 9.2% Indians, and 3.3% Others (2010 Census of Population). This "Others" category is a heterogeneous one that includes various ethnic minority groups, including Eurasians and Europeans. The relative proportion of the ethnic groups has not changed much since Singapore's independence in 1965.

This independence was acquired reluctantly after Singapore was ejected from the Federation of Malaysia, due to political differences between the Singapore government and the central government. A key political difference concerned the management of ethnic diversity and, specifically, the issue of whether ethnic Malays ought to be granted special rights. Singapore's position, as articulated by Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister, was that the granting of special rights

1. The discussions in this section and the next are drawn from Rappa and Wee (2006), and Stroud and Wee (2007).

would do little to improve the status of the Malays and would, in fact, create more problems for ethnic relations in general.

It was this debate over special Malay rights that would be a key factor leading to Singapore's eventual departure from the Federation. But because Singapore has no natural resources of its own, its leaders always had been convinced that economic survival was possible only as part of the Federation, and had worked hard to bring that about. Singapore's subsequent departure from the Federation meant that its leaders were faced, quite suddenly, with the task of building a nation out of an ethnolinguistically diverse population, and with developing the nation's economy without access to any natural resources.

Here we have the basic elements of a Singaporean political narrative: Singapore is a society born out of crisis. Its leaders never felt that the country could survive on its own. Separation from the Federation meant that Singapore had no choice but to find a way to survive, and to do so quickly. In other words, the pressures to perform economically became a real political challenge for the first generation of leaders.

This emphasis on economic development meant a correspondingly strong emphasis on learning English. But because of the country's ethnic and linguistic diversity, the promotion of English must take into account the presence of Singapore's other languages as well as the feelings of the speakers of these languages. In fact, as Lee makes clear in a discussion of the effects of Singapore's separation from Malaysia, the Singapore government continues to be extremely conscious of the need to deal carefully with matters of language and ethnicity:

> I think it is not possible for all of us, for any of us who have been through that period, not to have been tempered by bruising battles. We got to know people in the raw … what they were fighting over, why they wanted power, how they exercised power on behalf of ethnic groups. Race, language, religion became dominant themes in all these issues. So all our lives since then we have been extremely conscious that we've got to make sure that this does not take place in Singapore. We must never allow race, language, religion to dominate our politics because it will bring disaster upon us. So Chinese chauvinism was just not on. We made a decision to move away from any such tendency. Deciding on English as the working language was the first decision we had to make. We left Malay as the national language. We left the national anthem alone. We allowed the [military] commands to carry on in Malay, but we moved over to English as the working language. It was the first move, one of the first fundamental decisions we made within a few weeks of separation because we've got to have a working language. Before that, we were working on Malay as the national language. After that, we had to link up with the outside world and we decided on English.
>
> (Han, Fernandez and Tan 1998: 81–83)

Language policy in Singapore

Singapore's emphasis on English language proficiency, as we have seen, is motivated by the desire to ensure that Singaporeans are economically competitive in the global marketplace. In order to do this while still maintaining an Asian identity, the government has consistently encouraged Singaporeans to be bilingual in English and a mother tongue that is officially assigned to them on the basis of their ethnicity. Given Singapore's ethnically diverse society, three official mother tongues are recognised for each of the major ethnic groups: Mandarin for the Chinese, Malay for the Malays, and Tamil for the Indians. There is no official mother tongue for the "Others" category since this does not constitute a specific ethnic community. However, as we will see below, this raises the question of what the official mother tongue might be for the Eurasian community. The category "Eurasian" was originally created by the colonial bureaucracy to "signify colonial subjects who were offspring of European fathers and Asian mothers" (Rappa 2000: 157).

The government does not wish to recognise English as an official mother tongue for a number of reasons. One, English is to serve as an inter-ethnic *lingua franca*. Two, as the major language of socio-economic mobility, maintaining an ethnically neutral status for English helps ensure that the distribution of economic advantages is not seen as being unduly associated with a specific ethnic group, which would otherwise raise the danger of inter-ethnic tension. And three, English is treated as a language that is essentially Western and thus unsuitable to be a mother tongue for an Asian society such as Singapore. As Tony Tan, then Minister for Education, stated in 1986,

> Our policy of bilingualism that each child should learn English and his mother tongue, I regard as a fundamental feature of our education system … Children must learn English so that they will have a window to the knowledge, technology and expertise of the modern world. They must know their mother tongues to enable them to know what makes us what we are. (Cited in Pakir 2000: 261)

It is worth noting that this language policy is shaped by four main ideas. The first idea is the belief that linguistic diversity is an obstacle to nation building. Of course, in this respect, the Singapore government is by no means unique in its embracing of a Herderian conception of the relationship between language and nation. This is a fairly general belief and one that has led, in many countries, to policies that attempt to reduce the number of languages spoken.

The second idea is that in order to maintain harmony among Singapore's ethnically diverse population, there must be respect and equal treatment accorded to each ethnic group. This is sometimes referred to as "multiracialism" (Benjamin 1976), and has led to an official mother tongue being assigned to each ethnic community, and thus mitigating any extremist tendencies towards having a single language for the entire nation.

The third idea acknowledges the importance of English for economic development and access to scientific and technological know-how. But along with this also comes the fear that exposure to English can lead Singaporeans to become increasingly "Westernised" or "decadent" or "morally corrupt". Thus, in the eyes of the government, knowledge of English must be balanced by knowledge of one's mother tongue. Knowledge of one's mother tongue, it is claimed, will provide Singaporeans with a link to their traditional cultures and values, and will thus serve to counter any undesirable effects of Westernization. This belief that English and the mother tongue play different roles such that the former serves a purely instrumentalist function while the latter has a cultural-symbolic value has been described as "English-knowing bilingualism" (Pakir 1992).

Underlying these three ideas is a fourth, which has been variously characterised as an "ideology of survival" (Chan 1971) or "ideology of pragmatism" (Chan and Evers 1973). This is an ideology where political discourse from the government to the people tends to take the form of a crisis narrative where pressing problems are highlighted as needing to be addressed. Specific policies are then introduced and justified as the most effective and rational solutions to these crises. This ideology is "pragmatic" because the government, in principle, is willing to abandon more traditional values and attitudes if these are seen to be incompatible with the emphasis on rational problem solving. Accordingly, this pragmatism tends to "define everything in terms of economic-technical rationality, rendering antithetical all arguments based on moral or ethical grounds. Thus all decisions are defined, initiated, defended or evaluated in terms of economic gain" (Pennycook 1994: 241).

The combination of the above results in a policy that postulates the equal value of languages by acknowledging that both English and the official mother tongues are *equally essential* but for different reasons, the former for economic prosperity and the latter for maintaining ties to one's cultural heritage. In a similar vein, all three mother tongues are seen as being of *equal status* so that no single ethnic group can or should claim privilege over any other. This explicit ruling on the equality of mother tongues is aimed at pre-empting the possibility of inter-ethnic conflict. The language ideology behind the policy thus conceives of multilingualism in terms of (a limited set of) serially compounded monolingualisms; it recognises only "English plus official mother tongue" bilingualism, and according to the government, Singaporeans should ideally be *equally proficient* in both English and their official mother tongue (Lee 1983: 43).

To summarise, the architecture of Singapore's language policy therefore attempts to address the twin goals of ensuring economic competitiveness and maintaining ethnic harmony by:

i. Recognizing a total of four official languages. Of the four, English is not given a status as a mother tongue.
ii. Encouraging bilingualism in English and an ethnic mother tongue.
iii. According a specific mother tongue to each of the major ethnic groups.

These, then, are the fundamentals of Singapore's language policy. With the foregoing remarks in mind, we can now turn to the challenges facing this policy, focusing in particular on those that arise from the government's positioning of the English language.

Denying English the status of a mother tongue

We have seen that Singapore's language policy makes a distinction between English and the official mother tongues. This is core aspect of the policy, as can be seen from Lee Kuan Yew's assertion that English is "not acceptable" as a mother tongue[2]:

> One abiding reason why we have to persist in bilingualism is that English will not be emotionally acceptable as our mother tongue … To have no emotionally acceptable language as our mother tongue is to be emotionally-crippled. We shall doubt ourselves. Mandarin is emotionally acceptable as our mother tongue. It unites the different dialect groups. It reminds us that we are part of an ancient civilization with an unbroken history of over 5,000 years. This is a deep and strong psychic force, one that gives confidence to a people to face up to and overcome great changes and challenges. (Cited in Bokhorst-Heng 1998: 252)

However, there are various reasons why this particular positioning of English is problematic. One, consider the situation of the Eurasians, briefly mentioned above. Against the backdrop of the government's emphasis on multiracialism, the Eurasian community occupies an uneasy position. Together with the Chinese, Malays and Indians, the Eurasians are considered among the "founding races" of Singapore (Hill and Lian 1995: 103). This is perhaps one reason why, in some circumstances, the Eurasians are recognised as a category on their own, distinct from the Others. For example, the government introduced an ethnic self-help scheme in the 1980s, establishing four self-help groups, which are public institutions to which it gives dollar-for-dollar matching for funds that are raised. These groups are the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), Mendaki (for the Malays), the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA), and the

2. This speech was made in the context of the government urging Chinese Singaporeans to accept Mandarin as their official mother tongue. The same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, applies with regard to the other official mother tongues.

Eurasian Association (EA). Though the EA was originally established in 1919 as a sports and social club for Eurasians, it was co-opted into the self-help scheme when this was introduced. As another example, Singapore's National Registration Identity Card system, which applies to citizens and permanent residents, lists an individual's gender, blood type, address, religion, and "race". The options for "race" are Chinese, Malay, Indian, Eurasian, or Others (Rappa and Wee 2006: 86). In these cases, Eurasians are treated as a distinct category.

But the government has also sometimes suggested that their small number makes it more administratively expedient to absorb the Eurasians under the Others category. In the case of language, this is highly consequential, since it denies the Eurasians their own official mother tongue alongside the other major ethnic groups. As a result, there have been anxieties about the place of Eurasians in Singapore society. As Benjamin (1976: 127) pointed out sometime ago:

> [T]he more that Singapore's national culture demands that each "race" should have a respectably ancient and distinctive exogenous culture as well as a "mother tongue" to serve as the second element of a bilingual education, the more will the Eurasians come to feel that there is no proper place for them.

However, the lack of a specific mother tongue for the Eurasians is not just a matter of numbers; the question of which language might be accorded this status is also problematic because the Eurasians generally feel that it is English that should be their official mother tongue (Wee 2002a, 2010). This is in no small part due to the fact that, since the time of British colonial rule, many Eurasians have grown up with English as the home language (Gupta 1994: 19; Rappa 2000: 168). Thus, the Eurasian community's desire to be treated on par with the major other ethnic groups has led to calls by members of the community for English to be treated as its mother tongue on the grounds that this been the language most commonly spoken by members of the community. The government's response to this issue has generally been one of silence. This silence can be read as an indication that English is not acceptable as a mother tongue for the Eurasians. In practical terms, this has proven an effective strategy since the lack of official response seems to have allowed the issue to die out (for the time being at least).

Two, even if we leave aside the calls from the Eurasian community, it is questionable if it is possible for the government to continue denying English the status of a mother tongue on the grounds that Singapore is an Asian society. The reason for this is that this Asian character is already likely to change because the government has recently decided to reposition itself as "a cosmopolitan, global city" in order to attract talented foreigners as potential new citizens, thus replacing those Singaporeans who may decide to emigrate permanently. Thus, Goh Chok Tong, Singapore's second prime minister pointed out:

> Our … strategy to meet future competition is to gather talent and make Singapore a cosmopolitan city … Attracting global talent is essential for creating the best for Singaporeans. … Singapore must become a cosmopolitan, global city, an open society where people from many lands can feel at home … Therefore we must incorporate into our society talent from all over the world, not just Chinese, Malay or Indians, but talented people whatever their race or country of origin – East Asians, Southeast Asians, South Asians, Arabs from the Gulf and Middle East, North Americans, Europeans, Australasians, even Latin Americans and Southern Africans … Some will integrate into our society and settle here. For them we hope this spirit will eventually evolve into one of loyalty and rootedness to Singapore … We must therefore welcome the infusion of knowledge which foreign talent will bring. (National Day Rally Speech 1997)

Here, we have an implicit admission by the government that Singapore's national identity may need to be reconstructed into one less dependent on an Asian "us" versus Western "them" dichotomy. The many different ethnicities that Goh wants to attract (North Americans, Latin Americans and South Africans) raise the strong possibility that Singapore needs to rethink its desire to present itself as an Asian society (Wee and Bokhorst-Heng 2005). This possibility was acknowledged as much by Goh Chok Tong two years later:

> When Singapore becomes a first-world economy, it will become more international and more cosmopolitan. This has a cost for our society. It will be less Asian. There will be many more people of different nationalities, races and lifestyles in Singapore. This place will feel and look like any other cosmopolitan city in the world. (National Day Rally Speech 1999)

Thus, arriving at a judicious balance between a thoroughgoing cosmopolitanism – one informed by more pragmatically oriented responses to the challenges of late modernity – and the retention of a robustly Asian national identity remains an ongoing challenge for Singapore's language policy. And it is a distinct possibility that one response to this challenge will require abandoning the dichotomy between English and the official mother tongues.

Three, there are already signs that for many Singaporeans today (and not just the Eurasians), the language of the home is English rather than one of the official mother tongues. Rather ironically, this is because Singaporeans have taken seriously the government's message that English affords its speakers significant socio-economic advantages. While the actual direction of causality between language and affluence is open to question, there is no doubt that there is a correlation. As Gupta points out "[w]hatever measure of social class is taken, it is still the case that the higher the social class, the more likely it is that English is an important domestic language" (1998: 120). This enthusiastic "pursuit" of English has led to a situation where it is growing as a home language, threatening to displace the other languages (Pakir 2000: 262).[3] One already significant consequence is that a number of Chinese Singaporeans actually have great difficulty coping with Mandarin despite the fact that it supposed to be their mother tongue. This has recently forced the government to introduce a simplified language "B" syllabus for Mandarin, and to also acknowledge that only a minority, an elite estimated at about 10 percent of the student population, can be expected to be fully bilingual in English and the official mother tongue (Ministry of Education Press Release 2004; Wee 2006: 355). No less than Lee Kuan Yew himself has admitted that this signals a fundamental shift in government expectations:

> But now I believe it's only possible for the exceptionally able and the very determined … If you spend half-and-half of your capacity on two languages, it's likely you won't master either. (*The Straits Times* June 24, 2004)

> I used to believe that you can learn two languages at the same time, whatever your IQ. I was wrong. You have to master one language enough to read and to absorb knowledge for all the other subjects. (*The Straits Times* November 26, 2004)

Given all these factors, there are good reasons why the government should reconsider its decision to deny English the status of an official mother tongue. However, the increasing shift towards English has also led to the emergence of a highly colloquial variety of English known popularly as Singlish. And this has in turn led to official concerns that Singlish poses a threat to Singaporeans' ability to learn "good" English. Thus, in addition to the need to come to grips with the relationship between English and the other official mother tongues, the government also needs to deal with the relationship between English and Singlish.

Pitting English against Singlish

Singlish shows a high degree of influence from other local languages such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Malay and Tamil, with the varieties of Malay most important to the development of Singlish being Bazaar Malay (a simplified form of Malay used predominantly as an inter-ethnic lingua franca) and Baba Malay (spoken primarily by the Straits Chinese) (Platt and Weber 1980: 18; Gupta 1998: 109; Lim 2010). Below are sample Singlish utterances, showing how it is characterised by a lack of inflectional morphology (1a), productive use of reduplication (1b) and discourse particles (1c: the particle *lor* indicates a sense of resignation, see Wee 2002b):

3. E.g. Li Wei, Saravanan and Ng (1997), Saravanan (1994).

(1) a. He eat here yesterday.
'He ate here yesterday.'
b. I like hot-hot curries.
'I like very hot curries.'
c. I won't get married, lor.
'I have no choice but to not get married.'

But before looking at how the Singapore government has responded to the "Singlish problem", it is important to realise that among ordinary Singaporeans themselves, there is actually no real consensus as to the merits of Singlish. Those rejecting Singlish claim that it is not "proper/good" English while those favoring Singlish claim that it is a crucial part of their national identity. For example, some Singaporeans have labeled Singlish an "enemy" of English, and have suggested that "it is parochial to adopt a nationalist stance towards the use of Singlish" (Wee 2005: 57). Others have, in contrast, suggested that:

> Singlish is a mark of how we have evolved as a nation and should surely have a place in our culture. Embracing Singlish as part of our heritage is not self-deception. (Chng 2003: 53)

And Colin Goh, a Singaporean columnist, has argued that:

> Why we're fighting for Singlish, is because it's simply a part of our culture. In fact it may the ONLY thing that makes us uniquely Singaporean. It mixes all the various languages, which to me, seems to spread multi-cultural understanding. I thought this was something to be proud of. (Cited in Wee 2005: 59)

While ordinary Singaporeans disagree about the status of Singlish, the position of the government is unequivocal. "Good/proper" English, which it equates with standard English, is crucial for Singapore's continued economic competitiveness, particularly in a global economy (Chng 2003). And it sees Singlish as a problem because it fears that speaking Singlish will adversely affect the ability of Singaporeans to learn "good" English. Thus, as stressed by Singapore's second Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, the existence of Singlish actually poses a threat to the nation's economic well-being:

> We cannot be a first-world economy or go global with Singlish … 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 type of pidgin English, spoken only by 3 million Singaporeans, which the rest of the world will find quaint but incomprehensible. We are already half way there. Do we want to go all the way? (National Day Rally Speech 1999)

Because Singlish is viewed as an economic threat, whatever merits it may have as a marker of a Singaporean identity must be jettisoned in favor of the global economic value associated with the standard variety. Goh thus expressed the hope that in time to come, Singaporeans will no longer speak Singlish:

> Singlish is not English. It is English corrupted by Singaporeans and has become a Singapore dialect … Singlish is broken, ungrammatical English sprinkled with words and phrases from local dialects and Malay which English speakers outside Singapore have difficulties in understanding … Let me emphasise that my message that we must speak Standard English is targeted primarily at the younger generation… we should ensure that the next generation does not speak Singlish.
> (*The Straits Times* August 29 1999)

Perhaps the clearest statement of how strongly the government views the oppositional relationship between Singlish and "good" English comes from Lee Kuan Yew:

> Those Singaporeans who can speak good English should help create a good environment for speaking English, rather than advocate, as some do, the use of Singlish … Singlish is a handicap we must not wish on Singaporeans.
> (*The Sunday Times* August 15 1999)

This led the government to initiate the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) on April 29 2000, and according to the movement's chairman, Col. David Wong:

> We are trying to build a sense of pride, that as Singaporeans, we can speak good English as opposed to pride that we can speak Singlish. We are trying to check a trend in which younger Singaporeans are beginning to feel that it is perhaps a way of identifying themselves as Singaporeans if they speak Singlish.
> (*The Straits Times* March 31 2000)

There is this tension then between (some) Singaporeans, on the one hand, who wish to treat Singlish as a legitimate part of Singapore's linguistic ecology, and the government, on the other hand, who sees it as a threat to the nation's economic competitiveness. Any suggestion that Singlish and "proper/good" English can exist side by side is untenable as far as the government is concerned, since the presence of Singlish is felt to undermine proficiency in "proper/good" English and as a consequence, jeopardise the nation's economic well-being.

However, the problem with the government's stance against Singlish is that it fails to realise that the emergence of a nativised colloquial variety is an inevitable consequence of any successful implementation of English as an official language (also see Lim 2009). As a population becomes more proficient and more comfortable with using English, it will necessarily make the language its own. And this of course means that a nativised variety will inevitably develop, reflecting the population's greater ease and wider use of the language in the naturalistic environments of home and informal peer interactions (Kachru 1986; Schneider 2003, 2007).

Bearing this in mind, it is clear that the Speak Good English Movement unnecessarily confuses two independent goals: the promotion of good English and the elimination of Singlish. The former is a goal that no Singaporean is likely to disagree with, even those who are supporters of Singlish, and because of this, is relatively uncontroversial. The latter, in contrast, not only has to contend with opposition from supporters of Singlish, it is also unrealistic, since it aims to eliminate what is at bottom a sociolinguistically natural outcome.

The anti-Singlish stance is problematic for various other reasons as well. One, as we saw in the previous section, the government is concerned about Singaporeans emigrating overseas and has initiated a policy of attracting foreign talent in response. But this is only one side of the coin. The other is the government's desire to ensure that even as this "Singaporean diaspora" begins to take shape, those Singaporeans who are located overseas still retain a sense of belonging and affiliation with their country of origin. Thus Goh appeals to a sense of national loyalty and familial ties that Singaporeans will (hopefully) feel regardless of where they may be:

> In a very mobile world, more Singaporeans will go abroad to work … There are … sizeable Singapore communities in other cities – Sydney, Perth, London, Paris, Tokyo, Beijing, Bangkok, Manila … It is a facet of globalization and regionalization that we need to reflect on and address …
>
> Abiding bonds to family and friends and deep loyalties to Singapore are crucial in this new situation. We must never forget that Singaporeans owe one another an obligation, and the more able ones, in whom Singapore has invested the most, have a special obligation to society. We must all join hands to keep Singapore together. (National Day Rally Speech 1997)

But if Singlish can help to maintain such bonds and loyalties, it would be foolish for the government to insist on its elimination. This is not to suggest that Singlish will definitely play such a role or even a central role. Rather, it is to acknowledge that in general, the dynamics of deterritorialization (resulting from migration) "finds its expression in the creolised, mixed idioms of polyglottism", which means at least being allowing for the possibility that Singlish may well be part of this mix (Jacquemet 2005: 263). And whether the government likes it or not, the communication practices of Singaporeans across transnational boundaries will be increasingly difficult to police, which means that it might be best for the government to in any case adopt a more hands-off approach regarding the use of Singlish.

The second problem in the anti-Singlish stances is that the government has argued that it not possible for Singaporeans to "go global" with Singlish. However, a locally produced film, *Singapore Dreaming*, recently won a number of major international film awards, including the Montblanc Screenwriters Award at the 2006 San Sebastian International Film Festival, the Audience Award for Narrative Feature at the 2007 Asian-American International Film Festival in New York, and the Best Asian/Middle Eastern Film Award at the prestigious Tokyo International Film Festival in 2007. Promotional trailers for the film were apparently banned from local television because of its high Singlish content. The success of this film belies the government's claim that Singlish is a disadvantage in the drive to go global. In fact, where the culture industries are concerned, it would be hard to imagine a Singaporean film being successful overseas if the actors only spoke "proper/good" English. It is important to accept that Singlish contributes to a sense of what is authentic about the Singaporean identity even as it is clear that notions of what counts as authentic are becomingly increasingly commodified in order to attract attention and interest at a global level (Budach, Roy, and Heller 2003).

Three, the government is rightly concerned that Singaporeans acquire competence in a more standard variety of English, which it refers to as "good/proper" English. But it needs to recognise that Singlish can serve as a valuable resource in aid of this goal. In this regard, the reaction of the Singapore government is perhaps all too typical of institutionalised behaviors elsewhere, since it is an unfortunate fact that new varieties of English are all too often viewed as degenerate or corrupt versions of standardised varieties. This leads to a widespread fear that these new varieties, if left unchecked, could interfere with the learning of the standard. This fear has led to the stigmatised varieties being banned from the classroom, despite the fact that there are strong pedagogical grounds for allowing them in precisely because they *can* serve as useful resources in the learners' attempt to become proficient in the standard. As Siegel points out, a number of studies have demonstrated that stigmatised varieties either have no discernible effect on language interference, or they contribute towards better learning by reducing interference (1999). The reason for these results appears to be that teachers hold more positive attitudes because teaching in such programs requires an awareness of the legitimacy and the complex, rule-governed nature of their students' vernaculars (Siegel 1999: 710). Therefore, teachers have higher expectations for their students. Students also have more positive attitudes – more linguistic self-respect, more interest and therefore increased motivation. These avoid the vicious circle of linguistic prejudice observed in Britain, with teachers mistaking the language problems of creole-speaking children for stupidity, then stereotyping the children and eventually lowering their own expectations of the children's performance (Cheshire 1982). This leads to lower student performance, which in turn, reinforces the stereotype. This, of course, does not mean that Singlish should be considered an adequate substitute for standard English – the foregoing discussion should have made this clear by now. But it does mean that Singlish can be treated as a resource for learning the standard rather than as an obstacle that needs to be eliminated (Alsagoff 2010: 120).

Coming to terms with Standard Singaporean English

The Singapore government has occasionally displayed ambivalence about the possibility of an endonormative standard variety of English, which is not unexpected given its status as a member of Kachru's Outer Circle (Kachru 1985, 1986). What this means is that the government still shows an unhealthy readiness to treat British and American Englishes as standard references for what constitutes "good" English even as it attempts to also make reference to a "Standard Singaporean English". The latter is usually described as a variety that has standard English grammar, but is populated with lexical items that refer to local foodstuffs, customs or festivals. For example, the first chairman of the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) has been quoted as suggesting that:

> It's important that while we develop a brand of English which is uniquely identifiable with Singapore, it should not be a Singlish type.
>
> There are Singaporeans who speak English very well and after they have spoken for less than a minute or two, I would be able to identify them as coming from Singapore, just by the choice of words and the phrases they use and their intonation …
>
> I don't think we are trying to resist the use of words like *kampong* or *kiasu* … The idea, really, is to use the word in a grammatically correct sense.

Thus, if Singaporeans still insist on using English as an identity marker, rather than Singlish, the government would prefer that they speak a Singaporean English that is "grammatically correct". Where a Malay word like *kampong* "village" or a Hokkien word like *kiasu* "fear of losing out" is used, it should be embedded in constructions which are grammatically "standard" (*The Straits Times* March 31 2000).

This position makes sense only if it can be assumed that grammar and lexicon are separable such that the former is invariant across different Englishes and is culturally neutral. The lexicon then is allowed to vary so as to reflect the specific cultural contexts that English finds itself being used in. However, in linguistics, the increasing prominence of "construction grammars" is challenging the view that grammar can or should be treated autonomously (Croft 2001; Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988; Goldberg 1995). Constructions are defined as form-meaning relations, so that in any discussion of the properties of a construction, attention to both formal and functional properties is essential. Such formal properties can include phonological and morphosyntactic features while functional properties (understood broadly) can include both semantic as well as pragmatic features. Because a construction is defined as a relation between form and meaning, anything from relatively small lexical items (words, affixes) to much larger sentential patterns, including anything in between, can all count as constructions. Larger constructions that have been discussed in the literature include The Resultative Construction (*He painted the house black*), The *What's X Doing Y* Construction (*What's this fly doing in my soup?*), and The Way Construction (*He whistled his way down the street*). This suggests a view of grammar where there is a continuum from the highly regular and composition to the much more idiomatic; there is no strict separation between the two. This conception of grammar recognises that non-sentential idioms, fixed formulae, sentence fragments etc., are equally central phenomena alongside more traditional ones such as active sentences and their passive counterparts. Consequently, it is not possible to relegate or siphon off culture-specific aspects of English to the lexicon while assuming that the grammar remains culturally neutral.

The other problem with this position is that it is not clear that it makes sense to speak of standard English when we are dealing with the spoken variety (see, for example, the collection of papers in Bex and Watts 1999). This is because there tends to be much greater lexicogrammatical variation in speech. As one example, compare the following two constructions, the first from colloquial Singapore English and the second from American English.

(2) Why you paint the house green? [colloquial Singapore English]
(3) Why paint the house green? [American English]

(2) and (3) serve similar pragmatics, though they have slightly different morphosyntactic properties (Alsagoff, Bao and Wee 1998). In both, the speaker is asking for a justification concerning a particular situation. That is, the speaker is asking the hearer to provide a reason for painting the house green and implicates that unless good reasons can be given, it is probably not advisable to paint the house green.

But crucially, in Singapore English, the presence of second person pronoun "you" is essential (4). In contrast, the presence of the same pronoun is unacceptable in the American version (5).

(4) *Why paint the house green? [colloquial Singapore English]
(5) *Why you paint the house green? [American English]

The existence of "non-standard" grammatical structures is obviously not restricted to new Englishes. Carter points out that there are many grammatical structures in spoken British English that are used quite routinely by educated speakers (1997: 57–8). Yet, such structures are difficult to accommodate if "proper" sentences are being privileged as the norm. Some of his examples are given (Carter does not himself use the term "construction". I have added the term here to Carter's own informal descriptive labels to indicate that these can all be treated as constructions for language teaching purposes.):

(6) *Left-displaced Subject Construction* (with recapitulatory pronoun)
The women they all shouted.
(7) "Complete" *Relative Clause Construction*
Which is why we put the Bunsen-burner on a low flame.
(8) *Wh-pseudo Cleft Construction* (as "summarizing conjunctions")
What I would do is, people should try a different policy.
(9) *Fronted Anticipatory Phrase Construction*
That house in Brentford Street, is that where she lives?

What the foregoing suggests is that if Singaporeans are expected speak English, allowance has to made for greater range in lexicogrammatical structures. Concomitantly, any notion of a "standard" has to be interpreted in a much looser manner than the government currently appears comfortable with (Gupta 2010: 59).

The third problem is that grammar itself is not fixed but dynamic and thus open to change. This is because language is "not a circumscribed object but a confederation of available and overlapping social experiences" (Hopper 1998: 171). As language conventions change – and they inevitably do – what were once regularities may now be perceived as irregularities, and vice versa. Hopper explains this by describing grammar as *emergent* since "structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse in an ongoing process. Grammar is, in this view, simply the name for certain categories of observed repetitions in discourse" (1998: 156). Once we appreciate that the grammar of a language, including that of "standard English" is dynamic and subject to change, any reluctance to adopt a more endonormative stance to the grammar of English essentially condemns its users to the role of playing linguistic catch-up. This would essentially mean that Singaporeans have to wait for particular grammatical conventions to be first ratified by more traditional native speakers before they can themselves be confident in their usage.

All this is ironic since one of the most interesting developments arising from the spread of English as a global language has been the question of linguistic ownership (e.g. Brumfit 1995; Wardhaugh 1987; Widdowson 1994). As Widdowson puts it:

> The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. To grant such custody of the language is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status. It is a matter of considerable pride and satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication. But the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language. It is not a possession which they lease out to others, while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it. Who, it is often asked, really owns English? The answer to this question,

> it is suggested, has implications for a variety of issues such as what standards of English are acceptable, how it should be taught, and how problems of intelligibility ought to be approached. (1994: 384)

Along these lines, it has been argued that English is no longer solely owned by the traditional native speakers (Jenkins 2000; Kachru 1986). English is either owned by all who use the language or, what amounts to essentially the same thing, its ownership is not restricted to any particular group of speakers. In other words, it is reasonable that there should be "*pluralistic* centers of reference for norms and standards?" and as such, there is no reason to look only to traditional native speakers for directions and models (Kachru and Nelson 1996: 84, italics in original; Foley 1988: xiv; Heyhoe and Parker 1994).

What the foregoing means is this: The government is certainly correct to stress the importance of being competent in good English because of the socio-economic benefits that accrue to those who speak it. But it has to realise that in order to maximise the enjoyment of these benefits, Singaporeans can and should be encouraged to take the opportunity to contribute to evolving conceptions of what counts as good English. Failure to do so would constitute a missed opportunity, one that would actually work against the government's goal that Singaporeans capitalise on the possibilities open to speakers of good English.

Conclusion: Allowing greater autonomy in language choices

In this essay, we have seen that language planning is a pervasive concern of the Singaporean government. The government makes no excuse for the fact that it attempts to encourage particular kinds of behavior over others, including linguistic behavior. In fact, Singapore has sometimes been described as a "nanny state", and Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister, has been quoted as saying:

> We wouldn't be here, would not have made the economic progress, if we had not intervened on very personal matters – who your neighbor is, how you live, the noise you make, how you spit or where you spit, or *what language you use* … It was fundamental social and cultural changes that brought us here.
> (Mauzy and Milne 2002: 35, italics added)

The kinds of interventions that constitute Singapore's language policy have hitherto been informed by the problem of how to manage the country's ethnolinguistically diverse population across a range of sociopolitical contexts whilst ensuring continued economic growth for the country. Its mother tongue policy represents a fairly ingenious attempt in this regard: this policy encourages the learning of English as well as the official mother tongue, and by recognizing three mother tongues, the policy also goes a long way towards establishing a principle of inter-ethnic parity.

However, as we have seen, what was already a diverse population to begin with looks set to become even more increasingly varied in its sociolinguistic profile, as citizens who have lived overseas return to the country, and as foreign talent from different parts of the world take up Singaporean citizenship. The dynamics of Singaporean multilingualism are no longer simply organised along the lines of ethnically determined local identities, nor regulated in terms of linguistic ownership and authenticity. As a consequence, Singaporeans are continuing – and will continue – to make a variety of choices in matters of language, which are often at odds with the official policy prescriptions (Stroud and Wee 2010). In such a context, the mandatory assignation of a specific mother tongue, or even a limited set of mother tongues, onto this kind of ethnolinguistic diversity is simply unrealistic. Consequently, the official position that the mother tongue must be Asian may need to be revisited. As Wee and Bokhorst-Heng observe:

> This might mean that, in so far as the state is still intent on encouraging Singaporeans to keep in touch with their mother tongues, this will have to be done "softly", via persuasion but accepting that the final choice lies with the individual. Furthermore, once the mother tongue issue is ceded more toward the personal domain, then it becomes clear that what language a particular Singaporean may consider his or her mother tongue is also something that can no longer be mandated by the state; this, too, will be a matter of personal choice … Thus, it seems to us that the most reasonable option for the state is for it to shift away from the current mother tongue policy with its Asian-centricity towards a more "open" bilingual policy. By this we mean that, in addition to English, students … can learn whichever language they want for any number of reasons: either because they consider this other language interesting, they see it as a part of their heritage, or simply because they think it is economically useful. The state may then still want to encourage Singaporean citizens to learn their various mother tongues, but this would no longer be part of an official policy which would be mandatory in the schools. Instead, Singaporeans would be able to exercise their own choice in deciding what language they consider to be their mother tongue.
>
> (2005: 176–7)

This suggests that, whether the government likes it or not, there may be little choice but to allow for greater autonomy in language policy. This might be the only way a language policy can reasonably hope to accommodate the increasingly diverse identities and experiences of Singaporeans.

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CHAPTER 7

Uncertain locale

The dialectics of space and the cultural politics of English in Singapore

Robbie B. H. Goh

The role and place of English in Singapore is shaped by a number of key cultural factors, including the nation's colonial legacy, its multi-racial and multi-lingual society (and how this is handled by government policy), the push to position Singapore as a global city attracting transnational capital and flows of talent, and similar issues. These factors combine to create cultural tensions between language and race identifiers (for example, being of Chinese ethnic origin, being a recent arrival from China, speaking Chinese dialects, and speaking the Mandarin Chinese endorsed by the government), between different racial-linguistic communities (for example, Anglophone Singaporeans and speakers predominantly of Asian languages), and the peculiar tensions between varieties of "standard" English affiliated to global cultural flows (American media, living and studying in the U.K. or Australia) and the local variety known as "Singlish" that is affiliated with a localized (and especially everyman or underclass) Singapore identity. An account of English vis-à-vis the cultural landscape of Singapore thus also becomes an account of the geopolitics of identity and culture, as Singapore attempts to come to terms with global flows and competitions.

The national space is a crucial concept in Singapore governance and public life, with considerable attention having been paid to it and to cognate terms like the country's size, the "national" versus the "foreign", "stayers" and "quitters", land and housing zoning, and so on. This is hardly surprising, given Singapore's small geophysical size, its lack of natural resources, its perceived vulnerability (in economic, political and other terms), and its desire to compete as a global city (with the challenges attendant upon this). In Singapore's multi-cultural, multi-lingual society, these spatial concerns inevitably get overwritten by linguistic ones as well, particularly given Singapore's "mother tongue policy". The third term in this cultural triad is class, with socio-economic status very closely tied to education and language use, and in turn shaping spatial conceptions and attitudes. This essay examines the implications of Singapore's language policy and landscape for issues of nationhood, Singaporean identity and cultural concerns (including questions of cultural sustainability), drawing on official discourses and documents in the public domain and in literature and popular culture.

"English" and "Chinese" positionalities in Singapore: The colonial legacy

The relationship between language and class has had a contentious history in Singapore. While in general the correlation between class and higher education is the dominant factor (as is the case in most if not all countries), there are complications to this scheme arising out of Singapore's colonial legacy and multicultural setting.

In colonial Singapore even up to the first half of the twentieth century, English was strongly associated with the colonial rulers, and an Anglophone education and the predominant use of English by a native person was regarded with some suspicion as the sign of a certain cultural loss. Certainly there was a profound schism among the Chinese immigrants who formed the majority of the Asian population of Singapore: on the one hand, many recognized the pragmatic logic of giving their children an Anglophone education in the mission schools that were rapidly being established from around the turn of the century onwards (although the earliest few had been established in Singapore from the first half of the nineteenth century), and which were offering a quality education to Asian children which the colonial government was unable to provide. Chinese parents could readily see the value of such a mission education, in preparing their children for the desirable careers in colonial or British mercantile offices. A letter written to *Straits Chinese Magazine* by a Chinese parent, asserting that "a good English education is no doubt the best legacy a Chinese or any other parent in the British Empire can leave to his children" is representative of this position (cited in Loh 1975: 55). On the other hand, however, there were fears that the Anglophone education and cultural exposure in these mission schools were going to erode Chinese cultural identity – including of course in the form of the threat of conversion to Christianity (Robbie Goh 2003: 31–34; 2003b: 100–101). The ambivalence of training natives in English was deeply rooted in the British empire: in the context of India for example, Macaulay's 1835 *Minute on Education*, which advocated the central place of English in the training of an Anglophone native civil service, was repudiated in 1901 by then-Governor-General Lord Curzon, who criticized the "too slavish imitation of English models" that this produced (Loh 1975: 2–3). There was also the "discontented class" argument at work in colonial India, Malaya and elsewhere, which believed that an excessive propagation of Anglophone education would create a disinclination for "manual labor" among colonized natives; the control of English education was thus a means of social control as well (Pennycook 1998: 99, 111).

In the case of colonial Singapore, the tensions between English and Chinese and their respective cultural identities grew in the first half of the twentieth century, and came to a head in the decades of the 1940s and 1950s, after the Japanese occupation and in the movement towards independence from Britain. British suspicions of the Chinese in Singapore were founded on the tumultuous politics in China in this period – which included the 1911 overthrowing of the Manchu government, the May 4th movement of 1919, the Japanese occupation of China in 1937, and the rise of communism after the war – and the corresponding sentiments evinced by some of the members of the Chinese community in Singapore. These suspicions focused on the Chinese schools, which were perceived by the British to be "nests of Chinese Nationalists" and "potential instrument[s] for political sedition" (Loh 1975: 43). From 1920 onwards, Chinese schools were closely regulated by the British: a 1920 ordinance requiring all schools to be registered with the government was a means to allow the British to monitor activities in the Chinese schools, including the use of the unifying language Mandarin as opposed to the heterogeneous dialects, and from the 1920s these schools had to put up with constant government inspections, even though they received less funding than the English-medium and Malay schools (Chai 1977: 29; Erb 2003: 27–28). In this respect, the linguistic landscape of Singapore in the first half of the twentieth century was akin to that of Hong Kong, where the close affinities between the majority Chinese population and the political happenings in mainland China significantly colored the British attitudes to the Chinese community under their control, with consequences for language and educational policy (Pennycook 1998: 123–124; Wong 2002).

After World War II, tensions between the British colonial government and segments of the Chinese population continued to run high. Mainstream Chinese organizations in Singapore, which had been the traditional initiators and sponsors of Chinese vernacular education in the colony, began agitating for government support of Chinese education (Wong 2002: 57). Communist activities, which went underground and turned increasingly to non-constitutional means from 1948 onward, also became implicated in the arena of Chinese schools in Singapore, infiltrating the schools and moving students to acts of civil disobedience (Turnbull 1977: 248; Wong 2000: 63). The British colonial government in Singapore became involved in a series of clashes with Chinese school students who, influenced to a certain extent by the communists, saw their defiance of the British as a blow for Chinese culture and the rights of the Chinese community in Singapore (Robbie Goh 2007: 45).

Other social organizations also got involved in this cultural polemic: the establishment of the "Chinese YMCA" in Singapore in 1948 was very much a response on the part of the Chinese community in Singapore to what was perceived as the indifference if not outright hostility of the British government to their needs; it was believed that a "Chinese YMCA" which operated in Chinese and was governed by Chinese leaders, was a necessary corrective to the existing YMCA established by the British in 1903, and which was seen as very much an "English" institution primarily serving the interests of the British community (Robbie Goh 2007: 31, 42–45). Another institution which marked the English-Chinese linguistic and cultural divide in Singapore was Nanyang University (known popularly by its Chinese abbreviation Nantah), which opened its doors in 1955, funded by Chinese businesses and ordinary individuals from the Chinese community, who wanted to counteract the "English-dominant policy of higher education" pursued by the colonial government by endowing this new university which would use Chinese as the medium of instruction (Wong 2000: 62, 64). The British government, concerned that this bastion of Chinese language and culture would be an instrument of Chinese "racial power" and be exploited by the communists as a rallying symbol and hub of communist activities, reacted with a policy of "disenfranchisement" including initially denying registration to the new university, not recognizing its degrees and denying it financial assistance (Wong 2000: 64–66).

Although the overt political tensions of the English-Chinese divide ended with Singapore's independence in 1965, many of the underlying cultural tensions were inherited by the new nation. This is partly due to the persistence of the English language's ideological affinities (i.e. the global capitalism that succeeded the colonial economy), as well as the "continuity and resilience" in the relationship between English and discourses – the persistent "cultural constructedness" inhering in English (Pennycook 1998: 7–10). The Singapore government has consistently pushed the use of English as the main medium of instruction and of government, in the pragmatic recognition that Singapore's development and economic success relied (among other things) on its facility in this global language (Rappa and Wee 2006: 81). English also functioned in many ways as a kind of neutral "broker" language (Chiew 1978: 130–133) that avoided giving centrality to the language associated with any of the ethnic communities, and could also serve as a "*lingua franca* for inter-ethnic communication" (Rappa and Wee 2006: 87). At the same time, to counter the potential cultural loss of emphasizing English at the expense of vernacular languages, the government has also consistently pursued a "mother tongue" second language policy, in which students are also required to learn a second language determined by the ethnic group to which they belong. This, as might be expected, has at times been pursued in ways which are prescriptive and overlook some of the complexities of cultural identity and language politics: for example, ethnically Chinese students had to study Mandarin, which supplanted various Chinese dialects (such as Cantonese, Teochew and Hokkien whose use the government actively discouraged), while until recently ethnically Indian students had to study Tamil.

Apart from the prescriptiveness and other shortcomings of the "mother tongue" policy (for which see Rappa and Wee 2006: 83–90), it also assumes a comfortable and unproblematic complementarity between English and one's second language, ignoring the inherited tensions and political inequalities between the languages. In the case at least of the Mandarin that the ethnic Chinese population – the majority group in Singapore – were required to learn and use, the use of either English or Chinese involved complicated socio-cultural factors which not only were in tension one with the other, but also involved the individual in a choice that would mark his or her identity and persona in very distinct ways. Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew – who, as Prime Minister in the 1960s was responsible for Singapore's bilingual policy – has recently reversed his views on effective bilingualism. In a parliamentary speech of November 25 2004, he conceded that "very few people can be fluent in two languages," reversing his ambition in the 1960s to "have a whole society bilingual" (Lee 2004: H4). While he still wants to see Singapore pursue a bilingual policy, he accedes that this must be to "varying abilities" and varying "ratio of emphasis between English and the mother tongue [parents] want for their child" (Lee 2004: H4). In this more qualified bilingual policy, it seems clear that it is Chinese that will lose ground: Lee makes it clear that English is not only the "neutral medium" to help preserve racial harmony by avoiding the privileging any one mother tongue, it is also "the language of commerce, of science, technology and international intercourse" (Lee 2004: H4). The Minister Mentor's "advice" to parents and students – to "go for the highest level you can achieve [in Chinese] after coping with your other subjects that are taught in English" – makes this relegation of Mandarin to distinct second place quite clear, even as he insists that "Singapore must always retain a core of the Chinese-educated who can regenerate and sustain the Chinese-speaking and Chinese-reading habits of our population" (Lee 2004: H4).

The *fait accompli* of English's political and economic ascendancy over Chinese, it should be noted, does not correspond with an actual decline in the number of Chinese speakers in Singapore, nor with a decline in the importance of Chinese as a communal and familial (as opposed to educational or business) language. The General Household Survey of 2005 actually notes a slight rise in the number of respondents who use Mandarin as their main language spoken at home, from 45.1 to 47.2 percent of the Chinese population (Department of Statistics 2006: 17). Moreover, if the use of the various Chinese dialects is factored in, the percentage of Chinese respondents who spoke either Mandarin or Chinese dialects as their main language at home was 71.1 percent in 2005, with only 28.7 of Chinese respondents reporting English as their main language at home. English had a comparable percentage of users among the Indians (39 percent reporting it as their main language used at home), and a very small percentage of users among the Malays (13 percent; Department of Statistics 2006: 17). However, it is the better-educated respondents who tend to use mainly English at home (Department of Statistics 2006: 18). This, together with English's importance as the business language and the government's promotion of its function as international language, combines to explain English's dominance as a strategic, but not a numerical, one.

Singapore Chineseness: "Impurity", fragmentation, dislocation

This official acceptance of a qualified and variable bilingualism, with English in a distinctly superior position, is not altogether surprising or irrational. However, the main problem is not that this valorization of English is in any way exceptional or unpragmatic; it is that it places pressure not just on the use of Chinese language in Singapore, but on the very notion of Singapore Chineseness. Scholars on the Chinese diaspora such as Tu Wei Ming, Aihwa Ong and Ien Ang, among others, have debated intensely the possibility of a unifying "Confucian" value-system that continues to link the overseas Chinese with China and its people (Ong 1999; Ang 2001; Tu 1996). The idealism of a unifying set of "Chinese" values seems clear, considering the racial, ideological, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity that is in China itself, as witnessed by half a century of China-Taiwan political tensions, the recognition of Hong Kong's vastly different socio-economic character by treating it as a "Special Administrative Region", and the recent civil clashes sparked by the racial-cultural heterogeneity of Tibetan and Uigher peoples. Ang's classic formulation of the condition of the overseas Chinese, in her book *On Not Speaking Chinese*, conceives of overseas Chineseness in terms of cultural "hybridity", evidenced in matters of dress, food, religion and of course language (2001). Of course, the point of a "hybrid" Chinese culture may well be that there is really no "pure" and unalloyed Chineseness, not even in China itself.

This notion of a "hybrid" Chineseness seems all too evident in the context of Singapore. In the first place, Chinese ethnicity is marked out, but only to become one standardized component within an adamant Singaporean multi-culturalism. Within that multi-culturalism, the official terms of "Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other" are carefully-constructed categories, equivalences in which many distinctive features of each group (such as the fact that the Chinese are the overwhelming majority; or that the Malay community's under-performance in economic terms is a constant worry for the government and community leaders) are elided. That is to say, in the context of Singapore today, "Chinese" does not semantically associate with "from or of China" as much as it indicates "a social grouping within the constructed social polity of multi-cultural Singapore". Qualities of racial balance and multi-racial mixing – always evident and thoughtfully constructed and reinforced in the social landscape, in the national pledge's phrasing "regardless of race, language or religion", in public discourses such as government advertising, in government housing policy, and so on – override any strong correlation of Singapore "Chineseness" with qualities of being of or from China. The strongest evidence of this is the fact that Chinese nationals in Singapore – whether they be migrant laborers or professionals, students or tourists, young or old – are often regarded with hostility and suspicion, and seen as distinct and apart, by Singaporeans of Chinese origin. Blogs and webforum postings are a good place to get the pulse of Singaporean attitudes, and many of the postings on the popular "Sg Forums" website are hostile to the China Chinese and see them as different from Singapore Chinese. A June 28 2009 posting by "8800" is representative:

> I don't like them. They come to singapore steal our jobs, seduce our guys and break up marriages.
>
> And don't tell me craps like our ancestors are from China etc. Even though that maybe true, over the years our culture have developed completly [sic] different from them.
>
> Just look at the way we speak chinese is already different from them. Singapore Chinese speak chinese language the accent is different from China chinese.
>
> (Sg Forums n.d.)

Not all discussants took the same position as "8800", of course: another discussant "Plastic Bag" excoriated the former's "childish arguments", and pointed out that "FYI, different parts of China speak with different accents and dialects … Even Malaysian Mandarin is different from Singaporean Mandarin". Other discussants speak out strongly in defense of Chinese and other foreigners and their right to work and live in Singapore. However, the two discussants expressed a view that many others had, that the cultural difference between the PRC and diasporic Chinese was marked, including in terms of different versions of the Chinese language; also, there was broad agreement that (as "Plastic Bag" conceded) "it's annoying with all these Mainland Chinese flooding our spaces" (Sg Forums n.d.). There are even suggestions that one can tell a Chinese national from a Singaporean Chinese just by appearance: thus "Hazeynut" says "you should take a walk at geylang and see the whole area flooding with China prostitutes than you come and tell us your naive views that only a small minority of China women are like these" [sic] (Sg Forums n.d.). Some of this hostility and differentiation is fallout from the increasing presence of foreign workers and professionals in Singapore – about

1.32 million of them, forming roughly 27 percent of the total population (cited in Othman 2008: 2). This very sizeable foreign population (which does not include recently-naturalized Singaporeans), in Singapore's small physical and socio-economic landscape, is bound to attract a lot of notice, including negative responses. The Singapore government is aware of such sentiments and in addition to strictly regulating employment passes, also speaks a cautionary discourse of "limits", "constraints", "calibration" and "regulation" when characterizing its policy on foreign workers (Low 2009). However, it has also consistently insisted that Singapore depends heavily on foreigners, and this dependence is likely to grow over time – one projection is that Singapore will need an estimated 2.78 million foreign workers by 2034 (cited in Li 2008: A34).

Not all the animosity to China nationals stems from job fears on the part of Singaporeans, and it is clear from public domain and popular discourses that the construction of China nationals as Other to Singapore Chinese is overdetermined in its cultural logic and causality. Language, as suggested (however simplistically) by some of the discussants on the Sg Forums site, is a key issue: if Singapore Chinese is different from Malaysia Chinese and that spoken in China (which is itself heterogeneous), then on what basis can a fundamental or essential Chinese identity be asserted? Is there a sense in which Singaporean Chinese praxis can only ever be caught somewhere between the government-mandated goal of a "pure" Mandarin approximating an ideal Mandarin spoken in China, and a nostalgia of dialectal purity? Would a dialect-permissive policy indeed have given rise, not to effective dialect competence but to the "adulterated Hokkien-Teochew dialect" that Minister Mentor Lee describes (cited in Chin Lian Goh 2009: A6)? These questions are particularly wretched in Singapore, where "Chinese" linguistic praxis is itself fragmentary and heterogeneous.

The government's definition of the Chinese mother tongue is Mandarin, and together with this codification of Chinese-as-Mandarin in schools, it has also consistently (over the last 30 years, through its "speak Mandarin" campaign) discouraged the speaking of the various Chinese dialects – Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, Foochow and others – which were spoken by the various dialect groups when they emigrated to British Malaya, and which constituted the unifying language for their respective communities (Chin Lian Goh 2009: A6). However, this does not mean that Mandarin has effectively replaced dialects: almost 24 percent of Chinese respondents report using dialects as their main language spoken at home, compared to just over 47 percent for Mandarin (Department of Statistics 2006: 17). This gives Mandarin a dominant position but by no means a unanimous one. The divisive role played by the Mandarin-dialects relationship is exacerbated by a generational gap: older Chinese, who did not receive tertiary or even secondary education, and who at any rate went to school before the government's privileging of Mandarin over dialects took effect, tend to speak only dialect and lack competence in Mandarin, while for children, teenagers and even young adults, the opposite is true. The mutually exclusive tendency between Mandarin and dialects is quite clear from the 2005 General Household Survey's age breakdown: from the age-band 55–59 onwards, the respondents who reported speaking dialects as their main language at home exceeded those who reported Mandarin as their main language (and for that matter, those who reported English; Department of Statistics 2006: Table 21). In contrast, for those in the 20–24 age band and below, the number who spoke dialects was a miniscule proportion compared to those who spoke Mandarin or English: for the 20–24 age band, there were 16,596 dialect speakers, to 95,175 Mandarin speakers and 39,801 English speakers, with the spread widening even more for the younger age groups (Department of Statistics 2006: Table 21). This generational rift between Mandarin and dialect speakers, in addition to making inter-generational conversation (for example, between grandparents and their grandchildren) difficult, also means a rift in the notion of linguistic "Chineseness". While Mandarin is the government-endorsed definition of Chineseness and one with the most pragmatic international-business value, it occupies that position with a certain bad faith from the point of view of occluding communities of dialect-speakers who must thus occupy the position of being "un-Chinese" in their practice of dialects.

There is also a controversy as to whether Mandarin is in fact the more practical version of Chinese language, and whether thus its official prescription is worth all the effort and cultural dislocation: although by and large popular opinion is swayed by the official position that learning and speaking dialects is an "added burden" and "negative interference" to the learning and speaking of Mandarin and English (as recently reiterated by Minister Mentor Lee), there has been some vocal defense of the economic, political and cultural value of dialects (cited in Chin Lian Goh 2009: A6). Columnist Sumiko Tan sounded a public note contrary to government policy in her 2001 article "I'm Teochew – and Proud of It", in which she lamented the "frightening scenario" of young generations of Singaporeans cut off from their cultural "roots" (Tan 2001: P4). For Tan, this cultural loss is potentially irreversible, since the generational gap in terms of dialect competence means that the opportunity for the young generations to learn and practice dialects will die out with the "dying breed" of older Singaporeans. In her column, Tan alludes to the 1991 political victory of opposition member Low Thia Khiang in the polling ward of Hougang, a victory which she attributes to Low's "melodious command of the dialect [Teochew]"; this was not an isolated experience, and in the 2001 election, in the ward of Nee Soon East, another opposition member Poh Lee Guan gave a very strong showing (although he did not win the seat) based on his facility in Hokkien (Tan 2001: P4; Chan 2001: 4). In business, too, opinions have been aired that defend the commercial usefulness of dialects: a letter written to the *Straits Times* forum page by businessman Ang Kian Chuan argues that "dialects can be useful at work and in business", and adduces his own business experience using Cantonese in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, Hokkien in Penang and Taipei, and Teochew in Bangkok (Ang 2009: A19).

Ang's letter, although dissenting from the official "speak Mandarin" policy in Singapore's educational and public life, does ironically reinforce one consequence of that official policy: i.e. the heterotopic view of Chinese languages (whether Mandarin or dialect), which is in turn tied to the notion of language as transnational medium of business and politics. Clearly the government's pragmatic goal is to produce a sufficient number of fluent Mandarin speakers who can "speak to 1,300 million Chinese from all provinces in China", as Minister Mentor Lee recently put it, although advocates of dialect and skeptics of Singapore's bilingual system express doubt about how realizable this is, how close Singapore Mandarin will ever be to a variety spoken in China, and how homogeneous that China variety is (cited in Chin Lian Goh 2009: A6). Minister Mentor Lee himself acknowledges the crucial role of a foreign locus in bringing Singapore Mandarin to the degree of effective competence required in China: referring to a number of Singaporeans working in China who are "testimony to the success of our second language policy", he also concedes that it was the "constant exposure to Mandarin in China", and the academic "polish" some of these individuals had pursued in Chinese universities, which crucially completed the "second language foundation" they acquired in Singapore (Lee 2004: H4).

Thus in both official and dissenting discourses, the contestation of Mandarin and dialects is made on the grounds of a utility and value which is outward-located, in reference to its use somewhere other than Singapore. Within Singapore, while dialects are often advocated as a means of retaining cultural memory and roots, this goal is often seen as a lost cause, tied to the "dying" generations of older Chinese Singaporeans who can still effectively speak dialect but are unable to transmit this linguistic competence to a Mandarin- and English-speaking young generation – a linguistic gap which is confirmed by census data. English's overwhelming socio-economic and cultural importance in Singapore is thus strongly aided by the fissures in notions of "Chineseness" and the linguistic praxes of the same – fissures that have been created initially by the historical conditions of the Chinese migrant community in British Malaya, and reinforced subsequently by the contours of Singapore's bilingual and anti-dialect policies.

English, cosmopolitanism, class: Linguistic identity, mockery and self-loathing

Given the reality of a strong base of Mandarin- and dialect-speaking Chinese (as the majority ethnic group in Singapore – but together with a moderately-strong vernacular-speaking Indian population and a very strong Malay one), it is to be expected that a high degree of Anglophone competence is not only relatively rare but also regarded with a certain degree of suspicion by the general population, especially when that Anglophone performance is effectively monolingual, accompanied by a recognizably foreign (e.g. "British" or "American") accent, or demonstrated in the use of difficult polysyllabic words. Among speakers of Hokkien or familiar with the Hokkien-inspired slang, such effectively monolingual Anglophone but ethnically-Chinese speakers are often called "*kantang*" (hokkien for "potato", supposedly alluding either to the fact that such speakers sound as if they have a potato in their mouths, or because they are supposed to subsist mainly on a "Western" diet of potatoes rather than rice); while the use of difficult and polysyllabic English words is often greeted with the derisive Hokkien word "*cheem*" (literally "deep", but also derogatory for "profound").

Singapore's official validation of English as the language of education, business and politics runs against a persistent popular groundswell of mockery which casts a high Anglophone competence as foreign and aberrant, as somehow in bad faith or a betrayal of one's Chinese origins and communal ties. That sense of foreignness is of course already embedded in the noun "English" – i.e. the language that originated from England – although that foreignness tends to be overlooked or downplayed in an age where English has been appropriated by different peoples and nations, and especially in English-speaking circles. However, the connotations of a negative foreignness are very much to the fore still in the Hokkien term for the English language ("*ang moh*") which is also the noun for the Caucasian figure, and literally means (one possessing or characterized by) "red hair", thus emphasizing (from the point of view of Chinese physiognomy) the bizarrely different or exotic.

While much of the animus and xenophobia against foreigners has waned as Singapore has become more transnational and cosmopolitan in culture, the suspicion of Chinese Singaporeans (as well, no doubt, as of Indian and Malay ones) who exhibit too comfortably Western and Anglophone an identity – which of course is most easily detected through linguistic praxis – has remained. One of the best corpora for this form of popular mockery of "*ang moh*" behavior in Singaporeans is the satirical website "Talking Cock", which since 2000 has compiled and posted a very wide range of popular (often earthy and crude) Singapore humor – as the website itself puts it, it is "committed to preserving and advancing the authentic voice of Singaporeans" (TalkingCock n.d.). A large part of that authenticity consists in using Singlish and outright Hokkien words and phrases, often creating characters whose distinction consists primarily in their language (and secondarily in their irreverent, scatological views on Singapore life and especially on matters of policy). Thus the regular column "Dear Ah Beng", a mock advice column, features a columnist who is a typical Talking Cock creation: as the name "Ah Beng" suggests, he is a common man, more at home in Singlish and Hokkien than in grammatical standard English, and expressing the disgruntled malcontent view of one who feels marginalized in Singapore society. Ah Beng uses phrases like "*chio kway*" to refer to an attractive and sexually-available woman, "on, not?" as an interrogative asking whether his correspondent agrees with his plan, and refers to the eloquent standard English (such as that of the *Straits Times* newspaper) as "super *kantang* Engrand" (TalkingCock n.d.).

Another column, "Lim Peh Ka Li Kong" (Hokkien, literally "your father tells you", or "let me tell you something" when used by a senior or someone who assumes the position of a senior) creates the persona of a cantankerous and also lecherous old man who comments scathingly (in Singlish and Hokkien) on various aspects of Singapore life. In a post of November 28 2004, he alludes to Lee Kuan Yew's parliamentary speech on mother tongue issues, predictably (like many of Talking Cock's columns and commentaries) taking potshots at the government's language policies ("Teochew is already nearly gone", he comments at one point). However, the column also offers a humorous take on Singapore self-loathing. As one of Lim Peh's friends, Ter Koh (Hokkien for "lecherous") puts it, "It's *si beh* condemn that as Chinese peepur, our standard of Chinese am not as powderful as our Engrand" (TalkingCock n.d.). When an Indian interlocutor confesses to being confused at their ambivalence between their pride in being Chinese and yet sending their children to English schools, Lim Peh explains:

> We acherly prefer our chewren to be totally Chinese, but the *ang mors* got more money, so we prefer that they be more *ang mor* but still not forget that they are Chinese. Because we wan' them to have as much money as the *ang mor* but at the same time we do'wan to admit the *ang mor* win us, and also because now China making more and more money. (TalkingCock n.d.)

On the one hand a satirical version of governmental linguistic "pragmatism" (a word which Lim Peh also uses, although he mis-spells it), it is also on the other hand a summary of Talking Cock's project as a whole – a project as much about laughing at oneself as it is about laughing at the false positions created through official policy. This satire in Singlish-Hokkien combination fulfills Talking Cock's goal of "preserving … the authentic voice of Singaporeans" by defining that authentic position in contradistinction to other linguistic-cultural positions: it is not the admired-yet-dreaded "*Ang Moh*" English, nor the Mandarin unmixed with Singlish and Hokkien that China nationals speak, nor properly Malay or Tamil, nor any other kind of recognizable standard language that might lay claim to being a Singapore standard language (TalkingCock n.d.). Instead, it takes delight in a kind of bowdlerized inventiveness and borrowing (especially in the various choices of which English words to substitute with Hokkien, and the varied spellings of words to approximate the Singlish pronunciation), to create characters and their linguistic-cultural positions and praxes which are themselves laughable. Indeed, the founder of and main contributor to Talking Cock, Colin Goh, is a writer and former lawyer who was educated in the kind of elite English-medium school that characters on Talking Cock excoriate, as well as at Columbia University and University College London. Yet it must not be assumed that the "real" Goh distances himself in mockery from the lower-register characters he and his team create: even in his other avatar as a columnist for the *Straits Times* and other such English media, some of Talking Cock's mockery of Singapore life and institutions, and liberal sprinkling of Singlish and Hokkien words and phrases, is evident. Thus in his article "Dishing the Dirt", which appeared in the *Sunday Times* of February 8, 2009, he compares New York City's fledgling attempts to regulate the hygiene of food vendors with Singapore's well-established scheme, and takes a characteristically anti-establishment position, lamenting "the loss of our old, messy roadside hawkers" and hoping that New York will not emulate Singapore's path (Colin Goh 2009). He makes his point with liberal use of Hokkien and Singlish, including in an alternative hygiene rating system where "'A' stood for '*A-sai*' ('acceptable' in Hokkien), 'B' stood for '*buay sai*' ('unacceptable'), 'C' for '*cana-sai*' ('like crap') and 'D' for diarrhoea ('*lau sai*')", but where the quality of food is firmly averred to be inversely related to its hygiene rating (Colin Goh 2009). This cultural knowledge, social positioning and linguistic performance corroborates his implicit claim to speak for "we Singaporeans", and "us Singaporeans of a certain generation" (Colin Goh 2009).

What Goh represents is thus not so much a strict and straightforward class divide between Anglophone and educated elites on the one hand and Singlish-Hokkien everymen on the other (although he clearly capitalizes on that divide), but rather an attempt at syncretizing these different cultural-linguistic positions, to show the possibility of crossing those boundaries and constituting a Singaporean authenticity which does not have to be divided by different standard languages. Yet as consistent and sincere as this attempt may be, in the final analysis it does still constitute a contrivance or constructedness: Goh's English register in some of his other articles – including words and phrases like "us famously reticent Singaporeans", "the state of independent filmmaking economics worldwide", "massive financial opportunity cost" – are no more accessible to the average Singlish-Hokkien speaking Singaporean than his Ivy league education (Colin Goh 2006). Goh at one point describes himself as "growing up in a half-Peranakan household that spoke mostly English and just as much Malay as Hokkien or Teochew, and being educated in a mission school (then) famed for churning out bananas", before going on to talk about his awkwardness with his own Chinese ethnicity especially in the presence of "real Chinese" (Colin Goh 2009). This does not necessarily make him a "banana" and inauthentic Singaporean, but it does indicate the complexity of that "authenticity" and representative "Singaporeanness" which Goh and the Talking Cock project often assume.

If an "authentic" middle-Singaporean socio-cultural and linguistic identity is inherently problematic, then for a highly-educated, fluently Anglophone individual like Goh with "banana" elements in his upbringing to assume the position of that authenticity must certainly be something of a guise or artistic persona, in his case for comic purposes. If Aristotle is right in saying that comedy relies on a certain social distancing between the viewer and characters "worse than the average", then in the Talking Cock brand of comedy, there must also be a degree of Anglophone distancing from the linguistically- and culturally-lower characters and personae depicted (Aristotle 1982: 49). At the same time, there could well be a degree of self-consciousness (if not guilt) at that very cultural-linguistic superiority which makes the comedy possible. That is to say, Talking Cock and other related documents by Goh and his team could very well be a form of Singaporeans laughing at themselves, but if so, this is through a complex process of simultaneously distancing oneself from and laughing at the (cultural-linguistic) "average", while also promoting and even identifying with that average in order to distance oneself from the undeniable elitism of Anglophone fluency.

That sense of a self-consciousness possibly tantamount to guilt is evident from other cultural documents, in other (non-comic) genres of writing, and (as might be expected) is a recurring trope in Singapore Anglophone literature, particularly in depictions of life in HDB flats (i.e. public housing). In Daren Shiau's novel *Heartland*, the protagonist Wing is caught between two cultural worlds: on the one hand, the largely Anglophone, middle-class and upwardly-aspiring world of his Junior College friends and especially his one-time love Chloe; and on the other hand, the rest of his social world, including his Mandarin-speaking mother and Mandarin, Singlish and Hokkien-speaking army friend Yong and Yong's sister (and Wing's love interest) May. Although Shiau – an award-winning writer in English who is also a corporate lawyer (still in practice) with leading law firm Allen and Gledhill, and who has worked in several countries – is clearly, like Colin Goh, linguistically and culturally elite in the context of Singapore, the novel depicts Chloe and her family (the main representatives of that class) in the most unfavorable light. Chloe's elitist class position is made clear from her family background (her father has his own law firm, and is constantly "assessing" Wing as to his prospects and suitability for his daughter) to her love for foreign films and her overseas and "ivy league" aspirations (Shiau 1999: 13, 37, 54). There is a profound gulf between her comfortable upper-middle class world and the commonplace and often grungy HDB world of Wing and his family, which is epitomized in the cultural-linguistic gap between Chloe and Wing's mother:

> My mum? You're forgetting my mum's background. She doesn't speak English and she probably wouldn't feel comfortable with Chloe. I think she'll find her westernized and all that. (Shiau 1999: 39)

It is Chloe's aggressive snobbery that causes her to reject Wing and his world. If there is any hope for happiness for the liminally-placed Wing, it is probably downward in the socio-economic and cultural-linguistic hierarchy, with the shop assistant May Ling, who with her brother and friends speaks a mixture of Mandarin, Singlish and Hokkien:

> "No, lah … *aiyah*, he's [Wing] not the same as us, lah. People *tak chek kia* [hokkien, "studious boy"] …
>
> "So what? Big deal, lah!"
>
> "No, he never say anything … he never boast … but I just feel he don't really understand me. His friends all very different from us." (Shiau 1999: 159)

Yet May can interact and converse with Wing's mother, and although their cultural differences (and the death of May's brother) get in the way of their relationship, at the end of the novel there is still hope for their future relationship where there is none with Chloe. If language and communication are crucial touchstones of identity and likely fulfillment in Shiau's novel, then (like the Talking Cock project, but in more serious vein) there seems to be a clear advocacy of an "authentic" (i.e. unpretentious and unaspiring) middle-ground where Mandarin, Singlish and Hokkien meet, and which is spatially symbolized by the HDB estate. Yet as with the case of Talking Cock and its creator, too, Shiau's novelistic vision is at some odds with his own socio-economic position and cultural-linguistic register, and seems both wishful as well as self-conscious. Shiau's romance (albeit a severely qualified one) of "authentic" Singlish-centred happiness certainly repudiates the uncomplicatedly pragmatic Anglocentricism of the government's language policy, but also struggles to articulate the future of Wing and May, and the socio-economic and cultural-linguistic register they represent. As Wing's closing thought puts it, "Nothing had changed, and probably nothing would" – a sentiment which, if ambivalent, nevertheless suggests something of the uncertain prospects of a social grouping so strongly dependent on linguistic mixing, making do, and inexpressive communal meanings (Shiau 1999: 221).

Similar scenes of self-consciousness about and symbolic repudiations (or at least qualifications) of assured Anglophone and cosmopolitan identities are played out in the writings of Colin Cheong, Alfian Sa'at, to a certain extent in Hwee Hwee Tan, and others. The protagonist Chiah Deng in Hwee Hwee Tan's *Mammon Inc* probably reveals this Anglophone self-consciousness and self-loathing in the most outright manner. The Oxford-educated and essentially-deracinated Chiah Deng, who comes from a characteristically heartland and Singlish-speaking family, must undergo tests which will reveal and underscore the cultural binary within her, in order to get a job with the diabolically powerful firm of Mammon Inc. After tutoring her "*ah lian*" sister (who liberally uses Hokkien words like "*cheem*" to mark her separation from her sister) to the best of both their abilities, and watching her trying to fit into Oxford society, Chiah Deng concludes:

> Watching the Test was like seeing both sides of my soul act out against each other. It was like my soul was divorced, East from West. Cause: irreconcilable differences. I didn't realize this until I saw it on stage, but for the first time, I could see how much contempt my Western side had for my Eastern side. I felt guilty, hating myself for hating myself. (Tan 2002: 197)

Chiah Deng is considerably more frank about the self-loathing and guilt that the elite Anglophone part of her feels about her common Singaporean background and origins, and also more unapologetically Anglophile, than Goh's and Shiau's fictional constructs. Yet, as with Goh and Shiau, there is more than a little of the Oxford-educated Tan in her character, and a playing out of similar linguistic and cultural anxieties of Singaporeanness. In the final analysis, the deracinated Chiah Deng is left only with the prospect of a future amongst her own "tribe" of a similarly "smart and hip international set" – a novelistic device which is no more wishful than the romance of authenticity Shiau offers or the assumption of an earthy authenticity Goh constructs, and (like the other projects) as uncertain of its real and stable locus and positioning (Tan 2002: 274).

Conclusion: Linguistic space, dislocation, and the nation state

The anxieties of the national space within Singapore's ambitions of global connectedness and competitiveness are by now fairly evident, and have been discussed elsewhere (including at length in my own work – see Robbie Goh 2005). What the present essay hopes to have shown is the way in which language – both linguistic praxis, as well as the socio-cultural positioning and connotations of language choices – crucially functions as one dimension of the construction and contestation of that national space. The Singapore government's concern about the cultural contestations of Singapore space arguably intensified from the late 1990s onwards, and was marked by a seminal National Day Speech delivered in

1999 by then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. That speech, which expressed the government desideratum to develop Singapore into a "first-world economy" but also a "world-class home", set the tone for a dualistic project that was both outward-looking (including getting Singaporeans to "speak good English" in order to "communicate with the world") and inward-looking (trying to foster social "bonding", "cohesion" and "unity" and ensure that Singapore was a "fun place to live" in; Goh 1999). In that same speech, Goh made the much-debated and now-famous distinction between "cosmopolitan" and "heartlander" Singaporeans, which (together with the distinction between "quitters" and "stayers" that he made in a speech three years later) became the two spatial-cultural poles of Singapore's globalization strategy (Chok Tong Goh 2002: H3). "Cosmopolitans" who "speak English but are bilingual" can "work and be comfortable anywhere in the world", whereas "heartlanders … speak Singlish" and have skills which "are not marketable beyond Singapore" (Chok Tong Goh 1999). Goh stresses that both are important to Singapore, the former in international competitive terms, the latter in terms of Singapore's "core values and social stability". Together with skills, it is language which plays a large part in this distinction. However, as Goh's 2002 dichotomy between "quitters" and "stayers" reveals, the outward-orientation of Singaporean "cosmopolitans" (and, for that matter, the "foreign talent" that Singapore actively recruits) is clearly fraught with anxieties, about the possible multiple allegiances and diluted loyalties which come precisely with "cosmopolitan" status. In contrast, by implication heartlanders with their limited opportunities as well as their cultural-linguistic alignment with a "core" Singaporean culture, are more likely to stay put and continue to reinforce that "core" culture and associated values.

Singapore's English-language policy is thus pursued in such a climate and with full awareness of the double-edged nature of high Anglophone competence and the academic and professional elitism that often accompanies it. What is perhaps less obvious is the relative position of non-English based cultural identities in Singapore, and the spatial implications therein. Not a single "core" position, not a simple "authentic" cultural-linguistic praxis, the non-English socio-cultural component of Singapore is divided generationally (with an older-dialectal and younger-Mandarin or English groupings), linguistically (between at least Mandarin and the dialects, but also between mutually-incomprehensible dialects such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew and Hakka), and socio-economically (between Mandarin elites and Singlish- and Hokkien-speaking individuals of lower educational status, between Singaporean Mandarin and the distinct accents and vocabularies of China-born foreign workers, professionals and students in Singapore). Factor in the issues of Malay- and Tamil-speaking Singaporeans, and some of the fragmentary forces at work there (the relationship between these speakers and the English- or Mandarin-speaking elites, between these and dialect speakers, and even the relationship between Tamil speakers and the significant Malayalam-speaking Singapore community or the increasing Hindi-speaking North Indian expatriate group in Singapore), and the cultural politics of language in Singapore becomes much more complex and potentially problematic in an age of global competition and transnational movement.

While there seems to be little room to contest the pragmatism of privileging English as a driver of Singapore's international and global ambitions (even acknowledging the anxieties of deracination and spatial-cultural dispersion this may also foster), what perhaps needs far more work in terms of policy-formulation and scholarship is the multi-faceted impact of this cultural politics of English on an increasingly fissiparous and fragile (rather than stable or consolidating) Singaporean identity apart from that standard Englishness. Among other things, what needs to be studied includes issues of linguistic heritage (along the lines of architectural heritage, and the kinds of opportunity costs the selective preservation of that heritage entails), the demoralizing effect of Anglophone elitism and what might be done to ameliorate it, the parameters of the relationship between linguistic praxis/belonging and spatial-national belonging, and other crucial related matters.

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CHAPTER 8

The encroachment of English in Malaysian cultural expression

Ismail S. Talib

Malay is the national language of Malaysia. As such, there have been various policies and rules implemented to ensure that it is a dominant and widely used language in the country. However, its position and integrity have been pressured by the former colonial language, English. This chapter gives some examples of how English has permeated Malay cultural expression in literature, film and in the language of songs, and the various reactions to this, both positive and negative. Although the integrity of the language might be affected by excessive use of English words or phrases, some borrowings from English might be useful, especially if there are no equivalent words in Malay. While the dividing lines between practicality and linguistic integrity, and between aesthetic independence and the dilution of culture, may not always be clear, there are some examples, as discussed in this chapter, which could have resulted in a more moderate response.

Malay was adopted as the sole national language of Malaysia upon the country's independence in 1957. It was the language of the main indigenous community in the country. A version of the language had been adopted in Indonesia as the national language of the country. In Malaysia, there was no serious contender to the position of the language, quite unlike in Indonesia, which had more indigenous speakers of Javanese than Malay or its dialects, although even there, the position of a variety of Malay as the national language was not seriously questioned (Sneddon 2003). Thus in Malaysia, with Indonesia as a regional precedent, virtually all parties who had fought or argued for the independence of Malaysia, including non-Malay nationalists, accepted Malay as the national language. Debates on language in Malaysia usually centred on the educational emphases on the other languages of Malaysia, the linking or de-linking of Bahasa Malaysia from the Malays as an ethnic group, and whether Malay should be the sole language of instruction in schools (Gould 1969; Weinstein 1990; Cheah 2002; Tan 2005), but there was no serious sustained debate on the position of Malay itself as the national language.

Nevertheless, it was felt that the position of Malay in Malaysia had to be protected through various acts and policies.

Among the acts that protect the status of Malay as the national language is the seditions act, which makes it a punishable offence for anyone to question the status of the language as the country's national language. In spite of the vagueness of what constitutes an offence here, the act continues to prevail in Malaysia's legal system today. There have also been various other steps taken to ensure not only the preservation, but also the practical elevation of the status of the Malay language in Malaysia. I will be discussing one of these – the attempt to ban English words in Malay songs – later in my essay.

Historically, the National Language Act which placed Malay as the national language, was implemented in 1967. However, after the racial riots of 1969, this proved to be insufficient, and there was an apparent urgency to elevate the status of Malay (Kaplan and Baldauf 2003). From 1969 to 1983, the Malay-first policy in schools was adopted, to ensure that the language eventually became the medium of instruction in all schools by 1983. In 1971, the first school was converted from the English stream to full Malay stream, and by 1983, Malay became the main medium of instruction in all schools. It can be noted that it was the English-stream schools which were more thoroughly affected than the schools in other language streams. Although the Chinese and Indian schools had to make some changes to accommodate the teaching of Malay, their change was not as comprehensive. There were several reasons for this.

As pointed out by Asmah Haji Omar, the English-medium schools could be changed drastically, if gradually, by wholly converting them to Malay-medium schools, because English was not associated with any of the major ethnic groups (2007: 353). But another reason which should be highlighted is the importance of English. It was important as a colonial language in the earlier part of Malaysia's history, and hence had a dominant educational, administrative and legal position in the national life of the country. It continued to be important after that as the language of science, technology, commerce, industrial development and globalization. But the importance of English did not remain only at the practical level. It also encroached on the cultural life of Malaysians, and was perceived as posing a threat to the Malay language not only in competing with it, but also by influencing the Malay lexicon and the idiomatic usage of the language. Hence, if there was any one language that could practically threaten the position of Malay, it was English. The almost total association of Mandarin Chinese and Tamil with their respective communities meant than these languages were of less concern at the national level. The same can be said about the other indigenous languages, such as the dominant dialects of Iban and Kadazan which were used in schools.

The importance of English led to the perception that it was competing with Malay not only in practical importance, but also in status. The emotional anti-colonial thrust of the Malay nationalism of Malaysia's early history certainly found a formidable antagonist in the English language. During Malaysia's early history, gangs of youth who were undoubtedly allied to the main Malay political party in Malaysia, were known to have daubed English road signs with red paint (Gould 1969). English would have been an easy adversary of course, if its importance was largely symbolic, and strongly or exclusively linked to the imposition of political power. But this was not the case.

The contrast with the post-colonial situation in Indonesia, of course, could not have been more striking. Unlike the colonial importance of English and its continued post-colonial importance in Malaysia, the importance of Dutch was closely tied to the political power of the Dutch colonial administration, and its status was significantly reduced after independence (Groeneboer and Scholz 1998).

As a contrast, the post-colonial attempt to destroy the continued significance of an erstwhile colonial language was not wholly successful in Malaysia. This was because the importance of the language was not merely symbolically linked to the power of the colonial administration, but was correlated to its practical importance, vocational usefulness and global reach. To add to these, English was also culturally significant and pervasive, and did not merely compete with Malay, but had an influence on the language itself, enlarging its vocabulary. The English language also had more insidious and perhaps more controversial and less acceptable influences on the morphology and syntax of Malay, and on its idiomatic usage. These influences will be briefly discussed later in this essay. Dutch did not have the kind of global practicality and the cultural and linguistic pervasiveness that English had and continues to have.

Given the importance of English, the nationalist attempt to reduce its importance comes with a price. The peculiar upshot of pro-Malay nationalism is that it was the indigenous Malays themselves, which the nationalist thrust was supposed to protect, who were the ones who had to pay the costliest price. Although the rise of the importance of Malay in the national sphere must have gladdened some Malay nationalists in the earlier development of Malaysia, it resulted in the de-emphasizing of English, which in turn resulted in the lowering of the proficiency in the language, especially among Malay students. In this regard, the attempt to increase the importance and usefulness of Malay might have indeed been successful with the Malay students, whose competence in English concomitantly declined. The sustained decline in the proficiency in English of Malay students resulted in the recent drive to make students study mathematics and science in English, so as to increase their proficiency in English.

In spite of the obvious threat of the English language to the status and pervasive usage of Malay, some people believe that English could co-exist with Malay in Malaysia without competing for dominance, or, what is perhaps more important, the perception that it is not in serious competition with Malay (Macvay 2004). But even if one is supportive of this belief, it must be remembered that languages seldom co-exist by maintaining a distance from each other and by respecting the autonomy of the other languages. Some influence or interference of one language on the other is bound to occur. This situation gives rise to the negative perception of the importance of one language over the other, which is naturally the case with the global reach of English over the more regional spread of Malay.

The negative perception of the dominance of one language over another is of course a problem in all bilingual or multilingual countries. It is a problem, for example, in Belgium, where occasional linguistic conflicts arise, in spite of the sanctioned equal importance of French and Flemish; and in Canada's Quebec province, a similar problem is found with regard to English and French (Nelde 1998). Multilingual Malaysia is certainly not an exception here, and there is the added sensitivity of a colonial language which continues to exert not only its practical value, but also its cultural might on Malay language and culture in the post-colonial era.

Linguistically, there was a negative reaction to the interference of English on Malay, or what was perceived to be the unnecessary mixture of English and Malay when Malay was the base language. Objections to such practices are not merely political: when it comes to works of cultural expression, aesthetic factors, instead of merely political ones, do play a part.

There are various reasons for engaging in code-mixing, as any student of sociolinguistics will know. The political domination of one linguistic culture on another, or the political submission of one to the other, is not always a reliable or complete prognostics for any evidence of code-mixing. A user of a language may want to code-mix for *accommodation*, which is the desire to adjust to a linguistic situation so that one is not perceived as a stranger or as an arrogant participant. Code-mixing may be done for *rhetorical purposes*, which may be seen not only in situations where it is more effective to resort to English, but also in some examples of artistic expression, especially in popular culture. Or it may be done for the purpose of *repair*, which occurs when one is not proficient in Malay, and keeps including English words or syntactic inclinations in one's use of Malay. I will be discussing some of the impetus for code-mixing later in this essay.

Nor does this exhaust the various reasons for code-mixing. Indeed the layman may have one or two more reasons which the typical sociolinguist may not be able, or may not want, to discuss. For example, one resorts to another language because the other language has (or is perceived to have) more precise or appropriate words or expressions, given the situation, than the base language. Or the borrowed word may be less vulgar than the corresponding words or phrases in the language. For these – although some would argue that the resort to code-mixing or borrowing is for rhetorical purposes – I have no better example than the title of one of Shahnon Ahmad's novels (1999).

As a writer, Shahnon is not only conversant with modern Malay, but has some understanding of the other languages that give rise to the modern language today, such as Arabic, Sanskrit and Javanese, apart from English. So he is certainly aware that there is no other word that could describe the situation and the character of the then Prime Minister of Malaysia better than a particular English word. To anyone who doubts that he was referring to Mahathir, the unsubtle full title of the novel allows for no other possibilities: *SHIT@Pukimak@PM (Novel Politik Yang Busuk Lagi Membusukkan)*. The parenthetical phrase can be translated as "a political novel that smells and gives a stink". Academic politeness forbids me from translating "*pukimak*". To any user of Malay, it is a terrible word, which cannot be used in polite company. Before the publication of this book, those who knew nothing about literature (and there are many in Malaysia) saw it as a word that they believed should not be used in literature, or the high literature that Shahnon is well known. Maybe I should mention here that although the word is originally two words, it is often spelt as one word in contemporary Malay orthography, and coincidentally, the two words actually have the same acronym as the term for prime minister in Malay: *perdana menteri*. The association, indeed, suits Shahnon's purpose very well. The addition of "shit" indicates that "*pukimak*" is not enough in his appraisal of Mahathir as prime minister, although it is the Malay word which is certainly the more obscene. As Khoo Boo Teik (2002) has pointed out,

> In the lexicon of the novel, 'shit' (*taik*) is arguably the least offensive term, at any rate for squeamish readers. The most offensive word, though perhaps deliciously apt to other readers, is *PukiMak*. To me, *pukimak* was an expletive that needed to be used, but shit was what gave the work its substance, as the novel is basically an allegory about the politics of turds (especially those which refuse to retire), and the Malay equivalents of the word merely line up other expletives, and may detract from what the novel is about.

Although I have cautioned that we must be careful about overtly political interpretations of code-mixing, or in this case, of borrowing, there is no doubt about the blatant political thrust of Shahnon's use of the English word. Incidentally, Shahnon himself is a member of the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, which is better known today by its Malay acronym of PAS. He was elected to the parliamentary seat of Sik after the publication of his novel, which incidentally, was an instant bestseller. However, his political use of the English word in this case could be said to be political in the reverse sense. If code-mixing or borrowing is thought to leave Malay in a subsidiary position to English, Shahnon seems to have done the opposite here, by leaving the political position of the Malay language intact, or slightly more elevated, in spite of his use of the word. As one of the finest writers of the language who became the Malaysian National Laureate in 1984, he certainly knows how to politically protect the Malay language against the onslaught of English, in spite of using English himself.

But Shahnon Ahmad is perhaps an exception. In most other instances of code-mixing, borrowing, or the impact of English syntax, the intrusion of English is viewed in political terms, as a negative intervention with the apparent, implicit or inadvertent aim to lower the status of Malay. Of course, such practice is also viewed in some quarters in linguistic terms – or shall we say, in folk-linguistic terms? – as the attempt to dilute the integrity of Malay or the Malay linguistic system as we know it. Not surprisingly, textbooks of Malay, including those used in schools, have decried the Anglicization of Malay. As a linguist with a postcolonialist bent, I can say that some of the criticisms of the Anglicization of Malay are legitimate, but some alleged Anglicisms are just faulty or unidiomatic usage of Malay, and may have nothing to do with the intrusion of English.

Let us take a look at a recent Malay textbook for secondary school students: Sulaiman, Mashudi and Juliliyana's *Bahasa Melayu: Rujukan Menengah*. It is stated in the book that:

> *Dalam penggunaan rasmi atau dalam situasi formal, bahasa Melayu* (*bahasa kebangsaan* Malaysia) *perlu memperlihatkan bentuk dan gaya yang betul, tepat, ringkas, mudah, santun, tidak keinggerisan yang keterlaluan* (melampau), *di samping perlu menggunakan perkataan atau istilah yang berciri antarabangsa. Semua enam* [sic] *ciri tersebut – betul, tepat, ringkas, mudah, santun, tidak keinggerisan, berciri antarabangsa – boleh diakronimkan menjadi 'betermustika'.* (2007: 43)

The above can be translated as:

> In its official use in formal situations, the Malay language (the national language of Malaysia) must demonstrate form and style that are correct, precise, concise, simple, polite, not too Anglicised (in an extreme way), in addition to using words or phrases that are international in character. All these six [sic; there are actually seven] attributes – correctness, precision, concision, simplicity, politeness, avoidance of Anglicisms, and global reach – can be shortened to the [Malay] acronym '*betermustika*'.

Taking a look again at the passage, one can clearly see that it is not free from Anglicisms itself, which is evident in the use of these words: *situasi*, formal and *diakronimkan*. I find the neologism *diakronimkan* particularly interesting. Not only is the English noun "acronym" changed into a verb (which is seldom, if ever, done in English for this word), but it is also passivised. The writers are, however, not against Anglicism as a whole. Their use of the language clearly indicates that it cannot be avoided in some cases. It is only what they describe as "extreme" forms of Anglicism that are of concern to them. *Diakronimkan* is perhaps a striking and creative form of indigenization of a word which was originally borrowed from English. In English, as I have indicated, the word "acronym" remains fossilized as a noun, whereas in Malay, not only is it possible to verbify it, but it can also be passivized within the boundary of the word. Another appealing highlight of the passage is of course the *blend betermustika*, which includes the avoidance of extreme Anglicism as one of the principles for the study or improvement of one's proficiency in Malay. Anglicism is of course a perennial problem in the development of modern Malay. But what is noteworthy is its inclusion as an additional guideline among the other general guidelines for language learning that can be found in other language learning textbooks, including those for other languages, such as correctness, precision, concision, simplicity and politeness.

The writers of *Bahasa Melayu: Rujukan Menengah* attribute extreme Anglicisms to one-to-one translation from English or translation according to the meanings given in dictionaries. Here are some of the examples given in their book (Sulaiman, Mashudi and Juliliyana 2007: 121):

What is read or heard	**What should be the case**
Di bawah pengawasan ibu bapa (*under*)	Dalam pengawasan ibu bapa
Kedua-dua negara (*both*)	dua negara
Kedua-dua mereka (*both of them*)	Mereka berdua
Hukuman denda atau penjara, atau	kedua-duanya sekali … atau kesemuanya
Merujuk kepada (*refer to/with reference to*) merujuk (*to)*	"kepada" digugurkan
Di bawah seksyen… (*under*)	Dalam seksyen…
Peraturan di bawah Akta Rasmi	…dalam Akta Rasmi…
Semua sekolah di bawah Kementerian	…dalam Kementerian Pelajaran
Terima kasih di atas…	terima kasih kerana…/terima kasih terhadap…
Tidak memiliki sebarang (*any*) dokumen	tidak memiliki dokumen
Perkara itu telah dibincangkan (*was/has/had)*	…perkara itu dibincangkan *been*)
Dia telah dilahirkan pada… (*was*)	dia dilahirkan pada …

The examples of what the authors call "*keinggerisan yang keterlaluan*" or extreme Anglicisms, are not examples of code-mixing or lexical borrowing. They are not even clear examples of syntactic interference from English, except for the last two examples, where there are apparent attempts to directly transfer auxiliary verb forms in English into Malay. The problem here is the idiomatic usage of English versus the idiomatic usage of Malay, and the failure to see that some examples of the former cannot be directly transferred, word for word, into the latter. Indeed, the problem may not always lie with word-for-word transfer, but the transfer of a single preposition or particle from English to Malay, which idiomatically does not work in the same way in Malay.

As we can see above, the influence of English on Malay may be quite subtle, and may not even involve the explicit intrusion of English lexical items into Malay. There are further examples of allegedly extreme Anglicisms involving auxiliary verbs, such as the attempt to transfer the so-called future tense markers in English into Malay, such as "*Yulis akan dating petang ini*" (Sulaiman, Mashudi and Juliliyana 2007: 122). To the authors of the textbook, this is faulty, as "*akan*" is redundant once a time adverbial is located elsewhere in the sentence, and the sentence should be written as "*Yulis datang petang ini*". The authors are also of the view that "*akan*" is rather vague, and should be substituted with more precise lexical items such as "*dijangka*", "*bakal*", "*mungkin*", or "*boleh*". The English "will" is a more general-purpose lexical item when contrasted to the more restrictive usage of "*akan*" in Malay, thus again, disallowing an easy transfer between the languages. On the other hand, the Malay relative clause conjunction "*yang*" seems to have a wider function than the English relative clause conjunctions "which" and "that". This is partly due to the lack or more limited usage of other wh relative clause conjunctions in Malay. For example, "*Banyak aktiviti dilakukan yang mana* (*where*) *melibatkan pelajar*" is actually faulty as "*yang*" should be used instead of "*yang mana*": "*Banyak aktiviti dilakukan yang melibatkan pelajar*". Likewise, "*Banyak aktiviti dilakukan di mana* (*where*) *melibatkan pelajar*", should also be written as "*Banyak aktiviti dilakukan yang melibatkan pelajar*" (Sulaiman, Mashudi and Juliliyana 2007: 122).

As a contrast to the more subtle interference of English on Malay, involving differences in grammar or idiomatic usage, the more obvious intrusion of English, in the form of lexical borrowings, is more liberally allowed. In fact, lexical borrowings are quite frequently used in the contemporary Malay language textbook like Sulaiman, Mashudi and Juliliyana's *Bahasa Melayu: Rujukan Menengah*. These borrowings are not labeled as examples of "extreme Anglicisms".

One would expect a grammar textbook to be relatively objective, at least on the surface, in its recommendations on grammar and usage. But it is clear that, by calling some examples of the intrusion of English into Malay "extreme Anglicisms", the authors of this textbook refuse to adhere to such objectivity. One doubts if these examples are really "extreme". They may seem mildly deviant to some people, but the obvious intrusion of English, especially in the use of the lexicon, is not evident. Moreover, it is likely that at least some of the locutions which are alleged to be examples of extreme Anglicisms in the textbook, are either acceptable in some quarters, or on the way to becoming acceptable to them.

The rather liberal attitude towards the use of English vocabulary, as evident in Sulaiman, Mashudi and Juliliyana's own usage in their textbook, does not mean that the use of English lexical items in Malay has become generally acceptable in Malaysia. On April 17th 2004, the government imposed a ban on Malay songs which contain English words: these songs can no longer be broadcast on state-controlled radio and television. This edict was influenced, it was claimed, by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the Language and Literature Bureau of Malaysia, which was alleged to have criticised the government for allowing English words in Malay songs, as they would "corrupt the national language" (Tan 2004) or, more elaborately, they would "corrupt the 'purity and sanctity' of the Malay language" (Kupusamy 2004). As a consequence of the ban, twelve Malay songs were taken off the airwaves.

Among the songs that were banned were Anita Sarawak's "*Seksis*" and "Diva". The titles of these songs are lexical items that are obviously borrowed from English. The contents of the songs themselves contain English words, such as "lady driver", which could have been expressed in the Malay equivalent. There are also phrases with English words that are idiomatically inappropriate in Malay, such as "*ovasi berdiri*" for "standing ovation". I will be looking at "*Seksis*" again later, to see if lexical items in Malay could meaningfully replace the English words.

The song "*Tipah Tertipu*", which was rapped by the group Ruffedge, was also banned. Although, as in the case of the two Anita Sarawak songs, no reasons were officially given, many people believed that in the song, the words "body" in "*Tuan punya* body" and "problem" in "*Bila* problem *dah menggunung*", among other instances, contributed to its proscription ("RTM Ban on Songs Only As a Last Resort" 2004). Later in this essay, we will see if the use of English in "*Tipah Tertipu*" is indeed prevalent, and whether the use of English in the song is of concern, and if this concern could, or should, be politicised.

The ban on these songs was met with howls of protest from artists, who called the ban "stupid, impractical and unfair" and called for a review (Kupusamy 2004). The deputy president of the Malaysian Artistes Association (*Karyawan*), Freddie Fernandez, described the move as "harsh" and did not see anything wrong with the songs that were banned ("Language expert, Karyawan not in favour of RTM ban" 2004).

Even a language expert from the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, no less, criticised the move. The linguist Johan Jaaffar, who sat on Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka's board of directors, said "I don't see any wisdom in this move. Most Malaysians speak with a combination of languages in their daily conversation". He also could not see how the mixing of English lexical items in Malay songs could be detrimental to the Malay language, as songs serve an artistic or entertainment purpose. To Johan, "mixed lyrics are purely for entertainment purposes" ("Language Expert, Karyawan Not In Favour of RTM Ban" 2004).

It is significant that Johan sat on the directorship of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, as this casts doubts on the bureau's supposedly purist stance on the use of English words in Malay songs – that the English words supposedly "corrupt the 'purity and sanctity' of the Malay language". One suspects that the purist stance might not have represented the view of the Dewan Bahasa as a whole, but only of some of its members. Perhaps, there is no truth in its alleged criticism of the government for allowing Malay songs that incorporate English words, and that, indeed, we are dealing with a politician's interpretation of what he thought should be the Dewan's stand on this matter.

After the criticisms from artists and academics, the government had to engage in damage control. In a way, this is an illustration of Kuo and Jernudd's contention (1993) that language planning may not always be effective in the face of resistant micro-sociolinguistic issues. But there are personal or managerial issues involved in this case. It was quite clear, for example, that the ban was initiated by or at least associated with the Deputy Information Minister at that time, Zainuddin Maidin, and that the Information Minister himself, Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, was not initially aware of it and was probably against the ban. However, since the ban had already been imposed, he, as the Minister, could not be seen to be too critical of it, lest he be viewed as not being in full control of his ministry.

The Deputy Information Minister, Zainuddin, later explained that it was only songs that had "unacceptable" English phrases that were banned (Kuppusamy 2004). However, he did not list the English words and phrases that could be regarded as "unacceptable", nor was it explained why they were "unacceptable". Likewise, the Information Minister Abdul Kadir explained that it was only songs that contained "offensive elements" that needed to be banned, although again, what constituted "offensive elements" was not explained.

In Abdul Kadir's view, songs that do not contain offensive elements should be allowed, as banning is a "last resort and should be avoided" (Nadzri 2004). He explained that his Ministry "would only ban a song after all efforts have been taken to save it" ("RTM Ban on Songs Only As a Last Resort" 2004). The Information Minister himself seemed to be supportive of the view expressed by the language expert from the Dewan Bahasa, Johan Jaafar, when he said that "The mixing of words is common in today's borderless world". Incidentally, what the Minister meant when he said that all efforts had to be taken to save the song before banning it, was not explained. Should the "offensive" English words in the song be deleted, blocked, bleeped, electronically filtered, or censored in some way, so that the song could be "saved"? Or should the effort to "save" songs involve song-writers rewriting their songs by excluding the "offensive" English words to the satisfaction of the appointed official guardians of the Malay language?

An interesting feature of this episode is the retreat from what appeared to be a blanket ban on songs with English words, to only songs with "unacceptable" or "offensive" English words. The ban was apparently difficult to administer, and it was over in less than a month (to be precise, by May 7, 2004, according to Tan 2004). Nevertheless, its practical consequences lingered for a longer period of time.

There is no doubt however – whatever subsequent qualifications are made – that the public broadcasters would have had to treat the initial directive as a blanket ban, as it was not easy to determine which words in English were "unacceptable" or "offensive". It would be easier not to play all Malay songs with English words in them. Saying that only songs that incorporate obscene English words or expressions should be banned would not lead to a solution of the problem – if indeed there was a problem – of the maintenance of the linguistic standards of Malay. Some songs that are guilty of what I have called the inappropriateness of idiomatic transfer when using English words in a Malay linguistic context would still be there. If songs with "offensive" English words are banned, shouldn't songs with inappropriate idiomatic transfer or what the textbook writers call "extreme Anglicisms" also be banned? "*Ovasi berdiri*", for example, may qualify as "*keinggerisan yang keterlaluan*", or a phrase that does not transfer idiomatically, but it certainly does not qualify as obscene.

Another noteworthy feature of the episode is how the proficiency in English of the major players in government may affect language planning policies or actions. I noted earlier that there was a difference in opinion between the Deputy Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin, and the Information Minister Abdul Kadir Fadzir: the Information Minister had a more favourable attitude towards the use of English words in Malay songs and in Malay in general. His favorable attitude may be a reflection of his greater proficiency in the language. Zainuddin's weaker command of the language was clearly illustrated in a viral Internet video clip of an on-the-spot interview with Aljazeera Television during the BERSIH protests for electoral reform in Kuala Lumpur in 2007. With the banning of songs with English words in mind, the flamboyant Abdul Kadir found nothing wrong, for example, with the English phrase "I love you", which he regarded as "truly eternal" when used in Malay (Kuppusamy 2004). In spite of his more liberal attitude towards the use of English in Malay texts, the recommendation that Malay songs with English words should not be broadcast had already been made. So he had to play along with what had been decided as a *fait accompli*.

It is clear that the more traditional form of purism, opposing lexical borrowing or mixing from English, is still prevalent in Malaysia. The more subtle form, which involves non-lexical interferences from English that are unidiomatic or grammatically odd in Malay, is of course gaining ground, and as we have seen, may also be discussed in Malay textbooks. However, one is perhaps more reluctant to describe the objection to the idiomatic interference of English on Malay as an example of purism, because there are instances where the intrusion of unidiomatic Anglicised expressions certainly sounds odd to most speakers of Malay.

With purism and lexical code-mixing in mind – and with Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir's fondness for the English phrase "I love you" in the background – it is perhaps appropriate at this point to look at a classic instance of lexical code-mixing in a Malay song. The song is found in the 1953 film *Hujan Panas*. In this regard, I should mention that the influence on the Malay language of Malay cinema – especially the films produced in the fifties and sixties – and the many songs contained within them, should not be underestimated. Among the personalities involved in the discussions on the modernization of the Malay language, was the director and actor S. Roomai Noor (Harper 2001), who stated his belief, even before independence, that Malay films had an important role to play in the establishment and development of Malay as a national language (Roomai Noor 1987).

The song from *Hujan Panas* is titled "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" (or "*Dengar Cerita*", Zakiah 1990: 18). It should be mentioned that the song still remains as one of the best examples of code-mixing in a song in the language. The evaluative factor, and not historical precedence, is the main reason for choosing the song, as there were songs, dating back to the 1930s, which had code-mixing in them (Tan 2004). Popularity is another reason for choosing the song, as most of the songs with code-mixing in the 1930s and 1940s are now forgotten. "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" is sung in the film by Roomai Noor's contemporary, the legendary Malay moviemaker, singer and composer, P. Ramlee. Ramlee himself was the composer of the song, and he co-wrote the lyrics with Jamil Sulong. The song is reproduced below; instances of English words or phrases are underlined (italics indicate lines that are spoken instead of sung by Ramlee):

DENGAR INI CERITA!

Mari-mari tuan dengar ini cerita
Perempuan sangat mudah cemburu buta
Kalau lakinya orang muda
Dia so jealous, tidak percaya

You know apa yang jadi pada suatu hari
I perang besar you see!
Tapi baik juga, sudah hilang bengkak
Benjolnya dekat sini you sudah tak nampak!

Perempuan ini dia tak mahu periksa lebih dulu
Dia mahu pukul saja. Dia mahu marah.
Cuba tuan-tuan dengar; saya mahu cerita sekarang ini.

Kantor saya ada seorang secretary
Potongan badannya [whistle]… namanya 'Mary'
Halus kulitnya macam apple
Salah pandang macam Betty Grable…

Dia mengajak saya pergi makan angin
You know, she wants to 'romance'
I tanya 'Ke mana?'
She said 'Kebun bunga'
Ini chance baik I said 'Ok, Senorita!'

Bukan saya mahu pergi, dia yang panggil saya
Tapi mengapa bini saya marah?
Nanti saya cerita lagi kepada tuan-tuan semua

Tiba di sana si nona mula-lah posing
She makes badan I sejuk
Terus I shivering
She said 'Don't be afraid my darling'
Saya jawab: 'Oh! This is so thrilling!'

Kita pun pergi duduk dekat satu bangku
And then she said 'I love you!'
So then what did I do? I think you pun tahu…
Sudah tentu I kiss the girl bertalu-talu!

Bukan saya yang ajak dia, dia yang ajak saya!

Saya balik ke rumah cukup senang hati
Tapi my wife terpandang lipstick on my pipi
Dia menerkam dan menggigit,
Saya tak malu, terus menjerit!

Periuk belanga terbang melayang-layang
Menghentam my belakang!
I would like to tanya
Kalau you yang kena
Wife you juga cemburu jadi what will you do?
Wife you juga cemburu jadi what will you do?[1]

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1. As an understanding of the situation is important for us to appreciate why code-mixing arises in the song, a translation is provided below.

LISTEN TO THIS STORY!

Gentlemen, come listen to this story.
Women, you know, get easily and blindly jealous.
If their husbands are young,
They become suspicious and do not believe them!

As we can see, P. Ramlee's "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" has a large dose of English words, and seems to indulge in English code-mixing in Malay with evident relish. What is also quite clear is that this song falls in line with what is known as *lagu jenaka*

Do you know what happened to me one day?
I was involved in a big battle, you know!
But it's good that the swelling has gone,
And the bump on my head can no longer be seen.

Women do not want to probe beforehand:
They just want to hit you and to lose their temper…
Now keep listening to my story…

There's a secretary in my office
Her body shape is [whistle]… her name is 'Mary'
Her skin is smooth like an apple
A misglance would make you think that she's Betty Grable!

She asked me to go out with her.
You know, she wanted to be romantic with me.
I asked 'Where shall we go?'
She said 'The botanic gardens'
I won't miss this chance, so I said 'Ok, Senorita!'

Now, it's not me who wanted to go, it was she who invited me…
But why should my wife be angry?
Now gentlemen, I'll carry on with the story…

When we got there, the lady started to get into her act.
She froze my body.
I started to shiver.
She said 'Don't be afraid my darling'.
I replied: 'Oh! This is so thrilling'.

So we went to sit on a bench.
And then she said 'I love you!'.
So what did I do? I think you know what I did…
For sure, I kissed the girl incessantly!

Now it wasn't me who led her on, it was her!

I went home, happy as a lark.
But my wife saw the lipstick marks on my cheek.
She clawed me! She bit me!
I shamelessly screamed!

Pots and pans were flying all over,
Hitting my back!
Now I would like to ask you:
If you were drawn into something similar,
A jealous wife like mine, what would you do?

or humourous song. This is pretty obvious in the film version, in which Ramlee engages in some Chaplinesque antics while singing the song. The *lagu jenaka* has a long tradition in the cultures of Malaysia and Indonesia, and Ramlee is certainly well known for it, having sung such songs in many of his films (Awang Azman and Looi 2005: 4). However, by saying that it is a *lagu jenaka*, one is practically saying that the practice of code-mixing in the song should not be treated too seriously. In fact, the song resorts to code mixing as a humorous tactic, and to a large extent, it succeeds in doing so, although the code-mixing is certainly an accompaniment to the situation found in the main narrative in the song, which is itself humorous.

Thus the code-mixing in "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" certainly does not stand on its own and must be seen in relation to several relevant factors or contexts. Another factor that contextualises the code-mixing in the song is the romantic interest, who is someone who is obviously not a Malay. Hence the persona of the song has to resort to English words because the lady is not really competent in Malay, and the persona also wants to accommodate himself to her, as he is evidently interested in her romantic advances, and hypocritically blames her for making the first moves.

What is clear from the song sung by P. Ramlee is that the comedy does downgrade the significance of the code-mixing, which as I have noted, given the genre of the song, should not be taken too seriously. Let us also go back to Johan Jaafar's comment on the ban on Malay songs with English words – that code mixing in Malay songs serves an entertainment purpose. It clearly serves an entertainment purpose in Ramlee's "*Dengar Ini Cerita*"; the song would be significantly less funny if there was no code-mixing in it. Also, given the moral situation in the song, Ramlee has apparently succeeded in doing what Shahnon Ahmad has done with his novel: the use of English does not downgrade the status of Malay, which is either left alone or it emerges as slightly enhanced.

The moral context, according to Tan Sooi Beng (2004), is important in the tradition of Malaysian songs with code-mixing. In this light, code-mixing could be seen as almost a generic requirement of such songs. This song is certainly not an exception, although what is apparent on the surface is the pretended or false morality of the persona, who tries to shift the blame on his romantic escapade to the woman, accusing her of leading him on, instead of confessing that he is a partner in crime. The *moral* of the song thus seems to be encouraged by the song's generic context, but the *moral* here is not presented upfront, but should be perceived indirectly or contrarily.

But if we look at the moral context of the code-mixing itself – instead of the content of the persona's narrative or any "moral" statements or observations he makes about it – a different picture emerges. The complete use of Malay in a song which depicts immoral behavior may not be helpful to the prestige of the language, at least as far as the song itself is concerned. The use of English seems to suggest that this is not the kind of behaviour that Malays should indulge in. After all, the female character in the song, Mary, is clearly not a Malay, and her lack of fluency in Malay, with English words liberally thrown into her speech, seems to be in keeping with her warped sense of morality.

Finally, this and other Malaysian songs that resort to code-mixing reflect a certain aspect of social and linguistic verisimilitude which monolingual songs may not be able to reflect. It is this verisimilitude which resonates with the songs' audience and which ensures that they will continue to survive, in spite of governmental or other political attempts to discourage them. This is well put by Tan Sooi Beng (2004):

> Zainuddin Maidin's attempt to ban *rojak* songs [i.e. songs with some code-mixing in them] will not be the last time a self-appointed guardian of purity will try to do this. Even if a ban is enforced, there's no way that the *rojak* songs will disappear. This is because they extend beyond ethnic boundaries and can effectively speak of Malaysian reality and concerns. They mediate interethnic communication and challenge ethnicism, which colours too many aspects of our everyday lives. Malaysians appreciate these songs as they enjoy their *rojak*.

On the issue of sociolinguistic verisimilitude, it should be noted that the resort to code-mixing to depict the language of the Malay middle class is also a feature of some Malay novels, such as Khadijah Hashim's *Merpati Putih Masih Terbang Lagi* and Ibrahim Omar's *Desa Pingitan* (mentioned by Hooker 2000).

Our analysis of "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" reveals that it is difficult to over-politicize the use of the code-mixing of English words and phrases in such songs, at least with regard to nationalist politics that places a high premium on the "sanctity and purity" of the Malay language. There is a complex of subtle aesthetic and other contexts in songs and other works in the language arts that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to simplify the politics of language use in terms of the relatively "pure" use of a language – which is regarded as positive –versus an active attempt to code-mix it – which is regarded as negative.

An analysis of Anita Sarawak's song "*Seksis*" will reveal similar problems – that it is problematic to politicize it with a simple surface-level analysis of its use of language. Before we go further, it might be countered that Anita Sarawak was originally from Singapore, and so should not be part of the discussion here. It must be said however, that when it comes to popular and literary Malay cultural expression, the borders of the two countries are porous, and it is often impractical to determine what is Malaysian on the basis of the birth or origin of the practitioner or the artwork. This is of course a principle that applies to cultural expression from other countries as well. For example, some of the major figures of popular and serious French cultural expression in the twentieth century – such as Jacques Brel, Hergé and Jean-Luc Godard – are actually Belgian or Swiss, or, indeed, they may come from a good number of other countries, including, as in the prominent case of Samuel Beckett, from Ireland.

The same principle applies to Malay cultural expression in Malaysia, where artistes or works from Singapore play a prominent part. The film *Hujan Panas*, for example, as the establishing shots at the beginning make clear, is actually located in Singapore. The film was also made there, as was the case with the vast majority of Malay films made before Singapore's independence in 1965. As for popular music, some of the major contemporary figures, apart from Anita Sarawak, such as M. Nasir, Ramli Sarip, and – what is often regarded as the finest Malay hip-hop group today – Ahli Fiqir, are all originally from Singapore. Only M. Nasir has become a Malaysian citizen; Anita Sarawak is actually an American citizen now, although she has said that she will "always be a Singapore girl, born and bred here" (Tan 2000). There is general recognition that the major Malay-language singers and musicians from Singapore should be regarded as part of Malaysian cultural life (Al-Attas 2006), although there have been sporadic objections from quarters with a narrower nationalistic interpretation based on citizenship, in line perhaps with the misguided nationalism of trying to expunge English words from Malay songs.

When one looks at the language of Anita's "*Seksis*", one finds only a few English words: they are definitely fewer than the English words in Ramlee's "*Dengar Ini Cerita*". This is surprising, given the fact that there was an attempt to ban the song for its use of English words. Most of these words appear in the first verse of the song:

> Bila ku bersuara… kau <u>kategorikan</u> sebagai meleter
> Bila kau tercabar… sebelum bertarung pun, ku dah kau singkir
> (Ke)tika di jalanan… cermat ku cuai
> Di <u>stereotaip</u> '<u>lady driver</u>'
> Bila tunjuk pandai… lagakmu hebat
> Mengalahkan seorang <u>profesor</u>

There is only one other English root word used in the rest of the song: "*memonopolikan*". Most of these English loanwords have been used in Malay, especially in academic discourse, and they are certainly neither striking nor unusual. Even the phrase "lady driver" is not unusual, and is definitely used in Malay conversation. Like the title itself, it is virtually untranslatable, as one is referring to a whole spectrum of prejudice that the lexical item activates when it is used in Malay. The translation of "lady driver" to its Malay equivalent would lose all the connotations that the phrase has. Avoiding these loanwords in order to have a purely Malay song with no borrowing from English, also means that the problems associated with these words cannot be succinctly talked about or even mentioned in the song, and one must resort to circumlocutory phrases or sentences that erode the sharpness of the criticism in the song, and are, anyway, best avoided in the language of song.

The song would also lose the sociolinguistic verisimilitude that it has with the retention of the words. In fact, the language of "*Seksis*" resembles that of a Malay woman with probably college-level education: *kategorikan*, *stereotaip*, *profesor* and *memonopolikan* are clearly words that she has used or has been exposed to at college. The addressee of the song is also probably a man or men with college-level education, who would hence understand what she was driving at, but who probably had not benefited from their higher education by harbouring prejudicial attitudes towards women.

Ruffedge's "*Tipah Tertipu*" begins with an English phrase, "Here the drama gets wicked". But this is not spoken by a member of the group. but by a little girl with an American accent. In fact, the phrase seems to be quite extraneous to the piece, and could have been deleted. Most of the English words or phrases, as in "*Seksis*", occur in one particular verse:

> Ey..ey dah bingit ni menangisi
> Derita ditanggung sendiri
> Apa dicari, mengapa kau salahkan Ali? (mengapa?)
> Seronok sendiri, tak kira malam pagi (just for you baby);
> Jangan tangisi derita yang kau cari sendiri
> Ma you da best dada, I'm the best papa
> Ma you hilang semua, papa sama saja
> Ikut penangan jiwa sendiri
> kan bertanya
> Bila masa cinta berputik dipinggiran dia

Two other words occur elsewhere. An English word can be found in an earlier verse ("*bila problem dah menggunung*"), and another can be found in the final verse:

> Tipah, selamat hari jadi.... kau sudah kena
> Kena tipu lagi, takde sape yang boleh tolong
> Melainkan tuan punya body.

As in "*Seksis*", one is surprised by the relatively few English words in "*Tipah Tertipu*". One would certainly expect more English words from a piece which was supposed to be banned for its use of English, and which, moreover is an example of hip hop, in which some use of English could be expected. In a 225-word piece, there are only 19 words in English in "*Tipah Tertipu*" (I exclude words such as "*emosi*" and "*taktik*" as they are very much part of the Malay language today and cannot today be regarded as lexical items that are code-mixed into Malay). So only

8% of the words in the piece are English words. Ramlee's "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" has a much higher percentage. If we look at the song itself (excluding the character's spoken commentaries on the song, which could be regarded as lying outside the boundary of the song proper), 36% of the words in "*Dengar Ini Cerita*" are English words. So what is the problem with the use of English in "*Tipah Tertipu*"?

If there is any problem with the use of English in "*Tipah Tertipu*", it does not lie with the mere use of English, but with whether the English words have been meaningfully included in the piece. I have said that the opening phrase seems to be extraneous to the song. The same can in fact be said about the use of English in other parts of the piece. For example "just for you baby" does not seem to fit into the narrative that the rap is trying to convey. The same can be said about "ma" and "papa": they did not appear earlier in the song, and one is confused when they suddenly appear in the English phrases used. Similarly, the word "body" at the end: what does it mean? No one can help Tipah but the gentleman's "body"? Why? How?

One suspects that Ruffedge use English in their song as a sprinkling device. They obviously feel that they ought to include some English words into their piece because that is what one should do in hip hop. But the sprinkling of words should be done meaningfully, and I do not think that Ruffedge has succeeded here. Their piece could be criticised at the level of semantics and aesthetics, but not at the political level, where the mere use of English might result in the banning of the song from the airwaves.

The analyses of the Anita Sarawak and Ruffedge songs reveal that English is used to a lesser extent than in the P. Ramlee classic, which is, surprisingly perhaps, less generally offensive to the purists, in spite of its extensive use of English. I have pointed out the political, historical and educational contexts for the use of English and attitudes towards it in Malaysia at the beginning of the essay. How Anglicisms are perceived in a contemporary textbook of the Malay language is also helpful in giving us a grasp of how the influence of English on Malay is viewed today. These attitudes towards the intrusion of English in Malay are important for the understanding of criticism of the use of English in some popular Malaysian art works. I have concentrated on songs in my essay, and dealt briefly with literature, but the same can be said about the use of English in Malay cinema or Malay television drama, which may need another essay or two to discuss adequately. The use of English in Malay art works is a complex phenomenon which must take relevant aesthetic and sociolinguistic factors into consideration. Political attacks on the use of English in them will falter if they fail to take this complexity into account.

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CHAPTER 9

"They think speaking in English isn't good, you know"

Negotiating bilingual identities in the Malay community

Joanne Rajadurai

If language policies offer insights into a country's national and cultural identity, Malaysia portrays a conflicted self. While the official stand is that English competence is highly valued and encouraged, this public discourse does not always accord with or prevail against deep-seated suspicions and hostilities that the language arouses in certain segments of the community. In an examination of the complex politics of English in Malaysia, this essay focuses on the schisms between state ideology, community practices and daily experiences of learners who seek to live and function in contested spaces. Bringing together micro and macro perspectives, it examines the reflective journal writings of Malay students engaged in the linguistic practice of English. By drawing on constructivism to theorize and examine the data, the analysis shows how the use of English in what is deemed 'Malay spaces' problematizes English, unwittingly positions it as the 'linguistic other' and implicates political, ideological and identity struggles.

Malaysia typically describes itself as a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual country. How do these official discourses and narratives of identity play out in everyday social realities and cultural practices on the ground? This essay explores the disjunction between statal narratives and linguistic practices in Malaysia. It does so by investigating the learning path of those who pursue competence in English as a second language and thus lay claim to a bilingual identity. As a lecturer in a TESL program that trains Malay students to become proficient users and subsequently teachers of English, I had often been privy to my students' struggles. I had been allowed to enter into the inner world of their feelings, often of distress and despair at not being able to use English in their home or L1 communities, not daring to venture into English-speaking domains, and not being accepted as legitimate members of the English-speaking community in Malaysia. There is a need to investigate and critically examine the learning paths of these learners and users of a second language as they move beyond the boundaries of the classroom to their various communities.

This research stems from the recognition of the complex, socio-political landscape of Malaysia, the global position of English, the growing demand for proficiency in the language, and the need to inquire into how the identity of local speakers of English is constituted in daily social interactions. The essay, therefore, describes the macro perspective to provide an understanding of the position and function of English in the country and then explores the micro perspective through the voices of learners. In an examination of the politics of English in Malaysia, it focuses on the schisms between state ideology, community practices and daily experiences of learners who seek to live and function in contested spaces.

Specifically, the central aim of this research was to investigate and understand the relationship between Malay speakers of English in multi-ethnic Malaysia and their communities. The basic questions that guided this inquiry are: where and how do learners locate themselves within their respective communities, and how do these relate to their negotiated and emerging identities? This entailed a study of the ideologies and practices of their communities as well as an examination of how these learners negotiate access to English, respond to the opportunities and conflicts encountered, and strive to construct a new identity as bilingual speakers of Malay (or *Bahasa Malaysia*, hereafter BM) and English. Narrative accounts by participants in this study, generated through student journals and focus group discussions, were used to explore these issues. Inevitably, the research underscores the politics of English in Malaysia: how it is learnt, used, appropriated, resisted and reconstructed.

To organise this essay, I will first situate my enquiry in a constructivist framework and then describe the macro-sociolinguistic setting in Malaysia. Following this, I briefly discuss the multiple case studies undertaken, the participants involved, and how data were collected and analysed. In seeking to understand the learners' stories of L2 use, the analysis emphasises the learners' perspective, while the discussion section draws on both the outsider's and insider's perspectives, thus triangulating the various viewpoints. The essay ends with some consideration of the complexity of the socio-historic milieu of the Malay community and how this impacts their linguistic practices and ideologies.

Language and identity: Theory and practice

From a constructivist perspective, learners are seen as unique, complex and multidimensional, seeking and creating meaning in the course of their interaction with their physical, historical and socio-cultural context. Language learning is therefore conceptualised as a complex social practice, rather than as an acquisition of knowledge or even an abstract, internalised skill. This implies that learners of English should ideally have the opportunities or access to uses of the language as well as to communities in which they can participate in the target language. These contexts or real-world situations are considered "fundamental, not ancillary, to learning" (Gao 2007: 194). Hence, there is a shift away from focusing on individual learners to emphasizing their roles in the community, and in so doing, learners are regarded as simultaneously members of multiple communities. For L2 learners, these could include the L1 community, the target language community, the classroom or academic community, and even imagined communities (Anderson 1991), defined as socially constructed communities to which learners belong, to which they aspire, and in which they invest their language learning behavior (Murphey, Chen and Chen 2005). Language learning is therefore regarded as social acts by which individuals construct and negotiate their identities through communicative interaction in multiple communities.

In theorizing identity within constructivism, there is a clear move away from essentialist, unitary, static definitions; rather, identity is seen as constructed, fragmented, fluid and contradictory. Wenger describes identity as "lived" and "becoming" through negotiated experience and participation with others (1998: 149). This complex relationship between the language learner and his social world is also captured by Norton:

> When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. (2000: 11)

This is the sociolinguistics of "multiplicity and simultaneity in bilingual communication" (Woolard 1998). It recognises that identity is not a given, priori-social fact; for multilingual speakers, identity is routinely socially constructed from the roles, relationships, norms, discursive practices and expectations of the communities in which they participate. These pluralist alternatives reflect the reality in today's world where multilingual speakers are constantly changing identities, and reaching beyond communities and local contingences.

On the one hand, it must be recognised that L2 users' subject position, defined as an intersection of factors that position individuals such as their race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other affiliations, can mediate their access to linguistic and interactional resources available in the L2 (Pavlenko 2002). On the other hand, language learners are not passively defined by these ascribed identities and prior practices; even a cursory review of the literature points to the resourcefulness and empowering capacities of language learners. Research conducted among adult learners of English in countries like Canada, the United States, and Australia (e.g.

Norton 2000; Miller 2000; Pavlenko 2003; Iddings 2005) shows language learners as actively engaged with the world, making choices, positioning themselves and constructing their own identities in interaction with others. There have, however, been fewer attempts to study how learners of English in Asian countries construct and navigate their identities in multilingual contexts. Within this theoretical framework, it may be said that learners of English in Malaysia are not merely learning a linguistic system. They are learning a diverse set of sociocultural practices and negotiating multiple identities that are best understood in the context of wider relations of power (Norton and Toohey 2005). Notwithstanding the discourses on multiplicity, the use of English by Malaysians locates them and their interactions across multiple boundaries – linguistic, cultural, ethnic, religious, political and national – and this creates the potential for tension and conflict.

The sociolinguistic setting

Geographically, Malaysia is made up of two regions separated by the South China Sea: Peninsular Malaysia also known as West Malaysia, and Borneo Malaysia also known as East Malaysia. Sociologically, Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, post-colonial nation that has been categorised as an "Outer Circle" country by Kachru (1985). This label indexes Malaysia as a country where English has a long history of institutionalised functions and is used intranationally as a second language among fellow-citizens. Its demographics show that of a total population of 28.3 million, the *bumiputera* (literally, "prince of the soil") make up 67.4%, the Chinese 24.6% and the Indians 7.3% (National Census 2010). The vast majority of *bumiputera* are Malays, constituting 50.4% of the total population and 63.1% of the population in Peninsular Malaysia. Other *bumiputera* include indigenous groups in East Malaysia and elsewhere in the Peninsular. Consequently, a number of languages flourish in the country, and these include Malay (the mother tongue of most ethnic Malays and the national language), English, a number of Chinese dialects, Indian languages and other minority languages.

The key to understanding the sociolinguistic setting of contemporary Malaysia may be traced back to the policies and practices of the British colonial government, which ruled Malaya from the late 18th century to the mid-twentieth century. Not only were the British responsible for bringing the English language to Malaya, but by bringing in immigrant workers from China and India, they were also instrumental in creating the multiracial and multilingual character of the country.

In the midst of this colourful linguistic setting, even today English continues to command considerable prestige, and is used not only across national boundaries but also within and across linguistic and cultural groups. For some, English functions as a first language or is learnt early in life, mastered to high levels of proficiency, and is considered a dominant language. It is spoken in almost every aspect of Malaysian life, and plays a lively part in Malaysian urban society. Then there are others who still regard English as a foreign language and who can barely speak English despite learning it in school for more than ten years. A brief examination of language planning in Malaysia will shed some light on this state of affairs.

If official language policies offer insights into a country's national and cultural identity, Malaysia portrays a conflicted self. Although English in Malaysia began as an imposed colonial language, it quickly acquired power and prestige, and was regarded as a means to better jobs, higher education, improved living standards and social success. Lowenberg (1992) notes that the privileged recipients of an English education – the more prosperous and prestigious families of the three major ethnic groups, but particularly the Chinese and Indians – came to use English increasingly in their daily lives. By the end of the colonial era, English had become a *lingua franca* among the more educated people of the country.

The rise of Malay nationalism, which eventually led to the independence of Malaya in 1957, saw a linguistic change in favour of the Malay language, BM. In the interest of nation building, BM supplanted English in almost all official spheres, including education. To ensure that BM was used in education, the Education Act of 1961 made BM the only medium of instruction in national secondary schools, although the whole process was only completed by 1980 (Azirah Hashim 2009).

One result of this language policy that downgraded the status of English was a dramatic decline in the standard of English in Malaysia. While falling standards in English were found nationwide, the problem was thought to be particularly serious in the rural areas, and especially acute among the Malays (David and Govindasamy 2003). This dilemma resulted in a tension between promoting BM as a symbol of Malay power and national unity, and at the same time ensuring that the Malays were sufficiently competent in English to compete with the other races in the country and in the global economy.

In the 1990s, questions were asked about the relevance and sustainability of this language policy in the face of globalisation, the boom in the telecommunications industry, and Malaysia's own aspirations towards achieving developed nation status. In January 2003 Malaysia re-adopted the English language as a medium of instruction for science and mathematics (the PPSMI policy) in a move to keep abreast with scientific and technological development. While this move was hailed by most Malaysians as timely, it also had its critics, primarily among those who championed communal or nationalistic agendas like the Chinese education movement (*Dong Jiao Zong*), the Federation of Malay Writers Association (GAPENA), and the Malaysian Muslim Students' Association (PKPIM). In fact, in March

2009, groups of Malays led by opposition Islamic party president, Abdul Hadi Awang, and flanked by national laureate, A. Samad Said, took to the streets of Kuala Lumpur protesting the use of English to teach science and mathematics in schools (Goh 2009).

In July 2009, the Cabinet did an about-turn and announced that the medium of instruction for mathematics and science will revert to BM in national schools and to mother tongue languages in national-type schools from 2012 onwards. This move upset many and some accused the government of bowing to pressure from nationalistic groups that had decried the use of English claiming that it compromised the position of the Malay language and undermined the Malay culture (Lotbinière 2009). In 2010, the government replaced PPSMI with the MBMMBI policy which seeks "to uphold Bahasa Malaysia and strengthen the English language" (Ministry of Education 2010). Despite the government's pledge that they would use a 'soft landing' approach to gradually replace English with BM, this is still a hotly contested issue. Nevertheless, the Education Minister has said that the ministry would not bow to pressure from any quarters to have the PPSMI reinstated. Even today the debate continues partly because the transition plan has remained vague and open to interpretation.

Underpinning these political and policy decisions are linguistic ideologies, "the values, practices, and beliefs associated with language use, which are subject to and influenced by socio-political interests" (Blackledge 2008: 29). Within this ideological macro-context, the policy changes described in Malaysia also clearly illustrate the tensions between the local languages, and in particular, the national language BM, and the global language, English. Significantly, the official stand is that English should be a strong second language and that English competence is highly valued and encouraged. Yet, this public discourse does not always accord with or even prevail against long-held sentiments and deep-seated suspicions and hostilities that the language arouses. While English continues to be highly esteemed in public policy, private discourse, thoughts and practices sometimes tell a different story (see Martin 2005), and nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than among the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia, the Malays. David and Govindasamy (2007) observe that the resistance and hostility towards the English language and its use is most apparent among the Malay community, many of whom continue to oppose the increased attention and prestige accorded to English language education in schools. This continued opposition to English led the clearly chagrined former Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad to declare somewhat tongue-in cheek, "It will not signify the end of the Malay race if we are to learn in English as well" (Bernama 2008).

Study design

This essay investigates the narratives of Malay learners of English in Malaysia as they attempt to participate in English and enact new identities as competent bilinguals – proficient in English while retaining their L1 status. The investigation therefore entails a study of phenomena in context, and is designed to be descriptive and particularistic. It employs a qualitative multiple case study approach to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of learners' lived experiences and perspectives.

In line with the aims of the research, three main criteria were used for the selection of cases. First, participants had to be students of Malay ethnicity, second, they had to be comfortably fluent in English, and third, they should have the desire to use English in a variety of contexts outside the academic setting. These criteria were suitably met in a group of Malay TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) students of a public university as they could be expected to have some proficiency in English and would be more motivated to use English in interactions in the real world, given that English is their major. In total, twelve students participated in both phases of this multiple case study research. In phase one, data were generated using the journal narratives of participants who kept a reflective journal over a period of 3–5 months. In the second phase, two focus group sessions were held, one with five students and the other with seven students. All sessions were recorded, and the recorded data were later transcribed.

For each case study, all entries in the student journal were read carefully and repeatedly, as were the transcripts of the focus group sessions. Following the tradition in qualitative research, data analysis was primarily inductive: categories and themes emerged mainly from the data, and preliminary observations about the settings and participants were noted, which were then tested against further data. Using "within-case analysis", a comprehensive profile of each student was created, and this was followed by "cross-case analysis" (Merriam 1998), which led to the formulation of conceptual categories and constructs that revolved around themes like opportunities, positioning, strategies, agency and so on. These formed the basis for the reports drawn up.

Participants' narratives

This section presents the participants' perspectives and accounts of their learning experience. In the interest of space, only two representative cases, one from each of the focus groups, will be presented in this essay. Pseudonyms have been used and all verbatim quotes, grammatical or otherwise, from the journal entries and interviews are marked in the text. These interpretive accounts are grounded in the language of the two speakers presented and rely as much as possible on their own words and concepts. As Maxwell points out, interpretive research "seeks to comprehend phenomena, not on the basis of the researcher's perspective and categories, but from those of the participants in the situations studied – that is, from an "emic" rather than an "etic" perspective" (2002: 48).

Case Study 1: Nora – "It is as if you are in a battle"

Nora is a 20-year old TESL student, who lives in a small village, a distance away from the urban areas. Nora began her journal writing during the semester break when she left the academic community and went back to her home. The first entry in her journal reads as follows:

> I live in a community where English is not spoken at all. The community perceives English as inappropriate and it is not valued at all. When we speak English here, we are seen as snobbish. It is very hard for me to begin to speak English here … the community think that speaking English is a form of showing off. Sometimes some of the people are offended when you speak English to them because they think that you are underestimating them … they perceive speaking English as a form of rudeness.

In one of her journal entries, Nora writes about how she attracts stares from her neighbours or even sales people in shops whenever she speaks in English. "They look at me as if I was some kind of alien". Reading her journal, it becomes obvious that Nora has been scarred by the negative reactions she has received. "Sometimes, just thinking of their reactions to me speaking English makes my stomach ache". Nora's narratives echo the stories of the other participants in the study. The path towards learning and speaking English in their home communities, and in society at large is a difficult one, the struggle is genuine and often lonely, and the disappointment palpable.

Venting her frustrations in her journal, Nora notes that her ethnicity as Malay and her religious affiliations as a Muslim only add to her problems in using English in the community. She observes that because her mother is Chinese and looks Chinese (albeit adopted into a Malay family, and a practicing Muslim), her use of English is unproblematic and accepted by others. Her sister, who looks a little Chinese, too, faces few difficulties communicating with others in English. However, Nora who does not share the Chinese features of her mother or sister, laments she has never experienced a similar kind of warm reception to her attempts to speak in English. Articulating a view that received unreserved support from other participants in the focus group session, she asserts that if one is

Chinese or thought to be a Chinese or Indian, then speaking English is certainly acceptable, but not if one is Malay. In a remark tinged with irony, she quips: "so basically, looks do matter".

It is not only among strangers that Nora feels alienated; even her friends in her home community give her the cold shoulder for speaking in English with them. She records that:

> These hurdles and the feelings of uncomfortableness between me and my friends … are very hard for me to handle. It is true that speaking English can alter one's relationships … I just don't want my friends to think I've changed to a snobbish and arrogant person.

These conflicted inner desires capture Nora's investment, as it signals her relationship to the target language, as well as her ambivalent desire to practice and use it with others (Norton 2000). Nora's narratives also lend support to Pavlenko's claim (2002: 284) that "multilingual contexts are particularly fraught with the tensions of identity politics whereby many individuals experience a perpetual conflict between self-chosen identities and others' attempts to position them differently." It is to her credit then that she does not simply give up and resort to using solely BM in order to avoid social stigmatisation and the heartache of rejection:

> It is hard but I will do my best to speak English, at the same time, not being perceived as a rude person to the people here … I'm prepared to face these kinds of situations when I speak English. Sometimes, I think that when you are speaking English, it is as if you are in a battle where people all around are against you.

Clearly, learning English for Nora entails a constant resisting of others' tendency to define her deterministically in terms of her ethnicity, or religion, or linguistic loyalties.

Case Study 2: Amy – "That's who you're expected to be"

20-year old Amy is a TESL student who lives in a more urban part of Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. Like Nora, her journal describes several incidents when her attempts to speak in English in the community were rebuffed. In one encounter at a photo-printing shop, she writes:

> I asked for my photos in English and she continues to answer in Malay about them not being ready. I switched tactics and tried talking in Malay and she went to get my photos, which were suddenly ready! I'm confused.

Reflecting on her experiences, Amy notes in another entry:

> I realise that not everyone appreciates being talked to in English. Maybe they think I am showing off or something … someone once told me that when you speak English, it's like you're trying to prove that you're good or better than others. But when one speaks Malay, no one will care, because that's who you're expected to be.

Amy's narratives are suggestive of ways in which the community has certain expectations of Malay speakers of English, assigning to them an identity that is sometimes in conflict with their claimed or aimed bilingual identities. Amy documents:

> Because I'm wearing a shawl over my head, and I'm Malay, there are certain things people expect of me. Speaking Malay is one of them. When I don't meet those expectations, that's when the negative looks and whispers come.

During the group discussion, she asserts that living in a community that leans towards rather overt displays of religious practices is fraught with difficulty:

> They think speaking in English isn't good, you know… If I had been speaking Malay, then I might have been thought of as a better person by the Muslim community … then I might have made more friends.

Clearly, there is a price to pay for being competent and comfortable in the English language while at the same time displaying an identity that is manifestly Malay and Muslim. Like Nora, Amy's narratives show her clearly resisting and rejecting her community's construction of her identity that appears to exclude the possibility of bilingualism.

It is ironic that Amy's difficulties stem partly from the fact that she has a near-native command of English, which she attributes to the few years she spent in the United States, and this competence in English is not always an asset. There is an inherent fear that she would be thought of as trying to be superior and supercilious when she speaks good English. There is therefore a constant and conscious attempt on her part "to speak down, to talk in simple and often broken English". She relates an incident when a group of girlfriends were talking about lingerie, and mispronouncing it as ling-ge-ree. She writes about cringing at this gaffe, and yet being too afraid to correct the mispronunciation. In fact, she even considered mispronouncing it herself just so she "wouldn't stick out like a sore thumb". Experiences of this nature are not uncommon. "Sometimes I don't speak proper English because I'm afraid to be thought of as a 'know-it-all' which is something I hate very much". This struggle faced by motivated learners of English in the Malay community is real and profound. On the one hand, they long for real opportunities to practice and use English in its full range of expressions, and yet, on the other hand, they feel obliged to appear comfortably incompetent so that they fit in with the rest of the group. Those, like Amy, who have attained a high level of proficiency in the language are often compelled to deploy lower proficiency speech forms to accomplish social and interactional ends.

In her quest to master English, not only does Amy face isolation from her L1 community, but her endeavours to enter into and participate in the target language community of English speakers in Malaysian society have also not been easy. While some of her attempts were met with barely-concealed suspicion or total surprise, which she attributes to her ethnicity and religion, others were successful. For example, Amy's tenacity and perseverance sees her resolutely barging into new practices, like joining an English writers group. Discovering that this group of Chinese and Indians included a journalist, a poet, an English literature buff, a copywriter, a dramatist and a TV producer, she notes:

> I wasn't really surprised that I was the only Malay there … Needless to say, I was amongst a pretty professional bunch, and I was a bit intimidated. I was a stranger to them. Why should my ideas matter to these already-successful people?

Her descriptions of how her contributions to the group discussions were initially ignored or glossed over draw a picture of how everyday interaction is immersed in structured power relations of inequality, which determine the value and worth listeners attach to what is being said. However, Amy writes about how she drew on her fluency and mastery of English to overcome the group's initial wariness and resistance: "Although I'm struggling with self-confidence, I'm comforted with the knowledge that I am able to convey my thoughts fluently and clearly". Once her command of English was recognised, the doors swung wide open for her to participate fully and become accepted in this new community of practice. Amy's accounts show her contesting the status quo ascribed to her, as she challenges her marginalised position, reframes the power relations between herself and her fellow student-writers and creates new positions for herself. Putting aside her ethnic and religious identity, which seem to have low symbolic value in this group, she takes advantage of her linguistic competence in English, and uses it to increase her symbolic power and hence the authority and legitimacy of her speech, and makes her contributions worth listening to.

Discussion: Community ideologies and practices

All twelve case studies, including the two analysed in this essay, demonstrate how using a second language in the community involves larger social, historical and political situations reproduced in daily interactions. They also draw attention to the relevance of the subject position of learners and raise concerns about the access learners actually have to English use in society. The data repeatedly pointed to the dearth of opportunities for these Malay students to practice the English language outside the classroom setting and in their respective home communities, and the resistance experienced by learners who tried. These students talked about having to risk being misunderstood, stared at, made fun of, judged, alienated and given the silent treatment. They had endured being left out, being loners, losing face and even sacrificing valued relationships because of their investment in the English language.

By the same token, it is clear that community ideologies construct Malay speakers who choose to speak English as rude, offensive, showing off, patronizing, and arrogant. This draws attention to what is appropriate, acceptable and legitimate in interactional contexts in the Malay community. It brings to light ways of using language and the kinds of language practices that are "valued and considered good, normal, appropriate, or correct in the framework of ideological orientations connected to social, economic, and political interests" (Heller and Martin-Jones 2001: 2) These learners' forays into extending their use of English outside the classroom, thereby contesting language boundaries and projecting a bilingual identity, are in direct conflict with the home community's linguistic identity founded on the L1, BM. Students' use of English in Malay spaces problematises English, and unwittingly positions it as "the linguistic other" (Saxena 2009: 182). From the community perspective, these students are not merely drawing on social and linguistic resources, but are transforming them in significant ways. Their shifting linguistic allegiances imply shifting cultural identities, political affiliations and moral commitments. This is at odds with 'Malayness' which Shamsul (1998) describes as comprising traditions that are culturally exclusive in nature and meant to emphasise a sense of distinctive identity. In a community that prioritises collective identity, loyalty and traditional values, the learning trajectories and aspirations of these students are consistently marginalised, ignored and constructed from an indigenous point of view, resulting in their new, evolving identities as bilingual speakers being snubbed or spurned. Clearly, the use of dual languages is problematic for both the speaker and the audience in communities where the L1 is zealously guarded and monolingualism is the norm.

Not only were the opportunities to use English in the students' home communities denied to them, but there is also evidence that they were sometimes kept as outsiders to the target language community of English-speaking Malaysians. The data suggest that the English-speaking society in Malaysia, which tends to comprise the better-educated and socially mobile, is not always tolerant or welcoming to newcomers' attempts to interact in English. Instead, there is a tendency to either minimise interacting in English with them, or to switch to speaking in BM with them. The case studies have also raised the possibility that newcomers will only be granted legitimacy if they are able to prove themselves worthy of membership in this new "elite" community. This also means that a typical learner, lacking the necessary proficiency, is likely to be dismissed, neglected or excluded from participation. In such cases, the power relations will have served to prevent his or her access to crucial resources necessary for developing competence in the target language, English. English then becomes a crucial divider in society: while it accords people with opportunities for advancement, unequal access to it divides people into the English-educated and non-English educated, the elites of society and the non-elites, the haves and the have-nots.

Learners' responses and roles

In order to deal with the practices and perceptions in their environment, participants in this study responded in several ways. Students sometimes limited their English use to the sheltered confines of the TESL institutional community, where they knew they would be accepted and accommodated. This was their place of refuge. Outside the TESL community, there was a keen realisation that there would be greater hostility and disparagement, and learners had to brace themselves to accept and deal with possible inhospitable sites and adverse reactions to their attempts to speak in English. Students pointed out that it took conscious effort to use English in the face of unveiled opposition, but most declared that they were prepared to "battle it out" because they knew that it was a necessary condition of becoming competent speakers of English.

Students' journal entries also revealed a disproportionate use of receptive learning strategies, like reading and listening to English songs, given the lack of opportunities and encouragement for more productive language skills to be deployed in their home communities. In fact, some students wrote about using rather strange and unusual tactics: using English to talk to their cats, to their plants, and even to themselves! While these may seem rather bizarre, they are indicative of a growing sense of desperation and deprivation felt by these learners over the lack of opportunities to use English in their respective home communities. At the same time, it also signals their refusal to be silenced, and their inventive ways to keep their English alive when they left the academic community and headed to their home communities.

A common strategy employed by all twelve students in the case studies was to code-switch into more "acceptable" forms of English, including basilectal varieties and code-mixing, in order to lend legitimacy to their speech. These accommodation strategies have been observed among speakers in a variety of contexts. Rajadurai (2007a), for example, notes that the use of downward convergence is often employed among Malaysians to accommodate to conversational partners, stake a claim for shared affiliations and identities and thereby gain the interlocutor's approval and goodwill. Displaying such "incompetence", which includes speaking English deliberately overlaid with a heavy Malay accent, may be seen as a move to signal solidarity, and to vie for and enact forms of ethnic identity. These strategies help to reduce the linguistic deficit between interactants, level the playing field somewhat, resolve the tension and deconstruct the position of English as "the linguistic other", thus leveraging its indigenous value and lending it legitimacy (Rajadurai 2007b).

Another strategy that these Malay TESL students had developed was to position others in rather less-than-flattering ways. In their journals and discussions, these learners repeatedly verbalised the generalisation that in Malaysian society "Indians and Chinese speak English, but Malays speak Malay". They also expressed the belief that speaking in poor, broken or halting English was typical of the Malay community. Furthermore, the participants had formed rather pejorative views of those who avoided speaking in English or who denigrated those who did speak in English. Such segments of their community were frequently labelled "conservative, very Malay, nationalists, close-minded, rural, village-ish, uneducated" and even "mad". While these glib assertions and stereotypes may derive from a sense of self-preservation and act as a defence mechanism against perceived threats to their self-image, they also unintentionally and unfortunately function to reinforce charges of arrogance and separateness, and furthermore, they gloss over the reproduction of inequity. Attitudes of this sort only aggravate an already tense and misconstrued relationship between the English-speaker and his or her Malay community, and perpetuate a negative culture of disparaging "the other".

Evolving bilingual identities

One aspect that emerged as significant in the analysis of the data was how the opportunities to use English were related to the subject positions and identities made salient at different times. All participants in the study agreed that their position as TESL students was a facilitating feature as there was greater tolerance of their penchant to use English. Others were regarded as English teachers by their communities, albeit pre-service ones, and this too lent some latitude, paving the way for their use of English in certain domains in the community.

On the other hand, students unhesitatingly pointed to their ethnicity as the biggest obstacle to practicing English in their communities. "Malays are expected to speak Malay" seemed to be the oft-repeated mantra. Aside from ethnicity, religion was identified as an important factor as students related several incidents when they were shunned and called *kaffir* (infidels, or unIslamic) for speaking in English. The other associated feature that functioned to constrain the female participants was the scarf that some of them used as part of their Islamic beliefs. Female students who donned the scarf claimed that it seemed to act as an immediate signal to others that they could not or should not speak in English. Perhaps the overt signal of an Islamic identity was at odds with the speaking of English which is still viewed as rooted in the Judeo-Christian culture, and the primary vehicle for the transmission of 'Western' values (see also Ratnawati 2005).

An interesting sub-text underpinning participants' narratives was their allusion to the theme of imagined communities (Anderson 1991). These students wrote and talked about their longing for communities where their ethnic, religious and linguistic identities could live and shift in harmonious interaction, and where they could display competence in English while simultaneously affirming their mother tongue, religious beliefs, local affiliations and national histories. They aspire to be legitimate users of both the L1 and the L2, displaying multi-competence and thus acquire new possibilities for the self. They envision a time when declaring their Malay roots and donning a religious symbol do not ignite prejudices that dispossess them of their right to speak English. These students look forward to a world where participation in new communities of practice is neither exclusive nor elitist, where gatekeepers are hospitable and helpful, and where multiple identities and memberships are routinely celebrated.

Implications

This essay has examined the ambiguities and complexities in the learning and use of English as a second language in multicultural societies as seen through the narratives of Malay students in Malaysia. An examination of macro- and micro-perspectives indicate that the spatially and temporally unifying discourses of the state which espouse plurality are at odds with the experiences, practices, imaginings, representations, affiliations and desires of the individual communities. The study also raises the question of whether the intense personal struggle of learners desiring L2 competence is typical and widespread. Contrasting the experiences of Malay learners with those of the other ethnic groups in the country, it would appear that such struggles with dual linguistic allegiances are not a defining feature of all bilinguals. What then are the possible reasons for the uneasy relationship between the Malay community and the English language?

The role of English in countries of the Outer Circle has often been described in terms of a love-hate relationship; however, at the risk of over-generalisation, it does appear that this tension is particularly acute among Muslims and ingrained in the Malay community. Studies investigating linguistic and religious affiliations have pointed to a deep-seated reluctance among Malays and Muslims to engage with the English language (Washima, Harahita and Naysmith 1996; Rida and Milton 2001; Ratnawati 2005). In an investigation of the use of English in a classroom setting in Brunei, Saxena (2009) notes how Malays in Brunei find the use of English inappropriate in contexts construed as Malay spaces because local practices and monolingual ideologies position the English language as foreign. Similar patterns of attitude and behaviour are found in Malaysia. In a quantitative investigation of ethnic identity and attitudes towards English conducted among 331 Malaysian undergraduates (Malays, Chinese, Indians and others), the researchers (Mardziah and Wong 2006) note that it was the Malay group who most strongly felt English to be a threat to their ethnic and national identity, with the Indians perceiving this threat the least. The Malays were also the group that reported feeling the most discomfort when speaking English, and were the most unwilling to use English among fellow-Malays, claiming that they risked being teased by their own friends and community. These Malay students also regarded those who used English widely as unpatriotic and as "acting like foreigners". To shed light on these attitudes, we need to consider underlying cultural and ideological structures.

Perhaps central to understanding the Malays' distrust of English is to understand their relationship to the Malay language, BM, and how it articulates their personal, collective and historical identities. Some scholars claim that the apparent alienating of the English language by the Malays can be traced back to their historical resistance of the British colonial government and by extension the colonial language, English, and its perceived threat to their own culture and language (Asmah 2000). In the words of the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, "In the struggle to uphold their language, the Malays were forced to oppose and cast aside the English language" (1986: 43). It would appear that for a certain segment of the community, the historical, cultural and emotional baggage of the past continues to cast a long shadow, pervading language ideologies and governing the linguistic practices of the present.

But even more significant is the way "Malayness" is constructed and constituted in the country. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia defines the Malays as people who practice Islam and the Malay culture, and who speak the Malay language (Article 160), thus ascribing to them a religious, cultural and linguistic identity. This fusion of ideology, identity, position and practice is problematic and raises questions about how, where, when and with whom Malays are to use English, and what its consequences are. How does this static, seemingly non-negotiable imposition of identity fit pluralist views of multilingualism and shifting identities?

Another key piece of legislation that offers important insights into representations of the Malay self is the protection of Malay dominance or supremacy by the Malaysian Constitution. This is executed primarily by protecting the three pillars of "Malayness": language, religion and royalty (Shamsul 1997). The exclusive use of BM, therefore, seems to reinforce the supremacy of the race, and nationalistic narratives often construct it in tension and competition with the English language. In this regard, promoting English is often regarded as a threat to the Malay identity and an erosion of Malay dominance. There is always a continual fear that English will usurp BM in terms of status perception, and this will not only detract from the central role of the Malay language, but crucially, it may call into question the indigenity, dominance and privileged position of the community. Drawing attention to this link between the Malay language and the notion of "Malay supremacy", Rappa and Wee (2006) state that it helps explain why the Malay language has been used to ground the indigenous claims of the Malays.

Overall, I contend that if English is seen as a threat to other local languages in Malaysia, the threat is viewed differently by the Malays and the non-Malays. While Chinese and Indians may express some ambivalence and apprehension about English competing with and on occasion even displacing the L1, for the main part they have accepted the language and made it part of their already multilingual community. In contrast, for a large segment of the Malay community, promotion or use of English is construed as a threat to the mother tongue, and by extension to the sovereignty of their community, culture and race. Perhaps unlike the other ethnic groups in the country, the category "Malay" is still moored as an essential identity in Malaysia, implicating non-negotiable linguistic, religious and cultural loyalties. Such a stance constructs speakers' use of their L1 as unmarked and normal, and naturalises the connections between language, national origin, culture and ethnicity. Unlike the non-Malays for whom bi- or multilingualism is the norm, many in the Malay community have become largely monolingual because the language of the home is also the language of the school (David and Govindasamy 2003). This could be one reason for the kind of angst described by the learners portrayed in this study.

Nevertheless, as language issues seem to be in a state of constant flux in Malaysia, this too may change. Pavlenko suggests that "anxieties over an inner split may stem from the lack of social acceptance of bilingualism and may disappear once bi- and multilingualism are accepted as the norm, rather than an exception" (2006: 28). Hence, it is not inconceivable that globalisation, modernity, cyber communities and education will exert a push towards more porous boundaries and towards greater multilingualism and multiculturalism in the Malay community.

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CHAPTER 10

The grip of English and Philippine language policy

Beatriz P. Lorente

The grip of English in the Philippines signifies an enduring and flawed image of national development that is monocentric with an English-dominant core. It traces the trajectory of this dominance of English in the Philippines from its introduction as the *de facto* medium of instruction in the public school system during the American colonial era to its incorporation as the indispensable competitive edge of Filipinos in the current era of globalization. This privileged position of English in the country's linguistic economy has been reinforced by the Filipino elite's symbolic struggles over power in the wake of post-colonialism and the country's structural insertion at the margins of the global economy as a source of cheap, English-speaking migrant labor. The grip of English in the country may be mitigated by the introduction of mother tongue based multilingual education (MTBLE). The framework of MTBLE appears to conceive of national development in terms of widening access to valuable material and symbolic resources such as literacy and higher levels of formal education. As the MTBLE is still in its infancy, the extent to which it can live up to its promise remains to be seen.

In its 2005 annual report, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) attributed the global competitiveness of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to "the continued confidence of foreign principals to employ Filipino workers who are competent, highly trained, *English proficient*, with caring attitude and adaptable to work environment" (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2006: 8, emphasis mine). The POEA's portrayal of OFWs is not significantly different from how the Philippine government depicted the Filipino labour force to potential foreign investors in a 1974 advertisement in the New York Times:

> We've put our house in order. You can't afford to overlook the new Philippines in surveying your Asian prospect this year. For the authoritarian government in Manila has put an end to political factionalism and social anarchy. Restored peace and order. Purged the bureaucracy of the inept and the corrupt. Freed economic policy-making from the constraints of extremist rhetoric. Result: the renewed optimism of 40 million people and the resurgence of the national economy …

> We like multinationals … Local staff? Clerks with a college education start at $35 … accountants come for $67, executive secretaries for $148 …
>
> *Our labour force speaks your language*. Whether you're talking electronic components, garments or car manufacturing. National literacy was placed at 83.4% in 1973 (*English is the medium of instruction*)….
>
> (Tollefson 1991: 140, emphasis mine)

More than 30 years apart, the representations of Filipino workers in these two texts are striking in their similarities. Both showcase the Filipino workforce as being ideal and desirable labour for foreign employers; both market the skills and the supposed particular qualities of Filipino workers that distinguish them from others; both include English proficiency as one of, if not the most distinguishing quality of Filipinos. A very similar discourse is also emerging in relation to the call center industry which is seen as the country's "emerging sunshine industry" (Jobstreet.com 2003). In its attempt to attract businesses, the Philippines has been emphasising the English proficiency of its workforce and most especially, the "Filipinos' familiarity and affinity for American culture and jargon" because of the country's colonial history, which are supposedly the country's "natural advantages" over India (Dicarlo 2003; Alojipan 2003; Oliva 2003).

These similar ways in which the Philippine labour force is portrayed underline the structural and historical continuities in the Philippines' peripheral location in the world system. They also underline the grip of English on these structural, historical and social formations of the country and signify an enduring image of national development and globalization as monocentric with an English-dominant core.

In a country where English is, by and large, privileged above Filipino, the national language, and the other Philippine languages, this grip of English is ideological as well as material. The justification of the privileged position of English in the country's linguistic economy is premised on "a structuralist and positivist view of language that suggests that all languages can be free of cultural and political influences and more particularly, [that] English is even more neutral than other languages" and a "neoliberal framework of understanding the country's situation, globalization, and the global market within which English occupies a crucial place" (Pennycook 1994: 12; Tupas 2001a: 19). Simply put, the grip of English in the country is anchored in the widespread and widely accepted but decontextualized belief that English is neutral and beneficial. The grip of English in the Philippines is also material, in the sense that beliefs about English permeate and configure economic, social and political provisions and processes that distribute and regulate access to valuable resources and that have an impact on the everyday lives of Filipinos. In the Philippines, English (or more specifically, "standard

English") is the marker of and the gatekeeper to a privileged socioeconomic class (Hau & Tinio 2003; Tollefson 1991; Tupas 2004b). It fosters linkages within this privileged social class that cut across ethnic groups in the country while widening the gap between social classes (Hau & Tinio 2003).

In the subsequent sections of this essay, I trace the trajectory of this grip of English in the Philippines from its introduction during the American colonial era to its incorporation as the indispensable competitive edge Filipinos have in the current era of globalization. I do this in order to contextualize how the grip of English in the Philippines cannot be disassociated from broader struggles over the distribution of valuable material and symbolic capital. I then explore how this grip of English may be mitigated by recent moves to practice as well as to institutionalize mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) in the country.

Tracing the grip of English in the Philippines

English was introduced to the Philippines at the very beginning of the American colonial period when it became the *de facto* medium of instruction in what has come to be considered as "one of the most positive and enduring innovations brought by the American colonial government … the public school system" (Gonzalez 1985: 91). The Americans opened the first public school on Corregidor Island, within less than a month after Admiral Dewey destroyed the Spanish Navy in the Philippines in the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. This apparent prioritization of education literally came on the heels of Spanish colonisation which had not succeeded in providing a good measure of public primary education, and which had practically put the Spanish language only within the reach of the *mestizos* and *ilustrados*, the very elite of Philippine society (Churchill 2003).[1]

It was mainly because of the public school education system and the use of English as the basis of all public instruction that English followed a very different trajectory from Spanish: it was disseminated more widely and entrenched far more effectively in state policies as well as in the public imagination (Hau and

1. The lack of Spanish usage in the Philippines resulted from a decision by the Spanish crown to encourage friars to use the native languages, in the hopes that this would speed up religious conversion. While the Spanish crown changed this policy in the sixteenth century, the teaching of Spanish was hampered by a lack of funds and teachers, the absence of an organized system of primary education and scarce teaching materials (Hau & Tinio 2003: 338–339). By the end of 333 years of colonial rule, the estimated number of Filipinos who could speak Spanish was only 2.46% of an adult population of 4.6 million (Gonzalez 1980).

Tinio 2003).[2] Apart from the system of public instruction, Gonzalez (1980: 27–28) cited two other factors that contributed to the rapid spread of English and its swift ascent to the apex of the country's linguistic economy: "the positive attitude of Filipinos towards Americans; and the incentives given to Filipinos to learn English in terms of career opportunities, government service, and politics." English was also the official language of the civil service. Along with education, it was considered by the American colonisers to be the prerequisite for participating in the legislation, administration and leadership of the country. In this way, English came to be identified with the "progressive" American ideals of "enlightenment", "democracy" and "self-governance". Even then, the grip of English was such that even when the 1925 Monroe survey noted that Filipino students had problems learning English and recommended the use of Filipino vernacular languages for teaching manners and morals, and despite various recommendations by educators to use the vernacular languages, English remained the official language and the sole medium of instruction during the American colonial period (Gonzalez 1980).

In analysing the impact of this valorisation of English during the American colonial period, Constantino (2002: 181) emphatically argues that:

> The first and perhaps the masterstroke in the plan to use education as an instrument of colonial policy was the decision to use English as the medium of instruction. English became the wedge that separated Filipinos from their past and later was to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen … With American textbooks, Filipinos started learning not only a new language but also a new way of life, alien to their traditions and yet a caricature of their model. This was the beginning of their education. At the same time, it was the beginning of their miseducation, for they learned no longer as Filipinos but as colonials.

It must be emphasised that in his statement, Constantino outlined two devastating "English effects". First, by providing Filipinos with a semblance of access to the colonial language, American colonisers ensured the "forgetting" of the physical and symbolic violence wrought by colonisation while guaranteeing a (misplaced) sense of indebtedness *(utang na loob)* from Philippine society (see Gonzalez 1985). Tupas calls this the "problem of consciousness" in the Philippines where strategies of forgetting and erasure have effectively idealised the colonial history of the country and nullified the colonial accoutrements of English (Tupas 2001b, 2003). Second, English became the marker of and the gatekeeper to an educated and privileged class. As both a resource for and a site of symbolic struggles, English

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2. Thus, "at the tail-end of the American period (1898–1935), after only 37 years, the 1939 Census reported a total of 4,264,549 out of a total population of 16,000,303 (or 26%) who claimed the ability to speak English" (Gonzalez 1980: 26).

became a central means by which access to valuable symbolic and material capital could be regulated during and after the American colonial period.

In the postcolonial era, this "American legacy" of English shaped the landscape in which national language and bilingual education policies were debated and carried out. While there were strong sentiments for the search for and the declaration of a national language as early as 1903, the call for the development of a national language based on Tagalog (renamed Pilipino in 1959 and Filipino in 1973) in the Commonwealth Act 570 of 1940 was met by much opposition from other language groups.[3] As Hau and Tinio (2003: 342) correctly point out, however:

> This opposition to Tagalog … should not be interpreted as a manifestation of ethnic conflict. The debate over Tagalog – one that continues to this day – reflects intra-elite rivalry and internecine battles over resource allocations that happened to be parceled out by region.

Not surprisingly, in this and other language debates in the country, the anti-Tagalog forces allied and continue to ally themselves with the pro-English lobby particularly within the elite, thus ensuring the viability of the colonial language as a link within a social class that cuts across regional groups and did so even at the peak of linguistic nationalism during the height of student activism in the 1970s (Hau and Tinio 2003).

In 1974, a year after the declaration that steps would be taken toward the development and formal adoption of a common national language to be known as Filipino and the provision of English and Filipino as the official languages of the Philippines in the 1973 Constitution, a bilingual education policy (BEP) was set in motion. Under the BEP, English was to be used as the medium of instruction (MOI) in science and mathematics, and Filipino was to be used for all other courses. This marked the first time that the supremacy of English was to be challenged by a local language. Ostensibly, the BEP was considered to be a compromise solution to the demands of nationalism and internationalism: Filipino would do the homework of identity while English would ensure that Filipinos would stay connected to the world (Gonzalez 1998). Arguably, though, the BEP represented

3. See Gonzalez (1980) for a comprehensive history of the search for and the debates around the national language. Pilipino or Filipino, though based on Tagalog, was supposed to be an amalgam of the different languages of the country. It is accurate to say though that Tagalog was merely renamed in an attempt to pacify those who opposed Tagalog on the basis of regional representation. Filipino, as it exists today, is mostly if not entirely based on Tagalog.

> [a] political compromise between competing elites: the Tagalog-speaking elites who nevertheless were conversant in English and who took up the fight for Pilipino as the national language, and the non-Tagalog elites who were likewise conversant in English, but who feared that the imposition of Pilipino as the national language would put them at a disadvantage over resources necessitating competence in Pilipino. (Tupas 2004b: 20)

It could well be argued that this compromise held fast in 1987 when the 1973 Constitution was revised in the wake of the 1986 People Power Revolution that toppled Marcos and Filipino was finally declared as the national language of the Philippines. As Hau and Tinio note, "the presence of a strong English-language lobby during the convention's deliberations secured the use of English in government and in the classroom" (2003: 344). The terms of the BEP were maintained with the provisions that Filipino would be accorded the primary position as the official language and that Congress could strip English of its official language status should circumstances warrant.

Competing in the global economy

By the time the BEP was instituted in 1974, the Philippine political economy was already well into the process of becoming more fully incorporated into the global economy as a source of low-waged labour. Ironically, it was in this same year that the first batch of government-sponsored Filipino contract workers was deployed to the Middle East, an early indication of how the search for a national linguistic symbol of unity would soon be overtaken, or had already been overtaken, by the insertion of the Philippines into the world system as a source of cheap, English-speaking labour. For the groups whose rallying cry for English had been that Tagalog or Filipino would not represent them in the national arena, their almost indisputable argument now was that English was necessary if the country was to participate and fully benefit from the global economy. Arguably, in this light, the BEP's biggest winners were English which remained preeminent in the country's linguistic economy and the elite groups whose interests were now legitimised. The biggest losers were the many Filipinos whose wages had been eroded by their incorporation into the global labour market and whose varying levels of English competence facilitated their entry as low-waged workers in an export-oriented, labour intensive light industry financed by foreign capital (Tollefson 1991).

This was because in the 1970s, the Philippine government had restructured the education system, in accordance with the perceived needs of export-oriented industrialisation. Restructuring the education sector was a vital complement to the changes that had been made to the labour sector. Major changes to the Philippine educational system can be traced back to Martial Law. According to Tollefson,

> Various presidential decrees transformed the elementary and high school curricula into "work-oriented" programmes to prepare you for participation in commercial and industrial enterprises … The goal was to ensure that the educational system would equip high school students with specific skills needed for industry and agriculture … In addition, beginning in 1976, the World Bank funded publication and distribution of millions of new textbooks and manuals through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports that were designed to help the system of education respond to the new economic policy. (Tollefson 1991: 149)

These changes to the Philippine educational system were reinforced further by the institutionalisation of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) which became the country's main educational stratifier:

> With standards set by the central government, the NCEE determined who among the high school graduates could go on to college, earn their degrees and most possibly become white-collar workers. Those who did not pass could either enroll in technical education certificate courses or start working on low-paying jobs because by then they would have been taught vocational skills in high school through institutionalized technical programmes. (Tupas 2004a: 6)

These changes in Philippine educational policy translated to

> [a] renewed emphasis on English and a shift towards vocational and technical English training. The Marcos government's strong support of English was due primarily to its crucial role in meeting the labour requirements of the Philippine economy. (Tollefson 1991: 150)

The three main labour needs at that time were consistent with the country's policy of export-oriented industrialisation financed and managed by foreign capital; they consisted of:

> (1) A large pool of workers for unskilled and semi-technical jobs in light manufacturing, assembly and the like.
> (2) Office staff and middle managers able to work under the managers of transnational corporations investing in the Philippines.
> (3) A service industry for foreign businesses, including maintenance crews, hotel staff and domestic workers. (Tollefson 1991: 150)

What the formal education system then produced was a multi-tiered skills-oriented population whose proficiencies in English were ordered accordingly, with most students being educated for low-paying jobs requiring only basic English (Tollefson 1991: 150).[4]

4. See also Tupas (2001a, 2004a).

These differences reproduced the already glaring social and economic disparities in the Philippines. Those who learned English well and who had the skills to take up the better paid white collar jobs were inevitably graduates of elite schools and universities, with most coming from the well-off and landed families in the Philippines. Those who did not learn English well were usually from the impoverished areas of the country; they usually did not go on to college and they ended up in the large pool of semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the manufacturing and service sectors. As Tollefson (1991: 151) pointedly states, "the policy of using English in schools thus serves a dual purpose: it helps to ensure that a great number of students fail, and it produces the necessary number of graduates with appropriate English skills."

The Philippine education system's pattern of producing a hierarchy of labour with corresponding levels of English skills meant for an externally-defined labour market has resulted in a deteriorating education system that is unable to respond realistically and relevantly to the social and economic needs of the country (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas 2003). This is most evident in the disparity between the degrees of most college graduates and the demand for such skills or expertise in the domestic labour market, leading to a rise in the number of educated underemployed and unemployed in the country who, since 1974, have been funneled into overseas labour migration. Ensuring that the manpower demands of an overseas labour market were met has been one of the priorities of Philippine presidents from Ferdinand Marcos in 1974 to until recently, Gloria Arroyo. During her term, Arroyo explicitly pushed for the goals of Philippine education to match what the global labour market needed. In a 2002 speech, she urged the education system to "produce and produce" the workers that are "in demand" globally:

> *Kaya pag sinasabi nila brain drain, sabi ko, hindi, naglilingkod doon naglilingkod pa rin dito dahil hindi kinakalimutan 'yung mga pamilya, 'yung pamayanan, at sa ganung paraan pati 'yung bansa natin ay nakikinabang. Ang importante kung ano 'yung nakikita nating demand sa mga skills, ang ating school system ay dapat produce nang produce. Kung malaki ang demand sa nurses, produce more nurses; kung malaki ang demand sa I.T. workers, produce more I.T. workers kasi kailangan din natin sila dito, kailangan sa ibang bansa. Kaya pakinabang kung nandoon, pakinabang kung nandito sila, so produce more because there is an overall increase in demand.*
>
> [So when they say brain drain, I say, no, they are serving there but they are still serving here because they do not forget their families, their communities, and in this way our country also benefits. *The important thing is when we see the skills that are in demand, our school system should produce and produce. If there is a big demand for nurses, produce more nurses; if there is a big demand for I.T. workers, produce more I.T. workers*, because we need them here and other countries need them. They're an advantage there and they're an advantage here, so produce more because there is an overall increase in demand.] (Arroyo 2002, emphasis and translation mine)

With competitiveness in the global labour market being equated with English proficiency and with national development conceived as being largely if not wholly dependent on such competitiveness, it is not surprising that debates about language issues in the Philippines have, at least until recently, been dominated by dire warnings that Filipinos are losing their "competitive edge" over other countries because of their supposedly declining levels of English competence and that the only way to address this is to abandon the BEP and "return to English" (Varella 2003; Remo 2004). Supporters of a "return to English" have argued that English is "an economic strategy" that is "important for the alleviation of poverty" (Manila Standard 2003; Avendano, Contreras, & AFP 2003). English is the cure-all and its use would "save the Philippines" (Malaya 2003).

During the Arroyo presidency, proficiency in English was made the major policy goal of the Department of Education. In January 2003, Arroyo directed a "return to English" as the main medium of instruction in Philippine schools (Kabiling 2003). In accordance with the direction the president was taking, several house bills seeking to permanently institutionalise this "return to English" were forwarded. In September 2005, the House Committees on Higher Education and on Basic Education endorsed and sought the immediate approval of House Bill 4701 (HB 4701) which, among other things, would make it mandatory for English to be the official medium of instruction in *all* academic subjects, in high school (Rosario 2005). The bill was passed almost a year later on September 21, 2006 with the majority support of 206 signatories. It did not become a law only because there was no subsequent approval from the Senate.

Until recent times, there have been few significant challenges to the bid to have English-only as the medium of instruction. The challenge from advocates of the bilingual education program was muted. They chose to argue on constitutional, scientific and educational grounds. They contended that the Arroyo directive and the "return to English" proposals were unconstitutional and at odds with scientific and educational findings where children learn a second language more efficiently if they are already literate in their first language. This argument was muffled by those who blamed the BEP for the perceived decline in English language competence among Filipinos as well as those who decried the use of Filipino as a medium of instruction.

In tracing the grip of English on the structural, historical and economic formations of the country, I have shown the trajectory of English in the Philippines from its insertion in the country's linguistic economy during the period of American colonisation to its embeddedness – most especially via the education system – in the economic and social processes which produce Filipino workers for an externally-defined labour market. In this regard, the role of English in the Philippines can be seen as the evolving nexus of interests within and beyond the state. Within the Philippine state, the dominance of English has been reinforced by the elite's symbolic struggles over power in the wake of post-colonialism. Beyond the Philippine state, the entrenchment of English is secured by the country's structural insertion at the margins of the world economy, first as an export-oriented economy catering to foreign capital then as a source of cheap and English-speaking workers for particular niches in the global labour market. These intra-national and international forces, modulated at the switchboard of the state and engendered by a flawed education system, collude to produce and enforce the grip of English in the Philippines.

Mitigating the grip of English

Will this grip of English on the Philippines continue? Currently, there are two house bills pending in the Philippine congress which seek to permanently address the language problems of the country. The first bill, House Bill 5619 or the Gullas, Villafuerte and Del Mar bill, is a consolidated English-only Medium of Instruction bill. It proposes that English *or* Filipino *or* the regional language may be used as the medium of instruction from preschool to Grade 3. This implies that English could be the only medium of instruction in the lower grades. From Grade 4 to 6, all levels in high school and in university, English would be promoted as the "language of instruction" in schools as well as the "language of assessment" in all government examination and entrance tests to public schools and state universities (Barawid 2009). In rationalizing this "return to English", the main proponent of the bill, Cebu 1st district Representative Eduardo Gullas predictably emphasised the indispensability of English in ensuring that Filipinos remain competitive in the labour market:

> Mounting global unemployment due to the worsening economic slump has merely underscored the need for our human resources to be proficient in English – the world's *lingua franca* – in order to stay highly competitive in the job markets here and abroad. (Barawid 2009)

The second bill, House Bill No. 162 or the Multilingual Education bill (MLE), filed by Representative Magtanggol Gunigundo, opposes the English-only bill.[5] The MLE bill proposes the use of the mother tongues as the primary medium of instruction in all subjects from pre-school up to the end of elementary education. English and Filipino would be introduced only in the later years of elementary education (starting from Grade 4) in some parts of the curriculum. In the secondary level, English and Filipino would be used as the medium of instruction, with the mother

5. The bill was originally filed as House Bill 3719 in March 2008.

tongues as auxiliary medium (Gunigundo 2010). Interestingly, in arguing for the institutionalisation of mother tongue based multilingual education, Gunigundo also chose to highlight how such a move would also increase Filipino competitiveness in the labour market. He emphasised how the "emancipatory" policy is "central to reforming [the] Philippine education system in order for it to provide quality education that produces graduates with good thinking and reading skills that enhance Filipino competitiveness in the labour market" (Gunigundo 2010).

While both bills appear to put a similar premium on competitiveness, they represent fundamentally different frameworks of national development. Those who argue in favor of English-only conceive of national development in terms of integration with the global economy, facilitated largely by a labour force proficient in the world's dominant language. Those who argue for MLE appear to imagine national development in terms of widening access to valuable material and symbolic resources, among them English and Filipino, numerical and scientific literacy and perhaps, most importantly, the opportunity to gain higher levels of formal education.

The move to use the mother tongues in Philippine formal education is certainly not new. In fact, the use of the mother tongues as auxiliary media of instruction is enshrined in Article 16, Section 7 of the 1987 Philippine constitution. Furthermore, as Tupas points out,

> the 20th century has seen intermittent efforts to bring vernacular education into mainstream formal education in the Philippines … There were attempts at vernacularization (1903–1909) at the start of American colonial rule in the country, and the vernacular experiments in Iloilo in the Visayan region (1948–1954) during the early postcolonial years revealed results that would later serve as good justification for the use of local languages in the schools … There have been at least ten major research projects carried out since the Iloilo experiments attesting to the validity of mother tongue education in the early grades. (Tupas 2009: 29)

What is significant about the MLE bill is how it represents, in Tupas' words, a "re-engagement" with a national language policy which had been dominated and largely shaped by language ideological debates on English and Filipino, and by the increasing grip of English. The proposed institutionalisation of MLE has significantly shifted the terms of engagement in Philippine language policy.

First, MLE has moved away from conflating the mother tongues with Filipino, the national language, a tendency which, arguably, those who supported the BEP in previous language wars had. By explicitly recognizing the essential and advantageous role of the mother tongues, the MLE is acknowledging the role of local communities and how local knowledge can be valued in the classroom with the use of the mother tongues.

Second, MLE seems to have, at least so far, successfully re-introduced empirical data as essential to debates regarding language policy in the country. MLE proponents have not only based the legitimacy of mother tongue based multilingual education on what is highly recommended by international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), they have used local studies conducted in non-Filipino speaking parts of the country to show that the use of local languages is cognitively advantageous for students with those being taught in the mother tongue doing significantly better in all of the subjects, *including* English and Filipino, than those who were being taught using the prescribed media of instruction for the subject (e.g. English for Science, Filipino for Social Studies). The study that has perhaps been most highlighted in MLE-related publications and presentations, has been the longitudinal Lubuagan-Kalinga MLE study where the children were monolingual in Lubuagan. To these children, the regional lingua franca, Ilocano, as well as the languages of the classroom, Filipino and English, would all be new (Dekker and Young 2005; Dumatog and Dekker 2003). The English-only camp has been largely unable to respond to the evidence-based arguments forwarded by MLE proponents.

Third, MLE has broad multi-sectoral institutional support from the academe, representatives from business, crucial national and local government agencies (e.g. the Department of Education, the National Economic Development Authority, the Naga City Governance Institute, etc.) and non-government organisations. This is evident in the consortium called 170+Talaytayan MLE which has been a leading force in advocating for mother tongue based MLE.[6] The consortium is made up of education stakeholders from the University of the Philippines and the Philippine Normal University, as well as non-governmental organisations such as Save the Children, Nakem International, Defenders of the Indigenous Language of the Archipelago (DILA)-Philippines, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and the Translators Association of the Philippines (170+ Talaytayan MLE: 2011). In 2010, 170+ Talaytayan MLE, along with the Department of Education and SIL, organised the first Philippine conference-workshop on mother tongue based MLE in Cagayan de Oro City. The 2011 conference, which was held in Legazpi City, Albay was convened with various local education stakeholders and non-governmental organisations which include Bicol University, the Naga City Governance Institute and An Banwa: Kultura Boda Artes Kan Tabaco (AKBAT). Perhaps more importantly, proponents of MLE appear to be committed to encouraging and supporting the introduction and the ownership of MLE "from below", school by school,

6. The 170+ stands for the more than 170 languages in the country.

community by community (Nolasco, Datar & Azurin 2011).[7] Nolasco, a leading proponent of MLE, has emphasised in his MLE primer that "[t]he Lubuagan experience, the DepEd lingua franca project, and other existing programs using the local languages tell us that it is already possible to undertake an MLE program *without waiting for legislation*" (2009: 15, emphasis mine). Moves towards introducing MLE from below have ranged from the introduction of an MLE course as part of teacher preparation to conducting intensive training for MLE trainers (Padre 2010). This grassroots approach is key not just to increasing the legitimacy of MLE as an alternative in Philippine education but also to ensuring that it can be sustained in the local communities that stand to benefit most from it.

In terms of English, MLE holds the promise of redressing the issue of the distribution of this important linguistic capital. Theoretically, English will potentially no longer be the sole domain of the elite. More children may have a better chance of developing a good foundation in literacy that they can use to successfully learn English as well as Filipino. More importantly, MLE proponents have framed the use of the mother tongues within the much broader project of reforming the Philippine education system and providing "quality of education for all Filipinos, including members of both ethnic and linguistic minorities and pave their escape from poverty" (Gunigundo 2010). This framing, although not without problems, may be the beginning of a fundamental shift in Philippine education from a system (with the requisite languages) that seems to be wholly constructed to meet external demands to one that addresses the issue of quality of education *and equity* in the Philippines, from the perspective of local communities.

Some concerns

However, it must be noted that while MLE may potentially mitigate the grip of English in the Philippines, the symbolic power of English remains. Proponents of MLE have been careful to highlight how MLE is not a threat to English and Filipino and that it in fact even improves the learning of English and Filipino. In the words of the proponent of the bill himself:

7. It is telling, for example, that the MLE conferences spearheaded by 170+ Talaytayan have been held outside of Manila – in Cagayan de Oro City (2010) and in Legazpi City (2011). The different regions have also been very active in organizing their own fora and conferences on MLE. For example, in January 2011, a mother tongue based MLE conference was held in Urdaneta City, Pangasinan. In February 2011, a forum on mother tongue based MLE is scheduled to be held in Zamboanga City (Pedro 2010).

> Using the language the child understands not only affirms the value of the child and his cultural heritage but also enables the child to immediately master the lessons in the school curriculum and at the same time facilitates the acquisition of Filipino and English that will also be taught in the first language of the child. As the mother tongue is used in the classroom, the critical thinking and reading skills that are developed transfer to other languages when those languages become functional. (Gunigundo 2010)

Arguably, such a stance could be seen as part of an advocacy discourse that is necessary in order to achieve multi-party and multi-sectoral support of mother tongue based education. However, in doing this, it may appear that the mother tongues are valuable only in so far as they help children learn English and Filipino. Also, the measure of success for MLE is still success in the formal education system and this emphasis may tend to ignore, overlook and crowd out the other benefits of MLE such as the legitimation of local knowledge and the empowerment of local communities (Hays 2009). As Tupas insightfully points out: "Local languages must not only be seen as pedagogically superior because of their cognitive potential for faster learning. More importantly, they must also be seen as useful elements in the development process" (2009: 30).

With the MLE still in its infancy, the extent to which it can live up to its promise still remains to be seen, though there is perhaps no better time to change the terms in which the grip of English in the Philippines is sustained. For one, Benigno Aquino, the current president of the country, has signaled his support for the use of the mother tongues as a medium of instruction in his proposed program of education, albeit as a means of connecting to one's heritage:

> I fully support the UNESCO-tried and tested formula on mother tongue instruction. From pre-school to Grade 3, we will use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction while teaching English and Filipino as subjects. From Grades 4–6 (7), we will increasingly use English as the medium of instruction for science & math and Filipino for Araling Panlipunan (social studies). For High School, English should be the medium of instruction for science, math & English; Filipino for AP, Filipino and tech-voc education. My view: We should become tri-lingual as a country. Learn English well and connect to the World. Learn Filipino well and connect to our country. Retain your dialect and connect to your heritage. (Aquino 2010)[8]

8. In its emphasis on the mother tongue as a means of connecting to one's heritage, the president's stance is conceptually different from MLE which emphasizes the cognitive advantages of the mother tongue as well as to a lesser extent, the grassroots development that can stem from it. His stance though may lead to similar forms of implementation.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have traced how the dominance of English in the Philippines has come about and been reinforced by the elite's symbolic struggles over power and the country's structural insertion as a source of cheap, English-speaking labour at the margins of the world economy. With the possible introduction of MLE, while the grip of English may remain the same in so far as the symbolic value of English has not changed, the move may address a fundamental issue: the distribution of important economic and symbolic resources. In the evolving nexus of interests that is the language policy of the Philippines, local voices may have finally carved out a space where the grip of English can begin to be contested.

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CHAPTER 11

Nimble tongues

Philippine English and the feminization of labour

Maria Teresa Tinio

In the Philippines, state policies for economic development focus on two things: attracting foreign investors to set up export-oriented manufacturing and business-process outsourcing industries or supporting the already well-established structures that encourage Filipino workers to find jobs abroad. These three industries have a great impact on Filipino women as it is mostly women who are employed in minimum-wage jobs at manufacturing firms or who are sent abroad as domestic helpers or "entertainers." With such policies – which rely on foreign investors and employers needing a cheap but trainable labor force – English becomes a necessary skill for Filipino women. Following Bourdieu's concept of the "structured systems of sociologically pertinent linguistic differences" corresponding to "an equally structured system of social difference," it is not surprising that Philippine English displays characteristics of this structured system of social difference. This is most evident in a study done in 1995 by Ma. Lourdes Bautista that described three sub-varieties of Philippine English as *yaya* (nanny) English, bargirl English, and *colegiala* (Catholic schoolgirl) English. What is immediately striking about this template is both the inscription of the labor-export economy into, and the feminization of, Philippine English. This study examines the relations between language, power, and the new, postmodern, global, economic order of which English is both a catalyst and an offshoot. It will attempt to determine how the relations between the linguistic standard and the sub-varieties correspond to the link between patriarchal state/global capital and the most marginalized groups within that order.

Over the past century, English has played a central part in Philippine life. It officially entered the Philippines alongside a program of instituting mass public education throughout the islands. The program itself was instituted when America annexed the Philippines following the Treaty of Paris (approved by the United States Senate in 1899), at the end of the Spanish-American war. From the beginning, American colonial officials took as a given the idea that English would be the medium of communication not only in public schools but throughout the whole nation. The first official statements regarding the institution of English in the Philippines came from the Schurman Commission of 1900 (an exploratory and recommendatory body appointed by the United States President) and later in the same year from the Taft Commission (a legislative and executive body also appointed by the United States President). In these statements there was much discussion about English being made the official language and about efforts towards promoting it as the common language. By January 1901, Act 74 was passed. This act provided for English as the basis of instruction in all public schools and this policy remained virtually unchanged in the Philippines until the 1970s when, with the 1972 Constitution, a bilingual education policy was instituted (Bautista 1996: 223–227). Filipino, the national language, was going to be used, in the study of subjects other than Filipino itself for the very first time. English was to be used only for teaching English, science and mathematics. This bilingual policy was again reaffirmed by the 1987 constitution.

The campaign to define and institute a national language (first declared in 1939 as Pilipino, later to be called Filipino) and the campaign to allow both the national language and other Philippine languages a place in Philippine life had been and continues to be a struggle (Gonzalez 1980). Many educators and linguists defend the bilingual policy and are critical of the old English-language policy (Bernardo 2008: 29–48; Tupas 2007: 61–84).[1] Despite this, there exists a strong and influential discourse around the idea of the importance of English for global competitiveness in the labour market. Former President Gloria Arroyo was a strong proponent of this move, pushing for a "return to English as primary medium of instruction" because "our English literacy, our aptitude and skills give us a competitive edge in ICT [Information and Communication Technology]" (Arroyo 2003). Currently, there is pending legislation in the Philippine Congress that calls for the use of English as the sole medium of instruction for grades four up to high school and for the encouragement of the use of English as the language of interaction in schools.[2] Despite strong opposition to such a move from academe and from nationalists,

1. See for example Gonzalez (1996: 228–39). Gonzalez talks about his personal experiences as a member of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines (LSP), about lobbying for a bilingual policy during the framing of the 1987 constitution, about efforts of the LSP to standardize and "intellectualize Filipino" and about evaluating the bilingual policy for the Department of Education.

2. Republic of the Philippines, House of Representatives, Committee Report 1570 on House Bill 5619, "Strengthening and Enhancing the Use of English as the Medium of Instruction Act", submitted Dec 5 2008.

the state remains convinced that English-language proficiency will ensure a more globally-competitive Filipino workforce and create more jobs.[3]

The focus on creating a competitive work force and developing the labour market both for labour outsourcing into the Philippines and labour export to more developed countries, has been the centerpiece of the state's development program for the past forty or so years.[4] Most Third World nations, usually those that were former colonies, come from economies that relied on the export of agricultural and natural resources. After independence, these nations focused on developing their local industries through protectionism and through import-substitution industrialization. This was to change with the rise of transnational corporations and the increase in competition between American, European, and Japanese companies after World War Two – the key to competitiveness became finding ways to cut production costs. Transnational corporations developed the strategy of international subcontracting – relocating the most labour-intensive part of the production process in Third World countries where labour was cheap. International subcontracting and the special zones created to facilitate this labour-intensive subcontracting – the export processing zone (EPZ) – became the cornerstone of what is known as export-oriented industrialization (EOI). In the Philippines, much of the production within EOIs is the manufacture of what is classed as "electronics and components" and the manufacture of apparel and clothing accessories.[5] The manufacturing of electronics and components in export processing zones is mostly the assembly of semi-conductor devices such as integrated circuits, transistors and diodes, printed circuit boards, liquid crystal displays, resistors, capacitors, etc. (Tauli-Corpuz 1999: 53).

3. One of the stated objectives of the bill is "to raise to a higher level of English language proficiency of Filipino students and graduates of our educational system in line with the demands of business and industries to be competitive in the business world; and English language proficiency or the ability to communicate in the world of economic enterprise is the key for Filipino graduates to get better jobs here or oversees considering that English is the language of research, engineering, science and technology and other areas which is an accepted practice in global and business employment". One would imagine that such legislation might help, first and foremost, the authors of this bill itself.

4. For an overview of the transition from protected markets to export-oriented industrialization and for a comprehensive discussion on the workings of export-oriented industrialization and export processing zones see Bello (1992).

5. The top Philippine exports from 1980–2000 was first, "electronics and components" and second "articles of apparel and clothing accessories". Information from the National Statistics Office reproduced in Ibon Databank and Research Center (2005: 59).

The fact that most Third World countries in Asia and Latin America simultaneously subscribed to export-oriented industrialization can be explained by the fact that EOI is a development policy encouraged by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as a way to generate more foreign exchange earnings (Bello 1992: 39). The process of securing a structural adjustment loan from the World Bank carries with it loan conditionalities which include specific instructions to the borrowing government such as the creation of infrastructure like export processing zones (sometimes called a techno-park or an industrial estate) and special breaks for the foreign investor such as tax exemptions and labour deregulation (Bello 1992: 42).

There is a deep connection between the prioritization of export-oriented industrialization and the Philippine labour-export economy and this is succinctly explained by Delia Aguilar:

> As a model of economic growth for the Philippines, export-led growth replaced that of import substitution, using as its foundation the diversification of export manufacture to obtain foreign exchange for the purchase of capital goods necessary for industrialization. A corollary that before long became the experience of many families desperate to solve their economic troubles was the rude awakening to their interchangeability of consumer goods and human beings (a daughter, sister, husband, or brother) as export commodities. (Aguilar 1988: 9)

Aguilar's description that links the export of commodities and the export of labour shows that what both activities have in common is the pursuit of foreign exchange. The state's focus on, even obsession with, the acquisition of foreign exchange has led to the policy, now taken very much for granted, of labour export. In the 1970s, overseas contract work was supposed to be an interim strategy to address the problem of unemployment and the problem of balance of payments. It has since become a major economic strategy, promoted by the state as the solution to unemployment in the Philippines (Santos 2002: 3). Currently, there are 8.2 million Filipinos living overseas, 4.7 of whom can be considered overseas Filipino workers (OFW). Remittances from these OFWs rose over the past thirty years: in the 1980s, remittances contributed 1.3% to the gross domestic product while over the past ten years the average has risen to around 10%. The vast majority of these OFWs are either service workers (37.7%) or production workers (30.7%) with over two-thirds of service workers being domestic helpers.[6] The majority of these

6. Data on the number of Filipino workers abroad from the Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO) for the end of 2006; data for remittances from the Central Bank of the Philippines; data for the skills categories of OFWs from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) cited in Ibon Facts and Figures (2008: 5–6, 21 respectively).

workers are women: statistics show that, from 2002 to 2008, 63.32% of newly hired OFWs were women and that a vast majority of the jobs that were filled by Filipino women were for "household and related workers", "caregivers and caretakers", and "professional nurses".[7]

As state prescriptions for economic development are centered on creating a competitive work force and as one of the essential requirements of a competitive workforce is its ability to communicate in English, the state has plugged into and highlighted the discourse of English for global competitiveness. The features of this discourse include the idea that competitiveness is increased by a labour force that has a high level of English proficiency and the idea that English proficiency is achieved through the implementation of English as the sole medium of instruction. The discourse of English for global competitiveness is a dominant one despite efforts by linguists such as Allan Bernardo to highlight that "there is no scientific basis for saying that using English as a medium of instruction is the best means of creating students with good English skills" and that there is "strong evidence in the scholarly literature to suggest that the native language(s) of students may be effectively used as a scaffolding for developing good English language proficiency" (2008: 41).

The feminization of non-standard Philippine English

Against this vision of an imagined labour force that is highly proficient in English is the reality of highly polarized levels of English proficiency. This has led linguists such as Ma. Lourdes Bautista to described Philippine English as "bipolar" with one pole being "educated Philippine English" or "the English used by newspaper columnists and editorial writers" and the other pole being "exemplified by *yaya* English or bar girl English" (2000: 14). Similarly, historian Vicente Rafael has sketched the Philippine linguistic and cultural landscape by describing a hierarchy of languages, the top of which is occupied by English, the bottom of which is occupied by Tagalog (2000: 167–170). Indeed, Bautista's full-length study of standard Philippine English finds that the spectrum of the varieties of Philippine English is "better captured by the end-point bipolar terms 'educated-idiosyncratic' rather than the three way distinction in the current New Englishes literature of 'acrolect-mesolect-basilect'" (2000: 14). Language stratification is symptomatic of the harsh and polarized social stratification in the Philippines.

7. Data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) (Center for Women's Resources 2010: 10).

The linguistic underclasses that are described in these studies serve as an unwitting testament to how the state language policies are actually appendages of larger state policies and prescriptions for economic development. These state policies focus on attracting foreign investors to set up export-oriented manufacturing concerns that will offer minimum wage jobs to mostly female workers or encourage the structures that enable the huge industry of sending Filipino workers, most of whom are women, oversees to work as domestic helpers. Within such a set-up – where foreign investors needing a cheap but trainable labour force come to the Philippines or where workers, mostly women, are encouraged to find jobs in more economically developed countries and regions like Singapore, Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, Europe and the Middle East – English becomes a necessary skill.[8] This arrangement is suggestive of Bourdieu's of description the *linguistic market* and of *linguistic capital* and the idea that the "profit of distinction" is awarded to that group which possesses linguistic dominance, and conversely, that those who are classed as possessing the linguistic sub-varieties are those who would be part of the economically weakest group (1991: 55–57).[9]

Three of these sub-varieties of Philippine English are described in Bautista's "Notes on Three Sub-Varieties of Philippine English" (1996: 93–101). The study appeared as an addendum to a brief but general essay by Andrew B. Gonzalez entitled "Philippine English" (1996: 88–92).[10] The Gonzalez essay describes, one assumes, standard Philippine English. The juxtaposition of Gonzalez's essay to that of Bautista's underscores how this standard Philippine English contrasts to the sub-varieties of Philippine English which Bautista's study identifies. It is important to note that Bautista identifies only three sub-varieties, all of which are the speech of particular groups of women. The stark feminization of non-standard Philippine English is symptomatic of the feminization also of state domestic labour policy and labour export policy. It is also symptomatic of the long history the Philippines has had of "special relations" with American military forces, in which women also figure prominently.

The world Englishes paradigm, of which both Bautista's and Gonzalez's work has been focused, has come under fire for its triumphalist stance of seeing English

8. From 2001–2008, the percentage of women over men deployed as oversees Filipino worker (OFW) new hires was 63.32%. 2004 saw the highest gender discrepancy with 74.29% of OFWs being women (Center for Women's Resources 2010: 9).

9. Bourdieu's discussion is, of course, more complex than described here as he names other factors that determine access to the profit of distinction such as the (unequal) access to training, position in the social structure, other competencies, and the unification of the market.

10. Bautista would, four years later, publish a more comprehensive and full length-study of describing standard Philippine English.

as no longer being the tool of the colonial master but as having been appropriated and now owned by the former colonies.[11] Specifically, the critique of the discourse of Philippine English has been championed virtually single-handedly and insistently by T. Ruanni Tupas who is critical of the "limited yet comfortable space of positivist linguistics where we describe and analyse the various ways we use English in the country" because it "ignore[s] the conditions of the people who use (and do not use) the language in the first place" (Tupas 2004: 54).[12] Specifically, of Bautista's essay on the three sub-varieties of Philippine English, Tupas argues that it "has not moved away from a correlational approach to language varieties" and has "failed to explain why the subjects spoke the way they did in the first place" (2004: 54). Tupas's disappointment with the empiricism of such studies and his demand for a more critical approach that ties World English to historical and current relations of power is quite easily addressed. Pierre Bourdieu, after all, found that the linguistic oppositions that were of little interest to a linguist were the sociologist's goldmine because these oppositions were the retranslation of a system of social differences (1991: 54). Thus, relations between the linguistic standard and the sub-varieties can be mined for what they can reveal about relations between language, power, and the new postmodern global order of which the rise of English is both a catalyst and an offshoot. The relationship between these linguistic idiosyncrasies and patriarchal state/global capital reflects what Bourdieu calls "the relationship between the structured systems of sociologically pertinent linguistic differences and the equally structured systems of social difference" and addresses Tupas's call to look at the relations of power to which language is inextricably connected (Bourdieu 1991: 54).

Indeed, Bautista's work on the sub-varieties of Philippine English, does little by way of explaining the gendered character of and the class delineations within her model. The essay itself is brief, a mere eight pages, half of which is used for lengthy examples. In it, Bautista describes the three sub-varieties of Philippine English by describing the deviations from standard Philippine English and offers very little by way of analysis of the causes of the deviations or of the groups' particular relation to English or of the groups' positions and functions within the larger social sphere.

The three sub-varieties identified by Bautista are *Yaya* English, Bargirl English, and *Colegiala* English. The *yaya* or nanny is a woman, usually young, with little schooling, usually from a poor, rural family, who works in an urban household

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11. Kachru (2006: 446–71) provides a good overview of this debate. See also Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2005).

12. Similar sentiments expressed by Tupas are found in Tupas (2008: 67–86; 2002: 137–177).

as a caregiver of either children or the elderly. The bargirl is of interest linguistically because the bargirl referred to here is the bargirl of the red-light district that grew outside the periphery of the Clark and Subic airbases, Clark and Subic being municipalities in central Luzon where the United States government held military bases for almost ninety years. The *colegiala*, is a convent school girl. The *colegiala* (from the Spanish word *colegio*, meaning school) occupies the opposite position in the socio-economic spectrum from that of the *yaya* and the bargirl, in fact the *colegiala* would surely have been cared for by a *yaya*. The convent school or the Catholic girls' school (as it is also sometimes called) is not an indicator of an aspiration for particular religious training as much as it is an indicator of social class.

The essay begins with a description of the syntactic (gross deviations in tense and tense sequence, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent congruence, etc.) and lexical (insertion of Tagalog particles, lack of verb-preposition collocations) features of *yaya* English. A qualification Bautista makes is that the features of *yaya* English are actually typical of standard Philippine English, the difference being that the errors in standard Philippine English are sporadic and infrequent and are considered slips. Bautista identifies the deeper problem of *yaya* English as the fact that its errors arise from ignorance of the rules (1996: 94). Her explanation for the presence of *yaya* English is sparse; her only explanation being that the *yaya* is forced to use English because her young charges are usually from affluent families that speak English. Bautista then describes Bargirl English, reporting that it follows the general outlines of *yaya* English, a big difference being the influence of non-standard English on Bargirl English (1996: 96). She illustrates this difference as being manifested in copula-deletion, double-negation, a non-Filipino idiomatic flavor, and the use of "you know". Finally, Bautista describes the characteristics of *colegiala* English. She observes that what she calls "the base language" is English but that the syntax is characteristically Tagalog (predicate + subject). Other characteristics of *colegiala* English are frequent insertion of common Tagalog function words (particles, conjuctions, etc.) and the use of Tagalog content words and Tagalog exclamatives. The *colegiala* belongs to the higher socio-economic class associated with educated English. She is usually quite comfortable with English and this is why it is the base language of *colegiala* English. Bautista's brief explanation for why *colegiala* English deviates from standard Philippine English is that the switching to Tagalog contributed to a sense of rapport and solidarity (1996: 101). Bautista's essay is mostly descriptive and is quite spare but immediately leads us to make some connections between language, gender, and globalization. The sections that follow will attempt to describe these connections more fully. Bautista's configuration of the sub-varieties of Philippine English as feminized is, at first glance, curious. Yet, on closer inspection, the logic of this configuration becomes quite apparent, even brilliant. In the state template for economic development – the drawing in of foreign investors and the sending off of labour for export – Filipino labour, and in particular Filipina labour, are expected to be able to serve and care for the client. Despite the fact that English is not the first language of the Filipina labourer, she is expected to have at least a working use of it to be able to meet the client's needs. The sub-varieties of Philippine English are the byproduct of these state economic policies and Bautista's configuration brilliantly illustrates this.

Nimble fingers, nimble tongues

The Philippines, probably more than most other countries, has always had a history of having to let in, accommodate, serve, interact, communicate with, and make space for non-Filipinos. The nation's history is long and varied: three hundred years under Spain, fifty under America, the war years under Japan. This history has been brought to bear on current foreign relations. Each Philippine president since the 1970s has signed into law (or made presidential decrees) legislation/executive orders that institute measures that allow foreign investors special privileges and incentives such as tax exceptions, duty-free importation of equipment and even personal effects of foreign nationals, special immigration arrangements, lower rent and in some cases even 100% ownership.[13] Special relations, particularly between the United States and the Philippines, is evident not only in economic legislation but in military and cultural/linguistic relations as well. This state template for economic development and the special relations with foreign invaders/investors that twin it have effects on Filipino women workers that are personal, discursive, and linguistic.

First, the state practice of valuing special relations with foreign investors translates into personal matrices for understanding one's specific position in the new global order. Intensified and made complex by the Philippine fifty-year history of being a United States colony, these relations create equally intense and complex personal/collective feelings and imaginings about these relations. The correspondence between the ideological dreamworks of United States-Philippine relations with actual United States-Philippine relations has been codified by Neferti Tadiar. Tadiar's work focuses on how the fantasy of an Asia-Pacific family and of a Philippine-American romance translates into the materiality of real sexual labour and commerce, both on the national and on the individual level. She argues that nations "like individuals, behave in particular (sexual) ways and act with particular desires" (Tadiar 2004: 38). The personal/individual is imbricated in the

13. For an overview of the EPZ policies of each Philippine president see Ibon Databank and Research Center, *Export Processing Zones*, 55–63.

political/national/global and the economic/political fantasy is imbricated in the libidinal fantasy and vice-versa because individuals, like national governments, imagine and act as if a unified global community exists with national governments acting as individual citizens of this community. Desire for surplus wealth/pleasure is, Tadiar tells us, "produced by and producing a fantasy of political-libidinal economies that regulate individual and national lives" (2004: 38). Both fantasized and real global relations translate into regional relations and into national relations and finally down to individual relations. One can only imagine what role English plays in this fantasy of a unified global community and how the dramatic rise in World Englishes corresponds to this post-cold war vision of the new global order. Sub-standard/sub-varieties of English both fuel the fantasy and also stand witness to the stark differences in the order and expose exactly how women workers pay for the fulfillment of the fantasy, through economic, physical and linguistic flexibility and contortion.

Second, transnational corporations tend to hire women in what is described as the "feminization of employment" because they represent the kind of labour required in export processing zones or EPZs – manual dexterity (for the assembly of semi-conductor devices, clothing and clothing accessories), subservience, and willingness to work for low wages. It has been reported that, on average, at least 70 percent of the workforce of any given enterprise in an EPZ is composed of women (Ghosh 1999: 22). A more recent report from the Philippines places the total percentages of women workers at EPZs at 80 percent (Center for Women's Resources 2010: 6). This feminization is fueled by the idea of "labour market flexibility". Women are seen as being eminently suitable, both physically and economically, to this concept of "labour market flexibility", as they are "more 'nimble-fingered', more tractable and subservient to managerial authority, less prone to organize into unions, more willing to accept lower wages and easier to dismiss using life-cycle criteria such as marriage and childbirth" (Ghosh 1999: 22).[14] In the Philippines, the value of the nimble fingers of women at work on assembly lines are described this way: "deftness of fingers and stamina are valuable qualities to be able to perform the tasks, giving females an edge over males" (Paguntalan 2002: 49).

English proficiency is not included in this list of valuable traits of the EPZ employee and there is probably a very limited need for oral communication among women who do work at EPZs. Yet, the state, with its focus on the EPZs as a special economic zone where the ease and comfort of the foreign investor is assured, is locked into the idea of creating a labour force that is fully proficient in English, demanding that its work force be not only nimble fingered but nimble

14. See also Saloma-Akpedonu (2005: 93–109). Saloma-Akpedonu describes the process of "deskilling", which is the fragmentation of work into smaller, simpler and unskilled tasks.

tongued as well. The "logical connection" that lawmakers make between English and economic development is seemingly self-evident: global business is conducted in English, therefore the nation's workforce must be English-proficient. The argument for the necessity of increasing the role of English (by effectively eliminating any role of any of the Philippine languages) in basic education is made time and again: English proficiency must be achieved as it is "in line with the demands of business and industries to be competitive in the business world".[15] Bernardo has identified this discourse as the "usefulness of English" discourse, one of the discourses on the role of English in education. He describes it as a "persistent argument" for maintaining English as the medium of instruction (over other Filipino languages) because of the perceived advantages it brings to economic advancement. Bernardo notes that studies on the Bilingual Education Policy do not show any link between language and overall student achievement and that the "usefulness of English" discourse "is one that is not shaped simply by empirical evidence" (2008: 32–34).

A more direct way through which export-oriented industrialization connects to Philippine language policy and to Philippine English is in the recent rise of business process outsourcing also known as the call center industry. This industry is identified as one of the fastest rising industries in the Philippines, employing one hundred and sixty thousand as of May 2007 (Center for Women's Resources 2010: 3).

Business process outsourcing (BPO), like export-oriented industrialization, is an invention of transnational corporations in their efforts to cut production costs. Profits are increased by relocating their customer service information operation – an essential but clerical and tedious part of their operations – to a location with a cheap but linguistically-competent labour force. Business interests such as banks, insurance companies, appliance and computer manufacturers, travel agencies whose principal operations are located in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, relocate their customer service departments to places like the Philippines where Filipino agents receive their customers' complaints and queries from half-way across the world. Women also figure prominently in this industry with 55.5 percent of call center employees being women, 78 percent of whom work the night shift (Center for Women's Resources 2010: 3).

In the Philippines, the growth and dominance of the call center industry is palpable to any urban resident: business complexes devoted to call center operations have mushroomed in most major cities. Several post-high school and tertiary level educational institutions have revamped their curricula in order to provide their students with English language training suitable for call center employment; the

15. House Bill 5619, "Strengthening and Enhancing the Use of English as the Medium of Instruction Act", submitted Dec 5, 2008.

ICT industry has also made requests of several tertiary level institutions to participate both in training and research for it (Lockwood, Forey and Price 2008: 227). The call center industry's dominant presence is also seen in the Sunday classifieds of the major broadsheets that weekly advertise employment opportunities for "customer care representatives", "technical support representatives", "outbound sales representatives". One job market advertisement put out by IBM lists the following ideal qualifications of prospective applicants for sales support specialist positions:

> College graduate of a 4-year course, preferably in Marketing, Sales or related fields; excellent English communication skills, work experience in any field, or background in sales or marketing is an advantage, proficient computer multitasking and internet application skills, good analytical, documentation and organizational skills with keen attention to detail and accuracy, willing to work on shifting schedules, including graveyard and holidays.
>
> (IBM Job Market Advertisement 2010: J12)

The employment requirement of "excellent English communication skills" is a quality that is not particularly rare in the Philippine college-graduate workforce, as a college graduate would have had significant exposure to English through out elementary and high school and would have had to use English almost exclusively in college.

The ideal employees for the call-center industry, also known as the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) or Information Communication Technology (ICT) Industry would be quite unlike the factory workers at the EPZs who are hired not for their ability to speak but for their ability to work with their hands. The most important trait of the BPO employees would be their facility with English, which in the Philippines would mean that they would be from middle class or even upper-middle class families. The *colegiala* described in Bautista's study, would be part of the BPO workforce. The "base language" of the *colegiala*, Bautista tells us, is English, and it is this familiarity and ease with English that is now valuable to the call-center industry.

The Business Process Outsourcing industry has made a commodity out of language and in particular, it values the "feminized linguistic style" (Cameron 2000: 323–347). The BPO industry is in the business of providing customer care and this is conveyed through the linguistic behaviour of the industry's employees. This feminized linguistic style, which is perceived to be one that conveys care and a willingness to help and to serve, is highly valued. The *colegiala*, Bautista tells us, is familiar and comfortable with English but deviates from it for the purposes of social cohesion. In a manner of speaking, one may say she performs her *colegiala* English in order to fit in with her peers. In the call-center industry she can, together with her "feminized linguistic style", quite easily draw on standard Philippine English for interaction with the customers.

The "labour-market flexibility" that was described earlier that applies to female assembly-line workers, here becomes applicable to the former *colegiala*, now call-center employee. She has to be tractable too – open to working night shifts when most of the calls come in because of the time difference between the Philippines and where most of the calls originate; and whereas EPZ employees are valued for being "nimble-fingered", the call center employee will be valued for being "nimble-tongued" because, as Lockwood, Forey and Price report, several establishments require that their customer service representatives undergo intensive training in acquiring a convincing American accent and performance in most instances is appraised in relation to the ability to assimilate Standard American English (Lockwood, Forey and Price 2008: 224–5). Thus, from being representative of a sub-variety of Philippine English, the *colegiala* can represent transnational corporations themselves through a shift into not just standard Philippine English but standard American English (Lockwood, Forey and Price 2008: 225).[16]

English and the care of the world

The economic concerns of the Philippine government – the prioritization of the labour-export policy and the welcoming of foreign investors for EPZs and the BPO industry – have made Filipino women responsible for the reproductive labour – the work of sustaining the productive labour force – of the world.[17] As such, they do the "emotional labour" and have become responsible for "the management of feelings" of clients throughout the world (Cameron 2000: 338). Filipino call-center employees have to listen to and help solve problems and queries over the phone. Filipino maids, nannies, caregivers in homes for the elderly, nurses, by the hundreds of thousands take care of the personal needs of hundreds of thousands of foreign employees. They cook, clean, wash, nurture young and elderly, and run households. The kind of work that overseas Filipino women workers are required to do is work that puts them into close personal contact with their foreign employers. A domestic helper will most surely live with her employee and the work of

16. Lockwood, Forey and Price report that some of these BPO companies have a policy of transparency (the customer service representative must state their offshore location if asked) and therefore do not require their representatives to mimic an American accent. It is assumed that these companies expect their representatives to speak, at least, standard Philippine English.

17. 66% of OFWs are in the United States. Other countries with large populations of OFWs are Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Canada, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Italy, and Singapore (Santos 2002: 3). The medium of communication between employer and employee in all of these countries except Japan and Italy is English.

the nanny, caregiver, and nurse is work that requires physical and even emotional care, sympathy and tenderness. Thus, like the call center employee, these Filipina workers constantly have to communicate with their foreign clients in English.

A professional nurse's exposure to English would have been extensive even before leaving the Philippines for her job abroad as she would have gone through several years of university (the instruction of which would have most likely been conducted in English) – much like a *colegiala* – and she would have had to pass board exams (which would have also been in English) both in the Philippines and in the country where she is seeking employment. Domestic helpers, however, will not have been as comfortable with English. Though domestic helpers are actually quite educated and skilled – reports show that 43% of overseas domestic helpers are high school graduates and 36% are either college undergraduates or college graduates – their English proficiency would not have been high (Palma-Beltran 1992: 5; de Guzman 2008: 608).[18] An Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) working as a domestic helper has a job that is physically and emotionally taxing (Palma-Beltran 1992: 5–6). The job is also linguistically taxing as well, as the domestic helper, in Singapore, Hong Kong, the United States, Canada or the Middle East is forced everyday to use English, a language that is not her first language and with which she is not entirely comfortable, for simple everyday domestic arrangements and transactions. Everyday, nimble Philippine tongues throughout the world are used to buy food at the market, set menus for the day or week, ask children and the elderly what it is they need, make arrangements and agreements about the cleaning of the house, the care of the garden, the running of errands, etc. The OFW domestic helpers have, as Bautista's essay illustrates, an uneasy relationship with English. Nevertheless, they carve out an expressive space for themselves. Odine de Guzman, who has studied OFW testimonial narratives written mostly in English, has described these spaces as spaces of "creativity and resilience" and the OFW domestic helpers themselves as "engag[ing the] languages, regardless of grammaticality, with exigency" (de Guzman 2008: 615). Marshalling their wit, creativity, and their labial and glossal abilities, these OFW domestic helpers transform their unease with the language into a tool that aids in the comfort and ease of their charges.

The bargirl described in Bautista's study is local, that is, she lives and works in the red light district of Clark and Subic where American air force and naval bases used to be. Yet, like the domestic helper, the bargirl, or the sex worker, or, as she is euphemistically and officially called, the entertainment industry worker, is now found all over the world (de Dios 1992: 42–3). Like the domestic helper, the

18. De Guzman identifies the OFWs as "functionally literate" and cites statistics that show that only about 23 percent of OFWs are college graduates and the majority are either elementary or secondary school graduates.

sex worker can also be seen as one who provides care globally, ministering to the libidinal needs of the world. Beginning in the 1970s, the export of female labour for the "entertainment" industry from the Third World into industrialized countries (principally Japan, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand) has increasingly become institutionalized into international labour migration (de Dios 1992: 42). For overseas Filipino women entertainers, the most popular destination is Japan. The influx of Filipina entertainers into Japan was so great that a new visa category called "entertainers visa" was issued beginning in 1981 (de Dios 1992: 43). The vast majority of these entertainment workers work at nightspots and discos doing "hostessing" – dancing in strip shows, socializing with male guests, and even engaging in prostitution (de Dios 1992: 42). One would have to include as well in the category of sex workers the thousands of mail-order brides – the Philippines being one of the major sources of brides for hundreds of marriage agencies that, for a price, can broker marriages between young and exotic Filipinas to (usually older) men from the United States, Germany, and Australia (Santos 2002: 9–10).[19]

The phenomenon of the mail-order bride, many scholars have shown, is a symptom of a long history of colonial, military, and economic relations the Philippines has had with the United States (Tolentino 1996: 49–76; Tadiar 2004: 42–56; Eviota 1992: 140). The precursors of the mail-order bride, as Roland Tolentino tells us, are the bargirls of Clark and Subic, whose experiences of interracial and intercultural relations laid the ground for the mail-order bride phenomenon which began in the mid-1970s (right around the time the rest and recreation industry that grew outside the American bases, was to begin its decline) and burgeoned in the 1980s (1996: 56).

Colonial relations and special economic relations between the United States and the Philippines were briefly discussed earlier in this essay. Military relations are the necessary third aspect that ensures America's strong (neo)colonial and economic authority. In the Philippines, this military presence was, and actually continues to be, commanding and the effect on women and the sex trade industry, dramatic. Clark Airbase and Subic Naval Base had been strong military presences in northern Luzon since the turn of the century but with the Vietnam War of the 1960s, Subic Naval Base became an essential strategic asset as well as a rest and recreation (R and R) spot for the American troops serving in Vietnam. Hundreds of clubs, hotels, and massage parlors mushroomed in Olongapo, the town right outside Subic. From 1964 to 1973 a daily average of 9,000 military personnel were going to Subic/Olongapo

19. Santos cites Commission on Filipino Overseas reports that show that from 1995–2000 the CFO had counseled 192,052 fiancées and spouses (counseling being a requisite for the issuance of a passport) and that the highest intake of Filipino brides and grooms, the greater majority of which were brides, was from the United States, Germany, and Australia.

for R and R. Even after the Vietnam War, when the R and R activity around Subic and Clark was no longer what it was during its heyday, the sex industry in these areas was still vibrant – in 1979, Olongapo had over 9,000 registered prostitutes and Angeles, the area outside of Clark Airbase had 7,000 (Eviota 1992: 136).

The bargirl whose English Bautista describes as a sub-variety of Philippine English is exactly these bargirls who are conscripted to, as Eviota puts it, "service the servicemen" (1992: 135). As these bargirls are with little or no education, taken from their poor families, often with a promise of education, their exposure to English is minimal (Eviota 1992: 136).

As Bautista reports, their English has the same characteristics of *yaya* English with the addition of the use of "you know" and non-Filipino idiomatic expressions. The "you know," added to the base of idiosyncratic English resulting from an unawareness of the basic rules creates a kind of ironic situation where knowledge and ignorance are both merged and contrasted. This knowledge/ignorance or the power/powerless dichotomy, played out here in language, is played out also in how prostitutes, sex workers, and bar girls are portrayed. Attempting to destabilize the "language of advocacy" that fixes prostitutes as the victim or the disempowered other, social scientists like Liza Law focus instead on "more nuanced geographies of resistance" that allows the sex worker "negotiated spaces of identity" (2000: 44). Law identifies such actions as the use of cosmetics, breast augmentation, "becoming modern", a refusal to speak to the researcher, judging and ostracizing other prostitutes for extra-marital affairs as "individual resistances" that, "taken together, play a role in defining the contested terrain of politics in/at the bar" (2000: 60–1). This fixation on identity and power invests the marginalized and powerless sex worker with phantom power. The sex industry, which is actually characterized by unequal structures of wealth and power, is here naturalized as part of the global economy and imagined as located within a terrain of equality.

The inferior, subordinate nature of bargirl English, masked through an attempt at ease and familiarity with the language with the addition of such non-Filipino idiomatic expressions as "you know", points to the fact of the material conditions of these women – poverty and lack of education that consign these women to sex work which in turn consign them to work as "cultural interpreters" and to speak the language which is not their own.[20]

The sex industry around Clark and Subic did not cease after the American bases were closed in 1992. As these bases were converted into industrial parks and tourist spots, the demand for sex workers never really stopped. The signing of the Visiting Forces Agreement in late 1999 between the United States and the

20. Law describes the multifarious roles prostitutes take on as including "dancers, cultural interpreters, prospective wives" (2000: 4).

Philippines guarantees a steady demand for sex workers and the perpetuation of a vibrant sex trade which is interracial, stratified, and possesses patterns of exploitation within a discourse of patronage that correspond to patterns within the global economic order.

Conclusion

Bautista's vision of the sub-varieties of Philippine English chronicles the global world order that demands of a former colony like the Philippines a cheap, female labour force that has a working knowledge of English. This working knowledge of English, the sub-varieties of Philippine English, are used to address the needs – manufacturing, technical, informational, domestic, and libidinal – of its clients. The sub-varieties are born out of the necessities of the jobs that the Philippine state directs its labour force to fill. Tupas's unease with "positivist linguistics" like that of Bautista's and call for a focus on "the conditions of the people who use it", appear puzzling amidst Bautista's configurations that illustrate the social situations that are inextricable from language. Inscribed into the subordinate varieties of Philippine English is both a history and current order of exploitation in the name of either modernization and industrialization or development or in the name of a congenial, economically equal and liberal Asia-Pacific family. The female assembly line worker who works for a minimum wage, and is, ironically, valued for her dispensability, supports the operations of the largest Western-based transnational corporations. The domestic helper helps to keep the Philippine economy afloat with her remitted dollar earnings. Her reproductive labour is essential to the productive labour of much of the world. The bargirl, though stigmatized, actually helps maintain American military power throughout the world. The middle-class *colegiala* is now prized for her contribution to the Business Process Outsourcing industry which brings in the much needed dollars. These women do much to help the Philippine government to make payments on its foreign debt, the enormity of which keeps these women poor, lacking in access to basic social services, and undereducated.[21] These women serve as the very foundations of the global economic order that oppresses them. The English that they speak, idiosyncratic as it is, serves as a not so silent witness of the tenderness, care, libido, pretense at/desire for an ease with Western culture that is imbricated into this oppression.

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21. The national debt of the Philippines as of 2009 was 54 billion dollars. The 2009 national budget was 1.3 trillion pesos, of which 600 billion went to debt servicing. The 2009 budget for the department of education was 160 billion. It is estimated that 70 centavos of every tax peso goes to debt servicing.

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PART III

Asia Pacific

CHAPTER 12

English vs. English conversation

Language teaching in modern Japan*

Mie Hiramoto

From the mid-1800s, at the end of the Tokugawa feudal period and the beginning of the Meiji era, English has been a singularly important foreign language in Japan which has, since that time, risen to international prominence, mirroring the rise of the English speaking world powers in the west. While English education was limited to the elites at this time, after World War II English education became available to the general public through the newly-implemented public education system. Today, English is considered one of Japan's most important school subjects, and English conversational skills are regarded as a highly desirable special talent. At the same time, most Japanese do not hide the difficulty they encounter with learning both written and spoken English. Even today Japan remains an essentially monolingual country and average person's ability to utilize English in any practical capacity is quite limited. This paper discusses Japan's idealization of native English speakers and the dilemma of learning how to speak like them while at the same time living in an isolated monolingual nation. The Japanese government struggles with appropriate strategies on English education curriculum, leaving considerable room for improvement in the education system. Without revising the current education plan, English will remain a weakness for Japan.

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Introduction: Japan's language policy

Because Japan is a predominantly monolingual nation, its language policy has mostly concerned the utilization of the Japanese language. Nevertheless, since the end of the feudal period and the beginning of the Meiji era (1868–1912), as Japan became an international power, English has been a significantly important foreign language.[1] Before going into details concerning the importance of English in Japan, the history of Japan's language policy will be briefly described.

Japan's practice of language planning and policy is relatively uncomplicated due to the strength of the idea of a national language, which has persisted since the time of the Meiji government. Gottlieb comments that "the Japanese language holds uncontested status as the national language, since except for certain ethnic minorities the overwhelming majority of those living in the Japanese archipelago are Japanese and the country has never been colonized" (2001: 22). Historically, prewar Japan's language policy focused largely on a domestic policy that included implementation of a language standardization movement and script reform (in relation to the *genbun-icchi* "unification of the written and colloquial language" movement). Teaching of the Japanese language in the colonized areas was another focus of language policy. Table 1 summarizes implementations of Japanese language policies in colonized regions conducted by the Japanese government during the colonial period.

Table 1. Japanese language policy (adopted from Yamada 2006: 65)

Year of occupation	Target location	Implemented policy
1869	Hokkaido (Japan)	National language/standardization movements (The dialect abolition movements)
1879	Okinawa (Japan)	
1895	Taiwan	National language/Japanese education movements (Suppression of the local languages)
1910	Korea	
1914	South Pacific Islands, etc.	Japanese language education (Suppression of the local languages)
1968	Ogasawara Islands (Japan)	

1. English came to be considered an important foreign language after the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry at the Japanese port of Urawa in 1853. Although English has been considered one of the most important school subjects since the beginning of the Meiji era in 1868, Japan's education system has generally not succeeded in endowing its students with sufficient communication skills or command of the language.

English education began to be emphasized among the elites in the early Meiji period, when, as Koike and Tanaka (1995) report, it employed mainly the grammar-translation methods that are still the norm for English education to this day. In order to strengthen communication skills rather than translation skills, the now defunct Japanese *Monbushô* "Ministry of Education" (now restructured as *Monbukagakushô* or MEXT "Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology") introduced pedagogical materials focusing on speech skills. Nevertheless, due to factors such as the nationalist movements and World War II, language policy concerning English remained relatively unstable until the post-war era. For example, Harold Palmer, a pioneer in the field of English language learning and teaching, was invited by *Monbushô* to be a "linguistic adviser" in 1922. Most English textbooks used in school systems were based on translations of English text to Japanese and little materials for training spoken English were available. Thus, Palmer introduced his Oral Method, a variation of the Direct Method of foreign language teaching whereby the target language is used as the language of instruction as much as possible. Palmer tailored his Oral Method to Japanese learners of English, working in Japan as the director of the Institute for Research in Language Teaching for fourteen years while creating and compiling pedagogical materials for Japanese elites. It seemed that English fever had taken over the educated Japanese population. However, the Oral Method did not become widely available in actual classrooms after all due to problems with its implementation. In order to be able to teach a language class according to the Direct Method, instructors were required to have a native or native-like English proficiency. Therefore, training of (non-native English speaking) Japanese instructors limited this approach (Imura 2003: 73–74).

Later, anti-English sentiments peaked with the outbreak of World War II, but the popularity of English education in Japan recovered soon after the war. After World War II, the Japanese government altered English education in Japan to make it more accessible to the general populace rather than to only a small elite. Ota states that since the war, with the imposition of mandatory middle school education, a much wider population has been exposed to English and, on average, almost the entire Japanese population will have at least three years of English education, over 90% of the population will have at least six years, and one third of the population will have at least eight years (1995: 244).

In the Japanese education system, formal English education starts at the first year of a junior high school, equivalent to the seventh grade in the United States school systems. After three years of junior high school education, English is taught for another three years at the high school level. It is worth noting that post-primary education, particularly at the post-secondary university level, employs competitive methods of student selection. Entrance examinations focus on specific subjects such as English, mathematics, and Japanese, and the scope of the exam questions tends to be relatively narrow. The English teaching methods traditionally employed, even after the war, have continued to emphasize reading and writing skills with a heavy focus on grammar in order to prepare students for entrance examinations (for an overview of this discussion, see Gottlieb 2008). *Juken eigo* "entrance examination English" hinges upon grammar and reading rather than speaking and listening, and thus junior high and high school students studying for *juken* "entrance examinations" naturally train themselves with exercises that strengthen their reading and translation skills in order to survive *juken jigoku* "examination hell". The topic of school English will be further discussed in the following section.

School English, courses of study, and unsuccessful results

Because traditional English study has been primarily concerned with passing examinations rather than becoming capable of speaking the language, the Japanese in general have developed a love-hate relationship with English (McVeigh 2004). Most Japanese students are unable to communicate with the language that they spend years learning, and this tendency does not change dramatically at the university level (for a discussion of the similar situation of English education in South Korea, see Park, this volume).[2] Due to the separation of school English (based on grammatical comprehension) from communicative English, English conversation has become recognized as a category of English learning separate from academic English. As a result, private English conversation schools have been established across the nation and have become quite popular. McVeigh interprets the Japanese word for English, *eigo*, as "English for Japanese" or "Japan-oriented English" and states:

> [*Eigo*] is English for climbing the examination-education ladder (actually, *eigo* is a sort of non-communicative, artificial language designed for testing purposes). The non-Japanese version of English, or "non-Japan-oriented English" (*eikaiwa*) is "English for communication". (McVeigh 2004: 215)

Such an interpretation makes quite plain the division in English education in Japan – *eigo* "English" and *eikaiwa* "English conversation"; *eigo* is something one needs to learn for examinations while *eikaiwa* is something one may take up as extracurricular skill training or a hobby.

2. Takao Suzuki, a leading Japanese sociolinguist, remarked that the English classes he himself enrolled in at Keio University after the war consisted entirely of English-to-Japanese translation. Students' requests to the teachers for instruction on conversational skills were usually met with recommendations to attend English conversation schools in town. Suzuki reports that this seems to have been the case at most schools at that time (Suzuki 1999: 102).

The infamous *juken jigoku* "examination hell" places students under tremendous pressure, and the competitive nature of entrance examinations causes schools to focus on English material that is likely to be seen in the exams. Spurred by criticisms against *juken kyôiku* "entrance examination education", the Ministry of Education introduced the *yutori kyôiku* "relaxed education" reforms (as opposed to *tsumekomi kyôiku* "cramming education") in 1999. Under the relaxed education schema, schools adopted a five day per week schedule, and the number of classes and topics was reduced. The reformed curriculum for English shifted its focus to conversation and communication skills rather than reading comprehension, naturally influencing English education considerably. Table 2 illustrates the decrease in English grammatical items in the Japanese junior high school curriculum; the table is adopted from Moteki (2004: 23).

Table 2. English grammar introduced at junior high schools (adopted from Moteki 2004: 23)

	1958	1969	1977	1989	1999
Sentence patterns	5 types 33 patterns	5 types 37 patterns	5 types 22 patterns	5 types 21 patterns	5 types 21 patterns
Total vocabulary	1100~1300 words	950~1100 words	900~1050 words	1000 words	900 words
Compulsory vocabulary	520 words	610 words	490 words	507 words	100 words
Grammatical items	20 items	21 items	13 items	11 items	11 items

According to Honna and Takeshita (2002), there has been a shift in some English language classrooms away from exam-oriented teaching and toward more communication-based teaching since the implementation of the relaxed education scheme. Following this trend, the University Centre Examination, the entrance examination used by public universities, has included a listening comprehension portion since 2006. Some private universities have started accepting TOEIC or TOEFL scores in lieu of entrance examinations; however, these exams still require extensive orthodox grammatical knowledge.[3] In large part, despite the relaxed education schema's reduced number of classes, school entrance examination

3. The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) are administered by ETS (Educational Testing Service) in the United States. The former is intended to measure competency in English for everyday use in a business environment, and the latter for "academic" English. The TOEIC was developed following a request from Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and is a very popular qualification in Japan (Seargeant 2008: 131).

standards were not considerably altered, leading to contradictions in what English abilities are expected of students. For example, the goal for a junior high school graduate is to be able to converse in plain English including greetings and corresponding dialogues, as well as to have knowledge equivalent to the 3rd grade of *EIKEN*, or Test in Practical English Proficiency (Moteki 2004: 70). On the *EIKEN* organizer's website, the 3rd grade's example of recognition/use is stated as the "MEXT benchmark for junior high school graduates" (The Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP), Inc. 2010). However, the *EIKEN* 3rd grade requires knowledge of about 2100 words while the current total vocabulary introduced for the junior high school level of study in the MEXT's Course of Study is only 900 words, as shown in Table 2. This type of gap forces Japanese students who would like to qualify for the *EIKEN* certificate or for high school entrance examinations to maintain a focus on translation and grammar if they want the opportunity of higher education, yet now with the added burden of doing so on their own time as schools have shifted their focus to ostensibly more practical conversational material. Overall, the likelihood of Japan's education system producing students with competent English skills remains "distinctly bleak" (Seargeant 2008: 131). English conversation, meanwhile, has grown into a separate discipline outside the Ministry of Education's jurisdiction.

The government has been well aware of the imbalance between English and English conversation teaching at schools. As a countermeasure, beginning in 1987, the Ministry of Education has made conscious efforts to strengthen students' communicative skills through such programs as the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program.[4] This program's purpose is to provide students with opportunities to interact with native target language instructors. Even prior to the relaxed education schema, the government attempted to increase the number of available JET teachers and to revise the English Course of Study guidelines (Japanese Ministry of Education 1991). Moteki states that the JET program and the employment of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs, whose primary job is to assist Japanese English teachers in English conversation classes) was innovative, as it created an environment where students could interact with native English speakers (2004: 24). As of the 2011 school year and implementation of the foreign language activities to cultivate children's communicative ability, MEXT started

4. The Council for Improvement of English Teaching was established in 1960, with the goal of providing students with oral communication skills, rather than English skills based on translation and memorization. The JET program is related to the council.

sending ALTs to elementary schools. With this program, elementary school children in grades 5 and 6 have once a week educational slot concerning foreign language activity, often involving an assistant ALT and a Japanese main teacher (MEXT 2010). Although there is no denying the unique interaction opportunities provided by ALTs, they contribute little to the overall improvement of English listening/speaking skills, as their work schedules typically allow for only one classroom visit per week to a class of 30 to 40 students, in addition to the fact that the qualifications for many ALTs do not include previous teaching experience. Suzuki (1999), in agreement with a number of education specialists, comments that mandatory English conversation classes, including those at the elementary school level, are ineffective. By engaging in conversation once or twice a week with a native English-speaking instructor, a student in a class of more than a few dozen will be introduced to a rather limited amount of expressions and vocabulary. Moreover, selected topics or stories may not be interesting to each and every student in the class (Suzuki 1999: 116). Thus, "the situation of English language teaching in Japan [remains] without much improvement" compared to the prewar period (Koike and Tanaka 1995). Part of the problem is the lack of clear goals for conversational English education, as well as of a clear definition of what constitutes "conversational level" English.

The Ministry of Education, nonetheless, has been revising its Course of Study for school subjects including English to respond to the problems. For example, after the 1999 reform, the contents of junior high school textbooks were revised and restructured. Instead of introducing sentences directly connected to grammatical points like "This is a pen/This is not a pen", or "I have a book/I do not have a book", the revised lessons incorporated many situational dialogues containing relevant communication topics (Moteki 2004: 27). However, a number of educational specialists criticized the situational dialogues, which were based on the ideas of civil servants in the Ministry of Education, as too superficial and limiting to the students' creativity. One example of these situational dialogues is "Hamburger English", a textbook chapter set at a hamburger restaurant. The following is a typical example of the revised dialogue found in the new textbooks:

> Demi: Two hamburgers and two colas, please.
> Clerk: Large or small?
> Demi: Large, please.
> Clerk: For here or to go?
> Demi: For here.
> Clerk: Here you are. That's five hundred and forty yen, please.
> (after receiving cash) Thank you. (cited in Moteki 2004: 38)

Despite the fact that it is full of idiomatic expressions, this type of dialogue has been criticized for being unrealistic as actual English conversation, as it is overly ritualistic and relies on rote memorization of idiomatic phrases and vocabulary that are applicable only to specific situations (Otsu 2006: 22–23; Naoyama 2006: 235). Needless to say, the fact that the new method still relies primarily on memorization has not done much to improve English abilities compared to the prewar period, when this approach was at least bolstered by a substantial amount of compulsory vocabulary. To some people, the dialogue in the example above may seem practically useful because this type of situation is one that students might expect to actually encounter. However, others argue that it is hard to imagine how these situational dialogues can further develop learners' conversation skills to allow for more complex discussions. Although the English curriculum reformation and the relaxed education schema were originally devised to move away from lessons based on the memorization of grammar, the contents of the revised textbooks are still similar to the old-fashioned memorization method in many ways. People cannot gain real communication skills by only learning how to deal with preconceived scenarios in a scripted, formulaic manner, because, as Otsu points out, "day-to-day" conversation is made possible among interlocutors not through the exchange of phrases, but through spontaneous communication in order to express their thoughts (Otsu 2006: 23).

Today, despite nationwide English conversation promotion in the form of programs like JET, in addition to academic reading/writing instruction in school, many scholars (e.g. Gottlieb 2008; Moteki 2004) report that Japanese school students' English skills remain low. Japan has not succeeded in improving its performance on standardized English tests such as TOEFL. Japan's TOEFL tests scores are among the lowest of the 25 Asian countries, tying with North Korea, according to data collected between 1999 and 2002 (data from the Council on International Educational Exchange, Japan, TOEFL Division, cited in Moteki 2004: 19[5]). According to *Economic and Social Dataranking* records of 2007, Japan has the lowest mean scores in all four sections of the TOEFL test – writing, reading, listening, and speaking: 28th out of the 28 countries. Table 3 indicates comparative results of TOEFL scores in East Asia from another source.

5. Moteki mentions that the TOEFL scores for the 1997/1998 period saw Japan tied with South Korea, yet the 2001/2002 results were even lower by 21 points in total scores (2004: 24–25). As shown in Table 2, Japan's listening comprehension rate abilities are the lowest (18) in these three countries. A larger data set of the same test results indicates that Japan's listening comprehension rate was the second to the lowest among the 30 Asian countries, second only to North Korea's listening comprehension rate (17) (data from the Council on International Educational Exchange, Japan, TOEFL Division, cited in Moteki 2004: 19).

Table 3. The 2001/2002 TOEFL scores in East Asia (data from the Council on International Educational Exchange, Japan, TOEFL Division, cited in Moteki 2004: 21)

Country	Total test takers	Listening comprehension	Structure & written expression	Reading comprehension
Japan	84,254	18	19	19
S. Korea	73,093	19	21	22
China	22,699	20	22	22

Satonaka (2003) notes that it is those in their teens, many of whom are taking the TOEFL test to gauge their command of English or for study abroad purposes, who are dragging test scores down. According to his report, teen test takers' average scores are much lower than those of test takers in their 30s (Satonaka 2003: 23). Moteki (2004) blames the Japanese government's relaxed education schema for the younger generation's decrease in overall English skills. As Table 2 in the previous section shows, after 1999 there were only 100 compulsory English vocabulary words required at the junior high school level. Considering that an average preschool child acquires about 2000 words, a mere 100 English vocabulary items at the junior high school level seems an inadequate amount for serious expression or conversation, and this is certainly one cause of the overall poor results of Japanese TOEFL examination participants (Moteki 2004: 28).

Beyond school English, *Eikaiwa* "English conversation" and English ideology

English teaching and learning in today's Japan is quite unique in its dichotomy between English as a conversation tool and as an academic discipline.[6] While school English education practically functions to train students for entrance examinations, English conversation studied as an extracurricular activity puts less pressure on average students' shoulders. *Eikaiwa* "English conversation", or "English for communication" in McVeigh's terms, is practiced by Japanese people who would like to acquire communication skills, in addition to the reading/writing skills they learn at school (2004: 215). English conversation has been a common hobby among people of all ages, especially after the war, and a number of

6. No other foreign language is separated in this way. There is no "French" versus "French conversation". Japan's leading private foreign language schools, Berlitz, GEOS, and ECC, list their available lessons by the name of the language such as *chûgokugo* "Chinese", *kankokugo* "Korean", *itariago* "Italian", etc. English, however, is listed not as *eigo* "English" like other languages but specifically as *eikaiwa* "English conversation".

private language institutions flourish in Japan. Private *eikaiwa* schools indeed have become very successful businesses in Japan, becoming even more popular and successful since the 1980s. At that time, the exchange rate between the American dollar and Japanese yen improved, making it easy for Japanese to go overseas, as well as contributing to a marked increase in the average Japanese household income, which meant that many people had enough extra money to afford enrolment in *eikaiwa* schools. Private English conversation instruction became highly popular among all generations, and the schools started to expand across the nation (see Kubota 1998: 296–297).

In an essay based on his experiences teaching English conversation in Japan, Douglas Lummis (1976) states that he had never heard the expression "English conversation" until he moved to Japan, and this division seemed quite odd to him. Lummis explains that he could not help but think that the English conversation ideology in Japan propagates exotic yet shallow images of native English speakers.

> When I took my first English teaching job in Japan in 1961 I found the work embarrassing. Since then I have taught "English conversation" from time to time in language schools, company classes, and colleges, and I still find it embarrassing. I have struggled for a long time to try to understand just why the English conversation class is such an unsettling and alienating place … I visited a conversation class at a major Tokyo language school and found that it fitted the stereotype almost exactly. (Lummis 1976: 17)

The images of "native speakers" portrayed in conversation classes are invariably Caucasians, Americans, hamburger-eaters, drugstore-patrons, etc. Lummis has criticized this type of ideology for helping to spread biased information about English speakers and English conversation around the world, and described practices such as private schools' hiring of Caucasians from France or Italy as English conversation teachers for their appearances, not their English language skills, while non-Caucasian native English speakers, e.g. Asian Americans, were disfavoured for the same positions (Lummis 1976). This "native speaker ideology" has not changed very much since the time of Lummis' writing. Seargeant states that the Course of Study guidelines of the Japanese educational system's curriculum "look to the 'native speaker' countries as the oracle for orthodox English teaching practice, thus promoting a particular culturally-determined practice as universal", and suggests, based on LoCastro's claim, that "the native speaker" is modelled after Anglo-Americans (Seargeant 2008: 132; LoCastro 1996: 45). Hall argues that this ideology resulted in what he calls "academic apartheid" in the English higher education systems in Japan because "the term 'internationalization' merely means 'having pure and unassimilated aliens on campus – the two-dimensional presence of the linguistically incapacitated, culture-shocked foreign newcomer as exotic ambience'" (1998: 105–106). More than teaching experience or linguistic fluency, it is "the emblematic presence of a foreign culture in the classroom that is the defining factor in [foreign teachers'] appointment in schools" (Seargeant 2008: 134). The native speaker ideology in Japan dictates that the normative English conversation teachers are Caucasian native speakers. A recent JET participant (2006 – current) from India, Ms Ankita Naresh, notes on the official JET web page that that this kind of ideology regarding native English speakers still exists today. She comments that she is often asked how long she stayed in the United States and is complimented on her "good" English (JET Programme 2010). In fact, most ALTs are from major English-speaking western countries.[7] A relatively recent news story reported on a language school advertising English teachers who have "blond hair, and blue or green eyes" specifically (*Japan Times* 2007). As mentioned earlier, this type of "native speaker ideology" has not changed since the study of *eikaiwa*, or English conversation, first became a popular phenomenon in Japan. Referring to some earlier works on English conversation education in Japan, Kubota (1998: 298) points out that by learning English, which is based on Anglo native speakers' culture and society, the Japanese have internalized an Anglo view of the world that has been used as "eyeglasses through which the Japanese have viewed other ethnic groups" (see also Oishi 1990; Nakamura 1989; Tsuda 1990). While learning English, Japanese learners are also trained to identify themselves with the native speakers' world views, despite the fact that becoming a Caucasian native speaker of English is not an attainable goal for Asian second language learners of English (Kubota 1998: 298).

Eigo and *seiyô konpurekkusu*: An inferiority complex about English and the west

The stereotypical belief, described by Lummis as "ideology of English conversation", that ideal English speakers must necessarily be Caucasians, still exists today, as Asian- or African-Americans really face discrimination when applying for English conversation instructor positions in Japan (Lummis 1976; Suzuki 1999: 144). Tsuda (2006) remarks that the traditional discipline of English studies in Japan idolizes the United Kingdom and the United States, creating an

7. E.g., 340 from Australia, 655 from Canada, 112 from Ireland, 254 from New Zealand, 699 from U.K., and 2759 from the United States. Much smaller numbers were accepted from China (11), France (10), Germany (7), and Korea (3), according to Jet Programme's statement in 2006.

unnecessary *seiyô konpurekkusu* "Western complex". People studying English in Japan tend to devote little attention to other English speaking regions of the world, in an attempt to become superficial westerners or "English nerds", similar to overseas anime fans who tend to know little about actual Japanese language and culture.[8] It is important to remind Japanese English learners that it is not the adoption of their instructor's cultural values that confers legitimate English speaking skills. However, the Course of Study guidelines for English continue to deliver mainly Anglo-centred cultural topics even after the English education reform of 1999, creating a hereditary tradition of *seiyô konpurekkusu* "Western complex" across generations.

While the Japanese government suggests that a goal of its *eigo kyôiku* "English education" is to enhance Japanese nationals' *kokusaika* "internalization", materials used for English education are created to utilize English in western contexts rather than wider international contexts. A typical junior high school English textbook features situational dialogues with Japanese students interacting with their new friends from the west. The Japanese students never make any grammatical mistakes when conversing in English with westerners because the Japanese characters are speaking "model" English for the readers. Certainly Japan's inferiority complex regarding English is exacerbated by having the unrealistic goal of being able to speak and behave like idealized native speakers. Indeed, the Japanese are quite apologetic for their limited English abilities. As reported in Lebra (1983), Japanese feel *haji* "shame" for not being able to speak English despite years of study. Because of their extensive English education, the Japanese feel they are obliged to be equipped with English communication skills. The combination of the Western complex and the Japanese feelings of shame among adults has increased the demand for a mandatory early English education program.

With the onset of the relaxed education schema, then-Prime Minister Obuchi stated, in January 2000, that English should be mastered by the Japanese people as the international *lingua franca* and that English should be designated as an official second language.[9] As of 2002, MEXT began promoting English activities

8. As some modern English curriculum planners have suggested, school textbooks should not focus solely on topics related to the United Kingdom and United States. There are textbooks available that incorporate current world affairs (Suzuki 1999: 98). These junior high and high school English textbooks include topics such as ethnic diversity, environmental issues, or the cultures and customs of other people around the world. Suzuki, however, mentions his concerns that these textbooks focus too much on social studies at the expense of English (1999: 98).

9. Following the sudden death of Prime Minister Obuchi in May 2000, the discussion of making English an official second language ceased.

in elementary schools as part of its plan to foster international understanding.[10] English activities in the elementary school system reflect the value Japanese people place on English conversation skills. Because the adult population is only equipped with *juken eigo* "examination English" and still suffers from an inferiority complex regarding their lack of English speaking ability, many Japanese parents wish for their children to begin English education at a very young age (Ichikawa 2006: 54). Parents tend to believe that their children will have a better chance of acquiring English if they begin English education earlier than the parents did themselves. Yamada cites a report from the popular magazine, *AERA* (2004, March 8th) which conducted a survey of 155 parents under age 35. When asked "when should your children be introduced to English education?" 34% responded "before age three" and 39%, "between three and six". In total, 87% responded that their children should be introduced to English before they start elementary school. The reasons they chose for these responses were primarily "the younger the child, the easier foreign languages acquisition is", or worse, "I don't know why, but it feels right". Compelled by social pressure to begin English education at a young age, the government responded by implementing elementary school English lessons despite not having a clear goal for what these lessons were to accomplish. This ambiguity is similar to the definition of "conversational level" English, reflecting idealized goals with little planning apparent in the actual implementation. Although many Japanese people have an inferiority complex about English, the precise reasons for the importance placed on English communication remain largely unclear. As residents of an island nation with a mostly monolingual population, the majority of Japanese do not need English language skills. Yet such skills, along with

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10. According to the reports based on surveys conducted in 2005 on 22,232 public elementary schools, 93.6% (20,803 schools) employed some sort of English activity in their curriculum while only 6.4% (1,429 schools) did not (data from the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, cited in Kan 2006: 256). However, as the content of these activities is left entirely to the discretion of the individual schools and is not formally regulated, the calibre of these activities varies greatly across schools. Some schools held an "annual international event" which involved showing slides of foreign visitors' hometowns, while others conducted regular classroom activities with assistant English teachers (ALTs) (Kan 2006: 265). Due to the limited number of native instructors, regular class time with an ALT may seem like a privilege to those who participated, but some fundamental problems regarding the use of ALTs for elementary school education have been raised. For example, very few ALTs have any formal training in developmental education or foreign language instruction for children. Moreover, considering Japan's generally large classroom sizes, this method is not reported to be very effective at imparting to students any useful English communication skills (e.g., Butler-Goto 2006: 204; Tajiri 2006: 244). All in all, despite hopes of creating "internationalized" citizens by beginning English education at a young age, the current English curriculum in elementary schools has been criticized by many educators and linguists in Japan.

computer skills, have come to be seen as a facet of modern society, so that the general public feels that "they need to learn these skills in order to keep up with the world" (Yamada 2006: 100). Due to the resulting overwhelming public pressure, mandatory English education to elementary schools has been extended since 2011, although, again, without clear pedagogical objectives.

Katakanago: Katakana words and Japanese English

Written Japanese distinguishes the etymology of words through various orthographic conventions. In general, native Japanese vocabulary is written in *hiragana* script, Sino-Japanese vocabulary in *kanji* "Chinese characters", and non-Chinese loanwords in *katakana* script. Historically, Chinese culture influenced Japan very heavily from the 5th century, when a large amount of Chinese vocabulary began to infiltrate the Japanese language. Similarly, many European influences came into Japan after the 16th century, also bringing with them many new words. Because these loan words are written in *katakana*, non-Chinese loan words are often referred to as *katakanago* or "*katakana* words" (for further discussion about the symbolic value of loanwords in Japanese, see Morita, this volume). As it is in many other places in the world, English in Japan is often interpreted as a sign of modernity. Although most Japanese are unable to utilize English as a communication tool, having access to English-sounding vocabulary provides comfort to many who feel that they are supposed to have a better command of the language after extensive training during their formal education. The rampant use of Japanese English in today's media may be a reflection of *eigo konpurekkusu* "an inferiority complex about English". The use of *katakanago* is especially popular among younger people due to the sense of newness its use imparts, and the names of new products or popular song lyrics reflect this affinity. Pennycook (2003, 2009) investigates the use of English lyrics by a popular Japanese hip hop band and states that the English used in the lyrics projects the "global" identity of the band and thus the listeners. (For further discussion of global English in Asia, see Pennycook, this volume.) All in all, the point of using *katakanago* or *wasei eigo* "Japanese English" is to provide Japanese speakers with the feeling that they are utilizing English. The fact that many loan words do not necessarily retain their original meanings upon adoption into Japanese only serves to further distance the use of *wasei eigo* from actual English. In fact, many *katakanago* are quickly notarised, and there exist quite a few cases where these words make little sense to speakers of the original languages. Sanseido's online *katakanago* dictionary presents an example: *serebu* "celebrity" does not only refer to famous people but also means "wealthy, sophisticated, elegant, gorgeous, etc". In Japanese, the phrase *serebu-ken* means "an elegant

Figure 1. *Serebu-ken* "fancy dog". Copyright© PR24 Pet. Permission for reprint received 2010.

dog" not "celebrity dog", as many other speakers of English might assume. Figure 1 is one of the many results of a Google image search for *serebu-ken* "celebrity dog" (April 14, 2010).

This change of meaning of English loanwords is also accelerating as new loanwords penetrate into the usage of Japanese speakers faster with the aid of the internet. The relatively new English loanword *kaminguauto* "coming out" is an example of one such word establishing a different meaning in Japanese English. *Kaminguauto* means "to confess" in a broad sense where the content of the confession can include, but is not limited to, homosexuality, as opposed to the colloquial English usage of the word, which is almost exclusively limited to homosexuality. An internet search for the (Japanese) word *kaminguauto* turns up many instances of web forums where people confess their unique, hidden attributes. For example, in a forum entitled *katsura no kaminguauto* "confessions about hair pieces", suggestions on how to confess that one wears a hair piece are discussed, while another forum named *nioi kaiminguauto* "confession about smell" abounds with posts of the smells to which the members are secretly addicted. Other common subjects of *kaminguauto* found in search results include *byôki* "sickness (depression, haemophilia, STD, eczema, etc.)", *zainichi* "permanent ethnic Korean residents of Japan", *saishokushugi* "vegetarian", *shûkyô* "religion", *kin-en* "non-smoking", *zenka* "criminal records". *Kaminguauto* is also used to refer to a situation where specific people are introducing themselves or being featured. For example, on the webpage of a private English school, the phrase *shôgakusei kaminguauto* is used to mean "the featured elementary school students" and is used when introducing the featured students' academic progress at the school (School-T 2006). Similarly, *kenmin kaminguauto* is used to refer to "appearance of the people of a prefecture" in a popular Japanese TV show featuring the residents of specific prefectures (Yomiuri

Telecasting Co. 2010). Such loan words do not elicit the same meanings in English; however, most Japanese speakers are unaware that the loanwords do not retain their original meanings.

In his study of mixed Japanese-English advertisements in Japan, Haarmann (1989) describes how the actual meanings of English words are overshadowed by the public's positive feelings toward the sound of English. For instance, when advertisements end with English loanword phrases like "It's a Sony", "Kanebo for beautiful human life", or "Drive your dreams, Toyota", it is likely that viewers feel a sense of modernity associated with such uses of English, despite the fact that the meanings of such phrases may not be comprehended. The desire to be a part of the global community motivates this use of *wasei eigo* "Japanese English". A number of such examples are presented in Stanlaw's (2004) reports on "Japanese English" in pop songs, product names, and advertisements. Moreover, many Japanese speakers are unable to keep pace with the flood of newly adopted loanwords. According to a survey, 58% of Japanese respondents mentioned that there are increasingly more loanwords or foreign words; moreover, more than 81% of the respondents stated that they had encountered loanwords on TV or in newspapers that they did not understand (Ishino 1996). However, these survey results are a reflection of Japanese people's general admiration of and sentiments toward the English language. Despite the fact that many in the general public have accumulated anxieties toward school English, the use of English outside of school settings, such as in popular culture and media, is quite popular. The government and educators do not seem to have strategic pedagogical goals to equip Japanese with the desired levels of English communication skills. This lack is reflected in the lack of clear definitions for terms like "daily conversational skills" and the lack of planning regarding effective lessons for developing students' bilingual communication skills in a monolingual country. Feelings of "modernness" and "globalization", associated with the superficial use of appropriated English expressions, belie the fact that most Japanese speakers' English competence is too limited to allow them to realize why so much *wasei eigo* makes no sense to native speakers. Some scholars have suggested that the overuse of loanwords is actually working against the Japanese people, as they are often unaware of the differences between the newly reinterpreted meaning and the original meaning (e.g., Moteki 2004; Suzuki 1999).

Suggestions for English conversation ideology and identity

While “English language” is considered an important language in the eyes of the Japanese, it is always overshadowed by “national language or Japanese language”. For many Japanese people, the Japanese language represents the Japanese people’s identity while English is merely something used when dealing with foreigners. Although speaking English is not intrinsic to the Japanese people’s identity, “Japanese English” can represent Japanese speakers’ identities, as Japanese English is a uniquely Japanese construction. Park and Wee (2008) discuss the appropriation of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) among hip hop musicians from non-English-speaking countries, including Japan. Such musicians “have little need to claim competence in English or appeal to hegemonic notions of standardness, because it is the very stigmatization of AAVE that allows it to effectively index identities of resistance and discrimination” (Park and Wee 2008: 248). However, non-English-speaking hip hop musicians are not able to construct their identities simply by reproducing AAVE in their performances. AAVE in a non-English language needs to be appropriated to project the identity of the non-English-speaking rappers’ cultural norms. This kind of linguistic appropriation could be applied in an educational setting. As discussed in the previous section, English has already been appropriated in the Japanese market, and the use of English in Japanese popular song lyrics and the commercial media has been widely accepted by the general public. A change of focus in English education that reflected a realistic use of English in Japan could help change users’ goals, and might decrease the inferiority complexes of English learners in Japan. The teaching materials used in Japanese school systems could work toward shifting the learner’s identity from “a non-native English speaker” to “a native Japanese learner of English”. This would reset the goal of learning English from “becoming like a native speaker” to “becoming an English speaker”. This does not mean promoting Japanese English in school systems; rather, environments and situations where English is being used in the teaching materials should be centred around Japan and not in some western country where English is spoken by ideal native speakers.

The English teaching materials used in Japanese classrooms are largely modelled after so-called Standard English spoken in either the United Kingdom or the United States, and they couple the “native English speaker ideology” with western cultural norms. Such English teaching materials index the identity of standard speakers, an identity ultimately unattainable by Japanese second language learners. “Native-like fluency” touted in English classrooms is almost impossible for students to acquire under current pedagogical methods; as a result, students are encouraged only to copy and replicate "Standard English" models, as seen in the situational dialogue in Example 1. It seems that Japanese educational planners continue to ignore the development of English materials that would potentially enhance English language learning for Japanese speakers. Instead, the English education system continues to provide superficial band-aid solutions, such as "Hamburger English". Likewise, English conversation education became popular because it seems to address the inability of so many Japanese to speak English. The superficial nature of both of these methods fails to acknowledge the fundamental problem with the "native speaker ideology", namely the learners' inherent inability to become native speakers of English. Some critiques of English education in Japan suggest that English teachers should be more conscious of "Japanese identity" when designing and employing their lessons (e.g., Suzuki 1999; Torikai 2006). For example, in many English conversation classes taught by American or British instructors, teachers tend to call their students by their first names or nicknames. In other cases, English teachers assign random Anglo names to their students. Rather than copying such foreign customs and creating pseudo-Anglo identities for the students, situations such as these would benefit from the continued use of traditional Japanese family names (Suzuki 1999: 153; Torikai 2006: 146). English teachers should realize that English spoken by Japanese speakers will always be "international English" rather than "native English" and that it is acceptable for Japan to have its own version of English. The purpose of learning English as a second language in Japan is not to become a native speaker but to be equipped with a communication tool. Teachers and textbooks do not have to try to fill classes with cultural themes specific to English speaking areas of the world. As proposed by Suzuki, Japanese English learners should first learn how to explain their own cultural values or historical issues (1999: 106). This opinion is easily supported, as these are likely topics to be raised by non-Japanese when opportunities for conversation arise. Additionally, Japanese people should not be trained only to interact with native English speakers; today, English is used frequently between non-native speakers. The goal of English acquisition should therefore be "communicative" ability and not "native-like" ability. By accepting that Japanese students are unlikely to attain native-like English abilities, Japanese-coloured English will become more acceptable as a communication tool, and Japanese people may be released from the burden of their inferiority complex about the West and English.

Conclusion: English and English conversation for the future of Japan

Although a few "master English speakers" stand out during the early post-Meiji era, English instruction in Japan quickly became focused on grammar and translation. Accordingly, speaking/listening skills have been a consistent weakness among Japanese English learners. Postwar education created the infamous *juken jigoku* "examination hell", as a result of which teaching of spoken communication skills was overlooked. Moreover, after the implementation of the relaxed education scheme and major reformations of the mandatory education system's curriculum in 1999, the allotted classroom hours for the instruction of all subjects, including major subjects such as Japanese, mathematics, and English, have been reduced considerably, and the required content for each subject has been diluted accordingly. A number of scholars have warned government officials and education planners to seriously reconsider the current curriculum under the relaxed education schema.

The prevalence of the "English complex" among the general public has goaded the government into initiating English activity programs in elementary schools since 2002. As this program was mandated without having solid curricula or goals, the activities vary from school to school throughout the nation, with the result that the time devoted to these activities may or may not be conducive to English learning. Additionally, the hours allocated for various other subjects were further sacrificed to make time for these English activities. Unfortunately, the future of Japan's English education does not look very bright. The lack of regulation concerning the quality of early English education to which elementary school children across the nation are exposed means that the skills with which students enter junior high may vary considerably, complicating the teaching of English as a standardized mandatory subject. As many scholars have pointed out, there is significant room for improvement in Japan's English education system, but without revising the current education plan, English will remain a weakness for Japanese people for the foreseeable future.

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CHAPTER 13

Language policy and practice in English loanwords in Japanese

Emi Morita

This paper discusses the conflict between language policy and actual practice regarding loanword use in Japan. Localized appropriation of foreign words is nothing new to Japanese history; nevertheless, the Japanese government deems the current influx of loanwords to be "problematic". A 2007 report by the National Institute for Japanese Language (NIJLA), commissioned by the government, finds that numerous loanwords that appear in public discourse are not understood by the average Japanese person. NIJLA suggested that the most commonly non-understood foreign-language loanwords should be replaced with native Japanese or Sino-Japanese paraphrases instead. Despite the fact that it is the government that first "problematized" this situation, and one of its own institutions that has suggested the countermeasure, my comparative examination of loanword use in public resources reveals that it is primarily government administrators who introduce new loanwords, legitimize them, and treat them as established discourse. I argue that this apparent discrepancy is a conflict between two different forms of language ideology – NIJLA's (as well as the government's) essentialist notion of 'democratic language' versus actual language use, including the very 'third space' language practices of government officials that have arisen within the contexts of the transnational discourse of globalization and internationalism.

I would like to contextualize the discussion which follows by asking my readers to consider the following exchange between then Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Junichiro Koizumi and an assemblyman (AM) from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Toranosuke Katayama, concerning a recent increase in the use of English loanwords in the public talks and writings of Japanese government officials:

PM: It is not easy to understand. *Autosooshingu* (outsourcing), you say, means *minkan-itaku* (private sector delegation) or *minkan-san'nyuu* (private sector entry). So now what is "*bakkuofisu*" (back office)?

AM: *Bakkuofisu* means internal affair business, such as financial accounting or budget.

PM: You should use easily understandable expressions. I want you to write in such a way that local people understand. Why don't you use [the Japanese words] *minkan-itaku* or *minkan-san'nyuu* instead of [the English loanword] *autosooshingu?…*

AM: All the government offices use these terms. The reason why we don't use Japanese words is because the loanwords appeal more to the public and have a certain novelty. We cannot convey such nuances if we use Japanese words.

PM: But that is because you translate directly from English. You must think about our situation instead. Make it plain. We must explain things not only to other government officials, but to our inhabitants. We must have the people participate. It is not easy to understand a term like "*bakkuoffisu* affairs". And if I cannot understand, how can you expect the neighborhood people to understand it?

This excerpt from the minutes of the May 13, 2002, Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy reveals (at least) two rival understandings about the nature of English loanword incorporation into the public discourse of Japan. For Prime Minister Koizumi, such words are unnecessary impediments to the functioning of a fully participative, democratic state (or at least to the appearance thereof). For assemblyman Katayama, however, such words carry irreplaceable semiotic "nuances [that] appeal more to the public" – and this is why, according to the assemblyman, "all government offices use these terms".

In addition, it was the above exchange between then Prime Minister Koizumi and assemblyman Katayama, provoked by Katayama's use of the loanwords *autosooshing* (outsourcing) and *bakkuofisu* (back office) in a speech before the Council that initiated the Japanese government's subsequent "loanwords language initiative" that is the subject of this essay.

The historical ubiquity of loanwords in Japan

The incorporation of foreign words into the Japanese language is anything but a "recent" phenomenon. From the very beginning of its history, liberal and creative lexeme "borrowing" has been a mainstay of what is now considered to be the contemporary "Japanese" language. Tomoda argues that "the tendency for more prestigious language varieties to be first adopted by élites and then enter the mainstream language" has been the major impetus for language change in Japan (1999: 249). Chinese culture, for example, was highly esteemed during the 4th to 8th centuries, during which time members of the Japanese imperial court systematically imported Chinese lexical items into the Japanese language, as they incorporated into Japan many aspects of the Chinese institutional system, religion, and culture. Evidence of over 100,000 wooden tablets reveal that by the seventh century at the latest, Chinese characters *(kanji)* had been adopted for use in the written communications of Japanese government officials (Takeuchi 1999: 8–9).

In the eighth century, Japanese developed the dual syllabary of *hiragana* and *katakana* as an aid to the creative appropriation of Chinese *kanjis*' word-sounds and word-meanings for use in Japanese speech and literacy practices – and in so doing, created a semiotic "third place" – neither purely Japanese, nor purely Chinese – for the "traffic in meaning" that Kramsch (1993) and Pennycook (this volume) have written about so astutely, and that we will have reason to be discussing later in this essay.[1] So thoroughly was this semiotic third space developed that the Chinese vocabulary items borrowed at that time and put to use for Japanese language purposes are now simply regarded as "Japanese words" by the majority of Japanese language speakers. And just as adopting *kanji* made it possible for the Japanese to import any morpheme or word existing in Chinese into the Japanese language, the syllabary of *katakana* was later exapted by the Japanese to just as effectively import words from the West.

Indeed, by the time of the Meiji Restoration of the late 19th century – a period during which a large number of English, French, and German words were imported into Japanese – Japanese people, according to linguist Shoichi Iwasaki (2002: 5),

> in an effort to catch up with Western civilization after finally abandoning a two-hundred year "closed door" policy … started to translate many Western books. This resulted in many Sino-Japanese compounds coined to translate Western words, many of which were then subsequently re-imported to China.

With this last development, we see the long history of the Japanese language's "localized appropriation" of foreign word sounds and word meanings coming full circle, as Chinese language users may now create their own semiotic "third place" resources for meaning-making using the words developed as a "third place" language system between Japan and the West, that itself derives from a "third place" for linguistic meaning-negotiation arising from the earlier linguistic interaction between China and Japan.

Given such a long history with language contact, integration, and creative appropriation in Japan, how is it, then, that the use of lexemes from other languages suddenly became seen as a "problem" needing government intervention, as exemplified by Prime Minister Koizumi's admonition to the Internal Affairs Ministry noted above?

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1. Hoffer and Honna (1988) note that Japan's incidence of Chinese "borrowing" at this time was roughly the equivalent of the current influx of English loanword into the Japanese language today.

The understanding of "language" as a complex matrix of social, political, historical and interpersonal forces that I am sure that I share with my readers entails that there almost certainly be no one "single answer" that can be satisfactorily given to that question. What I will attempt to do in this essay, instead, is to present the reader with a brief report on the current language policy regarding loanwords in Japan, focusing on the suggestions offered by the government to the "problem" of loanword use, as stated in the report of the NIJLA (National Institute for Japanese Language) study on contemporary loanword use that was the result of the dialogue with which we began this essay.

Moreover, because the NIJLA study purports to reveal a mounting anxiety among Japanese towards the perceived power (and power inequities) associated with the use of English, as well as to offer concrete guidelines for the more successful integration of such loanwords into the public discourse, I then undertake a brief examination of the contemporary use of such loanwords, both in newspapers and in government publications, both before and after the issuance of the government's report and its suggestions. There we will see that the government officials have been less receptive than the newspaper editors in implementing NIJLA's suggestions for the more "comprehension-friendly" incorporation of loanwords. It is in an effort to make sense of this unexpected result – and to shed more light on the sometimes uneasy relations between "language policy" and "language use" (including the language use of the language policy makers) that the present essay has been undertaken. We begin, then, with an examination of the Japanese government's "loanword problem language initiative" that was the direct result of the events described at the beginning of this essay.

The "problematizing" of English loanwords

Less than five months after the meeting of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy in which Prime Minister Koizumi publicly criticized the proliferation of English loanword use in the public speech and writing of Japanese government officials, Japan's Minister of Education officially commissioned NIJLA to set up a Loanwords Committee in order to "study the problem of the increasingly indiscriminate use of foreign loanwords" and to suggest solutions to this government-proclaimed "problem".

This committee investigated, first, the national government offices' White Paper and Public Relations brochures, and secondly, newspapers and magazines with large circulations, in order to ascertain to what extent, as well as which particular, loanwords (*gairaigo*) were being used in these texts. Selecting 269 of what they determined to be the most commonly recurring loanwords, the committee surveyed over 3500 people between 2002 and 2003, in an effort to examine these words' "fixation rate" within the nation's language practices (NIJLA 2005b). Using the results of these surveys, they then categorized these words according to the degree of comprehension reported by the participants, and identified those words whose comprehension rate was particularly low.

Interestingly, those foreign language loanwords most closely associated with everyday life – e.g., *sutoresu* (stress), *risaikuru* (recycle), *borantia* (volunteer), and *toraburu* (trouble) – attained the highest recognition rates as well as the highest comprehension rates (both more than 90%). Information technology related words, such as *netto ookushon* (net auction), *nettowaaku* (network), *onrain* (online), and *intaanetto* (internet), also showed a relatively high comprehension rate (more than 60%). By contrast, words with a comprehension rate below 5% include less mundane words such as the following: *kyureetaa* (curator), *firansoropii* (philanthropy), *toriaaji* (triage), *adomisshon ofisu* (admission office), *komon ajenda* (common agenda), *onbuzupaasun* (ombudsperson), *inkyubeeshon* (incubation), *paburikku inborubumento* (public involvement), *enfoosumento* (enforcement), *pootabilitii* (portability), *reshipiento* (recipient), *kooporeeto gabanansu* (corporate governance), *yubikitasu* (ubiquitous), *konsooshiamu* (consortium), *ofu saito sentaa* (off-site centre), *akauntabiritii* (accountability), *akuseshibiritii* (accessibility), and *tasuku foosu* (task force) (NIJLA 2007).

Many of these "low comprehension loanwords" are relatively technical, specialized terms whose comprehension rates were particularly low among people over 60 years old. Yet, although the aggregate public comprehension rates of these words is less than 5%, many of these very words appear regularly in official government publications without any explanation as to either their origins or their meanings.

Moreover, the most recent report by NIJLA indicates that as of 2007, more than 80% of the Japanese people surveyed feel that they encounter too many "foreign" (i.e. non-Sino-Japanese) loanwords in everyday life; 78% of the people surveyed reported having had the experience of not understanding the loanwords they encountered, and had experienced difficulties comprehending the messages containing them. When asked their opinion about the increase of non-Sino-Japanese loanwords in Japanese discourse, 55% of the people "disapproved of the trend" and only 37% of the people "approved of it". This difference in preference also reflects a generational divide, as people under 40 generally report feeling more positively towards the increase in such loanwords, while people over 40 tend to view the trend more negatively (NIJLA 2007).

Accordingly, and as part of their commission to offer concrete, implementable suggestions regarding how best to ameliorate the problem of the non-comprehension of foreign loanwords, the committee then issued the following guidelines for the use of the 269 loanwords studied:

Table 1. NJILA's recommendations to Japanese government officials regarding the use of 269 non-Sino-Japanese loanwords (NIJLA 2006a)

	Comprehension rate	Action advised
★☆☆☆	< 25%	Most difficult to understand. Advised not to use.
★★☆☆	25~50%	There is a possibility that these words will be integrated at some point, but for now, one should avoid use of these words.
★★★☆	50~75%	These words are on the way to being integrated, and not problematic for use in most cases. However they may still require some kind of special treatment.
★★★★	> 75%	These words are completely integrated. There is no problem using them.

Between 2002 and 2006, NIJLA issued four government-sponsored publications that identified 176 "low comprehension" (< 75%) loanwords, along with suggested ways to paraphrase such loanwords using native Japanese and/or Sino-Japanese vocabulary thought to be commonly understood by the majority of the population. For example, the word *intaanshippu* (internship) was paraphrased as *shuugyoo taiken* 就業体験 (literally: "work experience"), and the NIJLA guidelines for government officials regarding this word read as follows:

> – The internship system started in the late 1990s and has now gradually spread to companies and schools.
> – At this point, many people do not understand this term, so it is advised to always either paraphrase or to add an explanation.
> – Depending on the context, this word may be paraphrased as *taikenshuugyou* 体験就業 (experiential working), *shuugyoo jisshuu* 就業実習 (hands-on practice), or *senmon jisshuu* 専門実習 (special practical training).
>
> (NIJLA 2006a, author's translation)

Throughout the duration of the project, public opinion was consulted in order to increase public awareness and interest in the NIJLA Loanword Committee's work, and NIJLA's suggestions were publicized at press conferences and reported in various media. As a result, during the last few years there has been much discussion and criticism regarding some of NIJLA's suggested paraphrases. Mizutani, for example, suggested the use of certain English loanwords, such as *dei saabisu* ("day service") and *bariafurii* ("barrier free") instead of their suggested Sino Japanese paraphrases, arguing that such "pleasant sounding" words could be used to replace discriminatory expressions about old people and people with disabilities, respectively (2003: 7).

Likewise, argues Jinnouchi, paraphrasing such terms may be counter-productive, as in many cases these English words have become prevalent in international discourse. The increasing use of "public loanwords", according to Jinnouchi, reflects the changing Japanese society, which is increasingly modeled on a globalized European-American society and its contemporary concerns. The use of such global loanwords, he maintains, may appropriately reflect, and be used to talk about, issues relevant to "an international society that is also an IT society, an aging society, a human rights society, and an equal opportunity society" (Jinnouchi 2003: 16). Such words describe ideas, concepts and social phenomena that may be new but necessary to a globalizing Japanese society, argues Jinnouchi – and that as long as the current model for, and origin of, these ideas is America and Europe, such global "foreign" loanwords will always be valued (2003: 16).

Moreover, many Japanese linguists feel that even the "general non-comprehension" of specialized English loanwords into the Japanese language is not problematic, so long as such use does not cause wide-scale communication breakdown (e.g., Yamada 2007; Aizawa 2003). Technical terms and discourse in special-interest magazines would in theory be no more problematic than specialized terminologies employing native words that are similarly not popularly comprehended. Such loanwords used as technical terms are legitimate and functional as effective common terminologies within their own particular discourse communities, and specialists who have been accustomed to using them may rightfully resist replacing them with paraphrases.

Yet, throughout the entire study, the official position of the NIJLA has always been that the suggestion to augment loanword use with Sino Japanese paraphrases is not so much an effort to "control" loanwords and the ideas that they disseminate, as it is to pragmatically acknowledge the fact that so long as the Japanese people have to live with the influx of "foreign" loanwords, the meaning of such words will be made clearer with the use Japanese paraphrases (Tanaka 2007). Such suggestions, insisted NIJLA, are not intended to purge loanwords, but rather to help people in understanding and then integrating them (NIJLA 2006b).

Thus, the scholars in NIJLA appear to be very much aware that the globalization of English is too powerful a force to be halted by an insistence upon what Jernudd calls "the politics of language purism" in this era, noting that such top-down language planning policy as is used in France, for example, may not be as appropriate to Japan, given its long tradition of incorporating foreign loanwords into its language (Jernudd 1989; NIJLA 2005b, 2006b).[2] Yet the creation of a public debate over "the loanword problem" provided the government with an opportunity

2. See also Lo Bianco (2001), Neustupny (1989).

to display their concern about social equality by "problematizing" the increased use of English loanwords in Japan. Were the government officials not aware of the irony inherent in their commission of such a study? The NIJLA survey made it clear that the current use of low-comprehension loanwords in the public sphere, and particularly by government officials, is what the public finds most problematic (NIJLA 2005a, 2006a). And, as we have seen, it was actually a politician's speech in the national assembly that triggered the government's response to the issue.

The question that we want to examine now is this: Did the NIJLA Loanwords Committee suggestions have any impact? One way of answering this question is to examine the subsequent use of loanwords in two of the major forms of Japanese public discourse: daily newspapers and government press releases, public documents, and speeches.

The treatment of loanwords in newspapers

Yomiuri Shinbun appears to be the newspaper that has responded to the NIJLA suggestions most seriously, creating their own internal publishing guidelines to avoid hard-to-understand loanwords. The *Nikkei* newspaper also came up with their own paraphrase booklet. Neither newspaper has adopted a policy of replacing all loanwords with paraphrased words, but they do make an effort to provide explanations if the loanwords seem to be difficult to understand. On the other hand, other newspapers such as *Asahi, Mainichi,* and *Kyodo News* do not have specific guidelines, and their treatment of loanwords is therefore rather inconsistent (Fukuda 2006).

In order to analyze the effects of the NIJLA suggestions more closely, I examined the use of loanwords in *Yomiuri Shinbun*. *Yomiuri* maintains a digital archive, in which I checked all articles containing certain English loanwords, from their first appearance to their current use. This quantitative analysis is enough to get a first impression regarding the relative frequency of certain loanwords at certain times. A qualitative analysis of certain loanwords provides a more detailed picture.

First, I discovered that, in *Yomiuri*, loanwords with high comprehension rates appear without Sino-Japanese paraphrases. For example, the word *bariafurii* (barrier free) appeared only 3% of the time accompanied by paraphrased words, even after NIJLA's suggestion to do so.[3] It seems, then, that Japanese newspapers rely on

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3. NIJLA reports that the average recognition rate of the word *bariya furii* ("barrier free") is 85.5% and its comprehension rate is 72.7% – for those Japanese citizens above 60 years old, 69% and 52.9% respectively (2005).

their own judgment about the necessity of paraphrasing. It also indicates that once loanwords are used, it is hard to go back to the status quo, or paraphrase them.

Secondly, I have examined the word *seefutiinetto* ("safety net").[4] This word first appeared in *Yomiuri* in 1998, and was introduced as a new idea and a definition was provided ("financial support in case of bankruptcy" in this case). In 1999, this loanword appears four times: once by itself and in the other three instances, the Sino-Japanese words *anzenmoo* 安全網 (safety net) or *anzensoochi* 安全装置 (safety device) were used as its translated equivalent. The following year, there were fifteen articles in which this word appeared, and in almost half of the cases, a Sino-Japanese equivalent was added in parenthesis, or some explicit accompanying explanation was provided. Such augmentation appears much less after 2002, however – although even in 2009, eleven years after its first introduction, the word "safety net" was often used with some kind of explanation (though not always).

Qualitative differences have also taken place in the use of this word by *Yomiuri* over time. For example, the "katakana word" *seefutii netto* started appearing together with other Sino-Japanese words, i.e., they were deployed in a form of compound noun (loanwords + Sino-Japanese words), as in *seefutii netto hoshoo* セーフティネット保証 (safety-net guarantee), *seefutii netto kashitsuke* セーフティネット貸付 (safety-net loaning), or *seefutii netto shikin* セーフティネット資金 (safety-net fund) as early as 2003. These compound words are the names of new banking systems which were arranged by the government in order to help small and medium-sized businesses who have a hard time financing due to economic crisis. When used in such compound nouns, an accompaniment of paraphrased Sino-Japanese words usually does not appear – as if both components are legitimate Japanese words, thus loanwords become a *fait accompli*.

The word *yubikitasu* ("ubiquitous") shows the same tendency: when this loanword was introduced for the first time, *Yomiuri Shinbun* provided the definition and the explanation that this loanword was a Japanese neologism for an English word used by Mark Weiser of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center in 1988. Although NIJLA's suggested paraphrasing *jikuujizai* 時空自在, literally means "space-time universal", this paraphrase was never used. Instead, *Yomiuri* newspapers have provided their explanation ("the state where one is connected to computers anytime and anywhere") in other articles as well when the word itself is a topic of the news article. Note here that the English word "ubiquitous" has

4. According to NIJLA, the average recognition rate of the word *seefutii netto* ("safety net") is 55.9% and its comprehension rate is 30.9% – for those Japanese citizens above 60 years old, 33.3% and 17.2% respectively (2005a).

been narrowed down in Japanese to refer only to information technology. As was the case with *seefutii netto*, however, currently the word *yubikitasu* is no longer accompanied by an explanation in the newspaper in those instances in which it appears as part of a proper name, such as *Higashi Nihon <u>Yubikitasu Toreesabiritii</u> Suishinnkyougikai* 東日本ユビキタス・トレーサビリティ推進協議会 ("East Japan <u>Ubiquitous Traceability</u> Promotion Council"), and in other such projects as administered and entitled by the Ministry.

In 2008, for example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, announced the creation of *yubikitasu tokku* ユビキタス特区 ("Ubiquitous Special District") (*Yomiuri Shinbun* 2008). The word "special district" is expressed using a Sino-Japanese word, while "ubiquitous" appears in *katakana* form. *Yubikitasu tokku* is thus a proper noun denoting a specific region of the newly invented government project, presumably for the benefit of the Japanese people. Yet the Ministry's homepage which describes this project treats the word *yubikitasu* without any special attention, as if this is already a widely understood word.

Examination of the use of foreign loanwords in Japanese newspapers reveals that it is not the media that are using such loanwords obscurely or evasively, because conveying information clearly is their main task. Likewise, Sekine's analysis shows that Japanese newspapers are, on the whole, rather conservative in their use of new words, and that, due to limitations of space, they tend to use concise Sino-Japanese words more than *katakana* words (2003). This may be motivated by the fact that they must take account of Japan's older people as a substantial portion of their readership. However, my longitudinal examination of such news articles reveals that once such loanwords are incorporated into compound nouns and become used as proper names, it becomes increasingly unlikely that explanations will be added to them – and it is the government administrators who create such compound words and proper names for new government buildings, institutions, initiatives and policies.

Government officials' use of loanwords

Let us now look at the use of loanwords in official government publications, such as White Papers and websites. Here is one example taken from the homepage of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, with my translation provided below. The relevant loanwords are underlined in both the original and in the translation:

> **ブロードバンドからユビキタスネットへ**ｅ－Ｊａｐａｎ戦略の目標は大きくクリアし、ブロードバンド環境は充実してきています。ｕ－Ｊａｐａｎでは、これまでの有線中心のインフラ整備から、有線・無線の区別のないシームレスなユビキタスネットワーク環境への移行を目指しています。有線から無線、ネットワークから端末、認証やデータ交換等を含めた有機的な連携によって、あらゆる場面で継ぎ目なくネットワークにつながる環境を整備します。その結果、ネットワークが生活の隅々にまで融け込む草の根のようなＩＣＴ環境が実現します。
>
> From **broad band** to **ubiquitous net** We have cleared the goal of the e-Japan strategy and our broadband environment has been gradually completing. U-Japan aims for the seamless changing over from the servicing of a wired infrastructure to a ubiquitous network environment where there is no distinction between wired and wireless. We will prepare an environment where you can connect to a network seamlessly from anywhere, by organically connecting wired and wire-less, network and terminal, including certification and data exchange. As a result, a grassroots-like ICT environment will be realized, where networking is blended into your everyday life.
>
> (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2007, author's translation)

Even an excerpt as brief as this shows potentially incomprehensible loanwords being transcribed directly into *katakana*, and being used not only as nouns, but also as verbs, adjectives, and proper nouns. Among people with computer experience, words like *deeta* ("data") and *nettowaaku* ("network") may have high recognition rates. However, NIJLA reports that the "average" comprehension rate of the word *buroodobando* ("broadband") is 36.5%, and under the guidelines issued, its use "should be avoided". For those Japanese citizens above 60 years old, the comprehension rate of this word is a mere 12.2%. Similarly, the word *yubikitasu* ("ubiquitous") has an average "recognition" rate of 7.4% and an even lower comprehension rate of 3.9% (and here, too, its recognition and comprehension rates for those people who are 60 years old and older drops to 3.2% and 1.6% respectively). Nonetheless, the Japanese government apparently decided that no explanation or paraphrasing needed to be added to this public discourse.

It is also noteworthy that the passage above is so technical and specialist oriented that it would not be easy for even a highly literate non-computer user to guess the meanings of the unfamiliar loanwords from a consideration of the surrounding context. Yet the inclusion of such specialized loanwords from the world of the globalized European-American technology sector apparently did not seem problematic for the authors of the above passage, nor for the government administrators who commissioned, oversaw and approved its use, completely disregarding the suggestions offered in the NIJLA public discourse guidelines for the use of low-comprehension loanwords by government officials.

The excerpt that we have just examined from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is hardly unique in its indiscriminate use of exclusivist and low comprehension rate foreign loanwords. For instance, phrases such as *puraimari kea* ("primary care") and *toriaaji* ("triage") were both found on the introductory homepage of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare without any paraphrasing or explanation – and even the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which the Japanese Language Council belongs to, freely uses such loanwords as *waakingu guruupu* (working group), *aatomanejimento* (art management), and *dejitaru aakaibu* (digital archive) without explanation in their public discourse.[5]

In the next section, we will examine some of the explanations that have been proposed to clarify the Japanese government officials' continued use of unexplicated and unparaphrased loanwords, as well as examine some larger theories about how such technical vocabularies can "embody definite claims to specialized knowledge and institutional identities", in an effort to draw out – and, hopefully, to add a new dimension to – Kramsch's notion of a liminal "third space" of meaning negotiation across what are commonly thought to be different "languages" *per se* (Drew and Heritage 1992: 29). This discussion should help us to gain a deeper understanding of why it may be that the suggestions for "loanword management" that were proposed by the NIJLA, though taken up to some extent by the media, seem to have had so little impact on government officials' own promiscuous use of unexplicated loanwords – and in the very context wherein the problem was first identified.

The perceived power asymmetry of English loanword use in Japan

Reviewing the results of a survey taken of the staff of local government offices, Mogami reports that these government officials use *katakana* loanwords, first, because of the difficulty of faithful translation, and second, because these *katakana* words can convey the impression of "appealing freshness and modernity" (1986: 68). For example, words such as *soosharuwaakaa* (social worker) and *kea maneejaa* (care manager) highlight the fact that these are imported from the welfare systems already developed and in use in the English-speaking Western countries. In this way, when the government introduces new ideas and systems,

5. According to NIJLA, the average recognition rate of the word *puraimari kea* ("primary care") is 16% and its comprehension rate is 7.8% – for those Japanese citizens above 60 years old, 10.6% and 5.8% respectively (2005a). The average recognition rate of the word *toriaaji* ("triage") is 4% and its comprehension rate is 2% – for those Japanese citizens above 60 years old is 2.1% and 0.2% respectively (NIJLA 2005a). The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare homepage can be found here: http://www.mhlw.go.jp/photo/2008/07/06.html.

the authors of such texts are relying on the modernizing “authority” of English and, by extension, of the Western countries more generally. Mogami also claims that use of such loanwords in project names is “one of the techniques to obtain budget or funding from a higher governmental office” (1986: 65). Here we can see that unfamiliar foreign loanwords are being used by the Japanese government for their semiotic “branding” effects upon its policies, laws, and organization, much as they would be used by advertisers and by product designers. As *katakana* writing makes it visibly obvious that the word in question is part of an internationalizing process, loanwords bestows upon those projects an aura of access to the international community and its consensus.

Indeed, we find evidence for this mindset in the dialogue reflected in minutes of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy with which this essay begins, and which triggered the creation of the Loanword Committee. “All the government offices use these terms”, protested assemblyman Katayama against the Prime Minister’s criticism that the inclusion of loanwords such as *autosooshingu* (outsourcing) and *bakkuofisu* (back office) were incomprehensible to the Japanese public and that existing Japanese words should be used to convey these concepts instead. “The reason why we don’t use Japanese words”, countered the assemblyman, “is because the loanwords appeal more to the public and have a certain novelty. We cannot convey such nuances if we use Japanese words” (CEFP 2002).

This metalinguistic awareness of the semiotic power of loanwords to manage the impression of one’s discourse, claims assemblyman Katayama, is one that is shared by “all the government offices” and has become an “everyday” part of the way in which they approach their work. Thus, even when there are Sino-Japanese word equivalents – such as *minkan-itaku* for “outsourcing” or *jimukanri-bumon* for “back office”, the government officials insist on using katakana transcriptions of these English loanwords for the “nuances” (of, say, internationalism and modernity) that account for their “public appeal” and their “novelty” and that the use of the equivalent Japanese words “cannot convey” (CEFP 2002).

Tomoda, however, proposes that at least one of the communicative purposes of using low comprehension “foreign” loanwords in this type of public discourse may be not so much to inform citizens, as to mark the administrators as specialists who know, and are themselves part of, the cutting edge technologies and concepts of the globalizing world economy (1999). Tomoda argues that “new *gairaigo* (loanwords) can function as a form of *officialese* or jargon which serves to retain information within a Japanese élite” (1999: 248). According to this interpretation, when these government officials and bureaucrats bring back new English terms which are used in the international conferences that they attend (and in the academic discourse that they read) and use them without translating them for the average Japanese non-English speaker, they are “branding” not only the projects they are involved with, but – in a certain sense – also attempting to "brand" themselves.[6]

Tomoda argues that "the borrowing by government officials of words derived from a prestigious language such as English is less a new process of internationalization than it is the latest stage in the evolution of *officialese* in Japan" (1999: 250). And just as Sino-Japanese words were available only for educated élite Japanese in previous centuries, unexplicated foreign loanwords may be gaining the status of "élite markers" that contribute to the stratification of society into "information élites" and "information deprived". "When the clarity of [the government officials' discourse] is reduced by the use of ill-defined terms," writes Tomoda, "the probable effect is the further alienation of a public which is already disenchanted with government and politics" (1999: 249).

Accordingly, for a population whose comprehension of such loanwords may be limited, one of the implicit messages derived from their government officials' use of such language may be: "If you don't understand these terms, then this information is not relevant to you". Thus, just as highly technical and newly developed concept terms exclude certain "non-involved" people from the discourse, the practice of making the use of unfamiliar foreign loanwords a consistent lexical choice may "embody definite claims to specialized knowledge and institutional identities" (Drew and Heritage 1992: 29).

So long as English is understood to be the "global" language of internationalist government and commerce, the user of such loanwords can always place the blame for non-comprehension on the audience, rather than on their own self-centered language practices. Compounding this problem, too, claim some language analysts, is the assumption that many Japanese profess to have an inferiority complex towards English – so that when they encounter unknown loanwords, rather than blaming the writer, they blame their own incompetence in English (Shibata 2002; NIJLA 2006b).

Moreover, when the state habitually uses new low-comprehension loanwords in its official capacity as governor of the nation, there is little room left to discuss the appropriateness of the use of such loanwords – and little chance of changing them, when such words have already been "officialized" as the proper names of public buildings, projects, services, etc. (Nakayama 2003). Such words then become (sometimes literally) "concretized" – i.e., treated as complete, the "most appropriate

6. An increase in use of novel English-derived loanwords among Japanese academics is reported in Nagai (1988). Crystal reports that from 1995–1996, about 85% of the international organization studied claimed English as its official language of use (1997). He notes that for a third of these organizations (and 90% of the organizations in Asia and the Pacific), English is the only language used to conduct on their official affairs, even among themselves.

representation" of the meanings that they are meant to convey, and legitimized "as is" (as is, in fact, the case with those more organically integrated loanwords that have found their place in the Japanese language over time). Here, the newly introduced loanwords are neither explicated nor problematized but "naturalized" from the top down, as it were. Finally, one can see the government's use of low comprehension but high status foreign loanwords as an act of "knowledge control" that establishes and perpetuates a power asymmetry between those who can effectively access and manipulate such discourse, and those who cannot. Notes van Dijk:

> The social, political and cultural organization of dominance also implies a *hierarchy of power*: some members of dominant groups and organizations have a special role in planning, decision-making and control over the relations and processes of the enactment of power. These (small) groups will here be called the *power elites* (Domhoff 1978; Mills 1956). For our discussion, it is especially interesting to note that such elites also have special access to discourse: they are literally the ones who have most to *say*. In our discourse analytical framework, therefore, we define elites precisely in terms of their "symbolic power" (Bourdieu 1991), as measured by the extent of their discursive and communicative scope and resources.
>
> (van Dijk 1993: 255)

Clearly one way to look at the phenomenon of the Japanese government officials' disregard for the NIJLA guidelines, and their continued use of unexplicated loanwords, is that that the functionaries of the state are using "the symbolic power" of such loanwords to construct and reinforce an "information élite". And indeed, the NIJLA studies do reveal a potentially troubling communications problem between the governors and the governed in what is supposed to be a democratically governed Japan.

In this essay, however, I wish to acknowledge those concerns of the citizenry, while suggesting a somewhat more complex understanding of the phenomenon of unexplicated loanword use that NIJLA's Loanword Committee was created by the government to address.

Third place languages and third space boundaries

We have seen in this essay some of the tensions surrounding the current discourse regarding English loanword use in Japan. In particular, we have seen how the Japanese government first problematized, and then initiated a study to propose countermeasures to the problem of, the proliferation of "non-understood" loanwords in the public discourse of government officials. We have also seen however, that officials of the same government have been reluctant to adopt the suggestions proposed by the authors of the study that they have commissioned, and have been shown to be among those public figures who make the least effort to modify their use of low-recognition loanwords in the public discourse.

One way of understanding this apparent discrepancy is to consider that what we may be looking at here is a conflict between two different forms of language ideology – i.e., NIJLA's championing of an overtly ideological "democratic language" which everyone who will be affected by such language use should be able to understand, and the less overt, if perhaps no less ideological, everyday language practices with which members of a particular discourse community (here, Japanese government workers) negotiate their identities as members of that community.

Postcolonial cultural critic Homi Bhabha made famous the notion of a "third space of enunciation" that rejects essentialist notions of "a prefigurative self-generating nation 'in itself'" that can be defined in opposition to "extrinsic other nations" (1995: 209). Against this essentialist notion, Bhabha argues instead for the adoption of an "interstitial perspective" of "cultural liminality *within* nations" (1994: 148). "It is in the emergence of the interstices", writes Bhabha, that "the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (1994: 2). Such "third spaces" are not mere theoretical constructs (though language and cultural theorists may do well to adopt such perspectives in approaching their subjects, as Kramsch does with her similar notion of hybrid "third place" language systems noted below). Rather, they are the lived practices, understandings and identities of human beings negotiating meaning with one another through whatever semiotic resources are at hand. "A German social democratic politician might speak of the need to transform German universities into *High Tech Unternehmen* (high tech enterprises), geared toward *Innovative Producktentwicklung* (innovative product development)", notes Kramsch, and in so doing, can be understood *to themselves and to their interlocutors* as speaking the language of "globalspeak" as much, if not more relevantly, than they may be understood to be speaking the "language" of either English or German – as one might otherwise conclude, were one only considering the number and kind of linguistic tokens (2006: 102).

Pennycook, too, argues, in his contribution to the present volume, against the "sterile view" of languages as fixed, essentialist, nation-bound systems of meaning, noting that, among language analysts who are alive to the creative, emergent dynamics of social practice,

> the question that has started to emerge, then, is whether these old categorizations of language – varieties, code-switching, bilingualism, mother tongue, multilingualism, borrowing – as well as the identities that are assumed along lines of language, location, ethnicity and culture really work anymore. Developed in contexts very different to those in which a language like English now finds itself, many of these concepts simply do not seem to address the forms of hybrid urban multilingualism in which English now partakes. (Pennycook, this volume)

Instead, urges Pennycook, our analyses would remain truer to the data were we to focus not on speakers as performers of pre-given "language systems" *per se*, but rather, on "languages" themselves as the emergent accomplishments that speakers perform and create in contexts of interaction.

Urban young people, postcolonial populations, expatriates, and those seeking a global audience may all clearly be understood to be subjects whose identities have been created by, and who themselves create, such "hybrid multilingualism". But in an increasingly hybridized and global-lingual world, why should even such unromantic figures as "government officials and bureaucrats" be expected to be exempt from the same social and semiotic forces? Operating within their own discourse community's emergent and self-perpetuating "third space" of language, should we not expect that they, too, will wind up creating their own new transcultural forms and norms?

Indeed, precisely what I wish to argue here is that the failure of the NIJLA guidelines to change the Japanese government officials' language practice is due to the failure of NIJLA to recognize the countervailing forces upon real world language users that almost always doom such "top-down" language policies to failure. "While language, in the sterile sense that linguistics has often assigned to it, can be planned", write Luke, McHoul and Mey, "discourse cannot" (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990: 39). And it is the *discourse* of globalization and internationalism, of modernity and progress, and of expertise and competence that the government officials apparently feel they have to speak – using whatever linguistic and semiotic resources they deem most appropriate – that may account for their principled intransigence towards the NIJLA Loanword Committee's proposals.

"All the government offices use these terms", protested assemblyman Katayama, insisting that "we cannot convey such nuances if we use Japanese words" (CEFP 2002). NIJLA, on the other hand, while justifiably concerned with the "democratization" of Japan's national discourse, believes that it can do so with recourse to a "sterile" view of language that fails to take into account the multiplicity of (oftentimes competing) discourses and hybrid linguistic forms that emerge within any society of language users subject to the forces of globalization and internationalism.

The creative power and linguistic legitimacy of such "third space" language practice that can be seen to arise within the contexts of transnational discourse communities have only recently been acknowledged as deserving serious study by language analysts, such as Kramsch (2006), Makoni and Pennycook (2005). Yet for all the liberating potential in acknowledging the legitimacy of these forms as such, relatively unremarked upon so far is the corollary observation that with the emergence of new discursive forms also comes the emergence of new discursive boundaries. In this study, we can plainly see that the exceedingly translingual and creative language form developed by the government administrators has had a significant influence on the disparity in knowledge, access to information, and asymmetrical participation opportunities to intelligently engage with the official public discourse among Japanese speakers. In this sense, the recognition of the emerging problem of third space boundaries was presciently recognized by the NJILA, even if done so within the confines of an "essentialist" language ideology.

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CHAPTER 14

English speakers in Korea

A short literary history

Eun Kyung Min

This paper interrogates the formation and representation of the English-speaking subject in modern Korea. Who speaks English in modern Korea and why? The paper offers a literary-historical sketch of representative modern Korean subjects in both Korean and Korean American literature. These subjects, I suggest, open up a troubled history of Korean imaginaries of the English language. Whereas English first appears as a marker of colonial modernity, class privilege, and social striving in early twentieth-century Korean literature, it quickly turns into a much more ambivalent and compromising sign of political and national dispossession in the literature of the Korean War. The evolution of the representative English-speaking Korean subject from the male colonial subject to the female '*yanggongju*' (western princess) who serves the American military personnel stationed in Korea demonstrates that, in the Korean literary imagination, English has always been deeply connected to national and collective trauma and dispossession, even as it continues to perform as a sign of globalized, elite identity. Recently, we have seen the transnational adoptee emerge in Korean American literature as a prismatic figure embodying, in particularly painful and ironic form, the contradictory identifications demanded by English-language use in contemporary Korea.

Who speaks English in Korea? This essay attempts to address this question by examining the representation of English speakers in modern Korean literature and contemporary Korean American literature. What follows is therefore very far from an empirical study. Although the representation of English speakers in Korean literature is clearly an important topic for research, there exists relatively little critical literature on this subject. I say the subject is important because of the historical light that it can shed on the formation of the modern Korean subject in the twentieth century in relation to language identity. In contrast, there is a great deal of sociolinguistic and anthropological research on the history and status of English language education in Korea today. Anthropologists So Jin Park and Nancy Abelman, for instance, have discussed the current "English language mania" in

Korea in terms of "class and cosmopolitan striving". Today English is officially introduced to Korean children at the elementary level, at age nine, but increasing numbers of preschoolers are attending *yŏngŏ yuchiwŏn* (English kindergartens), and the English education market is one of the largest in the world (over ₩4 trillion per year, or over US$3,333 million) (Park and Abelman 2004: 646). The impetus behind this mass investment at both the public and private levels in English language education is largely due to the economic advantages that can be wielded by English speakers in our age of global capital. However, as Park and Abelman point out, the importance of English in contemporary Korean life is not just about the "functional or instrumental character" of the English language. English today is part of "South Korean imaginaries" that exceed the practical advantages that attach to English (2004: 666).

My interest in this essay lies in the history of the Korean imaginaries of the English language, and I have chosen as my privileged site of investigation Korean and Korean American literary texts that chart the literary contours of this history. Why is this topic a relatively unexplored one? In my view, there are two main reasons for the dearth of Korean literature on the issue of English-language speaking in Korea. The first reason is that English-speaking is inseparable from the modern history of Korea – a history that has produced traumatic political wounds that remain, to this day, difficult to articulate. Like many other Asian countries, Korea was forced to open up to western powers in the nineteenth century and did so reluctantly, at gunpoint. Unlike many South Asian countries, however, it was never colonized by the British and has never been an English-speaking country. English language education in Korea officially began in 1883 (the year after the conclusion of the United States–Korea Treaty of 1882) when the government established an English language school to train translators and interpreters (Kim-Rivera 2002: 263). This school was shut down during Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), and English language instruction was carried on mostly by private and missionary schools run by American missionaries (Kim-Rivera 2002: 264). After the end of Japanese rule in 1945, the United States Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK, 1945–1948) occupied South Korea, while the USSR controlled North Korea – a hasty power-sharing deal drafted by the winners of WWII that has had lasting tragic consequences, as proven by the Korean War of 1950–1953 and the continuing Cold War division of the peninsula. To this day the United States continues to maintain a prominent military presence in South Korea, while a defiantly belligerent and increasingly isolated North Korea looms over the 38th parallel. It is not surprising, then, that English remains a deeply ambivalent signifier in Korea, even in this age of global capital and transnationalism. English is part and parcel of a train of events that catapulted a former "hermit nation" into a modernity that it paid for literally, and dearly, with its blood.

The second reason, which is in fact an elaboration of the first, is that Koreans associate English primarily with Americans for whom they tend to harbor contradictory and unresolved feelings. As Hwang Jong-yon points out, these feelings are deeply intertwined with the history of United States involvement in Korea. While the United States defense of South Korea in the Korean War cemented the image of the United States as ally and liberator for many Koreans, the failure of the United States to intervene during the Japanese annexation of Korea, its role in the post-Korean War division of the peninsula, and perhaps most decisively its support of the authoritarian Korean regime of Chun Doo-Hwan and the Gwangju Massacre of 1980 have produced widespread disillusionment and even enmity (Hwang 2004: 103–104). The literary response, on the other hand, has been less conflicted. To use Song Seung-Chol's expression, "America, Americans, and Americanism as a literary topic in Korea" have a "dismal status". Even in contemporary literature, representations of Americans are often limited to "simplified, fragmentary, and superficial" depictions of G.I.'s whose primary characteristic is a bestial sexuality (Song 2004: 183). This literary image, which clearly does not do justice to the complexity of Korea–United States relations, has been analyzed in psycho-social terms as the darker underside of the "hypertrophied idealization of America" (itself an "optical illusion" caused by the aftereffects of Japanese colonialism and continuing North-South tensions) and as a psychic awakening to the real and obscene father behind the image of the U.S. as an "imaginary loving father, the object of identification" (Song 2004: 198; Joo 2004: 206). These analytical insights aside, the fact remains that the literary record is disappointing.

For these reasons, then, a literary-historical investigation of the question of who speaks English in Korea through a survey of Korean literature can only be a partial and limited endeavor. Paik Nak-chung observed almost thirty years ago that Korean national literature is lacking in full-fledged, complex literary treatments of Americans (Paik 1985). His observation still holds largely true today. My decision to expand my field of inquiry to include Korean American works arose out of the silences and repressions at work in Korean literature. The uses of such an expanded literary history seem evident to me. Theodore Hughes recently noted that "The formation of modern Korean and other Asian literatures was from the beginning transnational, embedded in a global order of economic, military, political, and cultural relations linked to colonialisms, semicolonialisms, and nationalisms" (2011: 673). The politics of English in Korea can only be examined through a widened lens that incorporates these complex linkages through which modern Korea came into definition. A proper study of this subject would therefore require cross-disciplinary work, preferably collaborative, among linguists, literary historians, and social scientists in both Korean and Anglo-American Studies. What follows is an exploratory and experimental outline for a larger project devoted to this subject. What I offer is a sketchy literary history centered on a small sample of literary texts. The paper makes no claim to comprehensiveness; I shall only be discussing a very few works in detail. It is openly conjectural. Please think of it as, more than anything else, a call for action.

English and Korean colonial modernity

The standard historical designations for modern Korean fiction divide literary history into the modern (*kŭndae*) and contemporary (*hyŏndae*) periods. Conventionally modern literature refers to the literature of the colonial period (1917–1945) and post-liberation literature is categorized as contemporary. Here I shall use the term "modern Korean literature" to refer to both categories. In the introduction to their recent collection *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, Bruce Fulton and Kwon Youngmin explain that the early twentieth-century practitioner of Korean literature "was commonly male, often went to high school and/or college in Japan, and kept body and soul together working for a newspaper or literary magazine" (2005: xi). Like his predecessors, the colonial Korean writer was highly educated, but he differed from them in choosing as his medium not classical Chinese (*hanmun*) but vernacular Korean. Unlike his scholar-bureaucrat predecessor who wrote at his leisure, the modern Korean writer at the turn of the twentieth century was a professional writer who came of age under Japanese colonial rule. In the earliest examples of modern Korean fiction – examples that, not surprisingly, often depict the relatively educated and prosperous class to which the early twentieth-century Korean writers belonged – it is not unusual to come across Koreans who have access to English. English is, in this sense, a marker of colonial modernity.

For instance, the representative male protagonist of Yi Kwangsu's 1917 novel *Mujŏng* (*The Heartless*) is a middle-school English teacher named Yi Hyŏng-sik who is caught between two women: the *kisaeng* Pak Yŏng-ch'ae, daughter of his former teacher, who has unfortunately fallen into concubinage due to family misfortune, and Kim Sŏn-hyŏng, daughter of a wealthy church elder (Elder Kim) who was formerly consul to the United States. When the novel opens, Yi Hyŏng-sik is on his way to tutor eighteen-year-old Sŏn-hyŏng, who is about to leave for the United States to study. The contrast between Yŏng-ch'ae and Sŏn-hyŏng is blatantly allegorical: whereas Yŏng-ch'ae's tragic fate is clearly tied to the decline of the traditional scholar class, Sŏn-hyŏng's sexual and social desirability is a function of her westernized, upper-class family's connections to America and Christianity. Hyŏng-sik's own eligibility as a potential spouse for Sŏn-hyŏng in the eyes of her parents has everything to do with his legibility as a westernized Korean subject in their eyes. The narrator tells us:

> Hyŏng-sik believed that he was a pioneer with the most advanced thinking in Korea. Within his modesty was a pride and arrogance towards Korean society. He had read Western philosophy and Western literature … he used a lot of English, referred to the names of famous Westerners, quoted famous sayings, and spoke at length using incomprehensible words. His speeches and writings seemed to be literal translations of Western texts. (Yi 2005: 229–231)

The novel clearly connects Hyŏng-sik's vain adulation of western culture to Elder Kim's. Just like Hyŏng-sik, Elder Kim "prided himself on being the most advanced, civilized person in Korea":

> Elder Kim not only furnished his study in Western style, but also wore Western-style suits often, and slept in a Western-style bed. He respected the United States in particular, among Western nations. He tried to follow Western examples as much as possible. (Yi 2005: 250)

The narrator, however, refers the reader to the gaze of the western missionaries in Korea who see through Elder Kim's performance and pronounce him a mere imitation ("They therefore said he was just imitating Western civilization" [Yi 2005: 251]). In this sense, in *The Heartless* English is key to the moral hypocrisy and social vanity of the modernizing classes. Command of English turns the impoverished and socially inept Hyŏng-sik into a desirable mate for an upper-class girl; modern education is above all symbolized by the teaching of English which is directly linked to class mobility. Yi Kwangsu does not depict Hyŏng-sik entirely as a villain, however. Embedded within Hyŏng-sik's self-parodic mimicry of a western identity, there lies a genuine impetus for change, and in this way Yi Kwangsu rescues his protagonist from utter moral ruin. English thus functions in the novel simultaneously as a marker of class and gender difference as well as a sign of authentic, though problematic, desire for a new national and cultural subjectivity.

The very fact that Yi Hyŏng-sik is portrayed as an English teacher at a private Korean school during Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) attests to the complications of language policy during this period. This is a subject that is too vast to treat in great detail here, but it should be noted that there was a discrepancy between official policy and reality. In 1911, Japanese became a required subject in government schools and the teaching of other languages besides Japanese (including Korean and English) was banned (Kim-Rivera 2002: 264). In reality, however, English language education continued under the radar, especially at private and independent educational institutions, and after the March First movement of 1919 was in fact reintroduced by the Japanese in the colonial schools (Kim-Rivera 2002: 265). Kang Nae-hui notes that at the turn of the twentieth century there were basically four different languages in competition on the Korean peninsula: vernacular Korean, classical Chinese, Japanese, and English (2007: 98). At the end of the nineteenth century, there was a strong nationalist drive to promote Korean as the national language and the use of classical Chinese became more restricted. However, the status of Korean was forced into a rapid decline during the colonial period, especially in the last decade of colonial rule. For Korean intellectuals, many of whom studied in Japan, Japanese was the language of colonial modernity but also the official language of colonial oppression. English, in comparison, was a much more neutral signifier of progress and modernization. It was attached to a cultural imaginary in which the United States loomed as the land of golden opportunity, the route to alternative futures beyond the grips of Japanese colonization.

In *The Heartless*, we see a complicated political balance – or, as some would put it, compromise – being worked out for the Korean language. Yi Kwangsu famously wrote, "The Korean language has shared a common destiny with the Korean people. It cannot be destroyed unless the Korean people themselves abandon their own language and writing".[1] As many critics have pointed out, however, Yi's notion of a vernacular national literature was deeply inflected by his exposure to western literature and western-style literary theory in Japan (Hwang 1999; Shin 1999; Park 2006). In *The Heartless*, Yi idealistically proposes that vernacularization and westernization are not necessarily at odds. The almost absurdly happy ending of the novel, where the narrator prepares to welcome back to Korea Hyŏng-sik and Sŏn-hyŏng, fourth-year students at the University of Chicago, and Yŏng-ch'ae, who has reinvented herself as a professional musician and "graduated at the top of her class in piano and voice at the Ueno Conservatory in Tokyo", suggests that a significant part of Korea's future lies beyond its national boundaries (Yi 2005: 346). In hindsight, this ending may seem to harbor suggestions of Yi's increasingly "gradualist, nonconfrontational" politics that culminated in his collaboration with the Japanese colonial authorities in the 1940s and led to a fall in his literary reputation (Shin 1999: 249). Paik notes that pro-American and pro-Japanese sentiments are often dangerously close in early twentieth-century Korean literature, and Yi's *The Heartless* is a case in point (1985: 246).[2]

1. Yi Kwangsu, "Chosŏnŏ," *Chosŏn Ilbo*, October 11, 1935. Cited in Lee (2005: 51). See also Michael Shin's discussion of Yi's essays on the Korean language (1999: 254–261).

2. Paik makes this point in his examination of two novels by Yi In-jik: *Hyŏl ŭi nu* (*Tears of Blood*, 1906) and *Ŭn segye* (*World of Silver*, 1908) (1985: 246–248).

The sexual politics of English in the post-Korean War period

After liberation from Japanese colonial rule, many Korean writers found themselves in a linguistic and writerly quandary. Writers who were born and came of age during Japanese colonial rule, and grew up speaking Japanese during the repressive years (1937–1945) when schooling was forbidden in Korean, were suddenly faced with the task of unlearning Japanese and relearning their mother tongue. These challenges were compounded in the years 1945–1948 when English and Russian emerged as new objects of linguistic desire (Jo 2008: 230). This new quadrangulation of the linguistic field in Korea is expressed succinctly, for instance, in Sŏnu Hwi's *Pulkkot* (*Flame of Fire*, 1957) where the protagonist Hyŏn sardonically wonders how he should respond linguistically to the liberation from Japan: "Spasiba Krasnaja Armija (Thank you, Red Army)" or "Wonderful C-Ration" (cited in Jo 2008: 245).[3]

After the American occupation of Korea in 1945–1948 and the Korean War of 1950–1953, however, English quickly gained clear ascendancy over Japanese and Russian to emerge as the new foreign language of power. Not surprisingly, the English-speaking Korean subjects in the post-liberation period (the period that is conventionally designated contemporary [*hyŏndae*] in Korean literary history) are predominantly associated with the U.S. army. These subjects tend to divide along gender lines into two groups: Korean male subjects who occupy official positions that put them directly in contact with the U.S. military, and Korean female subjects associated with the military camptowns that formed around the American army bases. Examples of the first group include the eponymous translator/interpreter in Chae Mansik's *Misŭtŏ Pang* (*Mister Pang*, 1946) and the Korean colonel in Sŏnu Hwi's *Merry Christmas* (1958), both of whom pay the bitter price of self-alienation and humiliation to obtain the material and social advantages that come with associating with American personnel (Fulton 1998: 202; Jo 2008: 250). If these works tend to allegorize Korea – United States relations before and after the Korean War as an unequal alliance, narrating the failures of national self-determination through the socially and psychically emasculated Korean man, the female figures in the second group tell the story of the nation more bluntly yet, "as a penetration achieved by force" (Epstein 1995: 72). It is this group of Korean women, the sexual victims of the militarization of the nation, who have captured the literary imagination of the post-Korean War authors to emerge as one of the most important English-speaking subjects in post-war literature. The privileged

3. Jo analyzes this quadrangulation of the linguistic field in post-liberation Korea in such works as Sŏnu Hwi's *Merry Christmas* (1958), Jeon Gwanyong's *Kapitan Ri* (1962), and Son Chang-sop's *Sin ŭi hŭijak* (*God's Theater*, 1961), among others (Jo 2008: 245).

site of English-language communication in contemporary Korea literature is thus the military camptown and the *yanggongju* (western princesses) who serve the American military.

Ahn Junghyo's *Silver Stallion* (1990), the author's own English translation of the original *Ŭnma nŭn oji annŭnda* (*The Silver Stallion Does Not Return*), is one example of the literary treatment of the birth of this abject and yet empowered female Korean subject. *Silver Stallion* narrates the travails of a village named Kumsan during the Korean War. This village located in a region so remote that no "pirates, thirteenth-century Mongols, or sixteenth-century Japanese" ever touched it, manages to emerge unscathed from Japanese colonial rule, but eventually falls prey to invaders during the Korean War (Symons 1998: 131). Ironically, these invaders are none other than the American soldiers who have been sent to Korea as part of the United Nations Forces to liberate the Korean people from the menace of the North Korean red army. Unlike the North Korean soldiers who appear indirectly in the form of rumors, falling bombs, or stolen goods at the beginning of the novel, the American soldiers make their entrance into the novel as grotesque physical bodies:

> The villagers were too appalled and embarrassed by the grotesque appearance of the foreigners … The tall *bengkos* [big noses] in loose green uniforms had strange bright colors in their hair and eyes and some of them, especially those with charcoal-black skin, looked horrible, like beasts, when they grinned. (Ahn 1990: 41)

The ogre-like men proceed to settle into the neighborhood at a temporary military base. The widow Ollye, who is the main female protagonist of *Silver Stallion*, is raped at night by one black *bengko* – with "a flat nose with cavernous nostrils" and "porky thick lips"– and one white in front of her two young children (Ahn 1990: 54).[4] Subsequently she is spurned by the villagers who, paralyzed by fear, decorum, and sheer cowardice, ostracize the family. Desperate to feed the children, Ollye succumbs to the influence of two "U.N. ladies" or "Yankee wives" who persuade her to work for them in "Texas Town" (Ahn 1990: 106).

Ollye's education in English is appalling in its limitations. The soldiers speak a dumbed-down English to her – "Hey, drink can do?" – to which she learns to reply "Okay. Can do. Sank you" (Ahn 1990: 145). The first words she learns are "'okay, okay', 'hubba-hubba', 'namba wang', 'namba teng', 'gerrary', 'drink', 'kiss kiss'", and explicit terms for the sexual organs and the sexual act (Ahn 1990: 147). Linguistically, she is at the same level as the boys who learn to follow the American soldiers and call out, "'Hey, *bengko*, give me chop chop. Jelly give me chop chop'"

4. The highly racialized, and more often than not deeply racist, portrayals of African Americans in Korean literature is a subject that deserves a separate study.

(Ahn 1990: 80). By referring the reader to the degraded, bluntly instrumental English of Ollye and her fellow U.N. ladies, the novelist points to the communicative and cultural gap that exists between the Korean prostitutes and their American military patrons who conclude their transactions in the bizarre no man's land of Texas Town.

Like Yŏng-ch'ae in *The Heartless*, Ollye is a figure of abjection; both are raped. In this sense, both *The Heartless* and *Silver Stallion* use the "woman's body as a site where oppressive power has its effects, and as a point where resistance originates" (Lee 2005: 62). However, whereas Yŏng-ch'ae's sexual abjection occurs at the hands of Korean men who feel entitled to the body of a professional *kisaeng*, Ollye is raped by American soldiers who roam the Korean countryside demanding, "Sexy isso?" (Any girl [*saeksi*] here?). If Yŏng-ch'ae's fate shows that "the male subject of modernity depends on othering woman as abjection" (Lee 2005: 63) – in other words, on the complicity of the modern male Korean subject in the continuing violation of the female Korean body – Ollye's decision to make the American soldiers pay for her sexual services reveals the "paradox" of her empowerment through her sexual and social abjection (Symons 1998: 135). Marginalized and pilloried by her village, Ollye openly confronts the social, economic, and moral bankruptcy of the traditional male village elite (represented by Old Hwang) and the inadequacy of traditional social ties in the face of overwhelming social and political change. What Ollye gains through her break with the villagers is a new mobility and a new self-consciousness. Thus, by the end of the novel when the Chinese force all the villagers to flee to the south in a "dreadful landscape of war", it is Ollye, "her hair permanented [sic] like a modern city woman", her sack filled with "Yankee PX goods left over from black market trading", and a "handful of bank-bills neatly folded into small squares and hidden deep in her bosom", who looks like the woman of the future (Ahn 1990: 269, 265). She is not quite the "New Woman" who was an important icon of colonial modernity, of course. However, like the "New Woman" who symbolized a westernized, liberated female self during Japanese colonial rule, Ollye represents a female subjectivity that is in rebellion against "the neo-Confucian Law of the Father" and is unafraid to flaunt social convention to achieve a new selfhood (Choi 1999: 232).[5]

It remains true, of course, that her freedom is won at a brutal cost. The figure of the U.N. lady, Yankee whore, or *yanggongju* who speaks a bastardized English of sexual slavery is, in Grace Cho's words, "simultaneously an erased figure of national development and an overexposed figure of national loss", an enactment

5. See Choi, esp. 239–247 for an interesting examination of the figure of the "New Woman" in Pak Wan-so's *Mother Stake 1*. O Chŏng-hŭi's short story *Chunggug'in Kŏri* (*Chinatown*) is another well-known treatment of the G.I. prostitute theme (O 1989: 202–230).

of “South Korea’s ambivalent relationship to the United States” (2008: 90). “[S]ubjected to practices of hypermilitarization and constituted by a history of collective trauma”, the military prostitute is a figure of Korean national humiliation and shame that belies the Cold War construction of the United States as liberator and savior (Cho 2008: 104). As we can see in *Silver Stallion*, however, the reading of the military prostitute as merely a figure of shame contains its own violence and its own eroticism: the village boys who wage an internal war over their right to spy on the women of Texas Town are in effect enacting the villagers’ sexual fantasies about fallen Korean women. Lydia Liu’s analysis of Chinese nationalist discourse is enlightening in this regard. Liu writes: in nationalist signifying practice, “the female body is ultimately displaced by nationalism, whose discourse denies the specificity of female experience by giving larger symbolic meanings to the signifier of rape” (1994: 44). In *Silver Stallion*, Ahn Junghyo refuses simply to instrumentalize the raped female body, and uses the abject female body instead to force open the cracks in Korean social consciousness – the repressions, disavowals, and hypocrisies of a society that is as much imploding from within as exploding under the bombs of modernity. It is important to note that military prostitution sometimes did lead to marriage, and more than 100,000 Korean military brides emigrated to the U.S. after 1950. It is in fact estimated that military brides are responsible (directly and indirectly) for bringing forty to fifty percent of all Korean immigrants to the U.S. since 1965 (Yuh 2005: 278). These statistics bear out the two diametrically opposite symbolic values embodied in the military sex worker: on the one hand, social and sometimes even physical annihilation; on the other hand, transnational social mobility and ultimate self-reinvention.[6]

As Kyung Hyun Kim suggests in his book on the New Korean Cinema, the popular representations of the Korean War and its aftermath are intimately linked to the challenges posed by “the intense industrialization and the harsh rule of military dictators from the 1960s to the 1980s” (Kim 2004: 5). As he points out, the variously handicapped, often traumatized, and generally emasculated male figures that appear in Korean films emblematize political frustration and repression. The way out has almost always been imagined in terms of a nationalist project of rescuing and recuperating a specifically male subjectivity (2004: 6). For this reason, Kim finds that the “critique of masculinization ushered in by the postwar military regimes” implicit in the “depictions of emasculated and humiliated male subjects”

6. Tragic instances of unspeakable violence done to camptown sex workers have continued to occur throughout Korean history. For a recent discussion, see Cho’s chapter “Tracing the Disappearance of the Yanggongju” in her book *Haunting the Korean Diaspora* (2008: 89–128). For a useful overview of Korean literature dealing with the camptown in Korea, see Fulton (1998: 198–213).

only "set[s] the stage for their remasculinization" as new, "industrialized, modern, and global" subjects in tune with the world (Kim 2004: 9–10). Kim convincingly shows this project of remasculinization at work in the film version of *Silver Stallion* (Chang Kil-su, dir., 1991), where the story of Ollye's fall is (unlike the novel) narrated primarily through her son Mansik who turns "a phallic gaze" of "authorial surveillance" upon his "shameful" mother, pulling her back into a male symbolic economy in which he replaces his father as the familial patriarch. In Kim's reading, the strategy of the film is precisely "not to free the woman from the pains of the colonization and the war, but to develop a crisis that is astutely masculine" (Kim 2004: 85–86). Kim's analysis suggests that the reductive representations of U.S. military men, and the Korean men and women who associate with them, need to be read and critiqued in terms of a larger, Korean nationalist project that has operated in consistently gendered – i.e. masculinist and misogynistic – terms. The salient sexual politics of the English language in the post-war period should be understood in terms of this wider psychosexual dimension of the Korean nationalist imaginary in which the losses and traumas of the Korean nation are symbolized as oedipal drama: a lost and absent father, a mother seduced by his violent usurper, and a young male ego that must resolve these familial problems and somehow launch himself into maturity.[7]

The return of the repressed

The masculinist bias of the Korean nationalist imaginary explains why the rare sympathetic portrayals of the American camptown have come mostly from female Korean authors and from Korean American authors. Pak Wan-so, one of the most beloved and successful women writers in Korea, made her literary debut with a novel entitled *Namok* (*The Naked Tree*, 1970) which was based on her experience working at the PX store at the Yongsan Army Base in Seoul. Her first-hand experience of the American army world helped her create highly realistic portraits

7. A scandalous literary example of remasculinization can be found in dissident writer Nam Chŏng-hyŏn's 1965 satirical short story *Punji* (*Land of Dung*) in which the main protagonist Mansu takes the extreme step of raping the wife of the American G.I. who abuses his sister. Nam was accused of anti-Americanism by the Korean government and sentenced to seven years in prison, although he did not actually serve his sentence. Song notes that the writers and lawyers who came to Nam's defense in the 1960s did not comment on the "blatant phallocentrism" of his novel (2004: 183). Kwon draws a line between Nam's negative portrayal of Americans and the general attitude of Koreans toward the U.S., arguing that "one cannot conclude that this negative portrayal indicates the viewpoint or reactions of Koreans toward America as a country" (Kwon 1996: 60). See also Lee (2004: 112) for a discussion of Nam's work.

of not only the Korean women who wagered their lives on their ability to attract American men, and the lonely American soldiers desperate for human contact, but also the diverse social groups of workers, smugglers, middle-men, and their families, all of whom were profoundly affected by the presence of the American army. The narrator of *Naked Tree* works at "the portrait shop in the middle of the first floor of the glittering PX" (Post Exchange) in Yongsan (Pak 1995: 3). Her job is to speak English to the American soldiers and encourage them to buy portraits, usually of their American girlfriends back home or their Korean girlfriends. Although the narrator's adventures in the novel include a rather disastrous, brief sexual encounter with an American G.I., she is socially and linguistically distinguished from the other Korean women hanging around the army base by her ability to read and write English – an ability learned through education rather than sexual contact. This ability is what helps her land her coveted job and makes her useful for a character like Diana Kim who seems to speak English "like an American woman" but cannot read the letters her G.I. boyfriend sends her from America (Pak 1995: 13–14).[8]

In a lecture published posthumously in 2011, Pak declared that her own idea of, and feelings about, America are summed up in the story of the *yanggongju* Ch'un-hŭi in *Kŭ namja ne jip* (*The Man's House*, 2004) who sacrifices herself for her family and manages to bring them to the U.S., but is looked down on by her own siblings because of her African American husband and their biracial children. In *The Man's House*, it is Ch'un-hŭi's American-born niece, the daughter of her sister, who shows sympathy and understanding for her by writing an academic paper on the economic contributions of the *yanggongju*'s to the Korean national economy. Pak pointedly contrasts the older Korean generation's continuing inability, even on transplanted American soil, to acknowledge and honor the historical role of these women, and shows that it takes a younger generation of Korean Americans to view the women with eyes unclouded by social prejudice. In this way, Pak voices her disenchantment with the extreme positions taken toward the U.S. in recent Korean history, distancing herself from the anti-Americanism of Korean "generations that experienced nothing" as her own generation did, as well as the one-sided pro-Americanism of the older, conservative generations (Pak 2011: 86–88).

8. For a brief autobiographical sketch of Pak Wan-so's life, see Suh (2001: 93–94). Suh points out that, in Pak's view, "the Korean War was traumatic to the Korean people in ways that previous national calamities were not". Even under Japanese colonial rule, the Korean people had managed to hold on to a sense of national solidarity. According to Pak, the most destructive consequence of the Korean War was that it created such deep ideological and emotional divisions within Korean society that it brought about an effective "end of solidarity in Korean society" (Suh 2001: 100–101).

The stories of these women so frequently repressed in Korean national history in fact have an important place in the Korean American imagination. We can find a sympathetic Korean American treatment of the military bride in Heinz Insu Fenkl's autobiographical novel *Memories of My Ghost Brother* which recounts the camptown experience from the perspective of the biracial child. At the end of the novel, we see the narrator Insu's mother, who is married to an American G.I., looking forward to her move to the United States together with her two children. She is the ultimate camptown success: married to an American and moving to America. However, young Insu learns that what drives her motivation to move to the United States is not so much a fantasy of an America where "every American was a millionaire and everyone owned his own house and had a car and drank Coca-Cola instead of water and had meat for every meal" (Fenkl 1996: 267). Rather, it is her desire to be reunited with her son from a former marriage, Insu's Korean half-brother, who was sent away for adoption in the United States by Insu's father. Insu, who only learns about the existence of this "ghost brother" at the end of the novel, realizes that his parents' marriage was conditional upon this child sacrifice.

It is arguably this figure of the ghost child, the child sacrificed to an unequal, Cold War partnership between the United States and South Korea, that has emerged as the most powerful English-speaking voice in contemporary Korean and Korean American literature. To date, about 200,000 Korean children have been placed in transnational adoption, three-quarters (or about 150,000) of whom were placed in the United States. Korea benefited from transnational adoption because it was economical to airlift a major social welfare problem (orphan children and poor children) away from the country; meanwhile, adopted parenthood "provided a set of terms, images, and narratives that made America's increasing commitment to Asia seem natural, legitimate, and morally sound" (Klein 2000: 65). Like the military sex worker, the adoptee was also for a long time "an erased figure" in Korean national consciousness (Cho 2008: 90). Starting in the late 1990s, however, the Korean government started making a concerted effort to re-incorporate adoptees into "the 'global family' of South Korea as part of the cultural and economic 'globalization' policy (*segyehwa*)" (Kim 2003: 58). Once shunted away from a troubled nation unable to cope with the cost of raising them, adoptees are now being courted as exemplars of globalized Korean-ness. As anthropologist Eleana Kim puts it, adoptees are the spectral "reminders and remainders of South Korea's Third World past, the 'illicit' sexual practices of Korean women, and American cultural and economic imperialism". At the same time, "Having been reared in predominantly middle to upper-middle class white families", they are now identified with the educational, material, and social "opportunities afforded by the West" (2003: 72).

Many adoptees are returning to Korea these days as they reach adulthood and seek reconciliation or at least a reckoning with their birth country. They come to attend summer summits for adoptees around the world, to seek reunion with their birth families, to search out the many opportunities open to fluent English speakers. Jane Jeong Trenka, whose celebrated memoir *The Language of Blood* is one of the most important texts to emerge from the diaspora of Korean transnational adoptees, has recently published an account of what it is like to live in Seoul today as an adoptee (Trenka 2003).[9] In *Fugitive Visions*, she describes herself as a linguistic and cultural misfit in her land of birth, "an ex-Korean possessing Korean language skills inferior to those of my nephew". She writes; "I am functionally illiterate, deaf, and mute in what should have been my native language in my native country". In characteristically mordant fashion, she adds:

> Luckily, I had a marketable job skill when I returned to Seoul: speaking English with a standard Midwest American accent. 'You speak English well! Did you study abroad?' A person who teaches English, as most adoptees do, can pay the entire month's rent by speaking English for six hours. Speak English another six hours and teachers can buy drinks for all their friends all month. An English teacher can eat out every day, and always leave food on the restaurant table.
>
> (Trenka 2009: 14)

Here we see that it is, above all, the adoptee's command of English that rewrites her identity in contemporary Korea in extravagant terms, even though it is a linguistic command won at the cost of the loss of her mother tongue and estrangement from her native culture. Trenka has first-hand experience of the irony of passing as an elite, globalized Korean. While teaching at an English *hagwon* (private institute) in Yongsan, where the United States army still maintains a military base, she discovers that "nearly all the sixth graders of that *hagwon*, with their ethnic Korean faces, were born in the U.S.", "that their fathers were the most powerful businessmen in Korea, CEOs of computer companies and entertainment industries, and that nearly all the students planned to go to Harvard or Yale" (Trenka 2009: 98). She reads their "hope of becoming a transnational: a person who habitually drinks wine, eats cheese, sleeps in a bed, and speaks English" in terms of their vulnerability to the "Bewitching, bedeviling seduction of whiteness" that is visible everywhere in Korea – a dream that depends on a disidentification with the racialized realities of lived Korean immigrant and adoptee experience in the United States (Trenka 2009: 99). "Transnationalism is supposed to look like choices, is supposed to look like breaking boundaries, is supposed to look like freedom", but

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9. See my article "The Daughter's Exchange in Jane Jeong Trenka's *The Language of Blood*" for a discussion of transnational adoptee identity formation (Min 2008).

the experience of transnationalism in contemporary Korea is much more troubled and ambivalent. What it actually looks like in her experience as an adoptee is "sisters trying to rebuild their relationship after being unwillingly separated, families struggling to talk to each other … ethnic Koreans [such as herself] asking white people for directions right in the middle of Seoul, a city where the elite and the very lowest of society are thrown together because of a common language" (Trenka 2009: 109–110).

The adoptee, the Korean who is forced into a westernized identity, is a figure who is simultaneously elite and "expendable". As Trenka puts it, "I am the expendable of Korea who can pass as one of its elite" (Trenka 2009: 98). And it is above all the English language that engineers this intentional or unintentional passing. For this reason, the adoptee is a prismatic figure of the disjunctures surrounding English language use in contemporary Korea. As can be seen already in the colonial period, English has for over a century been associated with elite education, social mobility, and modernized Korean identity. English in this sense has long functioned as a cultural and social standard that mediates educational, social, even marriage transactions, as we can see in *The Heartless*. Whereas English was attached primarily to a social elite in the first half of the twentieth century, however, after the Korean War English was increasingly associated not only with the Christianized, westernized, United States-loving upper classes (already satirized through the figure of Elder Kim in *The Heartless*), but also with the abject class of military prostitutes and brides – indeed, with the various service industries that sprang up around U.S. military bases. This history is not unrelated to the reason why English today continues to be connected to a kind of false consciousness and colonized mentality.

A 2007 collection of essays edited by Yoon Jikwan, professor of English at Dŏksong Women's University and former director of the government-funded Korea Literature Translation Institute, bears the provocative title *Yŏngŏ, nae maŭm ŭi Singminjuŭi* (*English, Colonialism of My Mind*). The essays, most of which were written by university professors of English language and literature, take issue with the current English mania in Korea, arguing that English works all too often as an imperialist tool of linguistic oppression in Korea, and as an inaccurate marker of individual cultural capital (and conversely as a relatively accurate index of family financial liquidity). One essay goes so far as to accuse the current state of English education in Korea of violating students' rights. This is an extreme position, but it does speak to the overwhelming hegemonic power of English in Korea today where English is experienced by many as an unbearable burden.

Is English a trustworthy sign of an elite, cosmopolitan identity or is it a sign of national cultural loss? I propose that one answer offered by the uncanny figure of the transnational adoptee, who must navigate the distance between these two disjunctive meanings of English, is that in today's world of global English, the English language can no longer be simply regarded as the "other" of Korea, and that the managing of English-speaking identity in contemporary Korea demands a widened and deepened understanding, including an awareness of subjects marginalized by national consciousness. To ask the question "Who speaks English in Korea?" is to raise difficult and uncomfortable questions about nationhood, citizenship, and belonging. The strange trinity of English speaking subjects I have examined in this essay makes up a bizarre, split-up family: the elite, educated father; the prostitute mother; and the transnational adoptee. Their experience of English cannot be summed up easily: it is always already a profoundly gendered, classed, and heavily socially stratified experience, although English provides some mobility beyond the initial determinations of that experience. English leads these figures to confront their relationship to the cultural communities to which they belong, as well as their relation to the Korean nation. English is not necessarily a barrier to Korean identity, although it is a challenge to simplistic definitions of Korean identity. Its ambivalence is here to stay. This ambivalence is indeed continuous with the "contradictory and inconsistent relationship of Korean culture to the United States": anti-U.S. protests are common, but "U.S.-made products, culture, and lifestyles" are widely consumed and remain stable objects of material and cultural desire (Kim 2005: 441). Literature cannot be a substitute for history. For this reason, I do not pretend that the short literary history I have traced here provides an adequate account of the historical evolution of the role of English in Korean history. The three figures I have analyzed do not, and cannot, sum up the totality of what English means in today's Korea where, as in Japan, "Nearly everybody is exposed to so much school-taught English for so long that this alien language practically serves as a second language" (Miyoshi 2010: 111). Nonetheless, any investigation of English-language use in Korea would be incomplete without a historical understanding of the ways in which these English-speaking subjects have evolved in the past century.

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CHAPTER 15

English, class and neoliberalism in South Korea

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English is deeply embedded within recent neoliberal projects of social reformation in South Korea, becoming a central topic of contention in the controversial educational reforms of the Lee Myung-bak regime (2008–2012). It figured prominently in various changes to the Korean education system pursued by the Lee administration under the name of greater competitiveness, such as increasing English immersion instruction in public schools and opening greater number of special purpose high schools where English language skills are highlighted. Lee's policies on the one hand aimed to cater to middle-class parents' desire for better educational opportunities that drive the Korean education fever; but on the other hand, they also fueled that very desire by inserting English into a neoliberal social order and imbuing it with cultural significance. Here, the indexical nature of language – how "good English" comes to be interpreted as embodied evidence of not only one's educational attainment but also one's previous transnational trajectories, thus positioning the speaker as an experienced cosmopolitan well prepared for "global competition" – plays a central role, as it naturalizes and justifies the classed nature of neoliberal projects despite continued contestation and debate.

Understanding the politics of English in South Korea requires looking into the complex social and discursive forces that shape the meaning of English in the country. Korea's relationship to English is certainly one of great complexity, reminding us of the wide range of factors that must be considered when we picture the dynamics of English in Asia. Korea is a country that never experienced colonialism by an English-speaking power, yet in its close dependent relationship with the United States in trade, security, culture, and politics, it has been adopting and appropriating English actively since its independence. At the same time, Korea is one of the most linguistically, ethnically, and culturally homogeneous countries in the world, with monolingualism in the Korean language often playing a major symbolic role in the expression of national identity and pride. But as a rapidly modernized nation noted for its grand success in building up a strong economy, it has been actively pursuing English in the hope that it will solidify the country's status as a major player in the global market, leading to various policy initiatives and corporate sector efforts to secure good competence in English among the nation's citizens. The true local significance of English in Korea, however, cannot be fully accounted for just by identifying and itemizing large-scale social factors such as those of history of colonialism, relations of global-level dependencies, macro sociolinguistic patterns of monolingualism/multilingualism, or broader trends in language policy choices. In the case of Korea, English is implicated much more deeply in local political processes, mediating relations of class and social reproduction and indexing models and stereotypes of personae that reflect contrasting values and positions. In this sense, the local meaning of English is not a mere function of global social factors; it is only understandable through the way in which the language is employed by specific actors and particular projects in the local context.

In this essay, I illustrate this local significance of English in Korea through a discussion of how the language was implicated in the debate and controversy over projects of neoliberal social reform pursued under the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008–2013). English took center stage in many of the Lee regime's policy directions, particularly in the area of educational policy, which aimed to enhance and boost Koreans' competence in English and to prepare citizens who can better compete in the global market – which in turn was motivated by the belief that the global language of English is a necessary resource for full participation in the global economy. The link between neoliberalism and English in this case appears to be familiar; to many observers, English is the language of global capitalism, thus it only seems natural that English be adopted as a key index and resource for such neoliberal projects. However, it is clearly not adequate to posit an inherent connection between English and neoliberalism and to assume that such links will be reproduced in the same manner wherever capitalist globalisation sets foot. Even though global historical conditions serve as the basis for such links and thus may be reflected in many national contexts around the world, both English and neoliberalism are always located within specific sociopolitical context, and their specific meanings and manifestations must be contingent upon the varying political and ideological landscape in which they settle. In trying to understand the local meaning of English within broader projects of neoliberalism, then, it becomes necessary to pay greater attention to the historical context and political function that the link between English and neoliberalism serves in that specific context.

The role of English in neoliberal globalization, indeed, has been a central concern in the work of several scholars of English as a global language. Phillipson, for example, locates the global spread of English within a neoimperial structure of power relations, pointing out the contribution of English to a neoliberal capitalist order supporting the dominance of the United States (2008). Other researchers focus on commodification of language and language skills introduced through the shift in the capitalist economy and discuss how it may lead to a valorization of English, or more particularly, of specific ways of using English through stylization and resemanticization (Cameron 2005; Holborow 2007). These studies capture important macro-level trends in the global political-economic landscape and situate the shifting meaning of English within that context. However, according to our discussion above, it is also important to remember that neoliberalism is always manifested within specific local political relations, rather than simply imposed by global-level actors such as the United States or multinational corporations. Projects of neoliberalism, though shaped and constrained by common discourses, are likely to emerge in different configurations across different national contexts with varying political genealogies and historical contingencies (Apple 2001). For this reason, understanding the role of the link between English and neoliberal reforms in relation to the highly particular political contexts of individual nation-states becomes crucial; only in that way can we reach a more nuanced analysis of how English functions as part of the broader ideological framework of neoliberalism, generating particular outcomes under specific constraints rooted in local contexts.

By situating Lee's neoliberal reforms within a political context – that is, by highlighting their implications for relations of class and social power – and identifying the way in which English figured prominently as a loaded sign within this process, the discussion of this paper will serve as a useful case that reminds us of the importance of local political processes in the shifting meaning of English in Asia and in the world. In the following section, I provide an outline of the neoliberal projects of social reform pursued by the Lee administration, with a focus on educational policy, which most frequently relates to the status and politics of English in Korean society. In the next, I discuss the place of English within these neoliberal projects, situating them against the backdrop of the ongoing Korean "English frenzy", and considering how the meaning of English articulated in the projects works to mediate relations of class and inequality. In the final section, I summarize the discussion by suggesting how the indexical meaning of English that emerges through the intersection of complex political and discursive processes may work to justify and rationalize the neoliberal social order implicated in language policies and practices surrounding English.

Neoliberal reforms of Korean education

Since his inauguration as the president of South Korea, Lee Myung-bak actively pursued a series of neoliberal reforms of Korean society. He was certainly not the first Korean president to do so; Lee's projects were clearly a continuation of Korea's rapid move toward globalization, which was initiated in 1995 by the then-president Kim Young Sam and his *segyehwa* (globalization) drive (Kim 2000). While Kim's initial attempts facilitated the spread of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, derailing the country's economy and causing Kim's Grand National Party to lose the presidential election to the more progressive Kim Dae Jung, subsequent administrations maintained, or, in many ways, even more strongly adhered to the ideal of neoliberal globalization. During the ten years prior to Lee's election, Korea was able to put its economy back on track, and gradually embraced greater openness toward the global capitalist market. Thus, when Lee's election brought the conservative Grand National Party back into power, neoliberalism had already been an ongoing trend for some time. But Lee's contrast with previous administrations – his conservative ideological stance and close ties with large, multi-business corporations, or *jaebeol*s – naturally led him to more aggressively pursue the project of neoliberalism, embarking on privatization of public enterprises, reduction of taxes, removal of restrictions designed to constrain speculative investments in real estate, and so on.

What concerns us here more, however, are the neoliberal reforms that took place within the domain of educational policy and their intersection with the issue of English. New measures were proposed to introduce greater liberalization of the Korean education system, and in particular, the system of college admission management – an area that has always been a site of heated debate due to the heavy significance placed on higher education degrees in Korean society (Seth 2002). The most direct target of reform was the policy of equalization (*pyeongjunhwa*), which, for over twenty years, had been the centerpiece of Korea's college admission policy (Chun 2003). The policy of equalization was meant to be an egalitarian strategy for ensuring equality among students from varying backgrounds and curbing overheated competition. It consisted of various measures such as randomization of high school admission, use of common curricula across schools, prohibition of tracking of students according to academic achievement, and banning the ranking of high schools so that graduates of one school will not be privileged over others in college admission. Accordingly, the government maintained tight control over the college admission process, constraining the means of assessment that each university could employ in admitting students. The policy of equalization had been under attack by various fronts, most prominently from the middle and upper-middle class parents and the conservative news media, as well as from the universities who sought to gain more autonomy in governance over admissions, though still gaining much support from those working in primary and secondary education (Lim 2005). This discourse against equalization saw the policy as stifling the education system by putting equality before excellence, “dumbing down” the system and thus blocking students’ proper development as individuals with skills and competence appropriate for the global age. Lee, whose base of support consisted of the groups who rallied against the idea of equalization and for neoliberal reform, started to break down the equalization system step by step as soon as he went into office.

One of the new changes was the introduction of universal exams for testing academic achievement (*hakeopseongchwido pyeongga*), which took place in October 2008 for the first time in ten years, for all middle school and high school students, as well as for third and sixth graders. The results of the exam were disclosed, revealing gaps in achievements across schools and students, effectively reintroducing the ranking of schools that was banned under equalization. Under the school liberalization plan (*hakgyo jayulhwa*) promoted by the government, schools were also given greater autonomy so that they could have more freedom in developing their own curriculum and in hiring teachers. This allowed schools to make themselves more “competitive” by focusing on a particular subject or area; but due to the universal exams, it was argued by critics that it would only lead to schools spending more time on teaching core subjects such as English and mathematics rather than other topics (Yu 2009).

The Lee administration also worked to permit the opening of greater numbers of ‘”special schools” such as special purpose high schools (*teuksumokjeok godeunghakgyo*), autonomous private high schools (*jaliphyeong salip godeunghakgyo*), and international middle schools (*gukje junghakgyo*). These schools were initially established as alternative schools with specialized curricula that focused on science or foreign languages, targeting students with special talent in those areas; yet over time, they evolved into unofficial elite schools (in the absence of such schools under the equalisation policy) with high success rate in sending graduates to top universities in Korea and abroad. Contrary to their original purpose, these schools were reported to offer special classes preparing students for admission into Ivy League schools, and taught many classes in English. Such schools were also more expensive to attend, and had stricter criteria for admission that necessitated private afterschool tuition or experience of studying abroad, privileging students with wealthy backgrounds. Previously, only a limited number of such schools were permitted; but Lee proposed to relax the regulations so that many new schools could be established, under the premise that this would provide greater choice to disgruntled parents who believed that the school system did not provide room for the development of individual talent and skills. These measures, in effect, reintroduced the distinction between prestigious elite schools and "ordinary" schools, throwing schools into competition with each other to secure a superior ranking.

The college admission system was also liberalized, and more autonomy was given to the universities in selecting students. A large part of decision-making regarding college admission was transferred from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to the Council of University Education (*daehak gyoyuk hyeopuihoe*), a coalition of Korean universities that discusses admission issues. The Council sought to abolish the "three nots" policy (*sambul jeongchaek*) that had defined the equalization system of college admission: not administering independent admission exams, not accepting students in exchange for donations, and not ranking high schools for admission. Though the Council did not fully abandon the policy due to intense public criticism, many universities were revealed to have secretly deviated from it, emboldened by the government's supportive stance. For instance, Korea University, an elite institution in Seoul famous for its relentless drive for globalization, was reported to have given greater advantages to students from special purpose high schools in the 2009 admission exercise, effectively adopting an internal ranking for high schools (Gim 2009a). Universities have been arguing that such internal systems of assessment (including a university's own entrance exam) are necessary for identifying good students and recognizing the diverse types of skills they may have. Supporting such claims, the government proposed to subsidize universities to allow them to hire college admission officers (*iphak sajeonggwan*) who would specialize in the selection of students. In this sense, many argue that the "three nots" policy is practically being dismantled, and with it, the policy of equalization is also becoming an ideal of the past.

English and class in recent Korean education policy

In sum, the Lee administration's education reforms follow the familiar trajectory of neoliberal reforms found in many national contexts: marketization of schools, intensification and valorization of constant competition, emphasis on accountability based on performance objectives, greater liberalization accompanied by the state's simultaneous encouragement to be responsive to demands of "consumers", and so on (Apple 2001). These reforms, however, do more than merely reflect a global trend. In the Korean context, these projects are also significantly mediated by the sign of English, which both motivates and constrains the way in which the specific forms of the policies are shaped and understood. Indeed, English serves as a major backdrop for most of the changes discussed above. A crucial piece of social and historical context that needs to be mentioned here is the growing emphasis on English as an important form of symbolic capital in Korean society, an escalating pursuit of English by the government, corporations, and individuals, often called the "English frenzy" (*yeongeo yeolpung*) (J. S. Park 2009).

Since Korea's independence from Japanese rule and the occupation of South Korea by United States forces (in 1945), English has been a language of political and practical importance in the country. Particularly since the initiation of the globalization drive in the 1990s, English language skills came to be seen as increasingly important for the nation and individuals. The *jaebeol* groups began to actively expand their businesses globally, and needed new workers who were not only able to work within the hierarchical system of the Korean workplace but also comfortable with being in the world, an ability that was seen as manifest in good competence in English. Thus the corporations placed greater importance on English language skills in their employment criteria, and also generated a discourse of crisis that argues Korea's economy will face great hardship without fluency in English, which the major print news media, with close connections to the *jaebeol*s, actively circulated (Park 2010). Since these corporations exerted enormous influence on Korean economy and society, the *jaebeol*s' need for competent speakers of English led the state to seek ways to boost their citizens' English language skills. Thus various changes were made to the national curricula, such as greater focus on communicative competence, and introducing English as a school subject at an earlier age – at third grade in elementary school instead of first grade in middle school (Kwon 2000). Korean universities also placed greater emphasis on English, switching the language of instruction for many lectures from Korean to English, and also requiring a certain score in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) for graduation.

This emphasis on English in employment and education led individuals to make greater investments in English in order to survive. In particular, middle class parents started to make serious, sometimes exorbitant, investments in their children's English language learning (J. Park 2009). Various strategies for securing fluency in English became popular, ranging from English-only kindergartens, specialized afterschool English language institutes with native speakers, short-term language study overseas, and studying abroad in an English-speaking country at pre-university age (often called *jogi yuhak*, or early study abroad), all of which can be highly expensive (Park and Bae 2009, Song 2010). In fact, English was often seen as one of the main causes of the overheated private afterschool education sector (Gim 2009b). In 2008, Koreans spent ₩20 trillion (approximately US$2 billion) on private schooling, an average of ₩233,000 (approximately US$233) a month per student (Yi 2009). Largely due to the overwhelming perception that public schooling is not enough to keep up with others, let alone get ahead of them, Korean parents continuously sought opportunities in the private afterschool education market, and this became a great financial burden for many households. In particular, *jogi yuhak* became an increasingly popular strategy for securing good English, driven by the ideology that views good English as only acquirable at certain geographical locations, ideally the English-speaking West (Park and Bae 2009). In 2006 alone, almost 30,000 students went overseas, and this number has been rising steeply since the 1990s, particularly among elementary school students (Bak 2007). Because not everyone could afford to send their child to study overseas, *jogi yuhak* was often criticized as a way in which the more affluent middle class members secure their own privilege, embittering those who are "left behind". Also, since *jogi yuhak* not only costs a lot but also places a significant burden on the family as well (the typical arrangement is for the mother and child to move overseas while the father stays behind to provide for them financially), *jogi yuhak* was increasingly being seen as a social problem that needed to be addressed.

The English frenzy, particularly the way it was manifested in the educational market, then, provided an important political context for the Lee administration's educational policy. Indeed, the specific directions of the reforms were often shaped in response to the particular demands expressed through the English frenzy. For instance, one of the earliest proposals for educational reform put forth by the Lee administration was the plan to introduce English immersion instruction. In January 2008, the Presidential Transition Committee, which was preparing a blueprint for Lee's presidency, announced a plan to introduce English immersion education for all public schools by 2012 – that is, to teach English classes as well as non-English subjects in English, in order to boost the English language competence of the students. The committee chairperson Lee Kyung-sook (a political scientist who had served as the president of Sookmyung Women's University) stated, "the reality is that even after learning English for over 10 years in school, students often find it difficult to carry on a conversation in English", and explained that the goal of the proposal is to "enable people to speak English with nothing more than the public education they receive up to high school" (No 2008).

While intense opposition and criticism forced Lee to withdraw the committee's proposal and to later admit that "English immersion education cannot and should not be carried out" (Hwang 2008), this proposal for immersion instruction aptly demonstrates how Lee's policies are closely linked with specific discourses and pressures that reflect the political context of English while also being grounded in more broadly circulating visions of neoliberalism. The proposal was specifically crafted to address several of the widely discussed problems of the Korean educational scene outlined above: the prohibitive cost of private afterschool education, the burden it imposes on middle class and lower class families, increasing social division and animosity caused by those who can afford costly strategies of English language learning and those who cannot, and the strain of family relations caused by the increasing popularity of early study abroad. The proposal saw the heart of the problem as linked with (what it identified as) a fundamental flaw in the Korean school system: its failure to inculcate in students an ability to effectively use and speak English. The underlying assumption was that, because the school curriculum is unable to make the students fluent speakers of English, students are seeking other ways to gain competence in English, both in the private education market and overseas. Thus, the proposal hoped to solve both the problem of private after-school education and *jogi yuhak* by providing quality education through accessible public education. Lee Myung-bak stated, "I want to make sure that people can go to college without extracurricular instruction in English", and Lee Kyung-sook said that "we cannot keep ignoring separated families such as *gileogi* fathers and penguin fathers" (Yi and Yu 2008).[1]

The proposal for immersion points to the intersection of neoliberal competition and classed structure through the way it specifically addresses the concerns of the Korean middle class (from which the majority of families who chose English-speaking special schools or the strategy of *jogi yuhak* came) in the changing educational landscape, rather than those of the lower and working class. In a sense, it is the middle class who holds a greater desire for English, for they are the ones who can benefit maximally from increased investment in English. As Apple (2001: 415) notes,

> middle class parents are clearly the most advantaged in this kind of cultural assemblage … Middle class parents have become quite skilled, in general, in exploiting market mechanisms and in bringing their social, economic, and cultural capital to bear on them … This sense of what might be called 'confidence' – which is itself the result of past choices that tacitly but no less powerfully depend on the economic resources to have actually had the ability to make economic choices – is the unseen capital that underpins their ability to negotiate marketised forms and 'work the system' through sets of informal cultural rules.

This point illuminates the link between Lee's policies and the middle class desire for alternative means of securing cultural capital. In order to maintain their classed distinction, the middle class must identify ways in which they can define themselves as belonging to a distinct network of social relations that separate them from the lower class, and exploit those mechanisms to constantly seek class mobility (Bourdieu 1984). In the Korean context, access to educational opportunities provided by the policy of equalization initially had offered a way through

1. Colloquial terms referring to fathers left behind and who only occasionally fly off to see their families (*gileogi*, or geese) or those who cannot even afford such visits (penguins).

which the middle class might seek their distinction; but as the benefits of equal access to education spread to other classes as well, equalization then came to be seen as a constraint that blocked further pursuit of distinction. Thus, the middle class became a powerful force for the abolition of equalization, as they constantly sought "better schools" for their children and actively demanded channels through which their desire could be fulfilled. The political importance of the middle class, then, was manifest in the way education policy responded to just that: universal exams that officialized the distinction between schools, and new types of schools such as autonomous private high schools or international middle schools catering to the middle class parent's desire.

Here, the capacity to inculcate competence in English serves as an important index for what constitutes a "good" school. Valued English language skill, it is assumed, cannot be offered simply through strong discipline or through specific curricula, but must be transferred through something more material – such as the presence of native English-speaking teachers, or actual transnational movement to English-speaking countries – thus a powerful resource for distinction. This is precisely why strategies such as *jogi yuhak* or special schools, which are known for their strong English immersion programs with qualified native speaking teachers, are highly popular among the middle class. The proposal for immersion instruction in public schools caters to this middle class desire for English, and aims to quell their dissatisfaction regarding the public education system which has failed to serve as a source for marketable skills in English. Though phrased in a language that offers to provide quality English instruction to all students (and not just to middle class students), once coupled with the promise of competition articulated in other policies (such as the ranking of schools), the plan for immersion gives a sense of a general upgrading of the Korean education system without the middle class having to sacrifice their privileged position in the class hierarchy. In fact, one of the greatest criticisms of the plan to introduce immersion instruction was that, contrary to the claims of the committee, it would only exacerbate the class divide of English rather than eliminate it, as the well-off middle class would invest even more in their children's English so that they could keep themselves ahead of others when the language of instruction switched to English, while the lower class students with less opportunities of access to English would become even more disadvantaged in the new English-only classroom.

The discussion above shows how the ideologies, discourses, and class-based interests surrounding the issue of English mediate articulations of neoliberal education policies in Korea. While the broadly circulating trends in neoliberal reforms of education and increasing emphasis on English dictate the underlying *ethos* of local policies, the specific manifestations and implications of those policies need to be understood in the context of site-specific political relations. In the Korean context, elements as diverse as the tradition of attributing value to academic qualifications, historically contingent strategies such as *jogi yuhak*, and the class-based tension surrounding access to opportunities for attaining good English all contribute to the specific ways in which those projects of neoliberalism work to reproduce inequalities rooted in class structure.

Indexicality of English and naturalization of the neoliberal order

While the middle class desire for English provides a particular space for the articulation of projects of neoliberal reform, education policy and the powerful social agents that produce such policy also contribute to the formation of that desire. It is in this interaction, the mutual feeding and support engendered among different social actors and their practices, that English gains more specific meaning – or more precisely, its indexicality. A language, as a sign, functions to refer to its context of use (Silverstein 1976), allowing its users to make connections between contexts across time and space, and to attribute to themselves or others social personae, voices, or characterological figures (Agha 2007). Language is a circulating resource with an ever expanding historical repository of significance, and what it represents is constantly shifting, gaining new and evolving meaning as it recursively points to previous contexts of use (Vološinov 1973).

I have already noted above how English serves as an index for good schools; it points to the social connections that the school provides for the students to valued locales and speakers associated with those locales, thus placing its students within a global network of relations even as they reside in Korea. In the same way, via the ideology that associates good English with specific geographical locations, good English skills point to the speaker's previous transnational trajectory as accumulated through opportunities such as *jogi yuhak*, constructing the speaker as an experienced cosmopolitan, someone who has been able to travel beyond the traditional bounds of Korean society and internalize some aspects of the global. Here, English is not merely a practically useful language in the global age; neither is it a straightforward marker of one's class. What is significant is that English becomes a language that fits the profile of a "neoliberal personhood" – a language that indexes individuality and mobility, some of the very essences that define the ideal person imagined according to the neoliberal worldview, one who seeks autonomy and independence from traditional structures and surpasses their constraints through a life full of mobility and vitality (Abelmann, Park, and Kim 2009; Park 2010, 2011).

Of course, what makes this characterological figure available so that it may be part of the indexical meaning of English are the broader discourses of neoliberalism that are circulated by powerful actors such as the state and major corporations. As we discussed above, the changing conditions of the global economy and the need for *jaebeol*s to compete within that arena demands a new type of worker – one who is no longer constrained by the authoritative system of workplace organization, but who can transcend such constraints through creativity while never abandoning the virtue of hard work that defined older systems of work. According to Abelmann, Kim, and Park, this places a great burden on those who aim to be part of such a workforce (such as the Korean university students they spoke with), as they must constantly put themselves through a rigorous regime of self-development and bear the weight of having to display "vitality" at all times (2009). Broader discourses circulated by the government and the corporate sector no doubt supply those characterological figures that serve as the ideal person-type that people imagine in their quest for English. In this sense, the middle class desire for English and larger discourses circulated by institutional actors feed each other, the image of neoliberal personhood more firmly attached to the index of English with each reciprocation (Park 2010, 2011).

As the neoliberal order comes to be tied more closely with specific individuals associated with particular character types, a more important effect starts to take place. Once a speaker of good English is seen not simply as a member of the middle or upper class but as an embodiment of neoliberal vitality, individuality, and transnational experience of mobility, the privileges accorded to the speaker become naturalized – the speaker's competence in English is something he or she earned through relentless self-management, so any privileges that stem from that must be justified. This can be illustrated by the fact that, when the conservative press represents successful learners of English (almost all of whom come from a middle or upper-middle class background), what is highlighted is not the class-based privileges that enabled them to easily acquire good English skills, such as experiences of living overseas; it is the extraordinary effort those privileged speakers have put into learning English, which justifies both their English skills and the privileges they enjoy from their acquired language competence, for they are now presented as worthy achievers who worked hard to reach their goal, true to the spirit of neoliberal personhood (Park 2010).

This process of semiosis allows us to look back at the political context of Korean neoliberal projects of educational reform with more subtlety. While the government, *jaebeol* groups, conservative media, and the politically influential middle class were the main actors in the picture I have painted so far, their influence on Korean society on the whole is not unilateral. The discourses of neoliberalism and their manifestation in the form of specific policies are always subject to contestation, and this is particularly the case with the neoliberal projects of the Lee administration, which were often met with serious criticism and protest. For instance, in Korea, there exists a vibrant and persistent movement against neoliberalism and capitalist globalization, led by civil activists, progressive intellectuals, and politically minded working class and middle class citizens, who played a major role in criticizing Lee's unrelenting drive for neoliberal reform. Such views often receive strong support from the general public, as was the case in the massive protests in 2008 that followed Lee's announcement to resume import of U.S. beef, where large numbers participated due to concerns over public health and the serious impact it would have on the Korean economy and society. Negative views of the Lee regime were also often triggered by its highly undemocratic and authoritarian style of government, leading more citizens to oppose the administration's aggressive drive for reform.

On the education front, a particularly heated battle took place through the election of the educational superintendents of Seoul and Gyeonggi province. This first open election for the positions was highly polarized, with different groups with contrasting political stances towards neoliberal reforms contesting for the office which administers the two largest educational districts in Korea. In the Seoul election in July 2008, the incumbent Kong Jung-tack, a staunch supporter of Lee Myung-bak's educational mantra, won due to the strong turnout of wealthy middle class parents who were attracted by Kong's promise to open more special purpose high schools and autonomous private high schools in Seoul (such schools were previously located mostly outside of the nation's capital). But in April 2009, in the election for the Gyeonggi province, the larger satellite area surrounding Seoul and the home to many middle class Koreans, the winner was the progressive university professor Kim Sang-kon, who was highly critical of Lee's neoliberal educational model. Kim later went on to stall the proposed reforms that were about to be implemented, such as the expansion of special purpose high schools in the province, instead directing support towards underprivileged students.

Thus, it seems problematic to say the ideology of neoliberalism is "dominant" in the Korean educational landscape, for it is under constant contestation and debate, even though the ideology is what determines the "dominant" social actors' stance towards educational reform. It is perhaps more precise to say that many of the middle class and working class Koreans are conflicted in their position towards English and neoliberalism. On the one hand, they have a deep desire to acquire the language and appropriate it as a resource for advancing through the neoliberal market; but on the other hand, they are also wary of the obvious inequalities that are implied in such unconstrained upholding of competition. It becomes important for us, then, to try to understand how, through this process of contestation, neoliberal projects of social reform still maintain their allure, allowing people to accept the social order constituted by endless competition and to try to join the game by making ever-escalating investments in English.

The indexicality of English and the process of semiosis that reproduces this indexicality, which we discussed above, may be seen as part of the mechanism of how the neoliberal order of education reform comes to be seen as justifiable and acceptable. As the neoliberal order comes to be embodied in the person of the good speaker of English, the working of class-based privileges that underlie the realities of neoliberal projects is obscured; when this happens, people may come to see their investments in English as an exception – for what they aim for in their desire for English becomes the ideal personhood celebrated in the global world in which competence and social standing are achieved through one's determination and self-discipline, rather than through inhuman and unfair competition, even as they maintain their criticism towards projects of neoliberal reforms. While this interpretation does not preclude political action against neoliberal projects, it allows us to understand how such contestation can coexist with the zeal towards English that characterizes so many domains of Korean society today. As numerous recent studies point out, the working of language ideologies is always multiple and simultaneous, with apparently contradictory beliefs coinhabiting a complex vision of the world (Kroskrity 2004). Indeed it is reasonable to believe that such interaction and negotiation among ideologies is where political processes of contestation take place. Thus, the complex ways in which English accumulates social meaning in Korea may be seen as an important key for understanding how the language holds a crucial place in the current political context of the nation's neoliberal reforms.

To summarize, this essay presented an outline of the political context of Korea's current neoliberal projects of social reform, aiming to make a more sophisticated illustration of the link between English and neoliberalism. The discussion above points out how the connection between English and neoliberalism cannot be understood merely in the abstract. While the global trends in which English functions as a vanguard of the capitalist market tempt us to assume that the implication of English for neoliberalism is simply replicated across different national contexts through the process of globalization, the account of English in the Korean political landscape presented here suggests that the political significance of discourses of English and neoliberal reform must be seen as rooted in local ideologies and contingencies – such as the ideology that links valued competence in English with geographical space, strategies adopted to secure competence in English, particular linguistic demands of the workplace, and political histories of class relations – which give highly specific images and indexical meaning to English. Even though the particular outcomes of neoliberal reforms may be similar across different national contexts, it is important for us to consider how the meaning of English is constructed through such local political processes, as it will help us gain a deeper understanding of how English functions within the neoliberal order of our changing world. Such an understanding will help us imagine, as both researchers and users of the language, a more responsible and reflexive position towards the politics of English.

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CHAPTER 16

Conclusion

Lionel Wee, Lisa Lim and Robbie B. H. Goh

The preceding essays have served to give us a very good sense of the variety of problems and issues faced by different Asian countries regarding the roles and uses of the English language. And since examples of divergences between policy and practice could be easily multiplied, both within countries and across different ones, we would prefer not to simply add to the multiplicity of examples in this concluding essay. Consequently, even as we attempt to broaden the scope of the discussion by addressing (albeit briefly) some of the countries that were not covered in the preceding chapters, our goal is to provide an overview of what we see as some of the many challenges faced by Asian countries as they attempt to manage the English language. We group these challenges under the following three rubrics:

1. **Re-thinking the foundations of English language education**. Many Asian countries still insist on positioning English as a Western (and hence, foreign) language, and this has significant repercussions for attempts at adopting a feasible approach to English language education. This is because there is an important difference between considering English as the language of the Western other, on the one hand, and considering it as a global *lingua franca*. The latter is the reason why English figures prominently in the education systems of many Asian countries. Yet, the actual English language education practices being implemented are still largely informed by the former.

2. **Reconciling national language pride with English language usage**. This refers to the position that a local Asian language might occupy as the official national language of a country. Depending on the extent to which national pride hinges on the widespread use of this language, and relatedly, on the extent to which its wider usage might be limited through the perceived encroachment of English, potential conflicts might arise as proponents of the national language accuse users of English of disrespect or, worse, disloyalty to the nation.

3. **Responding rationally to inter-country 'competitiveness'**. While the preceding two challenges can be considered 'domestic', that is, as challenges that are internal

to a country, 'competitiveness' recognizes the fact that countries are not only interdependent but also compete with each other. The English language, then, constitutes a site in which inter-country competitiveness (broadly construed) is often played out. We suggest that there is in fact much to be gained by giving analytic attention to how one country's attitude towards English might be motivated by its monitoring of what some other country happens to be doing with the language.

As is no doubt clear from this brief summary, these three challenges are all potentially interrelated. Nevertheless, they are conceptually distinct, and so it is best to discuss them separately, as we now aim to do.

Re-thinking the foundations of English language education

English in Asia is typically 'tolerated' for its perceived instrumental value. It is a foreign language, imported from the West or historically imposed via colonialism. As a Western/foreign language, English in Asia is usually either not considered to have any identity related function or is at any rate not supposed to have any such function. As a result, this can lead to situations where Asians who appear to be too enamored of English may sometimes be charged with being "Westernized" or "unpatriotic" (Park and Wee 2008).

However, the perceived instrumental value of English also has observably direct consequences for the issue of English language education. The presence of English in a school's curriculum is commonly rationalised on pragmatic grounds, as providing students with the necessary language competence to compete globally. The common educational stance, then, is that as the language of the Western other, English should have no pastoral connotations whatsoever. Gal (1989) describes the pastoral function as one where a language is supposed to help establish a sense of cultural heritage and identity. This applies even when English serves as the medium of instruction, as in Singapore. And unsurprisingly, it also applies in countries where English is a foreign language subject. Thus, as the contributions by Hiramoto and Park tell us, English language education in both Japan and South Korea is still generally problematic because there is a strong emphasis on the memorization of grammatical rules and the passing of examinations. The more recent shifts towards conversational English are still problematic because these tend to be modeled on the traditional native speaker or the "Anglo native speakers' culture and society" (Hiramoto, this volume). This leads to the memorization of conversational scripts or classroom attempts at displaying naturalness or familiarity with colloquialisms and topics that learners may have difficulty identifying with.

The same situation can be found in China and Vietnam. In China, English language education is in such huge demand that "English teaching capacities are stretched to the breaking point in colleges and universities, where enrolments are increasing dramatically" (Zhou and Ross 2004: 13). Despite this demand, instructional methods remain problematic, with the familiar focus on testing and memorization. As Mao and Min (2004: 327) point out:

> For example, many schools began to overwhelm students with endless mock exams, additional class hours, and grammar and composition drills. These tasks inevitably disrupted regular classroom instruction and led students to devote all their energy to taking exams than to engaging in systematic learning.

And while educators in China are certainly aware that this situation is unsatisfactory, this "tension" between "the social need to put students through these standardised proficiency tests so that they can be recognized and employed by the society and the pedagogical need to provide for these students a well-balanced curriculum so that they will attain both linguistic and communicative competence" (Mao and Min 2004: 328) remains a difficult one to resolve.

In Hong Kong (SAR), a former British colony, returned to China on July 1 1997, it is unsurprising that English figures prominently in its language-in-education policy of biliteracy (in English and Chinese) and trilingualism (in English, *Putonghua* and Cantonese). However, the absolute majority of Chinese Hongkongers (more than 90%) is Cantonese-speaking; thus Cantonese has always been the dominant vernacular cum *lingua franca*. To the extent that English is one of the official languages and is commonly and actively used (though more in print than in speech) in the key domains of government, education, law and business, it functions as a second language. However despite this conspicuous presence in society, English is in fact seldom used by (Chinese) Hongkongers for intra-ethnic communication; this makes English more like a foreign than a second language (Li 2009). In fact, in primary education, with few exceptions, the teaching medium is Cantonese. In secondary education, the "mother tongue education" policy of September 1998 stipulated that schools must teach in Chinese (Cantonese and Standard Chinese written in traditional, as opposed to simplified, Chinese characters), unless they can demonstrate that students and teachers have the ability to learn and teach through the medium of English effectively, with only about 30% of some 400 secondary schools meeting this EMI (English as a medium of instruction) requirement. Parents have had a clear preference for their children to be educated through the medium of English, to the point of moving into neighborhoods with a marked concentration of EMI so as to maximize the chance of their children being allocated to an EMI school (Li 2009). However, such a 'late immersion' policy has not proved effective, with unsatisfactory English language attainment displayed in students' public examination results. This is compounded by the fact that amongst the majority of Chinese Hongkongers, the choice of English as the medium of communication is widely perceived as highly marked, probably out of concern for the co-speakers' ethnolinguistic identity (Li 2009); there is thus little opportunity for language practice or authentic use, and little sense of English being a *lingua franca* or having any reality outside school premises.[1]

In Vietnam, even though English language teaching is given strong government support, it is still approached in terms of "foreign language teaching" (Vietnews 2010). The Vietnamese government recently announced its English 2020 Strategy:

> … the government of Vietnam has identified the rapid improvement of English skills as a key priority and young people in the country are expected to be able to communicate, work and study in English by the end of 2020.
>
> (British Council n.d.)

MoET (Ministry of Education and Training) has also officially invited British Council Vietnam to be the advisor for the Strategy's Consultative Board to help with academic decisions on a range of issues such as quality assurance, curriculum development and design, assessment, teaching qualification standards, and teacher training curricula for both English and other subjects to be taught in English.

In a fundamental sense, this persistent insistence on positioning English as a foreign language is traceable to the dichotomy that we earlier alluded to between the pastoral and pragmatic functions of language. We have seen that a pastoral language is generally conceived as something owned by 'its' community of speakers, tied to a specific locale, inherited across generations and therefore steeped in tradition. It is constituted as the cultural repository of values and traditions for its associated community, usually an ethnic group or nation, thereby figuring importantly in identity construction. Loss of the language is thus (allegedly) tantamount to the destruction of that culture. Because of this, speakers may be obligated to preserve their knowledge and use of the language. In contrast to the pastoral view, speakers who learn a language from a pragmatic orientation do so because it is valued as a resource that facilitates socio-economic mobility in a competitive marketplace rather than as a heritage language intrinsically valued as a marker of cultural identity perspective (Heller 1999: 336; Wee 2003: 11). The loss of the language is not expected to result in any significant identity trauma. Consequently, speakers are not under any obligation to maintain the language. This is a language of convenience, being learned and used for the mundane, if not profane, purpose of making money or simply getting on in the world.

1. In 2009, a 'fine-tuning' of the mother tongue policy was introduced, basically allowing schools more flexibility in medium of education and essentially restoring English-medium education.

This description of the pastoral and pragmatic functions represents two ends of what might be better considered a cline, since many languages combine both functions and in variegated ways. Nevertheless, as an ideological representation, the description is of analytical value because both policy formulations and popular understandings of language tend to be quite clearly aligned towards one end of the spectrum or the other. This is a dichotomy informed by a 'modernist' conception of the relationship between community and linguistic affiliations, which are assumed to be stable and bounded. While we would not wish to make the sweeping pronouncement that the dichotomy is completely irrelevant in late modernity, it is undoubtedly clear, in the case of English at least, that its status as a global language does mean that this dichotomy needs to be negotiated in a more nuanced fashion.

The problem with the way that English language education is approached in many Asian countries is that it fails to seriously recognize the distinction between a foreign language and a *lingua franca*. A foreign language is the language of the other. For example, a Japanese who learns Italian because s/he intends to spend some time in Italy is learning a foreign language. But a Japanese who learns English because of the socio-economic advantages it is supposed to provide, is not necessarily learning the language in order to communicate with traditional native speakers, in, say, Britain or America.[2] Rather, such a person is learning it as a global language, which means that s/he is more often than not likely to be interacting with speakers from different parts of Asia, Africa, Europe as well as America (or, as in the case of Singapore, speakers from different ethnic communities as well).[3] As a global *lingua franca*, English is no one's language, or what amounts to the same thing, it is everyone's language (Widdowson 1994).

What this means is that English language education in Asia has to re-evaluate its conceptual foundations. It has to, from the very beginning, be preparing learners to see themselves as co-owners of this global language, as co-participants in contributing to the (always) ongoing negotiations and contestations over what counts as 'standard/grammatical/appropriate/good/ proper' English. As a global *lingua franca*, there is much greater scope for speakers from all over the world (including, of course, Asia) to actively contribute to the negotiation and development of standards or norms regarding lexicogrammatical correctness, genre

2. Given changing demographics in these countries as a result of immigration, the face (and skin colour) of the traditional native speaker is obviously also changing. Nevertheless, Asian countries still find it difficult to wean themselves aware from a dependence on racialized and essentialized notions of what constitutes a native speaker of English.

3. This is a point well appreciated by the ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) movement (Seidlhofer 2005; Jenkins 2007), even though there are problems with movement's specific proposals (Prodromou 2008; Park and Wee 2011).

suitability and even pragmatic expectations concerning interactional appropriateness. Global communications technologies are also creating a more open and level forum in which to do so, although of course they do not entirely remove cultural-political inequalities (dominant print and media centers) which weigh older Anglophone cultures more heavily than newer ones. But developing interactional and negotiatory models requires that learners are also encouraged to develop linguistic confidence, if they are to assume ownership of the language. Needless to say, viewing English as a foreign language or language of the Western other is unhelpful to encouraging such confidence. But crucially, failure to do so will mean that, in spite of the vast resources being pumped into English language education in countries such as Japan, South Korea and China, the majority of students that emerge will find themselves linguistically disadvantaged on the world stage.

Reconciling national language pride with English language usage

The need to reconcile national language pride with English language usage varies from country to country, with the most significant factor being whether the country in question already recognizes English as an official language, and whether there is a local language that is already accorded the status of national language. Singapore, in this sense, constitutes something of an anomaly in Asia because the national language, Malay, has a largely symbolic role, being used in military commands and as part of the national anthem. It is English that is both an official language as well as the *de facto* working language in much of Singaporean society. As a consequence, in the public sphere (including prestige domains such as education, media and politics), the use of English is not considered a problem. It is in fact seen as routine.

In contrast, in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, there is likely to be greater anxiety over the use of English, especially if English is seen as displacing the national language. For example, Rappa and Wee observe that:

> The use of English in official domains in Malaysian society, unlike that in Singapore, is therefore extremely sensitive and contested. Perhaps there is no better illustration of the hotly contested status of English in Malaysia than the angry responses evoked by a recent proposal, made by a Malaysian senator, to allow the use of English in the Malaysian Parliament (*The Straits Times* 25 November 2002). Angry responses included editorials from a Malaysian newspaper, *Berita Minggu*, which called such a proposal "shameful", and a fellow senator who was reported to have said:
>
> I do not agree, and in fact, oppose the proposal because in our excitement to improve our English language usage, let us not belittle our own national language.

> We fought hard to raise the Malay language as the official language and had won. (2006: 5)

And more recently, according to *The Jakarta Post*, the Indonesian President was publicly chided for using English instead of the Indonesian language:

> Indonesian Constitutional Court chief justice Mahfud MD says President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's predilection for making speeches in English was a violation of the law. Mahfud said the President violated a regulation he signed every time he delivered an official address in English. A 2009 law stipulates that the President, Vice President and state officials are required to use Indonesian when making official speeches. The law was translated into a presidential regulation last year. (*The Jakarta Post* 2011)

The same report, however, also quoted communications expert Effendi Ghazali as pointing out that "there were many reasons why Yudhoyono chose to speak in English, one of them being his future prospects as an international leader":

> "If one wants to be an international leader, using English would be much easier for quotation purposes", he said. (*The Jakarta Post* 2011)

Thus, there are occasional tensions between the very rationale behind the use of English, on the one hand, and local expectations that it is the national language that ought to be used instead. National pride can be very potent as a force for rallying strong emotions about language. What seems to be needed, then, is an institutionalised mechanism for the public examination of assumptions about language in relation to society (see also Wee, forthcoming). Such a mechanism may be useful because there are various social forces, internal and external to a society, that indicate the need to negotiate a general understanding of the relations between different languages.

By this token, it is not only Indonesia or Malaysia that would benefit from having such a mechanism. Even in Singapore, the apparent lack of conflict between English and the other languages should not lead to any complacency that future conflicts might not arise, especially since the country is grappling with potentially significant demographic changes and re-significations in the indexical values of the languages (Stroud and Wee 2010).

In countries whose national boundaries delimit a large linguistic heterogeneity, English's role as *lingua franca* is practically mandated; paradoxically, the competing heterogeneity of indigenous languages creates a tense atmosphere which obfuscates and sidelines the practical arguments for English. India is very much a case in point: constitutionally, Hindi is the official language, with English recognized as a secondary official language. However, a number of other major languages (including Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, Urdu, Kannada and Malayalam) have tens of millions of speakers and contend for cultural and political significance. Beyond these there are hundreds of other languages and dialects jostling for at least regional significance and value. Hindi's status as official language has been challenged on grounds of cultural politics, as reinforcing the privileging of North India over South, religious-cultural traditionalism over the economic vibrancy that is emerging in hubs outside the North-Central "Hindu heartland". These cultural-linguistic wars have to a significant extent obfuscated English's logical role as *lingua franca* within India's contentious linguistic diversity.

Responding rationally to inter-country 'competitiveness'

The role that inter-country 'competitiveness' plays in influencing how individual countries respond to policies and practices concerning English remains an under-researched topic. However, we are convinced that further research into this topic can provide us with fascinating insights into the dynamics of the politics of English in Asia. Of course, given that English is largely pursued for its pragmatic value and the economic and technological advantages it might give to countries with English-competent populations, the issue of competitiveness comes as no surprise. Still, it is worth investigating how the decision to adopt specific policy initiatives in one country or the trigger for more informal attitudinal changes may sometimes be given impetus by what is apparently happening in a 'peer' country.

By 'peer' country, we refer to a country that is perceived by some other country as its competitive peer *vis-à-vis* English language proficiency. Peer countries at a broad level are countries occupying the same Kachruvian Circle, though this need not always be so. For example, Schneider (2007) suggests that English in Singapore may well be on the cusp of moving into Phase 5 of his Dynamic Model, where there is greater confidence and pride in an indigenous variety. If such a development is also accompanied by Singapore's desire to encourage other Asian countries to see it as a regional leader in the area of English language education, then it is arguable that Singapore may no longer see other Outer Circle countries as its English language 'peers'. Other countries, however, such as Malaysia, may still consider Singapore a peer country, and, because of this, feel the need to adopt policies and practices that will allow them to keep up. While our use of the concept of 'peer country' is specifically focused on English language proficiency, we are aware that the perception by one country as to which other country/countries constitute(s) its peer(s) usually results from a combination of various factors, including historical rivalry, a past marked by colonialism, proximity or strategic co-location, and current stage of economic development.

With the foregoing in mind, let us now consider three examples of inter-country competitiveness. The first involves South Korea and Japan. Yoo describes the recent debates in South Korea over proposals for English to be treated as an official language (EOL) as one between two competing forces, a desire to meet the "demands of globalization" on the one hand, and a desire to protect a sense of nationalism on the other (2005: 1). What is interesting is that according to Yoo, this debate was 'rekindled' by events in Japan, when the then Japanese Prime Minister advisors made a similar proposal, that English be recognized as an official language in Japan:

> ***January 2000: Japanese Prime Minister, Obuchi's advisory board "21st Japanese Project" proposed EOL in Japan, which rekindled the debate on EOL in South Korea.*** At the beginning of a new millennium, Japan's consideration of EOL in Japan as one of the strategies for globalization fueled the EOL debate in the media again. The apparent similarity of Japan to South Korea, both as relatively monolingual countries and economically competitive countries, provided another rationale for EOL in South Korea. However, the proposal in Japan was different from that in South Korea, in that it was more focused on 'additive' bilingualism, rather than the replacement of Japanese by English. (Yoo 2005: 8, bold in original)

Note that Yoo's reference to the "apparent similarity" between Japan and South Korea fits perfectly with our notion of 'peer' countries. In this case, South Korea clearly views Japan as a 'peer' and while there no direct evidence pointing in the other direction, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Japan also views South Korea in a similar light. What is significant, then, is that considerations in South Korea about whether to accord English official language status are in no small part influenced by what might occur in Japan. The relative merits of the proposal for South Korea were not easily divorced from whether Japan might also be doing something similar. We can easily imagine that proponents of the EOL debate in South Korea might make reference to Japan as a reason why South Korea has to also adopt English as an official language.

The issue of English language competence in the context of competition among peer countries becomes much more specific when we consider the issue of migrant domestic workers. While there is undeniably a general devaluation of the work performed by migrant domestic workers, it is also abundantly clear that in the international market, Filipino domestic workers usually command a higher salary than, say, their Indonesian or Sri Lankan counterparts (see the contribution by Lorente). The most distinct feature that separates Filipino domestic maids from their Indonesian and Sri Lankan counterparts is that they tend to enjoy consistently higher salaries, whether they are working in Dubai, Malaysia or Singapore.

As Table 1 indicates, estimated salary differences between Indonesian and Sri Lankan domestic workers are minimal.[4]

Table 1. Salaries of domestic workers in three countries

	Estimated salary in		
	Dubai	**Malaysia**	**Singapore**
Filipino	1400AED	800RM	300SGD
Indonesian	800AED	500RM	220SGD
Sri Lankan	825AED	500RM	220SGD

Filipino domestic workers are consistently the highest paid in all three countries. This is somewhat surprising since Dubai and Malaysia are Muslim countries, so that the Indonesian maids – who also tend to be Muslim – might have been expected to command a premium in these markets. But this does not appear to be the case.

The most common reason why Filipino domestic workers tend to command a higher salary is their facility with the English language. As migrant domestic workers, coming from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds than their employers, communication is often an issue.

At present, it seems that the English language competence of Filipino domestic workers over their counterparts from peer countries remains unchallenged. But competition is relentless and the Philippine government is not taking the situation for granted. This may be because, much more so than Indonesia or Sri Lanka, the Philippines depends heavily on the economic benefits of remittance. As of 2010, it is estimated that 10% of the country's 90 million plus population works overseas; in 2009, the country received about $18.7 billion in remittance; and its remittances contributed about 10% of the country's GDP (Kloess 2010). This economic dependence on remittance led Gloria Arroyo (then president of the Philippines) to brand the Filipino domestic workers as 'supermaids'. This is not merely an exercise in labeling. As Javellana-Santos points out, it also involves the creation of a new training program:

4. The data from the table come from various sources, and as a consequence, brings together information about average salaries as well as proposals for minimum wages. Regardless, it is the clearly the case that Filipino domestic workers have a salary advantage over the Indonesian and Sri Lankan ones. The sources of data for the table are: "Sponsor a maid in Dubai", http://www.dubai.ae/en.portal?topic,Article_000546; "FAQ of employing a maid in Singapore", http://www.bestmaid.com.sg/faq.asp; "Burden to pay maids RM800, say Malaysians", http://www.mmail.com.my/content/.

> "We will be sending 'supermaids'", Arroyo said …
> Augusto Syjuco, head of the government's Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), said the 'supermaids' program includes instruction in first aid, evacuations from high-rises in case of a fire and other skills to help maids get higher pay …
> "They are not just maids. They are really very well trained now", he said. "If there is someone injured among the family they work for … how to get out of a fire in a high-rise building, all these are part of our upgrading program".
> Arroyo agreed. "They should (be able to) find jobs with families who will offer them high salaries", she said …
> Arroyo said that upgrading the skills of domestic helpers may convince the governments of countries where they work to give a premium to Filipino maids. (Javellana-Santos 2006)

The Philippine government is thus less concerned about maintaining the comparative linguistic advantage of Filipino domestic workers, choosing to focus on other skills instead. Nevertheless, it becomes interesting to monitor the situation and ask how the Philippine government might respond if the English language skills of migrant domestic workers from Indonesia or Sri Lanka were perceived as catching up with those of the 'supermaids'.

While the foregoing two examples can be said to represent issues of some major significance, this last example is of an apparently less substantive nature. Nevertheless, as we will see, it tells us something useful about the ideological assumptions that Asian countries still have towards the English language.

Colloquial Singapore English is well known for having a number of discourse-pragmatic particles, and among the best known is the particle 'lah' (see the papers in Lim 2004). And given the close geographical and historical relationship between Singapore and Malaysia, it is not unexpected if there are strong similarities between the kinds of Englishes spoken in both countries, including the use of 'lah'. Interestingly, in 2000, when the online Oxford dictionary 'legitimized' the 'lah' particle by making it an entry in the dictionary, there was outrage among some Malaysians because Oxford had described it as being a Singaporean rather than Malaysian particle. Here are the relevant extracts from a news report:

> It's ours lah! Malaysians are up in arms over an entry in the Oxford English Dictionary which attributes the much-loved 'lah' to Singapore rather than Malaysia.
> 'Lah' is among the 10,000 new and revised words to appear in OED Online (www.oed.com).
> Malaysians should feel pleased the word has now been recognised by the OED.
> But the definition is galling: "In Singaporean English, a particle used with various kinds of pitch to convey the mood and attitude of the speaker".

> *Apa*? (What?) Lah is Singaporean English?
> Ask any Malaysian and the response is shock.
> Secretary May Heng, 32, said: "I wouldn't be surprised if some Westerners think the Proton is a Singapore car. 'Lah' is Malaysian".
> Just how did the OED decide that 'lah' was an English word?
> The OED's principal philologist Edmund Weiner said that, if there was good evidence that a word borrowed from a foreign language was in widespread use in English in any part of the world, it would be included. He said there was nothing sinister in not attributing 'lah' to Malaysia.
> "It is simply that we have not collected examples of it being used there", he said.
> (The Straits Times 2000)

What is interesting is that claims concerning the ownership of the particle seem to have been triggered by the actions of an Inner Circle authority, namely, the Oxford dictionary. Thus, notice that Malaysians are supposed to "feel pleased" because the particle has been "recognised by the OED", and what is "galling" and shocking is the description of the particle as "Singaporean".

This is in one sense a linguistic storm in a teacup. But it is a storm that arises because English is still viewed as a Western language, and this can lead to rather absurd stances about the ownership of specific lexicogrammatical constructions (but not the variety itself) when 'legitimacy' is felt to have been bestowed by exonormative authorities, as in this case.

Conclusion

The politics of English in Asia is an extraordinarily rich field of study, and the three challenges discussed in this essay are not meant to be exhaustive, of course. One could point to a number of other challenges, such as pre-empting social tensions that might arise if English were to be seen as a class marker, and educating both policymakers and the general public about the need to avoid stigmatizing colloquial varieties of English. Our modest hope is that the essays in this volume make a useful contribution to the field, by providing both general overviews as well as the details of country-specific issues.

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