

The Origin and Development of Asia Englishes

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Abstract

This study surveys the history of English language and the roles of English language education in Asian context. Through the historical survey on English dispersal in Asian countries, the first section of this study traces the dispersal of English from the 18th century and the development of English in Asian countries. The second section of this study explains the development and characteristics of English language education policies in Asian countries. These countries belong to the expanding circle according to Kachru's model, and in the expanding circle, English plays a very important role as a tool for interaction among nonnative speakers. This section surveys and compares the developmental characteristics of English language education in Asian countries. The third section emphasizes the important role of English education and the future of English language education in Asian countries. Also this section focuses on the reasons for and characteristics of English as an International language, and emphasizes the role of English as a tool for inter-cultural communication in the world.

Keywords

Kachru's model, Asian countries, English language, the policy of English language education, roles of English language education

1 Introduction

The history of English language in Asian countries is very important to understand the characteristics of English language education comparing with those of the countries which belongs to the Inner circle. The information of historical background for Asian Englishes is very important to set up the roles of English language education in Asian context. So this research focuses to survey the development of English language and define the roles of English language education in Asian countries: Singapore, Philippine, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea.

The purposes of this study are as follows: the first one is to trace the dispersal of English from the 18th century and the development of English in Asian countries, the second one is to explain the development and characteristics of English language education

policies in Asian countries, and the third one is to emphasize the important role of English education and the future of English language education in Asian countries. The data for this research is based on the textbooks and materials for the development of English language and education policies from the governments of Asian countries.

2 The Development of Asia Englishes

The history of English language in Asian countries is closely related to the dispersals of English which consists of two kinds of dispersals. The first one involved the migration of many people from the south and eastern part of England to America and Australia. The second one involved the colonization of Asia and Africa, and led to the development of a number of second language varieties. English dispersals in South-East Asia and the south pacific started in the late 18th century. The main countries involved were Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. Stamford Raffles, an administrator of the British East India Company, played an important role in the founding of Singapore as part of the British colonial empire in 1819. Around the same time, other major British centers were founded in Malaysia, and in 1842, Hong Kong was added to Britain. After the Spanish-American War at the end of the 19th century, the United States was granted sovereignty over the Philippines. Through the above historical development, English came to play very strong influence over many Asian countries.

This section surveys the development of English language education in Asian countries: Singapore, Philippine, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. Historical survey on the development of English education is very important for defining the roles of English language education and giving the directions for English education in the future.

2.1 Historical dimension of Singapore English

Singapore had been colonized by the United Kingdom in the 19th century when Sir Stamford Raffles founded the part of Singapore as a trading post for the East India Company in 1819 and became separated and independent from Malaysia in 1965.

The population of Singapore is like this: Chinese - 76.8%, Malay - 13.9%, Indian - 7.9%, and other races - 1.4% (Gupta, 2006; Lim & Foley, 2004). Mandarin has become the most powerful and frequently used native language among the three indigenous languages,

Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil since the ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’ was launched in 1979 by the then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Official languages in Singapore are English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil (Lin, 2002). Since its independence, the Singaporean government has launched a bilingual education policy with an ever increasing emphasis on the use of English (Rubdy, 2001). Therefore currently, English is the language of education in all levels and types of schools in Singapore. English is the primary language in various sectors of the Singaporean society including public administration, education, commerce, science and technology (Lin, 2002). Letters and workplace documents in government offices, business contracts, and public signs are written in English. All subjects except the mother tongue classes are instructed in English.

2.2 Historical dimension of Philippine English

The Philippines is well-known for its large English-speaking population. In fact, it is the third largest English-speaking country (Bolton & Bautista, 2004; Gonzalez, 2004). English is indeed the major language in public and personal life of Filipino people. It is a co-official language used in various sectors including government, law and education (Bolton & Bautista, 2004). In addition, it plays a major role in print media, films, television, and creative writing.

2.3 Historical dimension of Hong Kong English

The history of Hong Kong English goes back to the early 17th century when trade with Britain began. When Hong Kong was annexed by Britain during the First Opium War between Britain and China in 1842, English began to be taught and used widely. Following the establishment of various mission schools, the University of Hong Kong was established in 1911. English was the medium of instruction, and it still is. When the Communist-led riots were successful in 1967, the Chinese language began to be used as an official medium of education along with English. From the 1970s to 1990s when Hong Kong was officially returned to China, economic, social and educational transformation took place dramatically. While more affluent people sent their children overseas for education, poorer children were given opportunities for bilingual education. Therefore more children were able to study English in ‘Anglo-Chinese’ secondary schools (Bolton, 2000). More universities where English is widely used as a medium of lectures were established.

2.4 Historical dimension of China English

Adamson (2002) analyzes the official role and status of English language and education in China by dividing Chinese history into three periods – the Qing dynasty, the Republican era, and the People’s Republic of China.

The first period, the Later Qing Dynasty, is characterized as the period of the aggressive clash of cultures.

The first phase from 1759 to 1860: English received very low official status and was only used for trade. During the second phase, from 1861 to 1911: English began to gain official status since it was considered to be a medium to access Western science and technology.

During the second period, the Republican era, the government established diplomatic ties with English speaking countries. The first phase of the second period from 1911 to 1923: the debates concerning English and English education were prominent with ambivalent attitudes. During the second stage of the second period from 1924 to 1949, English served as a medium for diplomatic, military and intellectual interactions with the West.

The third period from 1949 until now has been a period of a fluctuating political climate in both international and domestic affairs. During the first phase from 1949 to 1960, English received low official status due to the political events which were unfavorable for English.

During the second phase from 1966 to 1976, the Cultural Revolution swept the entire nation, labeling English speakers as traitors. Learning anything foreign was as condemnable as studying anything scholarly. As Western cultural artifacts were attacked, the English curricula of secondary and tertiary institutions were abandoned. However, Lam (2002) in 1971, China began to restore friendly ties with the United States as it formally recognized China as a member of the United Nations. The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 when Mao Zedong died. From 1976 to 1982, English education began to regain its popularity and English was once again regarded as a helpful tool for national modernization and development. In 1982, English became the main foreign language in Chinese secondary schools. In 1985, the first international conference on English Language Teaching was held in Guangzhou (Lam, 2002).

According to Yuhua (2002), the People’s Republic of China began to offer EFL lessons to third graders of all primary schools in 2001. The decision was made by the Ministry of Education to help young students to be better equipped for new challenges brought by its acceptance as a full member of the World Trade Organization in November, 2001 (Pang, Zhou, & Fu, 2002; Yuhua, 2002) and by the designation of Beijing as the host for the 2008 Olympic Games (Lam, 2002).

2.5 Historical dimension of Malaysia English

English has always been important in Malaysia because of her colonial past. Because Malaysia was part of the British Empire in the 19th century, English was the language of instruction and law. A daily English newspaper, *The Straits Times*, was first published in 1845. At that time English was the language of instruction in premier schools. After Malaysia gained her independence from the British in 1957, English continued to be recognized as the official language in the country. English became the second most important

language after the National Language Act of 1967. Following this, Bahasa Malaysia language became the language of instruction in national schools and higher institutes of education. Although English was a compulsory subject for all students from primary school, it was only taught as a subject. In 2003, English became the language of instruction for Mathematics and Science in all schools and higher institute of education.

2.6 Historical dimension of Taiwan English

In 1922, Ministry of Education announced that neither English nor other foreign language would be taught in the primary schools. Foreign language education would begin in secondary school education. After the ROC moved to Taiwan, foreign language education policies became basically English policies, and American English turned out to be standard for English. English has been a required course for all secondary school students. In 2001, English became compulsory for the 5th and 6th grade. In 2005, English became required for the 3rd grade and up.

2.7 Historical dimension of Japan English

The first contact with English for Japanese people was in 1600 when a British navigator who worked for the Dutch merchant fleet was cast ashore Bungo, Kyusu Island. In 1808, the Dejima Dutch Trading Post in Nagasaki was attacked from the Great Britain, and after the attack, the Tokugawa Government ordered all the official Dutch interpreters to learn English and Russian. This was the first start of English education in Japan. In 1853, US Navy Commodore Mathew Perry and his ships came to Uraga, Tokyo Bay. In 1858 American-Japanese Treaty of Amity was concluded, and by this time English had replaced Dutch as the main foreign language in Japan. In the early Meiji Era, English education reached its peak. At that time English was taught with two different approaches, one is to teach English through native speakers, and the other one is to teach English-Japanese translation by Japanese teachers.

In the Taisho Era, opposition to English education came to the surface because at that time, English was thought to be troublesome to learn and useless in everyday life. Then the Ministry of Education hired Harold E. Palmer to Japan in 1922 as an advisor for English education. Right before the Second World War, English education declined rapidly. After the Second World War, English education boom reached another peak again. In 1947, the 6-3 system of compulsory education was inaugurated and English was first introduced to compulsory education as an elective subject. By 1956 English was assigned as a subject to the entrance examination for all the public senior high schools. In 1989, Oral Communication was introduced into the high English curriculum. At that time, English was finally made a compulsory subject in secondary education. In 2002, English was introduced as part of an integrated program and was made a compulsory subject for the 5th and 6th graders in 2008. In 2010, the number of

English lessons a week was increased to four again (Kanji Horiguchi, 2010).

2.8 Historical dimension of Korea English

English language education in Korea can be traced to start in the Yi Dynasty Period when the educational institute for cultivating the young men who have good abilities in foreign languages started to teach English in that institute. During the Yi Dynasty Period, English education in the Yi Dynasty Period can be categorized into two groups by the institutes which delivered English education to Korean people: public institutes and missionary schools.

After Korea was liberated from Japanese Imperialism, English education was delivered through a tentative syllabus, and the first national curriculum was established in 1955. The National Curriculum of Korea can be surveyed through 10-year terms, the 1950's, the 1960's, the 1970's, 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's.

During the tentative syllabus period, the Grammar-translation method continued to be used with the emphasis on the ability to understand the cultures of various foreign countries. At this time English education through Korean language was introduced.

During the 1950's, the national curriculum continued to use the Grammar-translation method to emphasize the ability to understand the cultures of various foreign countries, but empirical psychology came to play a role in developing English textbooks.

During the 1960's, the national curriculum emphasized the speaking and listening ability of English, using the audio-lingual method of language teaching with the added goal of introducing Korean culture to other countries. During the 1970's, the national curriculum emphasized the communicative ability, and de-emphasized the grammar-translation method. During the 1980's, the national curriculum focused on teaching English through the audio-visual material, and also started to adopt English test across four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing).

During the 1990's, English Education Policies of Korea were innovated on the basis of following points. The most important innovation in the history of English education in Korea is the introduction of the teaching of English as a regular subject into elementary schools in 1997. Before that, English was taught as an extra-curricular activity. After English was introduced as a regular subject in elementary school, English teaching in elementary schools became the people's prime interest.

The second innovation is the import of NS instructors. This influx of the NS instructors in Korea's secondary school has left a great impact on the general perception of the public and the teachers. Most English students and teachers began to see the importance of communicative competence in their real lives, both in and out of the classroom.

The third innovation is to adopt the national college scholastic ability test. All Korean high school graduates who wish to go to universities are required to take the national College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT)

administered by the government. The real test of CSAT was given in 1993 for the school year of 1994.

3 The Roles of English Language Education in Asian Context

1) The Importance of Non-Native Interactions in Asian Context

One role of English language education in Asian countries is to recognize the importance of NNS interactions in communicating through English, to encourage their interactions and to create the environment to activate their interactions in daily lives in the globalized world.

2) Bi-directionality to communicate in Globalized World

The purpose of English language education in Asian countries is to emphasize the bi-directionality in communicating among NS and NNS in globalized world.

3) English language Teachers: Non-Native Speakers of English

Another purpose of English language education in Asia is to acknowledge the effectiveness of NNS teachers in teaching English in Asian countries and cultivate good NNESTs who are well qualified for teaching English in each country.

4 Conclusion

As a conclusion of this study, the essential role of English language education in Asian context can be summarized as Figure 1. In key concept of this model, Asian Englishes play the bi-directional roles: the first role is to establish the identity of each cultural and ethnic group by using both English and each group's mother tongues in Asian context.

The other is that English plays a role as a window to the world. In this process to open the window to the world, Asian Englishes can play the important roles like these: to teach English as a way of speeding up national development, to English as a way of understanding other cultures, and to teach English as a tool of international communication in the globalized world.

The number of the people who speak English as a second or foreign language in Asian countries is increasing very rapidly, so the Asian English plays a very important role in the globalized world. Considering these circumstance, it is very important to survey the distinguishable characteristics of Asian Englishes so that we can define the roles of Asian Englishes and set up the goals to direct English language education in Asian context. So this research to survey the development of

English language, and to define the roles of English language education in Asian context can have much significance in the research area for English education.

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