

English as the Language of Trade, Finance and Technology in APEC: An East Asia Perspective*

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There has been a lot of bad news in the world economy lately. Supposed economic superpowers like Germany and Japan have fallen on hard times; Asian tigers that thought the future belonged to them suddenly find that it belongs instead to the Westerners with ready cash; Latin Americans who thought they had put their past behind them are watching with horror as financial crisis strikes once again. And yet there are also some surprisingly happy economic stories out there. What do they have in common?

... The common denominator of the countries that have done best in this age of dashed expectations is that they are the countries where English is spoken.

– Paul Krugman¹

The role of English as the language of trade, finance and technology has grown into a development strategy in the 21st century, with the increasing recognition of its importance starting in the early 1990s. The intense globalization and human migration taking place within the Asia-Pacific Region has highlighted not only an appreciation of the multiple languages and cultures (Duff 2004) but also the significance of the ability to communicate effectively with people across language barriers. English in this era

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¹ From the 1999 article "Want growth? speak English: that certain je ne sais quoi od les Anglophones" and cited in Arnold Kling's 2003 essay titled "The language barrier."

of globalization will increase the capacity of people to communicate and exchange ideas and goods across borders.² The English language skill has become a necessity for establishing linkages with the rest of the world in international trade, economic development and even in the use of new technology.

APEC agenda

The APEC Ministerial Meeting (AMM) last year issued a joint statement echoing the leader's commitment on the development of a "Five-Year Strategic Plan for E-Learning" in the region. Along with the recommendations to improve access to Internet infrastructure for teachers and students, the AMM also encouraged member economies to undertake measures to provide adequate knowledge and practical use of English as a working language within the APEC region. This has been the groundwork for one of the subthemes of the 3rd APEC Education Ministerial Meeting, to wit:

Teaching English and Other Foreign Languages

The ability to communicate across language barriers is essential to international trade and to building mutual understanding among interconnected global economies. Due to the primacy of English in diplomacy and trade, APEC members from Eastern economies have further stressed English language education.

It is understood that the promotion of English as a working language in the APEC region does not imply a need for a replacement of the great diversity of local languages in member economies.

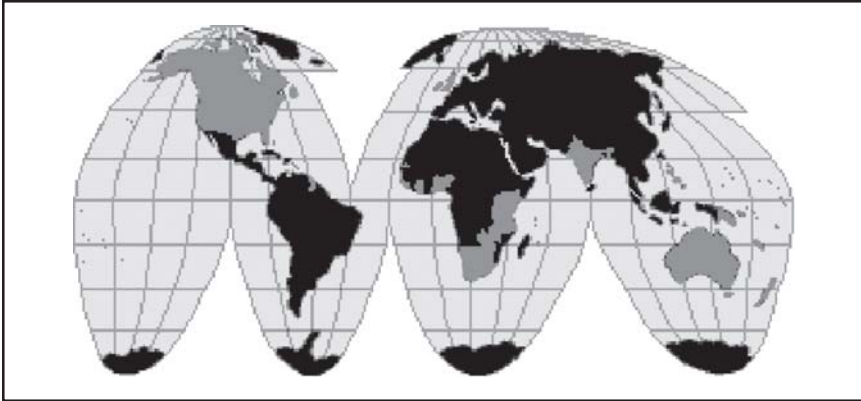
The English choice

Undeniably, English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. Although it ranks second only in terms of number of speakers, English is far more worldwide in its distribution than all other spoken languages. It is an official language in 52 countries as well as many small colonies and territories. In addition, 1/4 to 1/3 of the people in the world understand and speak English to some degree. It has become the most useful language to learn for international travel and is now the de facto *lingua franca* of diplomacy.³

² Statement by Ambassador Choi Seok Young during the 3rd APEC Education Ministerial Meeting Santiago, Chile, 29 April 2004.

³ In 2001, the 189 member countries in the United Nations were asked what language they wish to use for communication with embassies from other countries. More than 120 chose English, 40 selected French, and 20 wanted to use Spanish. See Language and culture: an introduction to human communication [http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_1.htm].

Figure 1. Countries wherein English is an official language (light shaded areas)



Source: Language and Culture: An Introduction to Human Communication (http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_1.htm)

In APEC member economies, majority uses the English language either as an official language or a working/business language (Table 1).

For children living in the globalized age, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language. About 75 percent of the world's mail, telexes, and cables are in English. Approximately 60 percent of the world's radio programs are in English as well as about 90 percent of all Internet traffic.⁴ Even host computers are English dominated.

Experts have provided various reasons for the global spread of English. Some claim that the language is popular because of its inherent structural openness; still more researchers attribute the phenomenon to the economic and cultural dominance of the English-speaking countries. Watson (2003) provides five reasons for English as a global international language:

- ◆ flexibility of the English language itself, which has been prepared to absorb words from many different languages;
- ◆ the process of economic globalization, part of which is the process of control of aspects of the global economy and hence an external penetration of internal economies by transnational corporations, the media and international organizations;
- ◆ the economic dominance of the United States (US) and the influence of US culture spread around the world;

⁴ However, the percentage of Internet users who are not native English speakers is increasing rapidly, especially in Asia. See Language and culture: an introduction to human communication [http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_1.htm].

- ◆ the growth of mass tourism and advertising has advanced the spread of English; and
- ◆ migration to Canada and the US has created a segment of the world population whose aim is to learn English for survival purposes.

Table 1. Languages in APEC member countries

Australia	English
Brunei Darussalam	Malay (official), Chinese, English
Canada	English , French (both official)
Chile	Spanish
China	Chinese, Mandarin, also local dialects
Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia (official), Dutch, English , and more than 583 languages and dialects
Japan	Japanese
Korea, Republic	Korean
Malaysia	Malay (official), Chinese, Tamil, English
Mexico	Spanish, Indian languages
New Zealand	English (official), Maori
Papua New Guinea	English , Tok Pisin (a Melanesian Creole English), Hiri Motu, and 717 distinct native languages
Peru	Spanish and Quéchua (both official), Aymara, and other native languages
The Philippines	Filipino (based on Tagalog) and English (both official); regional languages: Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano, others
Russia	Russian, others
Singapore	Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil, English (all official)
Taiwan	Chinese (Mandarin)
Thailand	Thai (Siamese), Chinese, English
United States	English , sizable Spanish-speaking minority
Vietnam	Vietnamese (official), French, English , Khmer, Chinese

Source: Various internet sites

THE LANGUAGE OF TRADE, FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The use of English and other foreign languages for cross-border communications is important in many areas of trade ranging from tourism to the trade in financial services. Free and open communication across borders is important in building a stronger regional economy.⁵ The increasing involvement in trade, tourism and international relations among APEC member countries where English is not spoken as the first language poses some problems and barriers in achieving aspired regional cooperation. For instance, the understanding of local laws and regulations which would be in a language other than English might result not only in confusion nor misunderstanding but even misinformation among businessmen and traders due to lack of readily available translation. The simple forms of interna-

⁵ International Seminar on Education Reform in the APEC Region, Beijing, China, January 2004.

tional transactions must have English translations if only to achieve increased global transparency.

Trade and Finance

Most governments have long acknowledged that knowledge of the languages of the countries with whom they trade provide advantages (Table 2). In this regard, learning languages is in itself a growth industry in the world. In the last four decades, researches have attempted to carry out economic analyses of language learning and use.⁶ The potential importance of language as a contributor to trade linkages has several foundations. Worth mentioning is the functionalist approach proposed by J. Carr which stated that “money and language share similar characteristics... just as money allows society to move beyond barter, a common language also facilitates transaction and lowers cost.” Another is by Albert Breton and P. Mieszkowski (1977) who applied the neo-classical international trade model and interpreted the use of one common language as resource-saving technical progress. To wit:

“The benefits resulting from knowledge of a second language are spread over time. Learning a second language therefore is an investment or the acquisition of an asset... It is a form of human capital, capable, like all capital, of being increased or depreciating—although, unlike material goods, it does not deteriorate with use—or even of becoming outdated.”⁷

These economic theories have been confirmed by several gravity model studies showing language variable/trade determinant with a positive relation with trade.⁸

Although it may not necessarily prove conclusively the correlation of language and trade, the international trade data indicates that majority of exports and imports for both intra-APEC as well as APEC member economies’ trade to the world comes from English speaking countries (Table 2; see Table 1 for classification).

Skills development

There are two potential benefits of a working knowledge of English. First, English proficiency is needed to upgrade workers’ skills or to enable them to participate in workplace flexibility and multiskilling initiatives.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion, see Grin 1990.

⁷ Karim 1999

⁸ Boisso and Ferrantino 1997; Frankel 1997; Fink and Primo Braga 1999; Clark and Tavares 2000 and Soloaga and Winters 2001.

Table 2. Total intra-APEC Trade, English and non-English speaking APEC economies, 1997 and 2001 in '000 US\$

Country Group	Exports 1997		Imports 1997	
	Intra-APEC	APEC to World	Intra-APEC	APEC f World
English Speaking % share	933,628,379 61.16	1,303,223,276 57.56	1,262,611,775 73.72	1,740,396,571 67.65
Non-English Speaking % share	592,911,496 38.84	960,848,146 42.44	449,997,552 26.28	832,098,373 32.35
Total	1,526,539,875	2,264,071,422	1,712,609,327	2,572,494,944
Country Group	Exports 2001		Imports 2001	
	Intra-APEC	APEC to World	Intra-APEC	APEC f World
English Speaking % share	1,004,536,463 59.25	1,388,235,056 55.72	1,410,399,732 71.31	1,994,558,688 66.85
Non-English Speaking % share	690,757,975 40.75	1,103,349,499 44.28	567,552,496 28.69	989,295,310 33.15
Total	1,695,294,438	2,491,584,555	1,977,952,228	2,983,853,998

Source: PC-TAS

Second, the knowledge and proficiency in English of its local workforce is undeniably a competitive advantage a country may have. A classic example is the outsourcing by many developed countries which have benefited those who are not only skilled in information and communications technology (ICT) but English-speaking labor suppliers like India and the Philippines.⁹

In the A.T. Kearney's 2004 Offshore Location Attractiveness Index, Asian countries like India (ranked 1), China (2), Malaysia (3) the Philippines (6) and Singapore (5) dominated the top 10 most attractive offshore destinations. The strength of India was the two million graduates who are proficient English-speakers with strong technical and quantitative skills. While in China, English language proficiency is a skill-gap receiving attention especially in the primary schools. The high ranking of the Philippines in the index was due not only to its favorable cost structure but, most importantly, its promising human resource capabilities where much of its population can speak American English, which has helped it gain leadership in the call center industry. The report also indicated that Thailand and Vietnam's success would depend on how well they upgrade their workforce skills.¹⁰

Aside from local employment, access to English language training has been useful for the successful participation of non-English-speaking jobseekers abroad.

⁹ In the Philippines, the government regularly touts it as a software development location by citing a New York based META group report ranking Filipino information and communication technology (ICT) workers high in global comparison (see ITU 2002c).

¹⁰ A.T. Kearney 2004

A classic example is the large percentage share of Filipino workers in international migration due to their country's English proficiency. The Philippines is the second largest labor exporter in 2003, next only to Mexico. Some governments are now providing for English language training programs for potential overseas workers and immigrants.

Technology

Language is also an important vehicle to promote development and information technology (IT) transfer improvement. With English being the primary language of research and development and science and technology, having English language skill is of critical importance in terms of acquiring and deepening IT knowledge.

From the economics point of view, language is an essential input to the output of the activity called communication. An extension of this hypothesis due to Marschak (1965) is that only those languages which are the most efficient will be used. It has been argued, for example, that this is why Chinese script language is being displaced by English for written communications—it is simply less efficient to write in one language relative to the other.¹¹

There is a strong link between the literature on globalization and ICT. ICT is regarded as one of the principal drivers of the process of globalization. ICT, however, may lead to a form of virtual economic integration based on nonspatial complementarities, as the communication barriers to exchange are reduced. One obvious complementarity is a common language. Promotion of localization may occur because of the virtual economic integration of language groups separated across space that ICT makes possible.¹²

Language on the internet

The internet is widely regarded as a tool for strengthening trade and investment. To boost economic competitiveness, e-learning, which indicates a country's ability to produce, use and expand internet-based learning (both formal and informal) fits this role. In an Economist Intelligence Unit White Paper, countries where English is widely spoken are at an advantage, given the predominance of English-language content on the internet.¹³ In the Asia-Pacific region, South Korea is the only top-ranked country where English is not commonly spoken in business settings.

In a series of survey conducted by International Telecommunications Union (ITU), language continues to play an important role in Internet usage. Countries

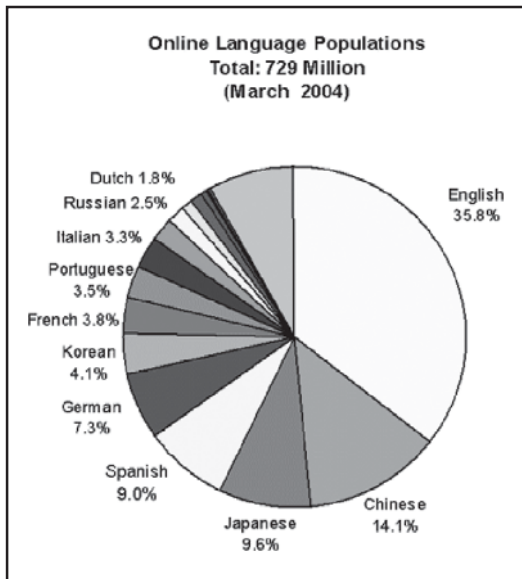
¹¹ Harris 1998

¹² Harris 1998

¹³ The Economist and IBM Corporation 2003

where English is widely spoken (such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines) have a strategic advantage vis-à-vis their neighbors. The Indochina countries (Thailand, Laos and especially Cambodia), on the other hand, face extra barriers because their alphabets are Sanskrit-based making them difficult to adapt to computers.¹⁴ Global Internet statistics show that English shares around 36 percent of the total online language (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Online language populations



Source: Global internet statistics by language, Global Reach
[\[http://global-reach.biz/globstats/index.php3\]](http://global-reach.biz/globstats/index.php3)

In Singapore, widespread use of English in the educational, health, government and corporate business sector has contributed to high internet access since most Internet content is in English. Almost half of Singaporean adults that are literate in English access the internet by going online compared to around 1/3 of those that do not (Figure 3). Those who do not speak English well have a much lower level of usage.¹⁵

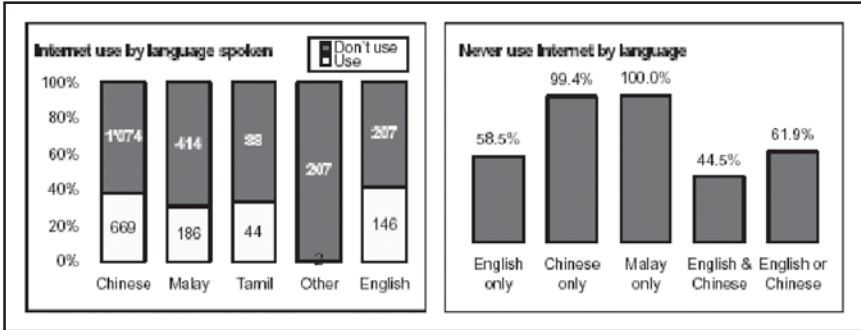
In the case of Thailand, one barrier to increased Internet penetration is the language. In a survey conducted by National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), the vast majority of Thai Internet users had

¹⁴ ITU 2002b

¹⁵ ITU 2001

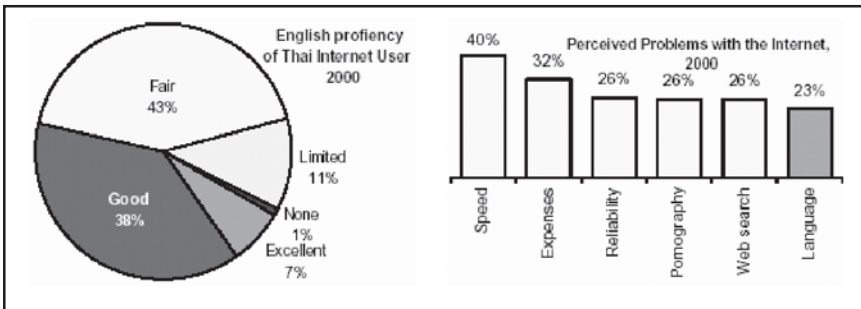
some English proficiency whereas 1/5 cited language as a problem with the Internet. With English spoken by only an estimated five percent of Thais, language barriers severely restrict the potential Internet market (Figure 4).¹⁶

Figure 3. Internet and language



Note: The charts show the share of population and Internet use by language spoken rather than ethnic group.
 Source: ITU adapted from CABSAT/NETWATCH

Figure 4. The English barrier



Source: ITU adapted from NECTEC, Internet User Profile of Thailand 2000

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF EDUCATION: TRENDS IN EAST ASIA

The importance of competitiveness in the context of globalization has brought to the forefront again the significance of the role of education. The reason is that, while the East and Southeast Asian economies did very well in providing basic education for their populations, they are now transiting or have already made the transition from labor-intensive manufacturing to technology-intensive manufacturing. Those that have not will require new foreign direct investment inflows and the development of domestic research and development for which an educated

¹⁶ ITU 2002a

workforce is required. In this sense, the role of education policies plays a major role in enhancing the productivity of labor.¹⁷ In practical terms, this means that they need not only increase the volume of education but also, and more importantly, raise the quality of the education.¹⁸

The changing demands within the workforce challenge the usefulness of traditional schooling and university education in many developing Asian countries. Individuals need to be sure that skills learned at school will be useful in the workplace. For example, computer and ICT skills need to be taught as well as English as a foreign language.¹⁹ There is also a sense of urgency around the introduction of technology and the requirements of training and retraining teachers in the effective use of ICTs owing to the fact that English is not the first language of teachers in a majority of APEC economies.

The teaching of English has steadily increased in APEC economies. In several non-English speaking economies, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language has become a priority for educational reforms and development strategies. Japan, Hong Kong and Korea launched major initiatives to increase the use of English by bringing foreigners to teach English or to assist local English teachers. In addition, the purpose of teaching English has changed from being an academic tool with emphasis on grammar and translation to a working and business language with an emphasis on communication.²⁰

The next section will discuss the profiles of selected East Asian countries tackling the policies of the government on English as a foreign/second language as well as the measures to incorporate English in the curriculum, the developments of language teaching profession and use of English as a training component in existing industries.

Selected Country Profiles

East Asia

Japan

According to a Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK) report in 2000, Japan has the largest commercial English language education market in the world valued at US\$20 billion. Globalization pressures and recent restructuring at local companies has resulted in greatly increased importance put on daily use of English within many companies.²¹

¹⁷ ADB 2003

¹⁸ ADB 2003

¹⁹ ADB 2003

²⁰ APEC EDNET 2004

²¹ Dolan 2001

One promising trend is the growing recognition in Japan of the value of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training. The basic premise of ESP is that English language students will be maximally motivated to succeed by improving communication skills that are necessary for success in narrowly targeted professional specialties of their choice. For example, English for Medical Professionals, English for Legal Professionals, English for Certified Public Accountants, or English for Academic Preparation. Good ESP training recognizes the critical importance of oral communication skills and uses situations, vocabulary and communication rules specific to particular professions to accomplish clearly identified learning objectives.²²

The government of Japan recognizes that the lack of sufficient English-speaking ability restricts many Japanese in their verbal exchanges with foreigners so that their ideas or opinions are not evaluated appropriately. In response to this situation, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has formulated various measures such as the revision of the Ministry's Courses of Study focusing further on cultivating students' basic and practical communication abilities. The Strategic Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" was formulated in July 2002 as a comprehensive and concrete plan for the purpose of drastically reforming English education in the country.²³

The Goals to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" are as follows:

- ◆ English language abilities *required for all Japanese people*
- ◆ English language skills *required for specialized fields or for those active in international society*

Building on the strategic plan, this action plan establishes a system for cultivating "Japanese with English abilities" in five years based on measures included in the strategic plan and those included in the budget for 2003. The formulation of this concrete action plan clarifies the goals and directions for the improvement of English education to be achieved by 2008 and the measures that should be taken by the government to realize these goals.²⁴

China

Although as early as around 1840 when English schools were already established by foreign missionaries in China and the adoption of the American system of education in 1922, English education showed a pattern of discontinuity from the time the People's Republic of China was founded. It was only after Deng Xiaoping

²² Dolan 2001

²³ Atsuko 2003

²⁴ Atsuko 2003

assumed power in the late 1970s that China shifted back to track and English was once again considered an important tool in the modernization of the country. Several backlashes followed, such as the so-called antispiritual-pollution movement, the antiliberalization movement and the antipeaceful-evolution movement, but the spread of English has been growing steadily. The 1990s witnessed an “English boom” in China, from elementary schools up to colleges and universities.²⁵

Several key events in the beginning of the modern millennium have brought new incentives for the learning of English in China. These include the successful bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, the accession to the World Trade Organization, the APEC meeting in Shanghai, and the increasing number of young people going overseas to study or remake their lives as immigrants.²⁶

Efforts are being made to reform the language teaching methodology in China and the option to start learning at early primary school level has been introduced in 2001. For some time, the lack of access to “authentic” English resources greatly hindered the progress of Chinese learners. Also, the lack of exposure to native English-speakers either, directly or electronically, among Chinese students who mainly relied in textbooks makes their aural and oral skills weak. Some are learning English via popular English television programs.²⁷

Until very recently, the textbooks used in Chinese classrooms have been practically the same throughout the country with the exceptions of only a limited number of laboratory schools. There are 350,000 junior middle schools (aged 12–15) in China and over 80 percent of them at one stage used the same textbook, *Junior English for China*, developed by the People’s Education Press in collaboration with Longman. English teachers are exclusively university or college graduates with majors in English and two to four years’ formal training in English. Only graduates of four-year courses are eligible to teach senior middle school students (aged 16–19) while graduates of two-year courses can only teach junior middle school and below and some rural senior middle schools when qualified teachers are not available.²⁸ The Ministry of Education requires Chinese universities under its direct administration to use English textbooks in teaching English language, information technology, biology, finance and law.

However, the Ministry of Education (MOE) attempts to separate English language teaching from culture education which is becoming detrimental to the goal of English education. The stringent requirement to abide by the rules and

²⁵ Zhang 2003

²⁶ Zhang 2003

²⁷ More information available at the China Education and Research Network [http://www.edu.cn/english_1369/].

²⁸ Zhang 2003

regulations has led to (at least partly) the failure on the part of the learners of English to conduct successful communication with foreigners, and that is where misunderstandings arise. The failure of English education in China, especially the lack of sufficient culture education, has also partly contributed to the phenomenon of “dumb English.” This refers to students pursuing their degrees or immigrating or working in English-speaking countries who had scored high in tests like TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or GRE (Graduate Record Examinations), GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) yet can barely express themselves in understandable English in daily communications with native English interlocutors.²⁹

A US project named “Standard Oral Business English Training” in Beijing was launched in a bid to solve the problem of “dumb English” among the business people. The recent events in China gave rise to an “English Economy” bringing many foreign institutions to vie for a market share of English training in Beijing. An expert estimation shows that Beijing has as many as over a thousand language training centers (companies) competing for various language training courses.³⁰ In 2001, there are more than 3,000 foreign language training institutions in China with annual turnover exceeding 10 billion yuan (about 1.2 billion US dollars).³¹

China is also aggressively implementing an English proficiency training program to boost its call center industry and to strongly compete against major players, India and Philippines. Foreign teachers are usually employed in tertiary level education dealing with teacher-training, or on ESP courses to Chinese technicians who are working on joint ventures with foreigners. Filipinos are in fact already in China teaching basic English.³²

In Taiwan, the educational system, which is largely modeled after the American system, focuses on imparting knowledge of the English language. English is a compulsory subject at junior and senior high school levels. Chinese Taipei launched the “Nine-year Integrated Curriculum Plan” in 2001 making significant changes in education objectives and redefining the starting age for studying English as a foreign language.³³

In Hong Kong, native-speaking English teachers play a significant role in enhancing English language proficiency among the students. Since 1987, the Hong Kong government has encouraged secondary schools to employ native speakers as English teachers. In the 1998–99 school year, an enhanced native-speaking English teacher scheme was introduced to provide all public sector secondary

²⁹ Zhang 2003

³⁰ Yang 2001

³¹ Yang 2001

³² Sioson 2003

³³ Yang 2001

schools with native-English speaking teachers. In August 2000, an English development project was launched.³⁴

South East Asia

Singapore

In 1965, when Singapore separated from Malaysia after a brief union of only two years, she was faced with a seemingly insurmountable task on how to survive. The Singapore government then made a conscious decision to adopt English as the country's primary language as a means of communication between the races and to ensure the country's survival in an English-dominated world economy. English has become the language of instruction for all subjects, and thus considered a first language.³⁵ This enabled Singapore to prosper and become one of the Asian Tigers. English is now so well integrated into Singapore's society that they have developed their own local form of English.³⁶

A Skills Development Fund was also set up which has actively encouraged employers to enroll their employees in nonformal recognized basic education programs that are administered by the Institute of Technical Education. These include the Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) Programme, which provides basic literacy and numeracy training, and the Worker Improvement through Secondary Education (WISE) program for adults to improve their competency in English and math.³⁷

Singapore's neighbors in South East Asia are likely to follow in her footsteps in the adoption of English as the language of business and a key language of instruction in schools. As they face some of the same obstacles and challenges as those met by Singapore in the late 1960s, these countries stand to profit from the Singapore model. Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand are the most likely to fall in line. As the populations of these countries total nearly 300 million people, this development may have profound implications for the profession of teaching English in this part of the world. Not the least of which is the need for more and better-quality institutions for the training of English teachers.³⁸

Thailand

The language problem is one of the major concerns in developing countries, especially Thailand where only a small percentage of the population can read and write

³⁴ Zhang 2003

³⁵ Yang 2001

³⁶ Clancy et al. 2003

³⁷ ILO 2003

³⁸ Clancy et al. 2003

English.³⁹ Hence, the demand for English language training exceeds the supply of language schools and institutions available. Many business-minded individuals are cashing in on the demand for English training by opening schools and charging high tuition fees. Classes offered are from preparing students for English proficiency examination to business English and writing skills. Prices also vary and some courses, such as the TOEFL preparation course, can cost more than 30,000 baht.⁴⁰

The problem is that the vast majority of these establishments operate without fully qualified instructors. In fact, some of the teachers are high school dropouts. As is the case in many other countries, there is no control as to professional qualification of foreign language teachers in Thailand. Basically, anyone can claim to be an English teacher. This will explain why Asian-Americans, Filipinos and other nonwhite teachers will have an extremely hard time finding employment in most schools here even if they speak perfect English and have all the required degrees or certificates and teaching experience.⁴¹

The Royal Thai Government enacted an Education Reform Act in 2002 to enforce a new curriculum in order to equip the students for the new economy. English was chosen as one of the core subjects from primary level. At the secondary level, mathematics, sciences, computers, and language skills have been given particular attention. Nevertheless, Thailand is still facing the dilemma of whether to emphasize the Thai content or expand English language learning among its citizens.

In the educational reforms currently being undertaken, the use of technology is featured prominently. Among the programs is the Thai Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Conference providing professional development for all levels of English language Teaching practitioners. This program includes a distance learning through Internet and satellite broadcasting technology; web-based and computer adaptive testing; and even videoconference with an American academic. This is a fullscale teacher-training program linking a foreign site directly with Thai schools utilizing the Thai Ministry of Education's Distance Learning Foundation satellite broadcast system, which has been used to deliver student classroom instruction.

Prior to 1998, six or seven out of ten Thai workers would say that they took special English classes at a language school. They realize that such gives them better career opportunities than the rest who did not take such classes. Since English is not adequately taught at schools and universities during those many

³⁹ Koanantakool 2001

⁴⁰ Avasadanond 2002

⁴¹ Avasadanond 2002

years, there was a mushrooming of private international schools in Thailand. The Ministry of Education has stepped in to fill this vacuum, starting off with a pilot project of a special English program at the 67-year-old Yothin Burana School, which is under the Ministry of Education's General Education Department's "bi-ed" program. This follows the curriculum regulated by the Curriculum and Instruction Development Department, except that the English Program Section is implemented in English. The advantage of following a Thai curriculum in the English language is that, after the students graduate high school, they can choose to enter a Thai language university or an international university in Thailand or abroad.⁴²

Malaysia

The movement from an economy based on primary commodities and manufacturing towards one based on high technology input has increased the demand for proficiency in English. This is seen in Malaysia's own Silicon Valley, the Multi-Media Super Corridor where English proficiency is increasingly required.⁴³

Since the 1970s, the language of teaching has generally been Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) as prescribed by the National Language Act of 1967 giving the legal basis for Malay to become the sole official language of the country. Despite this, the Malaysian National Policy nevertheless allows the use of English as an important second language. Malaysia's various ethnic communities are allowed to operate schools teaching in their own languages (Mandarin or Tamil) as well as English. Schools for foreigners are likewise allowed.

English is a compulsory subject and is taught as a second language in all schools. It is the language of instruction in Science and Math in secondary schools.⁴⁴ English is tested in examinations required by the government. It is an integral component in programs offered in all tertiary level institutions as well. Many university courses are taught in English.

In Malaysia, the use of application software and courseware in selected educational software used in the teaching and learning, e.g., computer-aided design (CAD) and Auto-CAD, is increasing. There is also a system called Self Access Learning (SAL) whereby the students are given opportunities to learn on their own based on their ability using SAL materials. The teaching of English has been using this method to improve the standard of the language among students.

⁴² Pramualratana 2002

⁴³ Speech by Minister Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar on English language teaching in Malaysia: learning from lessons from the past, forging tracks for the future during the Malaysian International Conference on English Language Teaching, May 15, Melaka, Malaysia.

⁴⁴ Yang 2001

Indonesia

Although English may be widely spoken and understood specifically in Jakarta by most business people, the national language of Bahasa Indonesia remains as the primary language spoken all over Indonesia, in addition to local dialects/languages. The present government policy is towards the preservation of the vernacular languages as part of national identity as well as the development of the use of English as an international language to support the role of Indonesia worldwide.

The new national curriculum for English education incorporating American curriculum models took several years to realize. English is the only compulsory foreign language in the curriculum. However, until now, teaching English in primary schools is still a topic of debate among Indonesian educational experts regardless of its introduction in the 1994 curriculum where English has been included as an optional subject to be taught from year four.⁴⁵

Philippines

The American occupation was responsible for teaching the English language in the Philippine soil. English is the most widely spoken second language. All business, governmental and legal transactions are conducted in English.

Unfortunately, however, the advantage of being an English-speaking country is being jeopardized by widespread erosion in the Filipino's ability to speak, read and write in English. The country's advantage is now being threatened by the vigilance in English education of China where labor cost is even cheaper.

Needless to say, the decline in English proficiency among Filipinos is not merely a language but an education problem. This can be attributed to insufficient investment and poor management of the educational system.⁴⁶ Public education in the Philippines suffers from chronic shortages like classrooms, textbooks, not least of which are computers and Internet access.⁴⁷

The educational system also faces debates over the language policy. There are conflicts as to whether education should be in English or local languages. The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines provides for the legal basis for the various language policies that are being implemented in the country.⁴⁸ Consistent with this constitutional mandate and a declared policy of the National Board of Education on bilingualism in the schools, the Department of Education, Culture

⁴⁵ Liando 2003

⁴⁶ Press statement of Philippine Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, 23 October 2003.

⁴⁷ ITU 2002c

⁴⁸ Article XIV Section 6. (1) The National language of the Philippines is Filipino. As it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages. (2) For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino, and until otherwise provided by law, English.

and Sports promulgated the Bilingual Education Policy. Filipino language is to be used as medium of instruction in social studies/ social sciences, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts and character education. English, on the other hand, is to be used for science, mathematics and technology subjects.⁴⁹

With respect to the English-only policy, one drawback is that there are not enough qualified teachers. The government recognized this problem and to address this, it launched a five-phased program under its National English Proficiency scheme. The program includes:

- ◆ Self-Assessment Test administered to high school teachers of English, Science and Math;
- ◆ Mentor Training Program teaching teachers to become trainers themselves;
- ◆ National Trainers Training Program to send outstanding teachers in England to teach;
- ◆ Orientation of School Heads – by those who took the Mentors Training Program for support and carrying out of what they learned in their schools;
- ◆ Monitoring and Evaluation.⁵⁰

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FACILITATION

With the irrefutable importance of a common language as manifested in the trends in the adoption of a foreign language policy in East Asian countries, the internationalization of the use of English would most likely proceed automatically. Currently, the use of English is gaining popularity not only in the government and education but more importantly in the field of information dissemination (Table 3).

The more relevant issue now is the pace of transition especially in those countries which cannot afford the full cost of language education. To facilitate this, efforts are being undertaken by the Human Resources Development Working Group of the APEC. Also, the Capacity Building Working Group has identified priority areas aimed at addressing regional capacity building needs at the institutional, organizational and human level within the APEC region. One of these areas is the human capacity building by the development of an APEC Business School Network, which will contribute by promoting English as a working language for business in the APEC region.

Ecotech programs

APEC Economic and Technical Cooperation (ECOTECH) priorities include the

⁴⁹ Espiritu 2002

⁵⁰ Press statement of Philippine Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, 23 October 2003.

Table 3. Use of English in selected APEC economies

SELECTED APEC MEMBER ECONOMIES	english translations					education profile							information dissemination				
	website	customs form	bank forms (BIB)	certificates etc)	product labelling laws	tourism programs	primary	secondary	technical/vocational	computer school	tertiary	distance education	entry of foreign english	research output	locally published epublic books	major newspaper	available cable TV
ASEAN 6																	
Indonesia	X					X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Malaysia	X					X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Philippines	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Singapore	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Thailand	X					X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X
East Asia																	
Japan	*						X			X	X			X			
People's Republic of China	*						X	X		X	X			*			
Republic of Korea	*						X	X		X	X			*			
Chinese Taipei	*						X	X		X	X			*			
Hongkong	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Latin American																	
Chile	*						X							*			
Mexico	*						X			X	X			*			
Peru	*						X			X	X			*			

* - there is an English translation/country counterpart

promotion of the development of knowledge-based economies. Specifically, the goal of this priority is more pronounced in the 2003 Bangkok Declaration on Partnership for the Future, which states:

“To create the conditions that allow peoples and societies to make the most of their potential and prepare for the challenges of the future—

Step up efforts to build knowledge-based economies. We instructed Ministers to accelerate progress towards the Brunei Goals on expanding Internet access, improvement of intellectual property rights facilitation, protection and enforcement, and implementation of the e-APEC Strategy, in partnership with relevant stakeholders. We voiced support for science and technology innovation, the *upgrading of English Language* and computer skills among the workforce for effective use of the Internet, advancing cyber-education and ICT capacity building, including small and microenterprises.”

An example of existing Ecotech program is the Integration of Information and Communication Technologies Through Teacher Professional Development. In 1999, this was participated by Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Hong Kong, China, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and the United States of America. It aims primarily to establish an APEC “Friendship Net” to accumulate and disseminate information on ICTs and teacher professional development. This site would be open to a broad audience and could invite such elements as a listserv, online electronic forums, an electronic newsletter and a

bank of tools and materials all designed to encourage sharing of ideas and experiences among APEC economies. Secondly, it aims to develop a charter that would recognize the need to respect the right of teachers and learners to use ICTs to support a learning culture and the responsibility of economies to support and facilitate such activities.

There are also recognized efforts by the Regional English Language Office of the United States. This office initiated workshops on web-based resources for English language teachers and learners as well as interactive projects of the International Education and Resource Network (IERN) conducted in English linking students with counterparts in the US and over 80 other countries.

Training and Cooperation

In the Labour and Social Protection Network (LSPN), a general consensus emerges on the need to concentrate on workforce retraining in all APEC economies. To strengthen workforce retraining, the LSPN proposed to develop and disseminate digital English instruction media which would enable workforces to access and benefit more fully from the Internet and English-language printed materials. By addressing the scarcity of English-language printed materials, APEC could begin to narrow the difference between basic education and workforce retraining to enable overall upgrading of skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations have been made in various studies to facilitate the promotion of English in the education sector. These include the development of curriculum and learning materials, professional development programs for teachers, funding for schools, and integration of ICTs access to language learning through satellite, computer, video/television and distance technologies. In addition to this, each government must be able to identify the adjustment issues in their respective countries. For instance, there are needs to address socio-cultural issues of keeping a sense of nationality along the process. Foreign language education should not be undertaken at the expense of students' indigenous/home languages and their prior literacy development. That is, it should be an additive as opposed to subtractive learning experience for them (Duff 2004).

In the process, although each country would have their own approach to developing the English language proficiency suitable to its level and nature of development, a comparative study of the strategies used by each country would be useful. At the very least, benchmarking of standards may be resorted to in East Asian countries. Harmonization in testing of proficiency and setting the criteria for proficiency is necessary in this regard. As of the time being, there is no available information on English proficiency or even adult English literacy. To assess the

extent of internalization of the English language, it would be useful if English proficiency questionnaires could be included in the educational censuses and surveys.

Finally, English instruction should not be the sole responsibility of the education sector. Government efforts should also include harmonizing the English language programs and giving tools like translations, software, and others not only for the local constituents but also to prospective foreign traders, tourists and teachers in order to facilitate trade and flow of information through technology. The movement of natural persons especially English teachers is also another potential industry in itself and must be supported so as to promote not only trade but exchanges of culture and learning experiences.

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