The Roles of English Language Education in Asian Context[*]

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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 characteristics of English as an International language, and emphasizes the role of English as a tool for inter-cultural communication in the world. The purpose of English language education in the Asian context is to cultivate young people who are well equipped with English capabilities and their own professional abilities.

Key Words: 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.

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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 Historical Survey on English Language in Asian Context

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.

Platt and his associates (Platt, 1975; Platt & Weber, 1980) recognized two distinct varieties: one is formal English as the H variety, and the other is informal English as the L variety. According to Gupta (1991, 1994), the formal one can be classified as 'Singapore Standard English' (SSE) and the informal one 'Singapore Colloquial English' (SCE). SSE is officially learned at schools, and it is not different from a Standard English such as British or American English, with a few differences in pronunciation and a few lexical borrowings. On the other hand, SCE is learned and used in vernacular situations. In fact when a child is born in Singapore, she acquires SCE first. In a sense, it is the native language of Singaporeans. About 3.2 million people speak SCE or Singlish at home, on the streets, and at shopping malls. They even enjoy Singaporean actors and actresses speaking Singlish. However, SCE has been negatively perceived as bad English by the society. The Speak Good English Movement Campaign was launched to eradicate this so-called bad English. Singlish is strongly discouraged in schools, at workplaces, and in the media. However, some Singaporeans argue that Singlish identifies them and bonds them as Singaporeans in this multi-racial, linguistic, and cultural society. The role of Singlish, therefore, is to establish group identity and solidarity in a sense (Rubdy, 2001).

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.

From 1565 to 1898, the Philippines were dominated by Spain who introduced Catholicism into this nation. From 1898 to 1941, the USA colonized the Philippines. From 1941 to 1944, the Philippines were briefly controlled by Japan. Even after independence, the language and the

government of the U.S. have greatly influenced the politics and lives of Filipinos (Bolton & Bautista, 2004). Philippine English, which has been one of the most popular subjects of research by many scholars, has been developed along with the educational development of the Philippines under American colonialism.

The English-only policy: In 1900, the American colonial government decided to adopt an English-only policy to teach English more effectively to unite the Filipinos with different linguistic backgrounds, and to provide the Filipinos with access to modernization.

The bilingual education policy in 1939: the Secretary of Education Jorge Bocobo ordered that "English be continued as a medium of instruction but that primary school teachers be allowed to use the local languages as a supplementary tool for instruction" (Bernardo, 2004, p. 19). Later, the Aguilar study which began in 1948 and lasted until 1954 reported that Filipino children learned better and more effectively when their vernacular language was used in instruction.

The Revised Philippine Education Program in 1957: the program declared that the vernacular be the medium of instruction for Grades 1 and 2 (Bernardo, 2004). For these grades, English was taught as a subject. From Grade 3 through college levels, English was used as the medium of instruction and the vernacular was used as an auxiliary medium of instruction.

Capitalizing on the anti-colonial and anti-American sentiments, in 1974, the Department of Education implemented the Bilingual Education Policy in 1974 that allowed both English and Filipino as media of instruction in elementary and high schools (ibid.). English was used as the medium in English communication arts, mathematics, and science while Filipino was used in such subjects as Filipino communication arts, social studies, and history.

The implementation of the bilingual policy in 1987: the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports announced a revised bilingual policy that emphasized Filipino as the language of literacy and scholarly discourse and English as the language of science and technology (Bernardo, 2004). Many Filipino students show more favorable attitudes towards English than Filipino as they regard English as the language of power and a tool for upward social and economic movement (Gonzalez, 2004).

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.

Bacon-Shone and Bolton (1998) also reports that the percentage of the people who thought they knew English quite well rose from 6.6% in 1983 to 33.7% in 1993 and to 38.1% in 1996. However, Hong Kong English has not achieved wide acceptance even in its own community. Tsui and Bunton (2000) investigated the attitudes of Hong Kong's English language teachers by analyzing a thousand messages on language issues. A group of 102 teachers which consisted of 85 non-native speakers of English (NNS) and 17 native speakers (NS) refer to reliable sources for the correct use of English and acceptability. The most authoritative sources they regarded were dictionaries and grammar or usage books from native speaking countries including Britain. They warned against and criticized the use of textbooks published in Hong Kong and the media as well. Although local features of English pronunciation and lexis are identified and recognized by many linguists and teachers, Hong Kong English does not seem to have been accepted by most of the teachers.

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. The Chinese government nominated Canton (Guangzhou) as the major port for foreign trade, and foreigners were allowed to reside in a small area of Shamian Island. According to Bolton (2002), English was taught in missionary schools in South China and the first schools that taught English were established in Macau in the late 1830s shortly before the First Opium War. 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. It was also used as a helpful tool for the Chinese government to develop international diplomacy (Adamson, 2002). According to Bolton and Tong (2002), after the Second

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Opium War which lasted from 1856 until 1860, English began to be taught widely in missionary schools and colleges.

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. English gained somewhat high official status and was used as a vehicle for exploring Western philosophy and other ideas. Some opportunities for study abroad were afforded to the people in higher status. 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. Capitalizing on cultural development, political pressures waned and English became popular. English was considered as a valuable tool for the national modernization and the promotion of international understanding and diplomatic ties with Western countries.

During the second phase from 1966 to1976, 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. When Richard Nixon visited China in 1972, the heads of the two nations agreed to talk about commercial, cultural and educational exchanges. Then, the slogan of "Red and expert" meaning "learning foreign matters to serve the people as an expert" was revived (Lam, 2002, p. 246-247). 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).

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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.

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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.

The Public Institutes, English education of Korea started with the opening of a public institute named Dong Mun Hak(同文學) in 1883. The purpose of this institute was to educate trainees to be the translators who were to become experts in translating and interpreting Korean into many foreign languages. In 1886, another public institute named Yuk Young Gong Won(育英公院) was established in order to cultivate talented young persons, who were well educated, to manage necessary tasks in the modernized society. In 1893, the public foreign language school(官立外國語學校) was established to educate young men who could handle various tasks necessary to modernize Korea at that time. The difference in English education between 育英公院 and 官立外國語學校 was that more students were able to enter 官立外國語學校 because during the modernization of Korea removed many of the social status barriers of Korean society. Another difference between the two institutes was that there were Korean instructors in 官立外國語學校.

During the Yi Dynasty, another group of institutions lead English education, which including BaeJae Boys High School(培材學堂), Ewha Girls High School(梨花學堂), the Young Men Christian Association(YMCA), and etc. These missionary schools played very important roles in modernizing the Yi Dynasty not only in English education, but also in every aspects of Korean society. The main purpose of these

schools was to propagate Christianity among Koreans, so many missionaries took the role of English teachers and the Bible was used as English textbooks.

The Korean people suffered in every aspect during the Japanese Imperialism Period, and English education declined from that of the Yi dynasty period in several aspects. First, Korean people had to use Japanese in their personal lives in many respects and receive English education through Japanese. At that time, most of English educators were Japanese and they had a negative impact on how Korean people pronounced the English language. The grammar-translation method was used as a teaching method during the Japanese Imperialism period.

Next followed the national curriculum period. 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

On the basis of the historical survey on the development of English in Asian countries, the roles of English language education in Asian countries can be defined into three categories: the first role is to recognize the importance of NNS (Non-Native speakers) interactions in communicating through English, and to encourage their interactions and to create the environment to activate their interactions in daily life in the globalized world. The second one is to emphasize the bi-directionality in communicating among NS and NNS in globalized world. The third one is to acknowledge the effectiveness of NNS teachers in teaching English in Asian countries and cultivate good NNESTs (Nonnative English-speaking Teachers) who are well qualified for teaching English in each country.

3.1 The importance of non-native interactions in Asian context

The Asian countries belong to the outer and expanding circles according to Kachru's model. The outer circle Englishes are NS-norm-independent, but the expanding circle Englishes are NS-norm-dependent. We should recognize some advantages in NNS-NNS interactions in Asia. Although there are some individual differences, the speech rates of Asian people are slower than those of NS, which facilitate the learners to understand their interactions. Prof. Yano (2006) pointed out the effects of NNS-NNS interactions like these: first, using English in the NNS-NNS interactions help Asian students to liberate themselves from the inferiority complex toward NS. Second, using English for communication works to reduce English learners in Asian countries to reduce their excessive self-consciousness about their own English and further helps them to be positive and active in international communication by forcing them to interact immediately. Third, NNS show difficulties in expressing themselves in English and often make similar grammatical mistakes, but the English learners in Asian context realize that it is more important to participate in the discussion and express their ideas and opinions than being silent until their English becomes perfect.

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 life in the globalized world.

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3.2 Bi-directionality to communicate in globalized world

It is true that the distinction between native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English is diminishing. To understand the English used by people from different cultural backgrounds, we need exposure to speakers from different cultural backgrounds. The best solution is to initiate a program for global communication in English in which not only NNSE but also NSE gain necessary training for effective global communication. The teaching and learning direction and relationship should be bi-directional in that both NSE and NNSE should not only be aware of the differences in their use of English, but also recognize the differences and learn from each other. Successful global communication can be achieved by overcoming national and cultural barriers and by recognizing the equal status of NSE and NNSE. *So the purpose of English language education in Asian countries is to emphasize the bi-directionality in communicating among NS and NNS in globalized world.*

3.3 English language teachers: Non-native speakers of English

For many decades the English language-teaching profession assumed that native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), by virtue of their superior model of oral production, comprised the ideal English language teacher. But many other researchers showed that nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) offer as many advantages. We must think of the proficiency level of a user of a language. Speaking is one of four skills and may not deserve in all contexts to be elevated to the sole criterion for proficiency. We see that the profession is better served by considering a person's communicative proficiency across the four skills. NESTs are clearly and unequivocally not better teachers than NNESTs by virtue of their native language background. The most important qualification for a teaching position is training and experience in teaching English.

NSE cannot be a universal solution. First, with education, NNSE can rise to the level of English proficiency of NSE. Second, a good English teacher needs not only linguistic competence and performance in English but also knowledge of extra-linguistic matters such as psychological factors and social factors. Thirdly a good English teacher should be able to apply different strategies and create innovative and interesting activities that learners are interested in. NNSE can be good English teachers and sometimes be better than NSE when teaching the language from the perspectives of the learner's culture.

So 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.

Figure 1. The roles of English language in Asian context
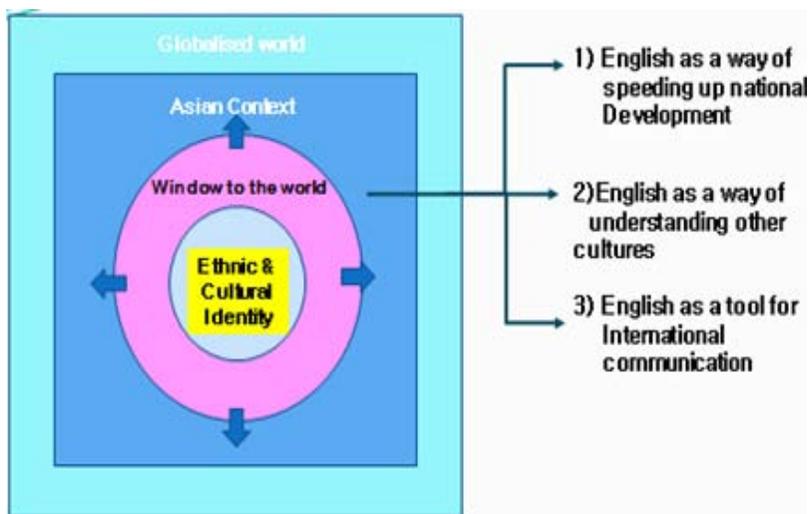
The number of the people who speak English as a second or foreign language in Asian countries is increasing very rapidly, so the Asian English plays a very important role in the globalized world. Considering these circumstance, it is very important to survey the distinguishable characteristics of Asian 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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