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Title	Varieties of English and educational linguistics: An agenda for research
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Source	<i>Singapore Journal of Education</i> , 7(1), 64-71
Published by	Institute of Education (Singapore)

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# Varieties of English and Educational Linguistics: An Agenda for Research

*S Gopinathan and Vanitha Saravanan*

## **Introduction**

In many multilingual societies, and especially those with colonial pasts, the choice of school languages is problematic. The colonial experience leaves a linguistic legacy — a colonial language which is often positively regarded since it is the language of a political or economic elite, the medium of instruction at the tertiary level, or because it is promoted by such elites as a vehicle of desirable, often western-styled, modernization. It is of course true that not all colonial languages are kept on after independence is gained — Dutch was rather quickly phased out in Indonesia — but in such situations another exogenous language is often found necessary. Thus in many newly independent countries, in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, languages like English, French, Spanish and Dutch have significant educational relevance.

As may be expected, a variety of situations exists with regard to the exogenous language. Considerable variations may exist due to differences in objectives of English language teaching. As Kachru (1976) has pointed out English need not be taught with a view to its serving as a vehicle for British or American culture. "In these countries, English is used to teach and maintain the indigenous patterns of life and culture." English may also be used to serve, as in Singapore, as a link between culturally and linguistically plural ethnic groups and to maintain continuity and uniformity in administration. A full mapping of the types will require us to take into account at least some of the following variables: the status of the language — colonial (English in Singapore, Spanish in the Philippines), non-colonial (English in Thailand, and in Indonesia) — whether it has second, foreign or additional language status, which in turn may depend upon the domains it is expected to be used in, and the manner (whether as a medium of instruction or a subject in the curriculum) and educational levels in which it is used. In the Southeast Asian context at least, considerable fluidity exists with regard to the status of these exogenous languages. Malaysia

in the seventies moved to replace English with Bahasa Malaysia as the language of education and Singapore moved from acceptance of two languages, Chinese and English as the suitable media for higher education, to only one, English.

## **The Emergence of Non-Native Dialects of English**

While problems concerning the choice of school languages have been treated rather extensively in the literature there is another which is only now coming to be recognized, i.e. deciding which variant of the exogenous language to use within the education system. Typically, two variants are seen as available — a standard which is the closest approximation to the educated native speaker's usage and a non-native variant of the language spoken by educated non-natives within the country in question. As we shall see later, the two variants are often seen as being in competition, and having different levels of prestige accorded to them. It is also worth noting that it is perhaps only in a situation where an exogenous language is widespread or has a role in a variety of domains that the issue of the role of the variant is most salient. Thus it appears as a "problem" in Singapore and the Philippines but not in Indonesia or Thailand. Perhaps the existence or otherwise of a colonial context is important as well. It is possible that in countries like Singapore which has a colonial history and keeps on the colonial language, discussions on proper standards and norms may well arise out of non-linguistic considerations as in the case of an English-speaking political elite using language variety as a marker of status.

How does a variant come into existence, and why is it a problem for educational linguistics? One explanation is that a variety comes into existence when a language that is transplanted into a different linguistic context begins to take on, especially after a lengthy period of transplantation and extended use, features at variance with those of the original variety. The variety, or more correctly

varieties, have been labelled variously as "indigenous", "nativized", "local", and "non-native" by comparison with established (and implicitly, standardized?) varieties in use in native contexts.

What factors in the host country context contribute to the emergence of the non-native variety? One factor must be the influence of native languages though little research exists to indicate if the process is different according to whether native languages are cognate or non-cognate, if the existence of a number of non-native languages (as in Singapore) makes a difference either to the process or to the product. Richards cites a shift in the functions of language, probably accompanied by new clienteles, as another cause. In this case extended use must imply new and more numerous contact situations. Consequently, we may expect new speakers who encompass a greater variety of backgrounds and levels of competence to introduce variation in a number of linguistic features. We may also add the lack of a sufficiently large number of native speakers to serve as role models, the conflicting models set up by the mass media, and poorly trained language teachers as contributory causes.

Recognition and study of non-native varieties have a great deal of relevance for educational linguistics. Richards (1980) makes the point that the vast number of speakers who now speak non-native varieties, and the recognition that they are relatively stable and systematic varieties of English, force linguists to acknowledge the importance of studying the linguistic, pedagogic, cultural and societal variables involved. He makes a further point that policy making in language education will be aided by such analysis and data, for in many countries there is considerable opposition to even recognizing that such varieties exist. There is often a tendency to deny the existence of a systematic variety and such a variety is often labelled "wrong English". Policy makers and educators have been slow to realize that the more widespread the domains of usage and the more speakers of English, the more likely English will become domesticated. If the notion of "wrong English" prevails a classroom corollary is that teachers may spend a great deal of time and effort eliminating what they consider only substandard, error-ridden approximation of the standard variety. This has both educational and societal consequences. Can it be done in a mass-education system, and at what costs and with what consequences in student motivation and attitude towards the school variety? If language learning is heavily influenced by non-school factors

— use at home and among peer groups, existence of, or ability to encourage by parents, or paying for tuition to aid language learning, social class factors may be crucial as to who learns the standard variety best. An awareness of the non-native varieties and a realistic attitude towards them in the classroom can have important consequences in the communicative competence of pupils and in their ability to use both written and spoken language in its many forms flexibly and effectively.

### **Linguistic and Educational Contexts**

Singapore is a multiracial and multilingual country of 2.5 million people comprising 76% Chinese, 15% Malays, 7% Indians and 2% others made up of Europeans, Arabs, etc. It has been estimated that Singaporeans speak a total of some 33 languages and dialects, though the 1970 Census indicated that seven main ethnic/dialect groups account for 90 per cent of the total variation. Not surprisingly the three largest groups are among the Chinese: Hokkien (32.2%), Teochew (17.0%) and Cantonese (13.0%). (Goh, 1982)

Singapore recognizes four official (also school) languages: English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil, and one National Language (Malay) which today has largely symbolic and ceremonial roles. Within these official languages Kuo (1976) has identified five major languages (Malay, English, Chinese, Tamil, Hokkien) and three minor languages (Teochew, Cantonese and Hainanese). English has particular significance in Singapore as it is the language of administration and legislation and now the dominant language of trade, tourism and industry. It is an indispensable requirement for entry into the professions and quite clearly the language of social and occupational mobility (Clark & Pang, 1980). The government also promotes English as the neutral link language between the various ethnic groups. English has such high prestige in Singapore that in recent years there has been a massive enrolment shift away from schools using other languages as medium of instruction. The English school population (elementary) has risen from 31.6% in 1947 to 92.5% in 1983. In 1987 English will become the main medium of instruction at all levels in the education system.

English is now more widely used in Singapore than in any other Asian country, largely due to expanded schooling opportunities. There has been an increase from 21 per cent in 1957 to 33 per cent in 1970 in the population aged 10 and over who are literate in English. How-

ever, while English continues to gain more and more speakers, the Singapore context is best termed multilingual and polyglossic (Platt, 1977). In many working-class homes a Chinese dialect (and not Mandarin which is the school language) is likely to be the most widely used language. We should also bear in mind that though social prestige in the mass media rests with English, this is at variance with the larger numbers who read Chinese newspapers compared with English (in 1982, 326,600 and 285,500 respectively). Chinese dialect programmes over radio and television had a large following before they were replaced by Mandarin programmes in line with the government's *Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect* campaign. Finally, we should bear in mind the ambivalence towards English felt by the older Chinese-educated adults for whom the extended use of English has meant less opportunity and who regret the fact that Chinese-medium education, long a community sponsored system, has lost out decisively to English.

As to norms, in cultural and entertainment terms, the major western influences are American. *The Streets of San Francisco*, *Dallas*, *TIME*, *Readers Digest*, *H. Robbins* dominate the popular imagination. But British influences remain strong. The British Council is actively encouraged by the Singapore government and lately has mounted an ever increasing number of programmes for teachers. Language teachers are trained largely in the UK and speech instructors from the BBC have been hired to read news and coach newscasters in the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation. The political elite, though only in part educated in the UK, seems to prefer British linguistic standards. The Prime Minister himself has publicly praised Fowler's *Modern English Usage* as a standard reference text for senior civil servants. The Ministry of Education has taken the cue and is busy importing "native speakers to bring up the standard of English in our schools." The link between an essentially conservative political philosophy and language is also worth noting. The political leadership constantly contrasts its own emphasis on hard work, its refusal to subsidize social services, the meritocratic and competitive school system with developments, and not least in education, with "the permissive west". There is an implicit suggestion that an acceptance of deviation from the standard is not only undesirable but dangerous which can lead to all sorts of social ills. Effort and difficulty are virtues in Singapore and it is probably believed that more application will lead to better standards.

"International intelligibility" (of English) is seen as the key to national credibility.

Educational policy with regard to language is characterized by the policy of bilingualism; all pupils in the school system learn two languages, English and the mother tongue (one of the other official languages). In practice there is a match between ethnicity and the second language chosen, though it is known that a sizeable proportion of Indian pupils at the elementary level do not offer Tamil. The main emphasis in the elementary grades is on language learning, mathematics and science with the latter two taught in English; instruction in languages takes up about 11½ hours per week out of the 23 hours available as curriculum time (Goh, 1982). Pupils of varying mother tongue backgrounds are taught English in the same classroom. At the elementary level a single teacher instructs pupils in the various language skills. What must be noted is that the school system is very examination-oriented and students must achieve minimum grades in the first and second language to proceed to the next grade. The emphasis on language in curriculum time is reflected in a double weighting given to the two languages in the terminal examination at the elementary level. The transition from secondary to sixth form and then to university is likewise blocked by the national examinations and satisfactory language grades are necessary for promotion (Gopinathan, 1980).

### Singapore English

Judged by the criteria offered earlier we may claim that conditions have existed in Singapore to facilitate the emergence of a different variety of English — the multilingual language situation offers numerous contact situations and linguistic "interference", the progressive extension of domains of usage for English to the extent of replacing Malay as a 'bazaar' (market) language and the acceptance of English medium education (1965–1980) by the Chinese, thus bringing in new users of the language. Increasing use of English in the media, and a shortage of native-speaker language teachers in the classroom are additional factors.

But to claim that conditions exist is not to prove that a distinct variety has in fact emerged. It is only in the last ten years that linguists have begun to collect and classify deviations from standard British English (SBrE): Ray Tongue (1974), William Crewe (1977), Platt and Weber (1980, 1982), Jack Richards (1979), Mary Tay (1980), Anna Kwan — Terry (1980), A Shields (1977), Tay and Gupta

(1981). What follows is a brief summary statement on the major features of Singapore English.

### Phonological Shift

Most writers seem to agree that some distinguishing features exist. The following are noted from an analysis of speech of undergraduates. Tay and Gupta (1981) note that tessitura (or the characteristic range of notes, or compass, within which the pitch fluctuation falls) is generally wider in British English than in Singapore English. The wide tessitura is unanimously interpreted as an affective index by Singaporeans to whom British English sounds "affected" and "excitable". The other difference noted is that there are more than one nucleus in a sentence in Singapore English whereas British English will normally have only one such nucleus.

Compare: Look at this picture (British English)  
Look at thís picture (Singapore English)

Some of the other features noted in intonation patterns are, first, the falling tune which is used in British English in *uh*-questions, but in Singapore English a rising tune is generally used for all types of questions.

Compare: What's your name? (British English)  
What's your náme? (Singapore English)

Second, the rising tune is used in British English in statements to reassure the listener, but not in Singapore English where a falling tune is used.

Compare: Don't worry (Singapore English)  
Don't worry (Singapore English)

Third, in British English the rising tune is used in tag questions where the speaker does not necessarily expect his listener to agree with him. In Singapore English, the rising tune is used in all tag questions, regardless of the attitude of the speaker.

You've finished, haven't you? (British English)  
You've finished is it? (Singapore English)

There are also differences between the stress patterns of Singapore English and British English. Tay and Gupta (1981) summed them up as follows:

1 equal stress in Singapore English where primary and secondary stress would be used in RP (e.g. celebration, anniversary).

2 absence of stress distinctions to mark different parts of speech (e.g. *increase* as a verb and *increase* as a noun).

3 different stress placements in Singapore

English from stress placements in British English (e.g. *faculty* vs *faculty*, *colleague* vs *colleague*).

Other distinguishing features observed by Platt and Weber (1980) are the considerable simplification or modification of consonant clusters. The higher educated have deletion of one consonant and those with lower education have deletion of two consonants, for example, *jus* instead of *just*, *recen* instead of *recent*, and *mi* (Mal) instead of *miles*. There is a reduction when the second consonant of a final cluster is a stop, e.g. in words like *and*, *don't* and *think*, and when it is an alveolar stop as in *rent*, *expect* and *mind*.

Speaking of television newscasters, Crewe claims that "news broadcasts are delivered with a very marked syllable-time rhythm, a much narrower range of pitch variation, a tendency to over-read commas and natural breaks and to introduce artificial breaks. . ." (Crewe, 1977, p. 106). Finally it is claimed that the variant has a syllable-time rhythm rather than a stress-time rhythm.

### Grammatical Shift

The following have been noted as variations in the speech of those with low levels of education.

1 a variable lack of marking for past tense as in "my father bring my mother over" and "from there I pick up my English".

2 deletion of "it" as in "If by bus is very convenience" and "You see \_\_\_\_\_ is compulsory".

3 deletion of verb "to be" as in "this coffee house — very cheap" and "my brother — working".

4 languages such as Chinese and Malay have aspect systems rather than tense systems. Features of an aspectual system are observed in the following expressions. (Platt and Weber, 1980).

I work about four months *already*.

My father (*used*) to work for X co.

*Usually* I get up around 6.30.

I hope the government *would* take action to put a stop to this practice.

### Morpheme Addition

Richards (1980) has provided examples of "the variable employment of morphemes from local languages which are attached to English sentences to mark a communication style, characterized by informality. In particular, the inclusion of *la* (from Hokkien, a Chinese dialect) as in "Cannot, la," "Up to you, la," "I said no, la."

Also noted is the wide use of two invariable tags, *is it?* and *isn't it?* as in "You check out now, is it?", "At six, is it?", "You not going home, is it?"

### Lexical Shift

Lexical shift variation is recognized at two levels. The first level is lexical borrowing, or the use of terms for which no English word exists, or in which words are used differently. For the last we have such examples as "His father was *attached* to the department," "We have a *batch* of girls out promoting this product," "an *outstation* call"; at another level the lexical shift is used to indicate a shift to an informal communicative style as in "lets go *makan*" for "lets go eat" and "call the *amah*" for "call the maid", or "an *ulu* place" for "a primitive place".

Generally speaking, there is a consensus on the use of British spelling. As one will expect, the newspapers published locally use British spelling, but imported magazines, largely from the US, use of course, American spelling.

Though the above description of Singapore English is admittedly an abbreviated version — in truth there are not many more works than cited in the bibliography — we need to ask several questions. We need to ask if such variation is stable, i.e. in Kachru's terms, *categorical* and *systematic*. Since Singapore is heir to three native languages does variation relate closely to the native language use of the speaker? Richards' answer is that variation in Singapore English is both stable and systematic while Platt, agreeing with the above, adds that there is an "increasing similarity of Singapore English as spoken by those of different ethnic backgrounds" (Platt, 1980, p 46).

There appears, however, to be less agreement as to ways of sorting out the variation that occurs among educated Singapore speakers of English and those poorly schooled in English. Part of the problem appears to be a lack of extensive documentation of the *acrolect* in Singapore English; Platt on the basis of his research feels that formal written Singapore English comes close to formal written SBrE. There is, as is to be expected, much greater variations with regard to the norm for spoken English in Singapore. The political leadership in stressing "international intelligibility" appears to have Received Pronunciation in mind, and believes that there is *a* norm to which Singaporeans should aspire to. Academic opinion generally tends towards the view that Singapore should aim at a standard that is indistinguishable

from Standard British English in the area of syntax but not in the area of phonology (pronunciation, rhythm, stress and intonation) and vocabulary. It is phonology and vocabulary rather than grammar that identify a speaker as distinctly Singaporean (Tay, 1982). This view is expressed in the now well-known remark of Professor T T B Koh, Singapore's long-time Representative to the United Nations: "... when one is abroad, in a bus or train or aeroplane and when one overhears someone speaking, one can immediately say that this is someone from Malaysia or Singapore. And I should hope that when I am speaking abroad my country men will have no problem recognizing that I'm a Singaporean." (Quoted in Tongue, 1974). Unfortunately, little reliable research exists, for instance, as to the speech variations of teachers of the English language in Singapore's classroom and the norm they seek for their students.

A third feature to note about variation is the social class dimension. The particular problem faced by the majority of the Chinese population in Singapore is that neither of the two school languages, English and Mandarin, are languages of the home. One may expect that in a large majority of working-class homes where educational levels are low and where exposure to English medium education minimal the exposure to English and the availability of suitable models will be certainly low. Thus the school has a great deal of responsibility in ensuring that pupils achieve an acceptable command of English, especially when adequate mastery is crucial to occupational success, and when so much of success in school depends upon success in English. Indeed it is known that most students bring to school at least a passive knowledge of English and a high motivation for mastering it. How well they learn the school variety of English will depend on how the teachers and the school treat their variant. As Richards has noted, emergent variations have an "affective and social significance" and they are markers of identity, at once distinct and separate. If the school is insensitive to this aspect of social class identity and views variation merely as linguistic phenomena which need to be firmly erased, it will undoubtedly complicate its vital mission to promote adequate levels of English language competence.

### Issues for Education

This section proposes to explore issues for education at three levels: policy formulation, pedagogy, and research.

## *Policy*

This is a problem as there appears to be no clear-cut view, a position created both by statements from a variety of sources and the use of terms and phrases which are too imprecise to serve as guides, e.g. "good English", "correct Singapore English", "unnecessary Singapore innovations", "internationally intelligible", "maintaining standards".\* As for sources, politicians from the Prime Minister downwards, the English Language Teachers in Singapore (ELTIS), academics in the relevant departments of the Institute of Education (teacher training), and the National University of Singapore have expressed their views. In very broad terms the key political leaders seem to prefer norms of SBrE while the academics are more accommodating of variation. It also seems to be true that expatriate academics seem to be the more active campaigners for Singapore English norms — a fact lost on the government which has been actively recruiting "native speakers" from Commonwealth countries to improve standards in Singapore schools.

It does appear, however, that attempts to adhere closely to SBrE norms are likely to continue. The Prime Minister speaks impeccable English and his speech is a good example of educated Singapore English of the acrolect variety which is close to SBrE norm; he is, in addition, a highly respected person whose word is literally law (many explanations and rationalizations of education policy are prefaced with quotes from the Prime Minister). Secondly, instructors at the Institute of Education, Singapore's single teacher training institution, are themselves part of an essentially conservative pedagogic tradition and are not likely to offer or encourage experimentation. Thirdly, political rhetoric on larger national issues is often couched in terms of standards and efforts versus easy solutions and permissiveness. It may be assumed that policy makers in education are not likely to be immune to this context.

## *Pedagogy*

Though the goal of English language teaching is said to be functional competence, an examination of both the English primary and secondary school syllabuses indicates that they are grammar based and emphasize the learning of structures at the expense of the communicative needs of the learners. It is of course possible to justify the use of a grammar-based syllabus. The deliberate learning of grammar has the advantage of being systematic

and lends itself to organized gradation, learning from easy to more difficult structures. This approach is suitable for teaching the basic structures of English to elementary school learners.

As for the advanced language learner the justification given by the designers of such structural syllabuses is that the majority of pupils do not speak English beyond the classroom. They come from non-English-speaking homes and even in group interaction in the playground or the canteen use their mother tongue, a dialect or Mandarin. They may not even have positive encounters with English through listening to English programmes or viewing television (Mok, 1983).

On the other hand, the language examinations and standardized tests that students must pass demand an adequate grounding in English structure. The Cambridge English examinations are based on a conventional, structural approach to the teaching of English. However, students who need English in the future have specific communicative needs that may not be identified during their secondary school years. These are the students who need to master English to get jobs that range from factory foremen to salesmen; students will also need English to read manuals and handbooks in order to be trained in technical skills and in computer technology.

According to the Secondary School English Syllabus — Express, students are expected to master the English phonological system: its vowels, diphthongs, consonants, consonant clusters, word stress, sentence stress, and intonation. A great deal of prescription inevitably enters the syllabus, and later teaching. Given the lack of exposure to good models of Spoken English and the lack of opportunities to develop communicative skills it can scarcely be expected that teachers will be able to produce speakers that master the more formal variety at the acrolectal end of the continuum. Also the elementary classes tend to be large, often 40 pupils to a class. Even if the non-native speaker masters the grammatical structures of the language he will still need to learn to use the language appropriately in its social context. It is within this context that efforts to promote norms must be seen.

What about teacher competency? Singapore schools, especially at the primary level, face a shortage of skilled teachers due to an expansion of instruction in the English medium. It is not unknown for out-of-work Chinese-educated tea-

\*All taken from a paper by a language project director at the Ministry of Education.

chers, after a short spell of teacher training to teach English or, most often, content subjects in English; they cannot be expected to be good models. Other teachers who are expected to use a structural syllabus and curriculum materials and textbooks based on the Ministry of Education approval scheme find the task complex and demanding. It is complex because the teacher whose native language is not English will find it difficult to teach communicative skills using a structural syllabus. The notions relating to communicative competence rules such as those underlying speech acts, or notions related to topics of discourse and social norms regarding appropriate usage, are subtle and complex.

The teacher finds the communicative approach to language teaching demanding because the socio-cultural milieu in which language learning and teaching take place is determined by culturally-determined learning styles. It is the Singapore experience to find great teacher resistance to learner-centred instruction. Though some progress has been made notably through the sustained efforts of the Institute of Education, teachers often shy away from classroom activities associated with the use of dialogues, role play, dramatization, language games, songs and audio-visual aids, and task-oriented activities which require students to interact in pairs and groups.

As the syllabus is grammar based teaching of necessity tends to be "accuracy" based. The consequences are that when teaching is "accuracy" based learners produce language primarily in order to acquire feedback on performance in terms of adherence to norms and such a perception cannot lead to communicative fluency in students with little or passive knowledge of English. As Brumfit (1983) has noted there is a need to stress "fluency-based" language teaching, for while accuracy work promotes dependence on teacher, textbook and syllabus the former forces learners to use strategies and develop processes to meet the language challenge of situations and events. The point is that the stress on norms and structure of language undermines the goal of communicative fluency. Since major examinations are externally set the insistence on norms quite external to societal realities is likely to prove difficult for the large majority.

Other contradictions abound: Singapore teachers are concerned with correct pronunciation yet the typical reading strategy is to have pupils called at random to read aloud with the teacher correcting "errors"; as the typical Singapore classroom includes a mix of native speakers of Chinese

dialects, Malay and Tamil, the phonological confusion may well be considerable. A further complication arises from the recruitment of expatriate teachers to make up for the teacher shortage for they bring a variety of models and attitudes to bear upon the teaching situation.

Language arts strategies at the level of writing, e.g. composition, are equally rigid. Though communication is now acknowledged as the major object of writing, the typical strategy is the listing of a random list of topics (often rather bizarre topics such as "My Life As a Coin"), a list of words deemed useful/appropriate to the topic and a time limit within which to finish the composition; it is not clear what goals the teacher has in mind in using these techniques. In the context of Singapore English, one observation may be made. Compositions are graded very often with attention to errors rather than meaning; variation in syntax and lexis are likely to be ruled errors and this will apply as well to such form of writing as letter-writing in which informality and intimacy may be expected, and indeed in which a less forward style is needed to be functional.

One final example. For several years now there has been pressure to use locally written fiction and prose in the classroom. At the primary level this has meant using, in place of *Snow White, Jack and the Beanstalk*, and similar children's classics, "readers" containing Asian and local myths and legends, and at the secondary level, a greater use, in particular, of the efforts of local poets and short story writers. The goal, according to proponents, is to encourage a sense of identity and pride, to make reading and literature more meaningful and accessible. Opponents are, however, scornful of local literary efforts, condemning not so much the imagination as "poor use of language" which it is claimed will serve as wrong models for pupils. The latter follows from the assumption held by language teachers in Singapore that the literary classics are classics because they display language at its best. Yet literature is very often taught as content, with teachers having little flexibility in choice of texts especially at the higher levels. Many editions of these texts have end-of-chapter questions and exercises to aid students in tackling examinations.

We hope to have shown with these examples that practice is not always consistent with objectives; it will perhaps be so even if Singapore English did not exist. Its existence complicates life for the teacher who often fails to distinguish between errors unacceptable even in Singapore English and those which are acceptable variants according to

objective and functions and whether reading or writing is being considered. Most language teachers seem unable to accept that styles and registers may vary according to function; they begin from a model of correct (almost always formal, even frozen) language which they then seek to impose on their pupils.

### Research

The research agenda in this context is clear-cut. Policy can hardly be made without consensus and more detailed description of the syntax, lexis, phonology, and code mixing of Singapore English. Some works of course exist but much more is necessary. Information on the attitudes of Singaporeans, especially teachers and pupils, towards the acrolect, mesolect and basilect — or what these are considered to be — will provide useful insights into how motivational variables in the classroom may be utilized to achieve goals in relation to the varieties. Such information will also enable rational target setting for different groups of pupils and the establishment of criteria by which progress towards

the goal may be determined. (We may of course not change the minds of politicians even with this information!) One of the major problems of the language situation in Singapore is that the current description of SE has been based on too small a sample and it seems particularly useful to study more extensively the language usage of teachers. One cannot hope to use teachers as classroom models without being clear as to the type of models they represent and the direction in which they need to be moved.

### Conclusion

This essay in educational linguistics has sought to relate data from a multilingual country to the concerns of standard language theory. Variants do become, over time in some contexts, standardized; but until they do, they have to fight a battle for survival. In such context social and power considerations matter as much as linguistics. The school as a dependent institution is not likely to be innovative and its dilemmas are best likely to be solved by a clearer understanding of the options. ■

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