

**A Survey into the Problems Confronting
Asian Pacific English Language Learners
—with reference to native varieties of
English and New Englishes.***

Mark C. Thompson.**

〈CONTENTS〉

I . Introduction

II . Information collated from the survey.

APPENDIX

I . Introduction

This study investigates the importance of the English language in the Asian Pacific with reference to the influence of the native varieties of English on English language learners in the region. It also considers the development of the 'New Englishes' in the Asian Pacific, and the relevance that English in all its current forms plays in the lives of the region's indigenous people. A questionnaire was distributed to a hun-

* Survey conducted at Summer–Autumn 1992 at the University of Wales and amongst Asian Pacific nationals resident in London, Great Britain.

** Visiting professor of English Conversation at Korea Maritime University

dred Asian Pacific nationals resident in Britain (See Appendix) and the information collated from this survey is discussed in this study. The Asian Pacific nationals who participated in this survey were asked for their own views and opinions on English language teaching in their native countries, as well as their own perceptions on their English learning experiences.

This study also aims to present the Asian Pacific English learner's own viewpoint on the concept of 'New Englishes' and English as a world language.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Asian Pacific nationals who kindly assisted me in my survey and whose help proved to be invaluable. So too were the sources of information made available through literature obtained from the University of Wales and their inter-library loan system.

My interest in this subject stems from my time spent working throughout the Asian Pacific as a merchant seaman. This interest guided me into my present studies, which has resulted in my return to the Asian Pacific region in a professional teaching capacity.

II. Information collated from the survey.

In an attempt to ascertain an impression of the role and influence played by the English language in the Asian Pacific region, I decided to compile a questionnaire (See Appendix) which was distributed to one hundred Asian Pacific people. A number of these people were either attending graduate or post-graduate courses at the University of Wales, or were their dependents and friends. Other Asian Pacific nationals who completed the questionnaire were living or studying in London. There was also a response from several South Pacific islanders who are currently resident in London. The majority of those ques-

tioned obviously come from the educated professional class of their respective countries, and although this survey was not conducted over a wide cross-section of Asian Pacific citizens, it will, however, provide us with an illustration of their expectations and reactions when learning and using the English language. Their responses and comments will also assist us in our understanding of the development and significance of New Englishes; as well as indicating which native English speaking countries they believe have influenced themselves culturally or linguistically. The individuals questioned originated from the following Asian Pacific countries: China and Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, the Phillipines, South Korea and Taiwan. Four people from the South Pacific islands of Vanuatu and Fiji also returned the questionnaire.

The objectives of this questionnaire were to investigate the following:

- a) When and where the individual started learning - or is currently learning English.
- b) When, where and why the individual speaks English, and their own perception of their level of fluency.
- c) Who taught the individual English, and their opinions of native and non-native English speaking teachers.
- d) What English language skills was the individual taught.
- e) How the individual feels about his or her competence when using/speaking English.
- f) The level of the individual's knowledge of the cultures of native English speaking countries.
- g) The individual's preference with regard to visiting or studying in a particular native English speaking country, and why.
- h) The individual's preference with regard to the cultures of na-

- tive English speaking countries, and why.
- i) Whether the individual recognises any differences between the native varieties of English.
 - j) Whether the individual is aware of what is now termed 'New Englishes'.
 - k) Whether or not the individual uses English with other Asian Pacific nationals.
 - l) Problems the individual may have in understanding other Asian Pacific nationals when speaking English together
 - m) The individual's views on the future of English - or a variety of English - in their native country.
 - n) The individual's general views on English, and the concept of English as a world language.

Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, a total of 74 were completed and returned, with the majority of the questions answered in full. Most of the individuals who completed the questionnaire felt free to state their opinions.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) is divided into four sections which cover the following subdivisions:

- Section A (questions 1 to 18) investigates objectives a) and b).
Section B (questions 1 to 17) investigates objectives c) to e)
Section C (questions 1 to 24) investigates objectives f) to m)
Section D (question 1) investigates objective n)

In response to these sections of the questionnaire, the information collated produced the following findings.

1. Section A: objectives a) and b)

As previously stated, the Asian Pacific nationals who completed

this questionnaire originated from China and Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, the Phillipines, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan.

Of the 74 completed questionnaires returned, 48 were from males; 26 from females. The majority of these people, 49, were aged between 31 - 40. There were 16 people aged between 20 - 30; nine people aged over 40.

An overall pattern immediately emerged that the great majority of those questioned began learning English in either primary or early secondary school, at around the ages of 7 to 10, with a few still younger. A number of people stated that this was when they started to learn English 'formally', but they had in fact already acquired vocabulary and phrases from not only family and playmates, but also from television, cinema and the media in general. We can therefore assume, that some of these young elementary learners were probably false beginners. It is also important to note, that English is used in some countries at nursery school level (as a medium of communication), notably in Japan and Singapore. In Singapore this use of English can be attributed to the fact that the government endorsed English as an official language whilst in Japan it is not uncommon among certain social classes to send very young children to private schools where English is used as one of the languages of communication. This is very much a growing fashionable trend. It is not unknown for children as young as 2 years old to be placed under the supervision of a native English speaking teacher/nanny in one of these nursery institutions.

All of the people questioned still consider themselves to be learning English, even if they are not actually attending English language classes, or studying a specific area of the language. The majority believe that they have attained a level of competence in English ranging between intermediate and advanced levels. No one believes they are

fluent, since as one person from China - who believes herself to be an advanced speaker - pointed out, "I believe only a native speaker of English can achieve complete fluency due to the idiomatic nature of the language". A few spouses of more advanced English learners/speakers consider their English to be at an elementary level, but were nevertheless able to reply to a great many questions with the assistance of their partners.

There are a variety of certificates - at varying levels of competence obtained by these English learners. Not surprisingly, the certificates/qualifications obtained by individuals, reflected their country's inclination towards either mainly a British or American system of English teaching and evaluation. Therefore, learners with certificates from the Phillipines, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan had nearly all sat (or want to sit) the TOEFL examination. It is interesting to note however, that some individuals from countries where a British system of evaluation is applied e.g. British Council or Cambridge English Language Testing services, still preferred to obtain a TOEFL certificate. There seem to be two main reasons for this choice. Firstly, the TOEFL qualification is universally accepted in the United States, and is gradually being accepted in other native English speaking countries. Secondly, and possibly more importantly, is the absence of oral evaluation in the TOEFL examination. Since the candidate need only complete a multi-choice test the chances of passing; a higher score, as well as greater possibilities for the intervention of 'luck' seem to make this qualification more attractive to a great many Asian Pacific learners. Importantly, as we will see when examining the information from Section B, nearly all the people who completed this questionnaire feel that their oral skills, especially pronunciation, remain their weakest ability when using English. Although it is possible to sympathise with the Asian-Pacific learners in what they often find the most diffi-

cult area to master, it poses the question of whether the content of the TOEFL examination is relevant to our learners' needs, and as to whether it can possibly be a valid and reliable evaluation of the learners' complete competence at his or her level in English; since it does not evaluate oral skills.

Cambridge First Certificate was popular among people from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, but only a minority of people had progressed on to taking the Cambridge Proficiency certificate. (No one had yet sat the new Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English) Those learners who had been taught at some time by the British Council's language training service had often taken the British Council examination.

The responses to question 10 ranged from 'no one else' to 'all my family' depending on the learner's country of origin. People from countries where English is endorsed as either an official or semi-official language, as in Hong Kong and Singapore, naturally had a higher percentage of English speakers within their homes. However in China, Japan and South Korea the percentage was lower. It was noted, though that, despite many older people being unable to understand English, more professional people (and especially school children and students) were learning English in ever increasing numbers. The level of competence in English, of the learners' families ranged from complete beginners to advanced speakers, and once again it would appear that the status that English occupies in their respective communities plays a deciding influence on the level of proficiency attained within the community as a whole.

The response to question 12, indicates that in the home, within the learners' home countries, English is virtually never used between non-native English speaking members of the learners' families. Naturally, a native first language is generally preferred, although some English

lexis, especially entertainment or some local slang vocabulary has often been 'loaned' to the indigenous language used. Once again, Singapore was found to be something of an exception, with several Singaporean learners stating that they may often use English - Singaporean English - in the home, but that it was nearly always with family members of similar ages. It was found 'unlikely' that English would be spoken to older members of the family group; especially their grandparents' generation.

Outside of their homes, in social situations, the use of English tends to increase only among non-native English speakers, if a group of speakers possesses more than one indigenous language. It also increases when a group of non-native English speakers are joined by a native English speaker. In this situation it was pointed out by several people, that the majority of non-native English speakers will be 'compelled' to switch to speaking English. Whilst speaking English in the home, or in social situations amongst these non-native English speakers is infrequent; the use of English increases dramatically in professional/work situations within their home countries. In response to questions 16 to 18, nearly everyone mentioned that English was 'necessary' for them to fulfill their job description, and that English could improve their career prospects 'Quite a lot' or 'A great deal'. Many people noted that the international language of business and communication is English, and that since they have to work with the machines of modern communication, such as computers etc., it is therefore vital for them to be able to perform in spoken and written English to a high level. It was also pointed out by several people that the majority of technical and scientific manuals are written in English, and that without a translation or a high ability in English, they would be unable to function at various aspects of their professions. There was a general feeling that in attaining a high level of English, these Asian-Pacific

learners feel they share a common language of communication - especially in their professional environments - with which to communicate with each other, and other peoples of the world.

2. Section B: objectives c) to e)

This section concentrates on the learners' own evaluations and conclusions about the English language teaching they have already experienced. It also asks them about the type of teachers they have dealt with, and the extent to which their receptive and productive skills were developed.

The reason for asking question 1 was to ascertain how much - if any - language training these learners had had other than their native languages; and other than English. The conclusion reached was that most of these learners had little or no knowledge of any other European language with at times some understanding of another of the Asian Pacific regions' languages. However, the overall impression remained that the English language is given priority when it comes to second language learning. Most of the learners also pointed out that whilst English is usually a compulsory subject in primary/secondary school, the future importance that the English language plays in their professional lives makes Asian-Pacific students keen to learn and speak English competently. When it came to asking these learners about whether they were taught English by a non-native or native speaker of the language, all but six people stated that at primary/secondary school level their English teachers were non-native English speakers. The six people who received tuition from native English speakers originated from Singapore and Japan. All six remarked that their native English speaking teachers worked in advisory/assistant positions to the principle English language teachers, who were non-

native English speakers. Two of the Japanese learners mentioned that the native English speaking teachers were not trained English language teachers, but university graduates working in Japan for a year under the Japanese government's 'JET Educational Exchange' scheme. The Singaporeans believed that their native English speaking teachers had had some kind of teachers training, but again were employed on a similar type of educational exchange scheme organised by the Singapore government. (It was noted that all these native English teachers were British).

At university/tertiary level a great many more learners had been taught at some point in their training by a native English speaker. These teachers were either permanently attached to the educational faculty or were visiting lecturers/teachers who attended the institutions for short periods of time; sometimes on an annual basis. However, in general it was pointed out that Heads of Department and principle English language teachers were non-native English speakers. Nevertheless, many learners believe that more native English speaking teachers will probably work in their country's tertiary education system in the future; and that this will be a desirable situation. In Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the Phillipines these learners remarked that the majority of native English speaking teachers at university level came from the United States, although a few of the Japanese people questioned mentioned being aware of Australian, New Zealand and British English teachers in their tertiary education system. In Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, the majority of native English teachers seem to have originated from Britain, and some learners remember having Australian English teachers as well. When asked for their preference between a native and non-native English speaking teacher several views were expressed for and against having native English speaking teachers. Firstly in their favour, it is believed

that native English speaking teachers are preferable over non-natives because, as one Korean learner considered "they have better pronunciation and they speak English properly". Conversely, a number of people, - especially Chinese, or Hong Kong Chinese - believe that often a native English speaking teacher doesn't always possess as good a knowledge of English grammar as a non-native English speaking teacher. This is considered to be a problem among many Asian Pacific learners, notably those who wish to further their English language comprehension. However, it was generally stated that a native English speaking teacher usually has a deeper lexical understanding of the English language, specifically in the idiomatic usage of English. For the most part everyone is in favour of native English speaking teachers working in their national education systems. It is felt that at university/tertiary levels a native English speaking teacher is essential, and that at primary/secondary levels it is a good idea to have team teaching between native and non-native English speaking teachers, which assists in overcoming both language and cultural problems.

Questions 6 to 11 endeavour to form a picture of how much emphasis was placed on each of the learners' receptive and productive skills. These questions also attempt to discover the degree of significance that was given to communicative ability in school and tertiary education. In the past it was pointed out that while the reading and writing skills of some Asian-Pacific nationals were of a high level, their oral communicative ability was found wanting, therefore, this line of inquiry attempts to discover whether certain areas of the learners' English language skills are being neglected and whether solutions can be found in order to improve the learners' all round skills development.

For the most part people were satisfied with the standard of English teaching at school in their home countries. Out of the total 74 replies, only 11 considered the standard unsatisfactory. (4 people from

Korea, 3 from China, 1 from Hong Kong and 3 from Taiwan). The majority of the remaining replies considered that the standard was satisfactory, while 9 people believed it to have been good. The pattern was similarly repeated with the response to English language teaching at university, although the number of people who considered the standard good, was higher at 23. Several people said that they had attended private language schools, including British Council classes (and the American counterpart) in such places as Hong Kong and Japan. These people all considered the teaching standard to be good, but that too much time was spent on general conversation, i.e. too much 'teacher talk'.

Questions 7 to 11 deal specifically with the degree of emphasis placed on the receptive and productive skills, ranging from none, to a great deal. It became immediately noticeable that there had been an overall significant bias in the type of English language training that the majority of these learners had experienced. Reading, writing and learning grammar would appear to have occupied the greater part of their classroom time. At primary/secondary school level nearly all these learners remarked that 'a great deal' of time had been spent on the reading, writing and grammatical skills of English, whereas only 'a little' time was spent on communication generally occurred between teacher and pupil, and rarely between pupils themselves. As for pronunciation practice, it would seem that with these learners this skill was greatly undervalued; with some people stating that they couldn't recollect ever having any specific pronunciation training. Consequently, this emphasis on more traditional, grammar translation methods of teaching occupying as they do the substantial part of both the teachers' and learners' time and energy would appear to dominate classroom time to the detriment of the other very necessary English language skills.

The responses to the same questions (7 to 11) revealed that the bias towards reading, writing and grammar at university/tertiary levels was somewhat less pronounced. Although, once again the majority of people who had attended an English language university course (or private language school and in some cases in-house English language company training schemes) indicated that 'a great deal' of time was still given to reading, writing and grammar. On the other hand the time allocated to oral communication, listening skills and pronunciation practice increased. As we have already seen, these learners pointed out that the number of native English speaking teachers at university/tertiary levels was greater in their respective cities/countries than at primary/secondary school levels. This situation could partly explain some of the reasons for a more balanced syllabus, with greater emphasis on a more comprehensive skills development curriculum. However, it has been recognised that the whole field of phonetics, and its application to the teaching and development of pronunciation skills is often a much neglected area at all levels of E.F.L. and E.S.L. The root cause of this problem may be that insufficient native and non-native English speaking teachers attend either university or teacher training courses where the study of phonetics with its enormous relevance to teaching pronunciation skills is inadequate. Therefore, to improve the quality of our learners' oral communicative competence, we must ensure that the teachers responsible for this discipline are themselves adequately trained to fulfil this vital area of English skills development. Certainly it was commented on by numerous individuals that a much greater emphasis on oral communication, as well as aural skills, would have been advantageous, especially since many of these Asian-Pacific learners find that actually speaking English is the most difficult skill of all to master.

In reply to question 12 the overwhelming response was that an En-

glish language learner 'must learn grammar'. Out of the 74 completed questionnaires, 61 people held this view, while 9 people believed grammar to be 'very important', and only 4 people thought grammar was 'quite important'. The general consensus of opinion was that grammar is the manner by which a student gains the ability to construct the language. By understanding the grammatical structures of a language, a learner is then able to understand the word and phrase patterns which make up a language. Judging from the learners' own individual explanations and opinions of how important they felt it was to learn grammar, this view was very strongly held indeed. However, opinion was divided when it came to whether the learners actually enjoyed - or still enjoy - learning grammar. In reply to question 14B the majority of people answered either 'sometimes' or 'it's O.K.' with no one admitting to liking grammar 'very much'. Those people who answered 'No' (11 people) occasionally made a note pointing out that while they didn't like grammar, nevertheless they recognised that grammar is necessary. The replies to 14A were rather different in that 17 people nowadays enjoy learning grammar 'very much', 44 think that 'It's O.K.' and 13 'sometimes' like learning grammar. Some of the reasons people gave for having a change of heart about learning grammar now, were:

- a) It was boring at school when they were younger.
- b) Their teachers are better trained, and know more about grammar, so the teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on them.
- c) Their English has improved so they can use English grammar books in English, as well as in their own language.
- d) The approach to learning English grammar is now more functional and therefore less dry.
- e) They, themselves sometimes have to teach English grammar

to either students, spouses or dependents.

Questions 15 to 17 attempt to ascertain the feelings and problems that these learners experience when speaking or using English in their everyday lives. In keeping with their earlier responses in this questionnaire, the amount of oral communication they participated in at school was not particularly substantial. The majority of these learners noted that they personally only spoke 'a little' English in the classroom. A few admitted to hardly speaking any, but explained that this was because they often didn't understand the lesson and therefore, felt nervous and inhibited. Several people believe that they spoke English 'quite a lot', but no one considered they spoke 'a great deal' in the classroom. At university-or at a language school - most people considered that they spoke English 'Quite a lot'; but many of them observed that they were following either English language courses or courses where it was required that they use English; so they were compelled to use English more than they ever were in school.

The learners' reactions to questions 16 and 17, provide us with a useful insight into the problem areas that concern the learners themselves when using English. The two most popular answers to question 16, were 'I'm not sure' (26 People) and 'It depends who I'm talking to'. (23 people). Following these, 16 people consider that 'Generally, I feel comfortable', and 9 people only feel 'a little' comfortable when they speak English. With these reactions in mind, it is interesting to distinguish which aspects of the English language these learners believe are the most difficult; as well as which areas pose few problems for them. The following table indicates their responses:

(0=very easy. 1=easy. 2=I have to work on it a little. 3=difficult, I have to do a lot of work. 4=I have serious problems with this.)

	0	1	2	3	4	Number of People
Speaking	0	14	16	33	11	..
Writing	9	27	16	11	11	..
Spelling	4	20	27	9	14	..
Listening	5	19	19	21	10	..
Grammar	7	21	29	9	8	..
Vocabulary	10	29	18	19	8	..
Reading	15	31	20	7	1	..
Pronunciation	1	11	15	26	21	..

The learners' responses reveal which English language skills they feel are problematic, as well as those language areas which they are able to understand and use easily. By conducting this type of simple exercise, and then compiling the learners' replies we are able to form a picture of what our learners perceive to be their English language requirements. It is also possible to distinguish inter-related language areas which are problematic and address these problems with the necessary teaching approach, so that the learners' English language skills development is balanced and, most importantly relevant to the learner.

3. Section C: objectives f) to m)

A great many of the contemporary perspectives on the growth of English as a world language - and the subsequent development of the New Englishes - have been well documented by native English speakers. Although a considerable body of literature has been assembled by native speakers on this subject, it remains a necessary exercise to remind ourselves, as native speakers of the language, of the attitudes of non-native speakers of English towards the use and advancement

of the English language in particular areas of the world. This section aims to investigate these attitudes and feelings towards the English language in its native forms, and to discover how the native English speaking countries may culturally have affected some parts of the Asian-Pacific region.

Although holidays to native English speaking countries are becoming popular with Asian Pacific nationals - most notably with the Japanese - for many of the region's people their first visit to a native English speaking country is very often for either educational or professional purposes. (Indeed, the people who participated in this survey were all resident in the U.K. for varying periods of time in educational or professional capacities.) The contributions from many of this questionnaire's participants show that their sojourn in the U.K. is in fact their first visit to a native English speaking country. A number of people had visited America; but only to attend university or on a business trip and not for the purposes of tourism alone. Several people from Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan had visited Australia and Canada, and it is interesting to note that the Hong Kong and Taiwanese Chinese made these visits in order to visit relatives who had emigrated there. (In Japan, Australia is one of the top tourist destinations, due to the Japanese passion for the sheer physical space in Australia, space which is so lacking in over-populated Japan.)

The Asian-Pacific learners were asked how much they knew about the cultures of Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.S. A. Not altogether surprisingly U.S. popular culture has had a pronounced effect on most of these learners, with 61 people stating that they know 'a great deal' about American culture. A further 13 people believe that they have 'quite a lot' of knowledge about American culture. This response corroborates the opinion of many people who believe that the spread of American popular entertainment in the last

2 to 3 decades has had far-reaching effects on the people of the Asian-Pacific. When asked about their knowledge of other native English speaking nations' cultures, the learners' responses were mixed. Depending on their country of origin, as well as their personal interests, they either knew 'quite a lot' or 'very little' about British culture and people before their first visit to the U.K. People from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Phillipines and China noted that other than the traditional stereotypes e.g. The Royal Family, 10 Downing St, Burberry raincoats etc. they were not actually aware of knowing much about contemporary British life. However, people from Singapore, Malaysia and of course Hong Kong, often professed to knowing - and following - events and culture in Britain on a much wider scale.

Many English language learners have been exposed to Australian English and culture in recent years due to the worldwide popularity of Australian soap operas. These television programmes supposedly present the viewer with an illustration of 'average' Australian day to day life. The affluent middle class families portrayed, living in the sun with ample living space, have a standard of living which many Asian-Pacific people aspire to possess. As a consequence of these programmes' popularity, it is not particularly surprising that Australian English vocabulary - especially slang - has crept into popular usage outside Australia.

Indeed, Australian beach culture, incorporating the language of saving, scuba diving, life saving etc. has become wildly popular amongst young people in many Asian Pacific countries. That quintessential Australian setting; Bondi beach. now seems to have become the mecca for young Asian Pacific beach addicts who flock there in droves, armed with all the up to date equipment and 'Aussie beach slang' to partake in the Australian way of life. Australia, with its youthful carefree image has for many Asian people overtaken Ameri-

ca as the believed 'land of opportunity', and for the first time in history, the Asian immigration rate in Australia has passed the European rate. This awareness of Australian culture was reflected in the responses from the Asian-Pacific nationals. A high percentage considered that they knew 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' about Australia, and several people expressed a desire to go there. Two people from Hong Kong remarked that Australia and Canada were the preferred destinations of those Hong Kong Chinese wishing to leave the colony before the 1997 handover to China. However, whilst they consider life in Australia to be generally good for Asian immigrants, they also expressed a concern about racism in Australia; where as they pointed out "We are often called 'slopes'".

Although the Asian-Pacific people who completed this questionnaire believed they knew a substantial amount about Australia and her people; they all consider that they know 'nothing' or only 'a little' about New Zealand. As one Singaporean person commented "I've never been asked anything about New Zealand before'. On the other hand the majority of people consider that they know 'a little' (31 people) or 'quite a lot' (35) about Canada. Canada seemed to produce favourable comments similar to those made about Australia. Several Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese nationals mentioned that large groups of their compatriots had settled in Canada - especially Vancouver - and they commented on the high standard of living that the immigrants had achieved in Canada. It was difficult to assess which country is the most popular destination from those peoples' answers to question 4, since the majority have only visited one or two native English speaking countries. However, the response to question 6 revealed a strong preference to visit Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. Twenty one people would have liked to visit Australia first, 19 the U.S.A., 17 Canada, 13 Great Britain and no one expresses an interest to

have visited New Zealand first. The replies to question 5 indicated that most people enjoyed and profited from their stay in the U.K. On the whole, the response was positive, with many people stating that their sojourn had improved their English language skills.

The response to questions 7 to 10 implied that the greater part of English speaking entertainment in the region originates from the United States. (This supports what has been previously mentioned.) This American entertainment is predominantly cinema, television and contemporary music. However, many learners mentioned that they regularly listen to the B.B.C. world service, and if they have access to satellite television, enjoy watching B.B.C. television's Asian Service. As for printed material, the most popular non-native English publications - as opposed to native publications such as the 'Straits Times' in Singapore - were Time International magazine (both U.S. and Australian editions) or Newsweek magazine and its Australian equivalent, The Bulletin. When analysing these peoples' responses, it became apparent that this considerable body of English news/communication services is frequently used, and often proves useful to the region's professional sector. It provides a scale on which it is possible to assess the current mood of the political and economic states of the native English speaking nations, as well as acting as a barometer for the political/economic position of the entire region.

Native English speakers (British, American, Austrealian etc.) believe that they are able to identify the different varieties of native English fairly easily. However, a British English speaker would probably have great difficulty in distingushishing an Australian English speaker from a New Zealand English speaker. Similarly many Americans struggle to distinguish native British English speakers from Australian speakers. Consequently, questions 11 to 14 try to differentiate - if at all - between the native varieties of English. When asked if in

their opinions there is any difference between British English and American English all the Asian Pacific nationals remarked that they believe there is a difference; to varying degrees. 33 people consider that British English is 'a little different' from American English while 41 people believe that these two native varieties of English are 'a lot different'. To support their theories many people mentioned that they were aware of differences in pronunciation, lexis and orthography. A number of people stated that their spelling of certain words e.g. labour - labor, favour - favor and through - thru, had been corrected by British English speakers or teachers, and these learners found this perplexing as they had always been led to believe - and had often been taught - that this American English spelling was both correct and universal. It was also pointed out by several people that before they arrived in the U.K. for the first time, they were unaware of the British English equivalent for certain American English words. e.g. semester - term, sidewalk - pavement, and this had again surprised them. The majority of the learners who originated from South Korea, the Phillipines, Japan and Taiwan all referred to the differences between standard British English pronunciation and General American English pronunciation. In some cases they had found these systemic differences problematic. One person cited as an example of this problem the American manner of pronouncing words such as 'writer', 'meter' and 'fighter', where the 't' sound is pronounced so rapidly that it alters to a 'd' sound. Therefore, this can cause confusion for the non-native English speaker, especially with words such as 'writer' which seems to change to 'rider'; a word with a completely different meaning. The way in which some word stress differs between General American English and Standard British English is also a source of some confusion for some Asian Pacific learners; Words such as 'futile' and 'missile' are stressed differently in the two native varieties of

English; a fact that English language teachers must be aware. (The different vowel systems were also mentioned as being a problem.)

Question 12 tried to establish whether these Asian Pacific learners consider that there are equivalent differences between Australian English and British English; in other words differences to the same extent as between American English and British English. Their responses to this question prove that the majority of the learners are aware of the differences between Australian and British English, but when asked to explain how these two native Englishes differ, their replies were not as specific as their explanations to question 11. 3 people stated that there was 'no difference', 23 people that there was 'a lot different', and 49 people thought that the two native Englishes were 'a little different'. It was generally agreed that Australian pronunciation could at times be difficult of understand. A number of people stated that some forms of Australian pronunciation were heavily accented and almost unintelligible. These non-native English were probably referring to the 'Broad Australian' accent - or 'Strine' as it is sometimes called.

Another problem for the Asian-Pacific English learner appears to be understanding colloquial Australian vocabulary; especially broad Australian slang. As one native of Taiwan remarked, the lively and inventive development of Australian slang has led many people - including himself - to believe that Australian English is 'not very good English'. His reasons for believing this are that the pervasive use of slang has 'changed too many good English words' and consequently, made the English language difficult to understand for the non-Australian English speaker/learner. The overall impression however, from these Asian-Pacific learners is that they are not as familiar with Australian English as they are American English. They are aware though that Australian English is a native variety of English in its

own right, and that it can be quite different from other native varieties of English. This opinion is further supported by the learners' responses to question 13. 2 people believe that there is no difference between Australian and American English, but the majority of people are conscious that the two native varieties of English are not the same. 53 people consider that American English is 'a little different' from Australian English, whereas 21 people believe the two varieties of English to be 'a lot different'. Once again those people who consider that there is a difference, point to lexical and phonological differences. One Japanese national in particular stressed that when speaking and listening to an American English speaker and an Australian English speaker at the same time, it is possible for him to distinguish two quite different pronunciation patterns. He cited words such as 'yesterday' and 'today' as sounding noticeably different in the standard accents of these two native Englishes. (It was also noted that in appearance Australians are different from Americans and therefore bound to speak English differently!)

The general opinion of these Asian Pacific nationals is that a British English speaker who uses 'received pronunciation' or standard south eastern English pronunciation is easy to understand. It was also stated that standard General American English pronunciation was 'very easy' to understand. As mentioned previously, some form of 'broad Australian' pronunciation poses problems in understanding for these learners and within the Asian Pacific region these learners appear to have more of an awareness of 'broad Australian' pronunciation, as opposed to General Australian English, than their British or American 'broad' equivalents. Numerous Asian Pacific English learners remarked that prior to their first visit to Britain they were unaware of the diversity of dialects and accents in the United Kingdom. The existence and variety of these dialects and accents sur-

prised many of these learners who previously believed what they term 'B.B.C. World Service English' to be standard for the entire country. They possessed only a vague awareness of a Scots, Welsh or Irish accent before their arrival in Britain. However, since residing in the U. K. these learners' opinions have changed. In response to question 15, everyone questioned stated that 'No', all British people do not sound the same; some British people are very difficult if not impossible to understand at times.

Native English speakers in their study of the spread and development of the English language have coined the phrase 'New Englishes' to describe the evolution of the English language amongst both native and non-native English speech communities. Question 16 to 24 seek to determine whether the indigenous people of the Asian Pacific recognise and accept the use of these 'New Englishes' within their own region.

There was a mixed response to the first part of question 16; 41 people admitted to being 'not sure' about the development of new Englishes; 14 people didn't know, and 19 people accepted their existence. This uncertainty appears to derive from the dilemma of what criteria exactly constitute the recognition of a New English. Most of these non-native speakers see themselves as 'speaking English' and probably believe that a 'New English' is in some way inferior or sub-standard to the older native varieties. Not surprisingly many Singaporeans accepted that they speak a New English - sometimes dubbed 'Singlish'—despite their government's attempts to contain this variety. The Taiwanese people questioned recognised that they used a local slang, and had 'loaned' words from other languages. However, many of them believed that their own English had been directly influenced by American English and therefore wondered if a so called 'New English' had really developed in Taiwan. The responses to the

second section of question 16 correlated with the replies to the first part. Once again, it was apparent that there was a certain amount of hesitation and uncertainty in regard to the validity of 'New Englishes'. Consequently, there were misgivings about whether these 'New Englishes' should be important, or whether what many learners termed 'correct English' should be reinforced. As one English learner from Hong Kong pointed out "If New Englishes develop too far, does that mean that English will one day stop being a common language for our region?" This opinion raises an important point; one which English language teachers must consider when they plan their approach to teaching English in the region.

The diversity of languages and dialects in the Asian Pacific, and the inherent problems that this heterogeneity causes have resulted in English becoming the common language of business and industry in the region. However, are different varieties and standards of English - its grammar, lexis and phonology - acceptable and intelligible to all non-native English speakers in the Asian Pacific? In questions 17 to 20 these non-native English speakers were asked if and when they communicated in English with other Asian Pacific nationals; and what were any problems that arose when this happened. The consensus of opinion is that all these non-native English speakers are obliged to communicate in English with other Asian Pacific nationals both in their native countries and when they are either working or studying abroad. A number of people specifically mentioned that when they are living in a foreign country they are required to speak English with native English speakers and other Asian Pacific nationals in both professional and social circumstances.

Subsequently, if English is being used as the lingua franca amongst Asian Pacific nationals - whether in their region or abroad - how much of the individual's English speaking competence is affected by

mother tongue interference. Question 19 hoped to ascertain if any of the English speaking Asian Pacific nationals were considered difficult or impossible to understand when speaking English by other non-native English speakers in the region. A few of the Singaporean nationals pointed out that with some of the other people of the region they were able to use both English and Mandarin Chinese as a means of communication. However, at times these same Singaporeans considered that the Japanese and especially Koreans could be difficult to understand when speaking English. Korean and Japanese pronunciation was cited as the main problem in mother tongue interference, and these Singaporean people remarked that they often have to ask a Korean or Japanese English speaker to repeat words or even whole sentences. On the other hand, in the opinion of these Singaporean English speakers the majority of Hong Kong, Phillipino and Taiwanese English speakers are relatively easy to understand, and they attribute this to the British or America influence in those countries. Several other nationalities - Malaysian, Hong Kong Chinese - commented on having problems understanding some Korean and Japanese English speakers. It would appear that a large proportion of the region's people believe that the problems which arise when speaking or listening to Japanese and notably Korean English speakers derive from the phonology of the Japanese and Korean languages, and the way that this interferes with their English communicative competence. Of course, if little or no pronunciation practice occurs in the classroom then the Japanese/Korean English language learner is insufficiently trained to communicate effectively in English with other Asian Pacific nationals. This problem is further exacerbated if the English language teacher has had inadequate or no training in phonetics and teaching pronunciation skills. In this situation a teacher who feels that he or she does not have the confidence to approach teaching pro-

nunciation skills will probably simply avoid the issue.

Indeed, if this is the case in some Japanese and Korean English teaching/learning situations then the discipline of mastering acceptable pronunciation skills urgently needs attention in order to provide the Japanese/Korean English speaker with the necessary proficiency.

The overwhelming reply to question 21 concluded that all the Asian Pacific nationals questioned believe that in the future more people will start learning English in their native countries and throughout the region. As to the variety of English likely to be taught and learnt, the majority of people consider that the influence of American English will continue to remain important. Many people also believe that the use of Australian English will probably increase, but that standard British English, especially received pronunciation will prevail as a status variety of English within parts of the region. It is also believed that English will continue to develop and that the vocabulary of the 'New Englishes' will expand due to the ever increasing acquisition of 'loan' words and the adaptation of the English language to the Asian Pacific person's language needs.

4. Section D:objective n)

A great deal of the literature on the subject of 'English as a world language' fails to take into account the attitudes and sentiments of the non-native English speaker/learner. The purpose behind the final section of this questionnaire is to try and gauge the feelings of these Asian Pacific speakers/learners towards the English language; and more importantly to the concept of English as a world language.

These Asian Pacific nationals were asked to explain their reactions to the statement "It has become accepted that English is now a world language of commerce, communication, tourism etc. The use of English will increase and become more important in the next century";

and to choose and comment on any of the following answers. When analysing the 74 completed questionnaires it became apparent that the majority of the non-native English speakers while not resenting learning English, nevertheless felt resigned to the fact that the spread and use of English is now too widespread to be reversed. Numerous people remarked that English is not a particularly easy language to learn and due to this a great deal of work and effort must be undertaken by the Asian Pacific learner in order to attain a level of competence and proficiency. A certain percentage of Asian and Pacific nationals also believe that native English speaking people are not particularly willing to learn other languages due to the continuing spread and use of English worldwide. It was mentioned that some native English speakers consider that they will never be in a situation where no one else speaks English. Therefore, some of these Asian Pacific nationals probably imagine that their own indigenous languages are not treated with the same degree of importance and respect within native English speaking countries as the English language is within their native country. However, none of the people questioned disagreed with the opinion that English in all its varying forms is becoming, or has indeed become, a world language. On the contrary, it was pointed out by many of these English learners that the government endorsement of English as an official or semi-official language in their own countries has strengthened the position of the English language. This does not necessarily mean that everyone feels happy about the increasing importance of English; in fact 12 people remarked that they are 'not very happy about it', whereas only 2 people consider that they are 'happy about it'. In contrast to this set of opinions, 51 people believe that the growing use of English is 'inevitable'.

It would appear that the proliferation of the English language is a topic which most of these Asian Pacific nationals have considered,

and this was reflected by the fact that only 3 people stated that they had 'never thought about this before.' Several people commented on the statement 'If there has to be a world language, it might as well be English' by acknowledging that a universal language used for business, communication and industry, as well as the specialist worlds of science and technology, helps produce common links between professional people who work in the same fields but different countries. It was also pointed out that even if unglish had not established itself in the region, another common language would probably have evolved amongst the people of the Asian Pacific. The economic success and transformation of the region's nations into industrial giants would have necessitated the emergence of some form of common language; so many of these learners believe that they would probably have had to learn another foreign language anyway. Finally, judging from the responses and comments of these Asian Pacific nationals, it would seem that learning English does present these speakers/learners of English with problems, but that they believe surmounting those problems and mastering the English language is a worthwhile exercise.

APPENDIXMark c. ThompsonCourse : M.A. Dept. of Applied English Language Studies.QUESTIONNAIREMAY 1992

I am conducting a survey into English language learning and teaching in the Asian - Pacific region. I would be grateful if you would answer these questions with regard to your own experience and opinions. I would like to thank you in advance for your help.

Please answer all the questions which are relevant to you.

Please tick spaces which are relevant to you.

Please use the back of each page for any long answers or extra information.

SECTION A

1. What nationality are you?
2. Male ... Female...
3. Age : 20~30... 31~40... Over 40...
4. How old were you when started learning English?.....
5. Where did you start learning English?

At school ...	At College/University ...
Language school ...	Other, please say where ...
6. Are you still learning English? Yes/No.

7. What level do you consider your English to be?

Elementary ...

Pre - intermediate ...

Intermediate ...

Upper - intermediat...

Advanced ...

Fluent ...

8. Have you obtained any certificates or other qualifications in English?

9. If your answer is yes, which ones?

10. How many other members of your family speak English?

11. If they do speak English, how good is their English?

(Refer back to question 7)

12. Is English ever spoken in your home, within your home country?

13. If the answer is yes, please say when and in what circumstances.

14. Do you ever speak English with other non - native speakers of English in social situations within your home country?

15. If the answer is yes, please say when and in what circumstances.

16. Do you ever speak English in professional/work situations within your home country?

17. If the answer is yes, please say when and in what circumstances.

18. To what extent does or will English improve your career or job prospects?

None ...

A little ...

Quite a lot ...

A great deal ...

Don't know ...

SECTION B ('Other' - language school, in-house training etc.)

1. How many languages do you speak? Please state which ones, and to what level. (Please see question 7 Section A)

2. Did you want to learn English, or was it compulsory?

3. Were you taught by a native or a non-native speaker of English?
 4. If your teacher was a native speaker, where did he/she come from?
 5. Which do you prefer as an English teacher?

A native speaker of English.

A teacher from your own country

Why?

6. Were you satisfied by the standard of teaching?

At school :	At University :	Other(Please say):
-------------	-----------------	--------------------

No ...	No ...	No ...
--------	--------	--------

It was O.k. ...	It was O.K. ...	It was O.K. ...
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

It was good ...	It was good ...	It was good ...
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

7. How much emphasis was placed on communicating orally (speaking)

At school :	At University :	Other(Please say):
-------------	-----------------	--------------------

None ...	None ...	None ...
----------	----------	----------

A little ...	A little ...	A little ...
--------------	--------------	--------------

Quite a lot ...	Quite a lot ...	Quite a lot ...
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

A great deal ...	A great deal ...	A great deal ...
------------------	------------------	------------------

8. How much pronunciation were you taught?

At school :	At University :	Other(Please say):
-------------	-----------------	--------------------

None ...	None ...	None ...
----------	----------	----------

A little ...	A little ...	A little ...
--------------	--------------	--------------

Quite a lot ...	Quite a lot ...	Quite a lot ...
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

A great deal ...	A great deal ...	A great deal ...
------------------	------------------	------------------

9. How much emphasis was placed on listening skills?

At school :	At University :	Other(Please say):
-------------	-----------------	--------------------

None ...	None ...	None ...
----------	----------	----------

A little ...	A little ...	A little ...
--------------	--------------	--------------

Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ...
A great deal ... A great deal ... A great deal ...

10. How much emphasis was placed on reading and writing?

At school : At University : Other(Please say) :
None ... None ... None ...
A little ... A little ... A little ...
Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ...
A great deal ... A great deal ... A great deal ...

11. How much time was spent learning grammar?

At school : At University : Other(Please say) :
None ... None ... None ...
A little ... A little ... A little ...
Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ...
A great deal ... A great deal ... A great deal ...

12. How important do you think it is to learn grammar?

Not important ... Quite important ...
Very important ... You must learn grammar ...

13. In a few words please explain your answer to question 12.

14. Do you like learning grammar? A

Did you like learning grammar? B

A. No ... Sometimes ... It's O.K. ... Very much ...
B. No ... Sometimes ... It's O.K. ... Very much ...

15. Did you speak much English in the classroom?

At school : At University Other(Please say) :
None ... None ... None ...
A little ... A little ... A little ...
Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ... Quite a lot ...
A great deal ... A great deal ... A great deal ...

16. Do you feel comfortable when you speak English now?

No ... A little ... Very comfortable ... Not sure ...

It depends who I am talking to. ...

Generally, I feel comfortable ...

17. Which of these aspects of English do you find easy or difficult?

Number the spaces below like this :

0=very easy. 1=easy. 2=I have to work on it a little

3=difficult, I have to do a lot of work.

4=I have a serious problem with this.

Speaking ...

Listening ...

Reading ...

Writing ...

Grammar ...

Pronunciation ...

Spelling ...

Vocabulary ...

In a few words, explain any difficulties you have with any of the above that you have marked with a 4.

How could an English teacher help you with this problem?

SECTION C

1. Have you ever been to any of these countries?

The U.S.A. ... Australia ... Canada ... New Zealand ...

2. Before you came to Britain, how much did you know about British culture and the people?

Nothing ... A little ... Quite a lot ... A great deal ...

3. What do you know about the cultures and peoples of these countries?

The U.S.A. Australia Canada New Zealand

Nothing

A little

Quite a lot

A great deal

4. If you have been to all or any of these countries which do you prefer?
 Why?

5. Do you like Britain? Yes/No Why?

6. If you had a choice, which country would you have visited first? (Before you came to Britain)

U.K. ... U.S.A ... Australia ... Canada ... New Zealand

Why?

7. Please fill in the chart below. Number the spaces like this :

0=None 1=A few 2=Quite a lot 3=A great deal

Have you seen/listened to/watched any of the below?

IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY

	FILMS	TELEVISION	RADIO	BOOKS	MAGAZINES/ NEWSPAPERS
BRITISH
AMERICAN
AUSTRALIAN
CANADIAN
NEW ZEALAND

8. If you listen to any English speaking radio station in your home country which one?

9. If you read an English speaking newspaper or journal in your home country, which one?

10. If you like and watch films or television from any of the countries in the chart overleaf, in your home country, which ones do you prefer?

Why?

11. In your opinion, how different is British English from American English?

No difference ... A little different ... A lot different ...

If you think there is a difference, please explain.

12. In your opinion, how different is British English from Australian En-

glish?

No difference ... A little different ... A lot different ...

13. In your opinion, how different is American English from Australian English?

No difference ... A little different ... A lot different ...

If you think there is a difference, please explain. (Question 12 and 13)

14. In your opinion, who is easier to understand?

A person from :

U.K. ... U.S.A. ... Australia ... Canada ... New Zealand ...

Please explain the reasons for your answer.

15. In your opinion, do all British people sound the same?

Yes ... No ... Don't know ...

Please explain your answer.

16. It is now accepted that "New Englishes" have developed in countries such as Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Did you know about these New Englishes?

Yes ... No ... I'm not sure ...

Please explain your answer.

17. Do you/Did you ever speak English with other people from any other Asian Pacific countries?

Yes ... No ... If your answer is yes, where?

18. Do you/Did you find it easy or difficult to understand them?

Easy ... Quite easy ... Difficult ... Not at all ...

19. If you found it difficult or impossible to understand someone speaking English from another Asian Pacific country, where were they from?

Why was it so difficult to understand them? Please explain.

20. How could English teaching help improve this?

21. In your country, do you think more or fewer people will start learn-

ing English in the future?

More ... Fewer ... The same ...

22. If the answer is more, do you know what type of English they will learn?

British ... American ... Australian ... New English ...

23. In the future what type of English will be more important in your country?

British ... American ... Australian ... New English ...

Why?

24. If your answer for questions 22 and 23 was "New Englishes", which New are you referring to?

SECTION D

1. Read this statement. How do you feel about it?

It has become accepted that 'English' is now the world language of commerce, communication, tourism etc. The use of English will increase and become more important in the next century.

Please tick all the spaces that you agree with.

I resent it ... I'm not very happy about it ...

There's nothing I can do about it ... It's no problem ...

If there was to be a world language, it might as well be English. ...

It's good because English is easy to learn ...

It's bad because English is difficult to learn ...

It's inevitable ... I'm happy about it ...

I've never thought about this before ...

It's because English speaking people are lazy about learning other languages. ...

I disagree that English becoming a world language ...

Please comment on this question, and on any other points you wish to mention.

THANK YOU

