

26. ESL in Africa and Asia

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English is a global language. It is a second or foreign language in many countries. In this text, Stephen Gramely examines the status and distribution pattern of the English language in some countries of Asia and Africa. In ESL countries English is used as a minority or institutional language or a default language.

English has a minority status: People's order of the priority of language use is: local, regional, pidgin then English. English is infrequent in use in private and familial situations.

Institutional status: English is more prominent in education, public administration, the press, radio, TV.

The default language: the language used when no other common language is available.

Choice of language depends on:

- ☐ User characteristics: region, gender, age, education, religion
- ☐ Feature of use: administration, education, and media.

Africa

Countries in Africa do not have English native speaking populations except in South Africa.

West Africa: In Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia, Gambia, Sierra Leone polyglossia not diglossia is the norm. Code switching and code mixing is typical phenomena there. English counts as a second language throughout West Africa. In multilingual situations languages borrow words from one another. The number of English speakers varies from place to place.

A case study of West African pidgin English shows that standard English is used to show their educational level while pidgin English is used to indicate their solidarity with each other.

East Africa: Anglophone countries (countries where English is not the only language spoken) are **Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda** where **Kiswahili** is widely used lingua franca. It is the preferred national language in Tanzania and English is the second. There are some other less frequently used languages too.

In Kenya Kiswahili and English are official languages. English receives positive attitude. English is associated with high status job. Some families use English as primary home language.

In Uganda English has stronger position.

In all African countries, English has high status; Kiswahili has higher than local languages. Kiswahili is the language of ethnic identity, national identity and solidarity. English is the language of modernity and good education.

Domains are the parameters to define the role of English in East Africa. They include:

- ☐ High court, parliament, civil service.
- ☐ Education
- ☐ The media
- ☐ Traffic signs, advertisements
- ☐ Business and private correspondence
- ☐ (some restricted) home use

Asia

In Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Pakistan the role of English has gradually reduced to that of an important foreign language.

India

English is outsider's language for hundreds of years established in British colonial administration. It is a link language, medium of modernization and westernization, language of education, science and technology. The constitutional status of English is associate official language next to Hindi. Since 1950 three language formula has been in practice in secondary education- regional language Hindi and English. English has played a noticeable role in media. People feel that English provides chances; it is the language of classes not of the masses. Speaker identities can be revealed through code switching and code mixing. Domains of English are: business, politics, technology, communication.

Singapore

In Singapore, there is four official language policy- Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English. Malay is national language, lingua franca, associated with ethnic Malays. Chinese is associated with ethnic Chinese, Tamil with ethnic Indian. English is the language for expression of national identity, inter ethnic lingua franca, unifying language, and plays a key role in modernization and development. It has played a great role in education – 60% of teaching time in English and 40% in the literacy of local languages.

English is prominent in media, parliament, court, and international trade. Singapore English is common in informal situation.

The Philippines

There is bilingual education policy. English is used for science, technology, international relations, worker migration into and out of the country. English is predominant in government administration, legislation, law, higher education profession, business, science, media. Pilipino is the national variety of Tagalog. English is used in education for advantages like jobs, power, and prestige.

The roles of many other languages are difficult to observe because their domains are homes, they are not used in public places.