

“ANTE ET RETRO OCCULATA”: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

This article briefly looks at what changes might occur linguistically with the widening of English within ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) while at the same time looking at the changes that have taken place in both the language and attitude in the history of English in its country of origin in terms of two forms of imperative: the cooperative and the territorial. In one case, the cooperative imperative is seen as a need to continually modify the language in order to communicate with people within new contexts and cultures. On the other, the territorial imperative seeks to secure and protect a separate and social identity. What lessons can we learn from history and what consequences such lessons can have for teaching in terms of the differences between teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and the growing awareness of the wider use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) will also be discussed.

Keywords: AEC, cooperative imperative, English in Britain, EFL and ELF, lingua franca, territorial imperative

INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons why languages of wider communication achieve the position they do is because of their position of power, especially in a global context. Historically Latin was a major lingua franca and remained in certain domains the language of scholarship and religion, weakened only by the rise of secularism and the growth in ‘scientific enquiry’ in 17th century. Today, English is the most important global language and thus has the greatest status as a world lingua franca. Jespersen writing in 1909 said that English was not a set of stiff dogmatic precepts, according to which some things are correct and others absolutely wrong, but living and developing, founded on the past but preparing the way for the future. Language in particular the grammar is something that is not always consistent or perfect but progressing. Such remarks are particularly relevant today as our age is marked as one of transition with the emergence of new economies, especially in the Asia-Pacific region

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