

Teaching Methodology for ESL Students in Singapore

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Abstract

ESL in Singapore is dominated by the complexity of her linguistic environment, identity, and the government's language policy. Since English is one of the official languages in Singapore, it is inevitable that English is used in everyday conversation. However, the cultural differences from the countries of the inner circle inevitably put pressure on inner circle linguistic norms. English must change when it arrives in the countries of outer circle such as Singapore. This trend is to meet the communicative needs of communities whose social structure involves very different priorities and preoccupations. The aim of this paper is to review English regional variation focusing on three main parts: codification of New English, communicative approach, and pedagogical implications. The discussion will be based on the perspectives of key stakeholders in Singapore such as ESL students, ESL teachers, government officers, and native speakers of English in Singapore. Both primary and secondary research were conducted with reference to current journals, dissertations, interviews and observations.

A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. This might seem like stating the obvious, but it is not, for the notion of 'special role' has many facets. To achieve a global status, a language has to be taken up by other countries around the world (Crystal, 2003).

Introduction

The perception that English is a global language does not derive from the number of speakers but its links between language dominance and economic, technological, and cultural power (Crystal, 2003). In the 1950s a bilingual education system was instigated in Singapore, with English as a medium language of instruction alongside Chinese, Malay, and Tamil (Ministry of Education, 2007). However, English has remained the language of government and the legal system, and retained its importance in education and the media. There has been a steady growth in the number of speakers in Singapore.