

# 英語之意識形態話語分析研究： 以台灣為例

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## 摘要

英語是全球語言,在英語為外語的國家中,英語享有特殊地位,因為英語通常和一個國家的地位與現代化有密切關聯,台灣亦是如此。在台灣國際化中,英語被視為給有抱負的人們帶來更美好生活與前途的關鍵。為了因應英語學習的需求,許多美語補習班到處林立。美語補習班的目的是把他們的商品－英語賣給顧客。當英語被視為商品時,許多人自經濟價值的觀點而非從教育的觀點衡量英語的教與學。

本研究方法是採用批判話語分析 CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis)。研究素材是美語補習班網路廣告的標語、短文與內文。本旨藉著美語補習網路廣告分析,進而探討英語為全球語言之意識形態在台灣所造成的社會不平等現象。研究結果顯示,英文為全球語言之意識形態,目前在台灣教育、經濟和語言上已經產生了不平等等現象。

**關鍵詞：**英語為全球語言、批判話語分析、意識形態、不平等

# A Discourse Analysis of the Ideology of English in Taiwan

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## Abstract

As a result of English-as-the-global-language, English holds a special place because it is generally associated with status and modernity in EFL countries. Taiwan is no exception. English language mastery is viewed as the key to achieving a better life and future for every aspiring individual, particularly in the context of globalization or internationalization. As a result, private English language schools have sprung up to meet the need for English instruction. The main purpose of language schools is to sell their commodity, English, to their customers. When English is viewed as a commodity, English teaching and learning are perceived from an economic perspective, rather than from an educational one.

To investigate this ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed to analyze data drawn from language school websites, written advertisements with a special focus on slogans, short paragraphs, and body texts. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the ideology of English-as-the-global-language is manifested in language school websites and how the ideology has resulted in social inequality in Taiwan. The finding of this study demonstrates that English-as-the-global-language has resulted in educational, economic, and linguistic inequality in contemporary Taiwanese society.

**Key words:** English-as-the-global-language, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Ideology, Inequality

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a global language, English holds a special place because it is generally associated with status and modernity in EFL countries. Taiwan is no exception. English language mastery is viewed as the key to achieving a better life and future for every aspiring individual, particularly in the context of globalization or internationalization. As a result, private English language schools or cram schools (*buxiban* in Mandarin Chinese) have sprung up to meet the need for English instruction. Studying English at a private English language school is a very common phenomenon (Liu, 2002). In fact, private English language schools are a necessary part of life for Taiwanese students, especially children (Lee, 2006). From private English language schools' perspective, the main purpose of language schools is to sell their commodity, English, to their customers. Therefore, English language teaching and learning in English language schools cannot be viewed merely teaching or learning a language, but also from an economic perspective. "Selling English" (Pegrum, 2004, p. 3) or "marketized English" (Goodman, 1996, p. 164) are concerned with the reasons why English has been marketed as a product or commodity, as well as the different media used to persuade customers to buy the product.

As far as media used by language schools are concerned, many different forms of media are used to advertise and promote their products, such as television, radio, magazines, newspapers, direct mail or fliers, and the Internet. Currently, the Internet has become a fast growing, highly effective, and inexpensive medium for advertising since its advent in the 1990s (Beasley & Danesi, 2002; Myers, 1999; Perlado & Barwise, 2005). Moreover, in Taiwan, the fact that a growing number of private language schools provide their web addresses in their school fliers, as well as in their English teaching job ads, demonstrates that people know that the web is the place to look for more information about the schools. Although there is a bull market for private language schools and many media have been used to

sell English as a commodity, how language schools use advertisements to promote ideologies of ELT has received little attention in English language education research in Taiwan. To the best of my knowledge, there exists no other published work investigating ideologies of ELT in Taiwan through media discourse, and particularly through the promotional materials of private language schools.

The central argument of this study is that private language schools, as the promoters of English teaching and learning, are critical to the promotion of the ideology of English as-the-global-language. English-as-the-global-language ideology refers to English as a tool for international communication and understanding, and that is the panacea for future success. In this research, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed to analyze data drawn from written advertisements on language school websites, with a special focus on slogans, short paragraphs, and body texts. The purpose of this research is to explore how English is viewed as a highly valued and desirable commodity and how English is viewed as the global language. The following are the research questions.

- (1) Who needs English in Taiwan?
- (2) For what purposes do people in Taiwan need to use English?
- (3) How has English-as-the-global-language resulted in educational, economic and linguistic inequity in contemporary society in Taiwan?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review deals with the idea that globalization has made English a highly valued and desirable commodity, and English teaching and learning are perceived from an economic perspective, rather than from an educational one. This is an ideology of English. There are three parts in this section: English-as-the-global-language, English as linguistic capital, and a brief introduction of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

## 1. English-as-the-global-language

There are two very different perspectives of English-as-the-global-language in ELT and SLA. Crystal (1997) and Fishman (1996, cited in Clayton, 1999) claim that the spread of English is both neutral and beneficial. Crystal (1997) argued that the primary reason for the spread of English is that it has “repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time” (p.110). In other words, the spread of English evolves naturally. However, Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) point out that the development of English language teaching worldwide can be traced back to British neocolonial policies in which political and economic benefits are involved. They claim that the development of ELT as a profession in the world is a response to a political imperative. ELT can no longer be taken as simply concerned with teaching language. Rather, the assertion that the spread of English is “natural, neutral and beneficial” is in itself ideological (Pennycook, 1994, p.9). Moreover, Tollefson (1995) argues that the spread of English is central to the ideologies of ELT and SLA.

It seems that the questions raised by English-as-the-global-language are diverse and complex. However, there are two main challenges: the political and the economic (Block & Cameron, 2002). Firstly, globalization has changed the terms in which people debate issues of language and power (Block & Cameron, 2002). Secondly, people have learned English for economic reasons because English competence represents “linguistic capital”, a term used by Bourdieu (1991; cited in Block & Cameron, 2002). As a result, English language teaching and learning have become more political and ideological because they are discussed in terms of economics and politics. In the following section, I shall discuss how English is viewed from an economic perspective and especially, how English competence constitutes a form of “linguistic capital”.

## 2. Linguistic Capital

Many researchers (Canagarajah, 1999, 2002; Garcia, 1995; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 1991, 1995, 2000; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1995) argue that the spread of English is part of wider social, political and economic processes that may result in economic inequity. They show that English-speaking countries have an interest in supporting the concept of English-as-the-global-language as it affords them “symbolic power” (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1977; cited in Loos, 2000).

Bourdieu (1992; cited in Loos, 2000) uses economic metaphors like “capital” and “market” to explain people’s positions and interrelations in a community. Bourdieu (1992; cited in Loos, 2000) distinguishes four different kinds of capital: economic capital (material wealth), cultural capital (knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions), and symbolic capital (that is, accumulated prestige or honor); “linguistic capital” is related to Bourdieu’s view of “cultural capital” and develops out of linguistic imperialism (Bourdieu, 1976; cited in Morrison & Lui, 2000). Linguistic capital can be defined as “fluency in, and comfort with, a high-status, world-wide language which is used by groups who possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and global society” (Bourdieu, 1976; cited in Morrison & Lui, 2000, p.473). Linguistic capital affords its holders symbolic power (Loos, 2000). Symbolic power is exercised on markets and it enables actors to convert one form of capital into another (Bourdieu & Boltanski, 1977; cited in Loos, 2000, p.39). In other words, if an EFL country possesses English (linguistic capital), it raises its national competitiveness, which grants it access to worldwide economic markets (economic capital) and accelerates its progress towards globalization (symbolic capital).

As a result, English has been viewed as linguistic capital in many regions, such as the European Union (Loos, 2000), Ecuador (Alm, 2003), Hong Kong (Morrison & Lui, 2000), Peru (Nino-Murcia, 2003),

Singapore (Chew, 1999; cited in Rubdy, 2001), and the Ukraine (Bilaniuk, 2003). The variety of descriptions of English demonstrates its power. In Argentina, English has become a “means of social ascension” (Friedrich, 2000; cited in Nielsen, 2003). English is viewed as “a more valued economic commodity” (Gimenez, 2001) or “a highly marketable commodity” (Rajagopalan, 2002) in Brazil, Canada (Heller, 2002), Japan (Kubota, 2002), and Taiwan (Ho, 1998; Li & Lee, 2004; Troester, 1990). In this linguistic commodity market, English has higher value than other languages. Consequently, people want to acquire this commodity which they feel they need. “The hunger for learning the language – with whatever degree of competence – is simply insatiable” (Kachru, 1997; cited in Seidlhofer, 2001). Kachru argued that “knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin’s lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science and travel; in short, English provides linguistic power” (1986, p. 1). Clearly, the possession of English is an issue of power. English provides its speakers with linguistic, economic and symbolic capital.

On the other hand, those with less linguistic capital have fewer opportunities for improving their lives. Morrison and Lui (2000) argue that “social stratification and patterns of domination and subordination are reproduced, albeit by a school system initially intended to provide equal opportunity to all” (p. 473). Tollefson (1991) also assumes that if English is viewed as a means for getting better jobs with higher salaries and as one criterion for determining which people will complete different levels of education, it results in “unequal social and economic relationships” (pp. 8-9). In many countries (as cited above) English has become a form of linguistic capital, providing access to education, employment and economic advantages for those who are proficient in it. As a result, English proficiency has created an educational hierarchical and a social hierarchical system. Hong Kong is one such example.

In Hong Kong, those who possess English proficiency “possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and global society” (Morrison & Lui, 2000, p. 473). This has resulted from a ‘labor-market-driven’ ideology (Ling, 1997). Under this ideology, the goals of English education are not primarily based on the development of learners’ potential, or on social, intellectual and cultural development and enrichment, but are primarily based on fulfilling labor market needs (Ling, 1997). Therefore, it would be significant to explore how English has been viewed as linguistic capital, and its implications and impacts on ELT and SLA in an EFL country, Taiwan.

### **3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how English-as-the-global-language has become a fundamental driving force in learning English in Taiwan and has concomitantly contributed to educational, linguistic and economic inequality in contemporary Taiwanese society. To investigate how the ideology of English-as-the-global-language is manifested in language school websites and how this ideology has resulted in social inequality in Taiwan, Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is needed. Gee (1990) argues that discourses are a “way of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by a specific group of people” (p. xix). CDA considers “the social, cultural, economic and political ways in which people are inequitably positioned” (Pennycook, 1997, p. 23) and “how the production and reception of texts is ideologically shaped by relations of power” (Ibid. p. 28). Van Dijk (1993) suggests that CDA can only make a significant and special contribution to society if it is able to provide “an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality” (p. 279).



Fairclough (1992a) points out the difference between critical approaches and non-critical approaches by stating that CDA does not just describe discursive practices, but shows “how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants” (p. 12). A critical approach on discourse analysis explores issues such as class, cultural difference, ethnicity, ideology, identity, gender, and power, and how they are manifested in particular texts. Moreover, it is believed that awareness of the ideological effects of discourse can lead to changes in discourse practice that will result in greater social equality and justice (Fairclough, 1992b). In short, CDA has offered educational researchers in investigating language use in media texts within social contexts a valuable tool. CDA reveals ideologies of a text within a society and aims at providing the society with higher awareness of the ideologies and therefore enables the society to escape the ideologies.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **1. Data Collection**

A total of 101 language school websites in Chinese were used. The data was collected and downloaded through [www.yahoo.com.tw](http://www.yahoo.com.tw) and [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) search engines, and analyzed in 2008 and 2009. In this study, language schools refer to those that offer general English courses for different age groups (such as preschool children, elementary, secondary and tertiary students, and adults) and whose purposes are not geared for academic tests.

Additional data were provided by media discourses on the World Wide Web. The additional data were not analysed quantitatively, as the language school websites were. Rather, they were used as further qualitative evidence to triangulate the results of the analysis of the advertisements, and also other themes in this research.

## 2. Data Transliteration and Coding

Slogans and/or short paragraphs and body texts were analyzed in this study. A school slogan and/or a short paragraph provide information about the school or anything related to English teaching and learning. A body text provides information such as how, where, when, what and by whom the English is taught. A total of 208 texts of slogans, short paragraphs and body texts from 101 language school websites were analyzed.

Table 1 indicates that 208 texts were put into three categories based on the use of language: they are Chinese texts, English texts, and Chinese and English or Bilingual texts.

Table 1 Coding of the Data		
101 Language School Websites		
Chinese texts	C1 – C160	160 texts (76.92%)
English texts	E1 – E41	41 texts (19.71%)
Bilingual texts	B1 – B7	7 texts (3.37%)
	Total	208 texts (100%)

The Chinese data are presented in Mandarin Chinese with English translations. My translation of Chinese data into English is underlined and within single quotation marks. Data that are in English in the original are underlined only to distinguish them from the transliterated ones within single quotation marks. Moreover, in this study, in order to protect the language school's identity, school names were not revealed and "XXX" was used to replace a school name. The following are three examples.

Example 1: Chinese text: Mandarin Chinese with English translations

用美語和世界接軌 (C41)

'American English is the key to the world' (C41)

Example 2: English text: English in the original

Let's possess success! Join XXX Language School and we will make you success!(sic) (E1)

Example 3: Bilingual Text: English and Mandarin Chinese

XXX is the key to the world (B1)

選擇 xxx 與世界接軌 (B1)

### 3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). To employ CDA, the downloaded Chinese language website was first coded. Then, the content of slogans, short paragraphs and body texts was analyzed by using written text analysis (Goddard, 1998). Goddard (1998, p. 7) points out that every written text can be classified according to two aspects: “what is being advertised – a product, an idea, or an image?” and “who is being addressed?” Therefore, the texts were analyzed based on two major themes: who needs English and for what purposes? In addition, the decision about whether a text contains the ideological concept of English-as-the-global-language is based on the definition mentioned in the Introduction. The definition of English-as-the-global-language refers to English as a tool for international communication and understanding, and that is the solution and panacea for future success which is an ideology, as mentioned earlier in Introduction and Literature Review. The following are three examples.

Example 1

Quality English Education – the key to your future (E19)

Example 2

提升台灣國家競爭力 (C150)

‘Raise Taiwan’s international competitiveness’ (C150)

Example 3

美語能力，是提升孩子國際競爭力的關鍵 (C65)

‘American English ability is the key to raising children’s international competitiveness.’ (C65)

These three texts clearly and directly illustrate the purposes for learning English: English leads to a bright future (E19) and English can raise children's and Taiwan's international competitiveness (C150 & C65). As far as who needs English is concerned, text C65 refers to Taiwanese children and text C150 refers to Taiwan. In text E19, 'you' refers to the general public or real readers (Graddard, 1998).

Based on the themes, the process of data coding and analysis was administered by the researcher first and then re-examined and re-confirmed by a research assistant to ensure that the data were categorized correctly and accordingly. In addition, the English translation of the data was reviewed by two professors at NPUE's (National Pingtung University of Education) English Department to avoid any inappropriate or unclear translation. The first was reviewed by a Taiwanese professor who is bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and English, and then by a native speaker of English, a Canadian professor with a Ph.D. in English literature.

#### IV. RESULTS

Table 2 and Table 3 indicate that English is needed by Taiwanese people for different purposes. In addition, Table 4 indicates the use of English in this study. I will explore each theme separately.

As far as *who needs English* is concerned (Table 2), the largest group is 'General Public or Real Reader' (118 texts = 56.73%), followed by 'Children' (84 texts = 40.38%) and then 'Taiwan' (6 texts = 2.89%). A total of 118 texts use 'you' in this study (cf. 3. Data Analysis). Graddard (1998) points out that 'you' in the text targets the general public – real readers or everybody, so there is no clearly identifiable group. In other words, general public is being addressed as the message receivers in this study. Therefore, general public or real readers in Taiwan is being addressed as if English is needed for them. A salient result is that 84 texts specifically indicate that English is needed by children. Implicitly, the result suggests that in terms of English learning, the younger the learner the better. Moreover, 6 texts show that English is needed by Taiwan. It is argued that English is an

essential instrument for Taiwan's internationalization.

Table 2 Who needs English in Taiwan

Who needs English	Total
General Public or Real Reader	118 texts = 56.73%
Children	84 texts = 40.38%
Taiwan	6 texts = 2.89%
Total	208 texts = 100%

Table 3 shows that the purposes for learning English can be subdivided into 12 different categories. They are '*English is the key to the world, to globalization and to becoming citizens of the world*' (32 texts = 15.38%), '*English means competitiveness in general or international competitiveness*' (28 texts = 13.46%), '*English means self-improvement (such as ability in general, confidence, wisdom, potential, critical thinking, open-mindedness, independence, communicative skills ... )*' (26 texts = 12.50%), '*English means a bright future*' (21 texts = 10.10%), '*English allows you to become part of an (international) elite*' (20 texts = 9.62%), '*English is a must in the context of globalization*' (19 texts = 9.13%), '*English is the key to success (business, career, education)*' (16 texts = 7.69%), '*English learning fosters a global perspective*', '*English learning leads to a wonderful life*' (11 texts = 5.29%), '*English allows you be your best*' (8 texts = 3.85%), '*English can fulfill your dreams*' (7 texts = 3.37%) and '*English is an asset, and gives knowledge, hope and opportunity*' (7 texts = 3.37%). In short, English is needed for business, for professions, for education both in Taiwan and abroad, for self-improvement, and for future success in general. The texts analyzed in this study suggest that English means competitiveness in general or international competitiveness or English is viewed as linguistic capital. Moreover, English is sufficient for most purposes in the context of globalization for Taiwan and Taiwanese people.

Table 3 For what purposes do people in Taiwan need to use English?

For what purposes	Total
1. English is the key to the world, to globalization and to becoming citizens of the world	32 texts = 15.38%
2. English means competitiveness in general or international competitiveness	28 texts = 13.46%
3. English means self-improvement (such as ability, confidence, wisdom, potential, critical thinking, open-mindedness, independence ... )	26 texts = 12.50%
4. English means a bright future	21 texts = 10.10%
5. English allows you to become part of the (international) elite	20 texts = 9.62%
6. English is a must for business or in the context of globalization	19 texts = 9.13%
7. English is the key to success (business, career, education – both in Taiwan and abroad)	16 texts = 7.69%
8. English learning fosters a global perspective	16 texts = 7.69%
9. English learning leads to a wonderful life	11 texts = 5.29%
10. English allows you to be your best	8 texts = 3.85%
11. English can fulfill your dreams	7 texts = 3.37%
12. English is an asset, and gives knowledge, hope and opportunity	7 texts = 3.37%
Total	208 texts = 100%

In summary, English is promoted by language schools as a tool that is essential for multiple purposes. Moreover, English-as-the-global-language is viewed as a panacea for overall future success. As a result English is seen as a highly valued and desirable commodity. Clearly, English language learning is viewed from an economic perspective, not from an educational one. Additionally, English is perceived as linguistic capital. The result of English as linguistic capital has resulted in education, employment, and languages in Taiwanese society which will be discussed in the following section.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned in the Literature Review, CDA is first concerned with connections between micro domain (language use in classrooms, schools ...) and macro domain (inequality, power, ideology in a society ...) relations (Fairclough, 1992a & 1992b; Pennycook, 2001; van Dijk, 1993). Based on the results and additional media discourse from Taiwanese English newspapers, I explored how English as linguistic capital has resulted in educational, economic, and linguistic inequality in contemporary Taiwanese society and the relationship between English and globalization. I then concluded this study with some implications of ELT and SLA, as well as the limitations of this study.

### 1. English as Linguistic Capital

Table 3 demonstrates that there are two prevalent perspectives regarding English as a global language: an individual perspective and a global perspective, as suggested by Mackay (1993). Based on Mackay's two prevalent perspectives, Taiwanese people who view English from an individual standpoint believe that English is probably the most important factor in their education, career, and future success. Taiwanese people who view English from a global perspective believe that English is the key to globalization. In other words, Taiwanese people who approach English teaching and learning from both perspectives consider English as a form of linguistic capital. They pay attention to the economic value of English both for the nation and for every individual. As a result, English language acquisition has caused inequality in education, employment, and languages which will be discussed in the following section.

#### *1.1 Educational Inequality*

According to Article 159 of the Constitution of the Republic of China, Taiwan, "All citizens shall have equal opportunity to receive an education," (<http://www.edu.tw/statistics/english/d2.htm>; last

accessed on March 1, 2010). Teese et al., (2007) point out that educational inequality, in short, refers to unequal educational opportunities. The result (Table 2) indicates that in terms of the age of English language learning, the younger the better. Therefore, in the following, I will take the goal of nine-year comprehensive curriculum as an example to demonstrate how English education has resulted in educational inequality at the elementary school level.

The purpose of the nine-year comprehensive curriculum for elementary and junior high education is to help students “acquire a global perspective – and English, as the international language, is the bridge to the rest of the world” (Her, 2002). As such, English language learning is considered the key to accessing the world. In order to achieve this goal, the Taiwanese government intends to provide equal English opportunity for all, to narrow the gap in English education between the urban and rural areas, because many elementary schools in cities had started English courses long before the government’s implementation of English courses in September 2001. However, English education at the elementary level does not bridge the education gap between the urban and rural areas, but rather widens it. “Elementary schools in seven counties and cities in Taiwan have included English courses in their first grade curricula, instead of the third grade as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Many parents are sending their children to bilingual kindergartens, fearing their kids will fall behind” (*Taipei Times Online*: November 22, 2002, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/edit/archives/2002/11/22/180514>; last accessed on November 3, 2009). In contrast, children from rural areas do not have English classes until the third grade. As a result, their English ability lags far behind their urban counterparts (*Taiwan Headlines*: May 14, 2002, [http://th.gio.gov.tw/show.cfm?news\\_id=14125](http://th.gio.gov.tw/show.cfm?news_id=14125); last accessed on September 12, 2009).

Due to the fact that rural areas do not have enough qualified English teachers and possess fewer educational resources the gap



between the urban and rural areas will probably continue to widen. For example, elementary schools in the eastern coastal counties of Hualien and Taitung, Pingtung county on the southern tip of the island, and the mountainous Nantou county in central Taiwan are having difficulty recruiting qualified English teachers for their fifth-graders (*Taipei Times Online*: October 13, 2002, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2002/10/13/175506>; last accessed on November 6, 2009). On the other hand, urban areas have a huge advantage, since parents in these areas are eager to have their youngsters learn English at an early age. Urban schools in general will start an English teaching program earlier with parents' support. The combination of parental support and earlier education initiatives have resulted in a serious urban-rural gap in English education (Hsu, 2009; Liu, 2002; Lin, 2005).

To summarize, the government's good intention is to provide equal opportunities for the entire population to promote internationalization by teaching English. Nonetheless, the introduction of English in elementary schools has resulted in an imbalanced distribution of English study resources between urban and rural areas, widening the gap between rich and poor. In addition, wealthy families are able to allocate a significant amount of money to their children's English education, but poor families are unable to do the same for their children. As an outcome, English education not only results in widening the gap between rich and poor, but also creates a situation where financially disadvantaged children might find themselves in an inferior position in English learning.

## *1.2. Economic Inequality*

In this study, economic inequality refers to different levels of income and unequal access to employment. The following recent public discourses show that English is viewed as "linguistic capital" in Taiwan and has resulted in different levels of income and unequal access to employment.

Proficiency in the English language helps create better job opportunities and brings comparatively higher pay for employees in Taiwan, according to a survey by online job agency conducted in October, 2009, covering 488 employees and 1,465 employees. (*The China Post* – October 20, 2009, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/print/229303>; last accessed on November 6, 2009).

Government employees with better English ability are to be given better chances of promotion. This will be the first major step planned by the Executive Yuan (Cabinet) to encourage learning English and help beef up the nation's international competitiveness. (*The China Post* – August 10, 2004, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/2004/08/10/51401/Govt-employees.htm>; last accessed on January 16, 2009).

English proficiency is just as important as professional expertise, a spokesman for a job placement service said yesterday” (*The China Post* – May 6, 2007, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/2007/05/06/108899/English-proficiency.htm>; last accessed on January 16, 2009).

Based on the recent media discourse, English proficiency has not only become a basic goal for people who want to work in foreign companies, but also in both private and public sectors in Taiwan. The reason is that Taiwan needs English as the global language to be accepted by the international community. The government asserts that Taiwan's future and economic prosperity depend on English proficiency, the key to competitiveness. As a result, both the general public and the government require people to learn English to obtain work. The rationale is that English will help raise the image of Taiwan as an international nation since English is the key to internationalization.

If English learning is viewed as an authoritative imposition as well as the transmission of a set of useful linguistic skills, it is not surprising that “Government employees with better English ability are

to be given better chances of promotion” (*The China Post* – August 10, 2004, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/2004/08/10/51401/Govt-employees.htm>; last accessed on January 16, 2008). The underlying message is that English not only entails material rewards but also power. Clearly, learning English in Taiwan, in the context of globalization, is based on “employer-defined language goals for education and job market value as the incentive for language learning” or a “market-labor driven” ideology (Ling, 1997, p. 440). The result of labor-market-driven English learning is that it may create a two-tier society, (Tung et al., 1997). In Hong Kong, for instance, those who can speak English are in the upper social levels; those who cannot speak English are in the lower ones. The “labor-market-driven” ideology has created linguistic inequality which I shall explore in the next section.

### *1.3 Linguistic Inequality*

Linguistic inequality refers to the idea that the imposition of English learning has resulted in stratification in languages spoken in Taiwan. The following recent public discourses demonstrate that English has a higher status than other languages spoken in Taiwan.

An elementary school principal said though I speak local dialects quite well, that ability did not help me to achieve much. ... Learning local dialects cannot help you find a job. He considered that English teaching should take priority over Mandarin and other local languages. (*Taiwan News Online*: October 14, 2002, [http://th.gio.gov.tw/show.cfm?news\\_id=15613](http://th.gio.gov.tw/show.cfm?news_id=15613); last accessed on December 6, 2003).

Up to 80 percent of Taiwan parents hoped the government would declare English the second official language of Taiwan, according to findings of a survey released yesterday. The survey was conducted by King Car Education Foundation in December 2005 on 2,059 parents around Taiwan. (*The China Post* – January 12, 2006, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/print/75184>; last accessed on November 6, 2009).

Based on the above discourse, when Taiwan prioritizes cultivating English proficiency for entering this era of economic globalization, English may impact mother tongue learning. Taiwanese people may not be proud of their mother tongue, because speaking English is regarded as a status symbol. It is not surprising to learn that in the first news excerpt that an elementary school principal considered that English teaching should take priority over other local languages, even the official language Mandarin. Moreover, in the second news excerpt, up to 80 percent of respondents hoped the government would declare English the second official language, alongside Mandarin. In short, English-as-the-global-language promotes English as the norm and depreciates other languages, both small and large. In other words, the position of English is not being challenged, but other languages, such as Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka and the aboriginal languages are.

## 2. English and Globalization

The Taiwanese government and Taiwanese people believe that Taiwan needs English for internationalization. The central argument of English as a key to globalization or internationalization is that if Taiwan is unable to compete in an international market, lack of English proficiency must be viewed as a major cause of the decline of the nation. As a result, English has a gatekeeper function in determining who will or will not be able to use their professional knowledge for getting a better job.

However, some scholars have argued that the provision of English instruction in schools is not a panacea. Wang Wei-ming (Wang, 2002), an assistant professor at Nan-Jeon Institute of Technology, claims that Taiwanese people do not have a clear understanding of globalization, nor of the crucial role English plays in globalization. A similar argument was also found in the editorial in the Taiwanese English Newspaper – *The Taipei Times* (*The Taipei Times* – November 09, 2009, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2009/11/09/200345796>; last accessed on November 9, 2009). Liao (2000), a professor at

National Taiwan University, pointed out that the globalization slogans currently popular in Taiwan are aimed exclusively at economic globalization which is a form of “neo-colonialist globalization” led by the Western World, or “Anglicization” as described in the editorial in *Taipei Times* (Ibid.). Liao (2000) further pointed out that Western-led globalization is substituting economic colonialism for the old colonialist power. He also argued that Taiwan does not need this kind of globalization; it needs a “critical globalization” with cultural and humanitarian characteristics. Liao (2000) and Wang (2002) worry that if the teaching of the English language in lower grades is implemented, and English becomes a second official language with no complementary measures to get students firmly rooted in native cultures, Taiwan will soon become a colony of neo-colonialist globalization. As a result, Taiwan will turn into a globalized society where everything is led by commercialized capitalist values from the West.

Chang M. C. (2003) specifies two gateways to achieve internationalization. Firstly, “the influx of international capital and human resources can facilitate internationalization”. Secondly, “internationalization can be achieved through trade”. According to Chang, Taiwan has used international trade as the means to facilitate internationalization, and its degree of internationalization is as good as that of Hong Kong and Singapore. Clearly, Taiwan does not necessarily need to use English to achieve internationalization.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In this study I have examined how language schools sell English as a highly valued commodity in the context of English-as-the-global-language. The results show that English is needed for Taiwanese people and Taiwan, especially that children need to acquire English the earlier the better. Taiwanese people are zealously learning English, for mastering English not only makes Taiwanese people citizens of the world, but also fulfills their emerging practical needs. English is valued by Taiwanese society for its

economic rewards and the government is willing to invest capital in promoting English. The government believes this will increase Taiwan's competitiveness. English appears to be capital; learners invest money and effort in the hope of various occupational rewards and/or a better future. Many Taiwanese English learners believe that their efforts to acquire English proficiency will necessarily result in a well-paid job and a better future. In reality, English learning has led to a variety of inequalities, such as educational, economic, and linguistic inequalities. Investigation revealed that the view that English is the key to internationalization and future success needs to be seriously reconsidered. Therefore, it is suggested that Taiwanese people need to adopt a more thoughtful, sensitive, and critical attitude towards English and English learning as a whole.

## **VII. IMPLICATIONS**

The implication of English as a global language is very complex in an EFL country. The first implication is that ELT and SLA cannot be taken as simply teaching and learning a language because they derive economic benefits. Secondly, English should not be promoted as a panacea for current Taiwanese economic and educational problems. Thirdly, English should not be viewed as the primary factor determining Taiwanese people's success or failure in schools or other working systems. Fourthly, policy-makers and educators need to consider the promotion not only of English but also of local languages. They should promote an appreciation of the critical value of local languages and local cultures to ensure national prosperity. Fifthly, the overemphasis on English language learning, without a thorough evaluation of its educational impact, is problematic. The implication is that a successful English education needs a well-designed curriculum, qualified English teachers, sufficient funding and instruction hours, appropriate teaching materials, methods and assessment, positive attitudes towards local languages, and a thorough evaluation of the educational impact. Finally, the government and English educators need to research English teaching and learning as it exists in particular

economic, political, and cultural contexts so that they can better understand the dynamics and ramifications of English teaching and learning.

## VIII. LIMITATIONS

The main limitation is that this study was based on language school slogans and short paragraph texts. However, other texts provided by language schools, such as school names, school logos, photos, and pictorials need to be researched. Moreover, further research could focus on different types of media used by language schools, such as English teaching job ads in newspapers or websites, television commercials, and language school flyers.

Although the data provide ample evidence, whether these data reflect the reality in the classroom remains unclear. An ethnographic study is needed to fill in the gap. Participant-observation, classroom observation, ethnographic interviewing, photography, and document collection in a language school or a public school would be highly desirable to triangulate the findings of this study.

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