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Citation

Dawadi, Saraswati; Kukulska-Hulme, Agnes and Seargeant, Philp (2024). English for the EDI generation: Predicting and tracking the role of English and digital/mobile technologies in Higher Education across East and South Asia. In: INTED Conference 2024, 1 Jul - 3 July 2024, Palma, Spain.

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English for the EDI generation: Predicting and tracking the role of English and digital/mobile technologies in Higher Education across East and South Asia



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Research Focus

- Part of the British Council's Future of English initiative - particularly the future of English from the perspective of higher education (but with the British Council looking at the future of English around the world in education more generally).
- Our project tracks and evaluates a set of three interconnected, predicted trends concerning the impact of the growing use of digital/mobile technology (DMT) on regional and local ecologies of teaching, assessment and learning of English (TALE) in higher education
- Two key areas of interest for us: the impact of technology on English education and use; and the ways in which gender plays a role in access to English and English education
- Examination of the future role that English will play in social mobility and how access to English-related educational resources affects life chances of people in the four most populous nations in Asia

Research contexts and stakeholders

- Focus on how most populous nations in Asia (especially China and India) are likely to have a particularly significant influence on the global future of English

Working with key stakeholders in each target country



China



Indonesia



Bangladesh



India

Research questions

1. How do undergraduate students and their teachers perceive the role of **DMT (digital mobile technology)** in teaching, learning and assessment of English (TALE) in higher education?
2. How do the students and teachers perceive the **EDI - including gender equality - issues** in TALE in higher education?
3. How do the stakeholders perceive the role/value of English **now** and **in the next ten years** in their communities in general and higher education in particular:
 - in providing better career and life opportunities,
 - in relation to other languages used at university and in their communities,
 - in creating an equitable and inclusive society?
4. How does students' **experience of using English and DMT change** from high school to higher education?

Research Design

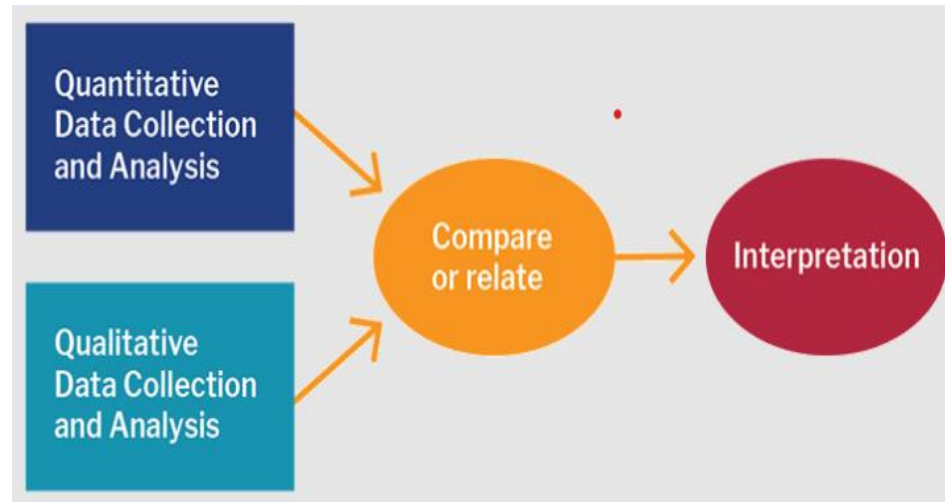
- Mixed-methods approach: a time series longitudinal design (within an interval of 13-15 months)
- Surveys, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and Padlet discussions

First Phase Data collection- done

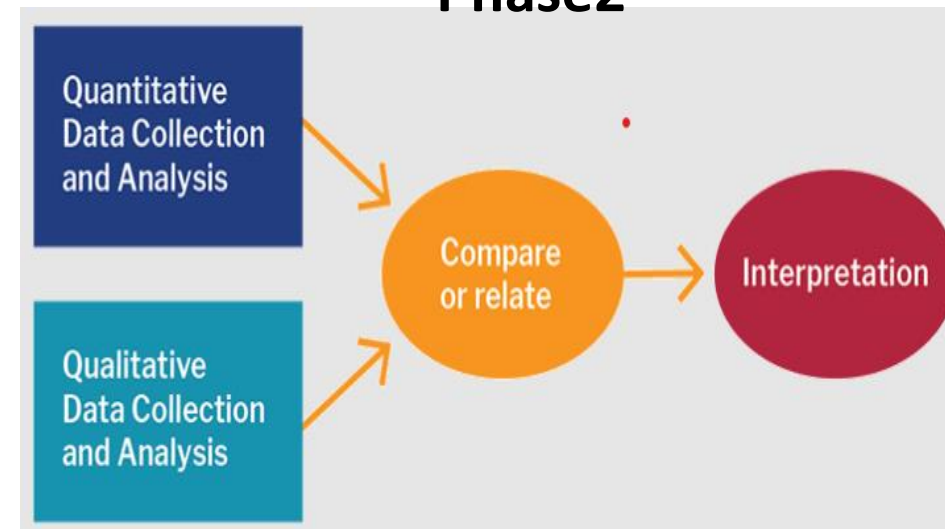
- Surveys: students (n= 5695), teachers (n=327)
- Interviews: teachers (n=20, 5 in each country)
- Focus Group Discussions: 57 Students (3 FGDs in each country)
- Padlet Discussions: 49 Students

Data transcription and analysis

Phase 1



Phase 2



Roles of English for professional opportunities

- Almost all the teachers from the four countries reported that English language competence is important for professional growth (98%) and for finding a job (95%).
- Almost all the students (98%) expressed the view that knowledge of English is important in their country. Interestingly, female Students considered English to be more important than their male counterparts ($p < .05$).
- Qualitative findings provide further evidence to these findings (a few quotes below):
 - *From a career development perspective, because our country now vigorously develops the economic exchange between countries, there are a lot of foreign-funded enterprises. They offer many specific positions, covering fields such as tourism, hotel management, aviation, IT, and so on, in which English plays an important role. So, from the perspective of career development, English is a necessary skill. (Teacher in China)*
 - *If they want to do a high paying job, they must know English. Even the teachers and friends tell us that without English, we won't be valued. (Student in Bangladesh)*
 - *I am learning English; I see it as a career advancement. In today's globalized world, English is often the primary language of business and communication and by speaking English or by improving my skills in English, language as particular, I aim to enhance my professional opportunities which I had to come and effectively engage with the opportunities with the international audience if ever. (Student in India)*

Will English continue to be important?

- The majority of survey participants reported that the importance of English is likely to grow in the future, as indicated below.

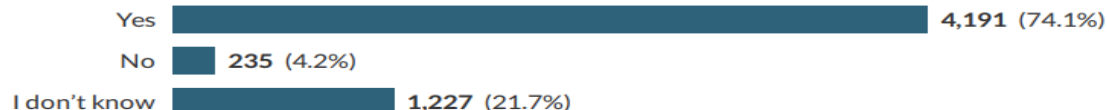
Teachers

Is the importance of English in higher education likely to grow in the future?



Students

Is the importance of English in higher education likely to grow in the future?



The above quantitative findings are well supported by qualitative findings.

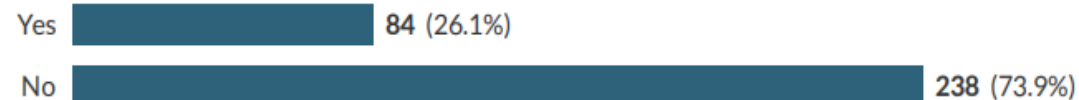
- *I see this language [English] as a growing and is still growing language, it's growing, and it will still continue to grow [...] I don't think any other language will be able to replace English in the upcoming years (Students in India).*
- *I don't think English will be replaced in the near future because it has a wide audience and its influence has lasted for many years (Student in China).*
- *I don't think any other language will be able to replace English in the upcoming years (Students in Bangladesh).*

Other languages taking over the position of English

Participants were asked to report whether they see other languages taking over the position English has as the main international language today. However, as indicated below, findings are not conclusive.

Teachers

Do you see other languages taking over the position English has as the main international language today?



Students

Do you see other languages taking over English's position as the main international language?



Other languages taking over the position of English (Continued)

- Qualitative findings are also not conclusive. While some participants think that English will continue as a major international language in the future, some others argue that other languages (mainly Chinese, Spanish and Japanese) will take over the role of English as an international language in the long run:

As I have mentioned, I think maybe one day Chinese will become the largest language of the world. (Student in China)

I believe English will not hold as much popularity as it holds today. We have a lot of other emerging nations, France, Germany, Japan even India. In fact, Spanish has become a very popular language in USA these days. (Student in India)

Our world is constantly changing and there will be a new world language in our world, cause the main factor is, I think Chinese or Japanese can become a global language because, as we know, China is a superpower country now. (Student in Bangladesh)

EDI issues associated with the use of English in higher education

- Half of the students (50%) and more than one third of teachers (39%) reported that some students are unable to join their program because of English language requirements. Slightly more teachers from China and India think that some students are unable to join their university because of English language requirements than the teachers from two other countries.
- More than one third students (37%) further reported that English language tests or English language assessment activities conducted at their university disadvantage them.

Those who know English are at an advantage compared to those who do not know English. (Teacher in Bangladesh)

DMT in Higher Education

- Findings suggest that DMT has a crucial role in higher education. Almost all students (97%) reported using mobile phones and most of them using the phones to learn English (84%) and support their academic studies (87%). Additionally, 81% students reported using a laptop and 38% using a tablet to learn English.
- Participants reported that digital devices are very important for their (professional) lives and studies.

Students' views about the importance of digital devices

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q52 In your opinion, how important are digital devices (for example laptops, mobile phones, tablets...) in learning at university?	5643	1.00	5.00	4.4140	.81559

DMT in Higher Education (Continued)

- Qualitative findings further suggest that DMT helps students and teachers in different ways, including teaching and learning.

Nowadays, all digital devices are inevitable part of our daily life. It's kind of hard to think without these devices. Usually, I use phone to learn English (Student in Bangladesh).

DMT have facilitated online teacher-student interaction and even allowed real-time tracking of student responses, which is highly beneficial (Teacher in China).

DMT helps teachers perform better. In many cases, I would prefer sort of old-fashioned non-digital tools for my teaching. But often, digital tools are very useful for showing content that is audio visual in nature, such as pictures or videos (Teacher in India).

EDI issues associated with the use of DMT

- Findings in relation to inclusion issues associated with the use of DMT are not conclusive. The majority of students (76%) reported that students in their program have equal access to digital technology for learning English outside the university.
- Although the majority of teachers (76%) and students (64%) did not feel disadvantaged in terms of having access to digital devices; a substantial number of students (36%) and teachers (24%) reported that they feel disadvantaged in this regard.
- Country-wise findings further suggest that more students from Bangladesh feel disadvantaged in terms of having access to digital devices. There is no gender difference in this regard ($p > .05$)
- In terms of teachers' views about whether the entry requirements for technological know-how in their university put some students at a disadvantage, findings suggest that the requirements put some students at a disadvantage (mean scores are higher than 3 on a scale between 1 and 5 in both countries).

Gendered use of DMT in Higher Education

- Findings generally do not indicate gender-wise differences in terms of students' access to and use of DMT in their studies. However, there are some indications that girls in some contexts in India and Bangladesh have less access to DMT.

In terms of technology access, speaking solely from my own experience, I have seen some differences in getting access to technology. In households with strict environments, I have often noticed girls getting less access to or getting restricted in their usage of technology as compared to guys. "Strict" here is a very subjective word and its definitions may vary for everyone here. (Student in India)

It seems to me that boys get access to technology at a young age, but girls get the opportunity later. So, I think it can adversely affect their English language learning. (Student in Bangladesh)

THANK YOU

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