

## American impact on Asian and Pacific Englishes: a corpus-based investigation

As is well known, except for the Philippines all of the Postcolonial Englishes of the Asia-Pacific region can be traced back to British colonialism, and in almost all countries an external British norm is still upheld as the target of language education (cf. Schneider 2007). However, an increasing impact of American English has been observed and commented on in many countries, and it is usually met with ambivalent attitudes. Evidence for this perceived Americanization is scant and anecdotal, however, and serious investigations of the process are missing. This paper sets out to fill this gap by systematically investigating corpus data drawn from the International Corpus of English (ICE) project (<http://ice-corpora.net/ice>).

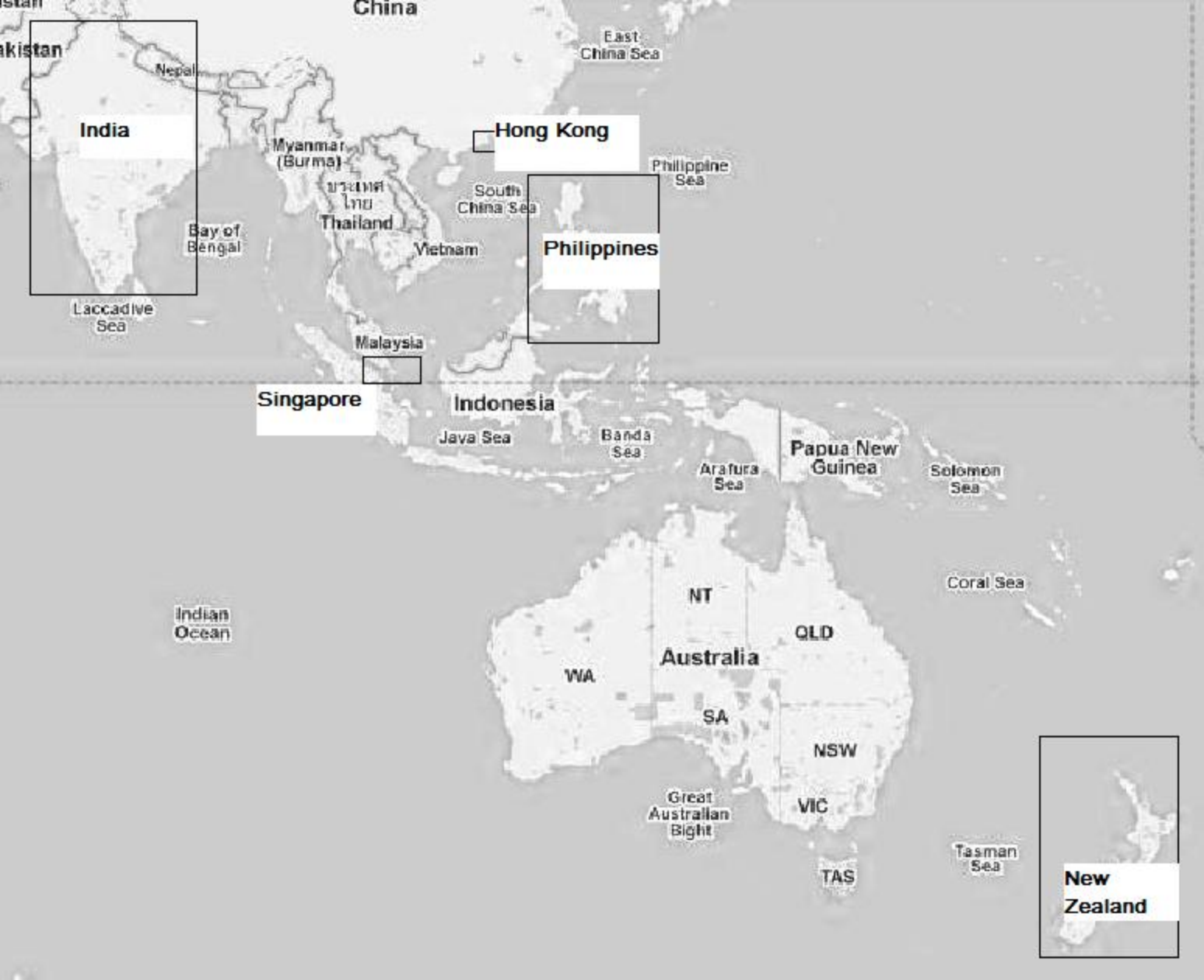
First, it is necessary to define the notions of Americanization and globalization and, in particular, to develop a method for detecting and weighing American impact. Of course, there is a set of well known, apparently simple distinctions between British and American English on the levels of lexis (e.g. *petrol* – *gas*, *autumn* – *fall*), grammar (e.g. *got* – *gotten*, *Have you ...* – *Do you have ...*) and orthography (e.g. *colour* – *color*), in addition to phonological differences (not considered here, given that this study is based on written data). Recent research (Algeo 2006, Mittmann 2004, Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2009) has shown, however, that reality is much more complex: differences between the two major varieties of English are rarely so clear-cut; instead, they consist of a vast array of subtle quantitative preferences of either variety for certain lexical choices, phraseological collocations, and grammatical patterns. One question asked, thus, is whether the putative global impact of American English manifests itself more strongly, or possibly even restricts itself, to a few salient features, or to what extent subtle co-occurrence preferences are also influential, if at all.

Based on the above studies by Algeo, Mittmann, and Rohdenburg & Schlüter, a set of word choices, "lexical bundles" (after Biber et al. 1999) and structural preferences distinguishing British and American English are selected, and their frequencies of occurrence in a range of Asian and Pacific Englishes are investigated and interpreted in the light of the putative Americanization process. Specifically, ICE-GB (from Great Britain) and a roughly similarly composed corpus of American English texts (culled from the FROWN and Santa Barbara corpora, given that no ICE-US is available) serve as quantitative benchmarks, and the one-million word ICE corpora from India, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and New Zealand, representing the respective varieties of English, are screened for these variant forms. Distributions are investigated quantitatively. Factors considered include variety; language level (lexis, phraseology, syntax, spelling); style level (spoken vs. written); and saliency (salient vs. non-salient variants).

Thus, the study yields a subtly differentiated picture of the variant degrees of the impact of American English on Asian and Pacific Englishes.

### References

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Pakistan

Nepal

India

Myanmar  
(Burma)

Laos  
ไทย

Thailand

Vietnam

Malaysia

Singapore

Indonesia

Java Sea

Banda  
Sea

Arafura  
Sea

Papua New  
Guinea

Solomon  
Sea

Coral Sea

Indian  
Ocean

NT

QLD

Australia

WA

SA

NSW

VIC

TAS

Great  
Australian  
Bight

Tasman  
Sea

New  
Zealand