Pop Culture Images of English Speakers in Asia

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Research Framework

Language Status | Multilingualism | Norms
---|---|---
**Inner Circle** | Official Language | Monolingual | Norm Providing
**Outer Circle** | Official Language | Multilingual | Both Norm Providing and Dependent
**Expanding Circle** | Unofficial Language | Multilingual | Norm Dependent
Englishes Across South East Asia
How does Popular Culture Inform/Shape Identities?

• Because pop culture is driven by the marketplace, it will not present images that are inauthentic or unacceptable.

• Images of English speakers often are, in fact, idealised images rather than statistical realities.

• Pop culture will also portray intercultural communication as a form of entertainment.
“Girls Out Loud”
(Singapore)

Two Singapore Englishes:
(1) Singaporean English (Exonormative)
(2) Singlish (Endonormative)

Rosalyn “Roz”
a radio DJ
the voice of ‘authority’

Wendy
a blogger
the voice of ‘authenticity’
‘Language Entertainment’
Television in the ‘Outer Circle’

• The genre is characteristic of the ‘Expanding Circle’ of English users.

• The genre emerged from the ‘language education’ genre that was designed to instruct.

• The development of the genre is related to the more general development of ‘edutainment’ TV.

Moody (2006)
Eigo-de Asobo
Eigo-de Shabera Night

Can you speak English?

NYからお招きしました
NOKKOさんです！
Japanese students tend to hesitate to interact with English speakers “until,” as they often are heard to say, they develop complete proficiency in the language. Fears of making mistakes often prevent them even from using the phrases and expressions they are learning at school.’

Honna (2008: 147)
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Honna (2008: 147)
Characteristics of Japanese Speakers Portrayed on Japanese Language Entertainment TV

- Competence

- 勇気 yuuki ‘Courage’

- 自虐 jigyaku ‘Self-effacement’

- 元気 genki ‘Enthusiasm’

Moody & Matsur
Competence
Competence (FAIL!)

Mr Bush speaks no Japanese, and Mr Mori will be well advised not to rely on his high school memories of English. "Who are you?" he asked Bill Clinton, welcoming him to the Okinawa economic summit last year.

"I'm Hillary's husband," replied an unstumped Mr Clinton. "Me too!" beamed Mr Mori, sticking with his painfully rehearsed script. Mr Clinton assumed the look that says "We've got a right one here," and, predictably, the Okinawa talks were just that: much talk, all at cross-purposes. (Sayle 2001)
勇気 Courage
Self-effacement
元気 Enthusiasm
Conclusions

• The ‘Language Entertainment’ genre of television offers us one way to look at how English speakers are idealised in popular culture.

• The images of English speakers are consistent and respond to specific psychological characteristics of Asian speakers that cause communication apprehension.

• ‘Englishes’ (distinctive ‘authentic’ variety features) may not directly be portrayed because of concerns with ‘authority’ and external norms.
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