

Prospects for English Studies: India and Britain Compared

Notes of the third workshop of the project held at the Open University in London, 13-14 July 2013

Workshop Chair: Richard Allen

July 13

Introductory Discussion

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Theme: 'For the future we should see 'English' in universities as either a global brand, ripe for recognition by World Heritage but also vital for the free movement of labour, or an increasingly fragmented thing, embodying local cultures and expressing local needs'.

By way of picking up threads from the previous workshops, RA introduced the topic for the present session: whether "English" in universities should be understood *either* as "a global brand, ripe for recognition as World Heritage but also vital for the free movement of labour", *or* as "an increasingly fragmented thing, embodying local cultures and expressing local needs". RA explained that the either/or topic for this session offered a deliberate polarisation and was intended to provoke contesting viewpoints and set the ground for the more forward looking stance of further sessions. RA wondered whether changes could be spotted in the way English Studies has come to be recognised in the UK and in India within the periods of the participants' engagement with the discipline. In the UK it might, for example, be argued that for all the apparent changes in approach in English Studies (Marxism, Feminism, Post-colonial students) the essential structure of a typical English Studies degree had remained the same.

With regard to the deliberately polarised topic for the session, TB wondered how the "local" should be factored in – as global vs. the "national", or as global vs. the "regional". GJV wondered whether the number of students enrolling in the English studies programme is indicative of an interest in the subject itself - whether global or local, or an aspirational option: a way to spend time at universities studying what is perceived as a non-demanding subject while preparing for other competitive entrance examinations. This could affect the way English is taught – as training for an increasingly competitive marketplace, or as an introduction to disciplinary concerns and research areas. SG commented on the two underlying assumptions that underlie how English Studies is perceived – as a business enterprise involving proficiency in daily linguistic transactions, or as an institutional formation. While debates to the role and future direction of English studies try to respond while keeping these two assumptions in mind, the history of English studies, he argued, was derived from neither. It is the institutional structure (rather than the subject or discipline of English studies) that attempts to accommodate both these assumptions.

MP saw a global trend towards integration and increased mobility across national borders, so that English Studies does seem to be a global brand. In his own institution, JNU, the area of English studies has traditionally absorbed cross-disciplinary influences. More generally, English Studies has come to represent the liberal arts in general. With the demand for English-language proficiency in the workplace, he said, it would be useful to think of the area in more holistic terms. In India, English departments have incorporated trends such as the efforts of regional or caste groups to assert their distinctive identities through the medium of English. TB agreed with MP that English Studies has in some locations and where disadvantaged groups are encouraged to enrol been seen as helping social 'levelling' and an empowering location for students.

CS commented from an Italian and UK perspective that she thought the humanities were under attack globally. On the one hand, with cuts in funding, new teachers are not being recruited. On the other hand, the quality of students and their level of preparation for studying English (in Italy) have deteriorated. The challenge, she noted, is to engage with the younger generation, find out what students need and want, and rethink strategies of teaching English. Globalisation and localisation should go hand in hand in this. AW observed that in the Netherlands, there has been a shift between generations. Whereas earlier English was a specialism where students would have basic knowledge of the language combined with French and German, in more recent times students have become increasingly comfortable with communicating in English. English has been incorporated into primary school education in the Netherlands, and the knowledge of English is now taken for granted enabling the subject to be seen as a local as well as a global subject.

The group noted a contrast here with India where participants in previous workshops had commented on the inadequacy of teaching in schools. RS extended these earlier comments from earlier workshops. One motivation for studying English was to gain proficiency in the language to further aspirations and achieve empowerment. The paradox is that the teaching of English Studies is not geared to this local demand but in a 'global' fashion assumes language proficiency at every level. SB commented that in Delhi, language education had been included in English Studies teaching to help students from different backgrounds and language proficiency but it was not explicit whether increased proficiency was to help the study of texts or something more vocational. AG noted that English has been considered as an important medium for a globally trained workforce in India in the XI and XII plans, but she also felt apprehensive that universities might turn into functional training centres with a heavy focus on teaching language rather than literature. For all this SB argued that the reason for the demand for English lies in being perceived as within the liberal arts umbrella that in different ways combined the global and the local. That, he argued, is the reason for the demand for English Studies, and also for the demand for English graduates in the media and publishing industries.

MP felt that the lesson of the practice of English Studies in Spain and Europe more generally was that language learning could be embedded in English course alongside canonical texts in a way that would complement a degree in business or science. In India English studies, moreover, has had a largely canonical syllabus, which inculcates in students "a certain way of being in the world", a cosmopolitanism that further translated into better employability. This, he argued, was the case in English teaching in Korea, Japan, China and Brazil, which could be seen as indicative of a global increase in demand for English studies. English Studies is very much a global brand with local affinities.

TB updated participants on the effect of undergraduate programme reform on English Studies in Delhi University (DU). A four-year undergraduate programme replaces a three-year one – with skills-centred foundation level courses and more subject-specific higher level courses. It was anticipated by many that English Studies would decline or become no more than a pragmatic choice made with view to bettering employment prospects, but in practice the English curriculum in the four year programme was not, as had been much feared, a functional programme focusing on communication skills such as reading and writing and is still fairly canonical. In terms of recruitment too there had been no decline. SC was more sceptical and said he thought it was still an open question as to whether this institutional change could mean institutional dilution, and whether students in the four year undergraduate programme in DU would be learning literature, or functional skills for the labour market.

AH said that English Language Teaching (ELT) has an interface with the English department in the Arts faculty at the Open University, and are working together towards building a joint degree within the global/local polarity. English studies, she felt, potentially had the flexibility to encompass many different designations in a time when language acquisition was fighting for its

place as an academic discipline. AH also perceived a shifting pattern in terms of how much the present concern is with the literacy level of the students, and wondered if within curriculum design there was an implicit polarisation between skills enhancement (with a focus on language acquisition) or as life enhancement (which she associated with the study of literature). The debate concluded having explored relationships with English Studies between: Language and Literature, global and local, institutional structures and structures within the subject area.

Thematic Session 1

Public and University Policies as Drivers for Change

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RA introduced this thematic session by commenting on the institutional and policy contexts in which academics work and invited comments on the way public and university policy drove change. He invited KH to begin the discussion. KH spoke of a change adopted by many institutions and fostered by governments, namely the development of internet technology and the opportunities presented by information exchange and freely available online content. In the most common model being proposed there is free content available to the aspiring student, the universities provide the tutors and assessment required for gaining academic credentials. This has a clear potential to be disruptive of present structures requiring the HE sector to reconsider its role and what it should provide for students. At its least threatening the model of online access/institutional assessment provided a trajectory that can help develop student journeys from the informal to the formal. More threateningly institutions could their research based content creation work.

AW spoke next discussing the contemporary research environment and market trends, and the ways in which economic and societal benefit, impact and employability are considered in this context. Open access and free content (where research publications are available to everyone) seem to be key elements in the evolving scene. This again leads to questions about how they might be affecting the research environment -- who is footing the bill for open access, so to speak, and who derives benefit from it? AW wondered how English Studies and English Studies departments would position themselves with such. AW suggested that one must ensure that definitions of impact also take into consideration the intangible values of research, and weigh in cultural benefits as well as economic ones. Often, she noted, government policies are blind to what cannot be represented as figures. SG reflected on how tangible and intangible benefits are currently defined, and how the moulding of conceptual research to meet pre-determined ideas was being implemented by, but was in fact damaging to, the AHRC. As more money is going to applied areas, he observed, even the sciences are suffering in terms of theoretical research. AW replied that public policy does not formally define applied or theoretical funding, but RCUK policy could be being moulded by the desire for catching up with 'business' models. SG observed that more money goes to research with non-academic impact than academic impact, something that is determined by the stakeholders who view research as a use-oriented activity.

GJV returned to KH's points and described potentially similar moves in teaching India where, under the *e-pathshala* policy announced in 2011 with actions beginning in 2013, undergraduate and postgraduate courses are made available online for free access in universities and colleges across the country. He discussed the potential impact of online learning on college and university teaching, and emphasised the need to consider what kinds of learning are enabled with classroom instruction, and what a college space offers that is more than the interaction available on a virtual space.

MP argued that public policy as a driver was problematic in India because policy makers do not consult the stakeholders (teachers) and therefore do not respond directly to what is happening in the classroom. Indian government policies are often moreover often just copies of policy decisions in the UK. In a context where public policy generally favours market forces, federally funded and state universities have relatively low standards, and demand exceeds supply the government has surreptitiously opened up the private sector. Big business houses such as Wipro, Tata, Infosys, Ambanis and Jindal are setting up universities. These private institutions, MP felt, are brutal in terms of their selection of academic content and the fees they charge for it, focusing only on courses that “sell” or have explicit employment benefits. Through these moves, intentionally or accidentally, the concept of the university has changed; neo-liberal universities are run like businesses. In such a context the main question facing English studies may be how to market literature and link it to prestige (inextricably linked to higher fees structure in the private sector). This runs contrary to the notion of open access and the model described by KH. English Studies here can constitute tightly regulated cultural capital, with universities assiduously maintaining their branding – which they hope would give their students the credential that would be valued in the job market. The contrast of public policy driving both the use of open resources and the growth of institutions fostering exclusive prestige was discussed further. SC noted the number of online course offered by Harvard and MIT, and speculated that these institutions use brand value to provide offer apparently open education but in fact to claim ownership of knowledge. KH responded suggesting these universities could indeed be trying out different models of business – online access helps in first exposing students to quality content, and then to capture them as fee-paying students. He said one could look more closely at which institutions are offering such content, and also offering scholarships to students.

SG observed that the difference between the public and private sectors have been all but wiped out in the UK. In some instances, the private universities may even charge less than the public ones. He then returned to elearning, reminding colleagues of the publishing environment, in that publishers have also offered autodidactic materials to interested students through visual aids such as DVDs. What people have always paid for is the brand. Formal and informal aspects of learning have always been blurred rather than clearly demarcated, and what is now happening is that the content has been further divided into a special mode of delivery with e-learning. E-learning, SG continued, can be an enhanced mode of learning, but added that it is an illusion that it is cheaper mode of learning. MA offered a further critique, saying that elearning remains city-centric in India. He questioned the number of Indian students, away from urban centres, who would have access to e-learning (with personal computers, broadband connectivity, and so on). Meanwhile, MA observed that access to online content at the undergraduate level leads to mass plagiarism, at times touching almost 90% of all students in Delhi University.

GM felt that open access was a market product wherein English becomes an acquisitional cultural marker. What, she asked, does a product do when it is offered as free access and not consumed within university contexts? With these two models colliding in the UK, GM felt the gap between government policy and ground reality may widen even more. She also observed that in terms of policy, the interference is not currently in terms of the curriculum, but in terms of the context (such as the fees) that are forcing changes upon classroom teaching and how knowledge is disseminated. GM argued that open access is interfering with academic freedom.

CS felt that Britain is shifting away from European models of democracy with new (higher) fee structures. Unconvinced about the quality of online courses, she suggested that e-learning suppresses critical thinking. Also, the assimilation of the humanities into hard sciences (where language teaching complements a business or science subject) makes it functional. AW disagreed with CS and commented on the use of e-learning to make students better aware of critical thinking and use of historical sources, as online platforms offer a rich learning environment. She asked GM why she perceived open access as a threat, to which GM responded

that it is not the virtual space that is the threat, but the process of getting to that space (such as the distribution of money and institutional affiliations). GJV commented that e-learning can be complementary to the university system, entailing more interaction for the students, and thought that access to online learning is available even in small towns in India. SG disagreed that cited that online access is currently placed in the region of 12% in India. Also, e-learning is still not “free” in India, since the degree of moderation of electronic forums needs considerable investment.

SB registered a possibility of a disconnect between policy and practice in India. He suggested that the university could be a site for subversion, and academics could pursue their own research while nodding to policy, and instil critical thought in the curriculum. TB responded that there is a difference between being responsive to and being dismissive of public policy; he felt that teachers in India were not protesting enough, and were there complicit with government policy. SB conjectured whether after having appropriated funding, academics could take a somewhat duplicitous way out, and pander to the belief of ELT impact while continuing to work with the cultural framework of English studies. The situation in England however, RA noted, suggested this might be difficult as funding and government bodies increasingly monitor what happens in the ‘classroom’ MP observed that the kind of duplicity SB mentioned is indeed easier when there is inefficient officialdom, and lower standards of accountability. In terms of bureaucracy in India, there is now a points system for promotion that is hard to subvert. The use of research metrics shows a different pattern. On the one hand, more journals are being set up and more papers being published; on the other hand, activities such as organising conference have become exercises in the collection of certificates to prove academic engagement and research dissemination. SG noted that English departments in the UK are also set funding targets, a quantification where the amount of funding is seen to be proportional to the quality of the research. AW suggested that such targets are set to demonstrate the quality of research, having gone through a competitive process. KH observed that funding is a mark of peer review and is needed in all streams. The order of magnitude may differ, but the peer review process, the assessment of quality, and the recognition of contribution to the broader field are equally important for the humanities.

RA concluded the session by highlighting key issues from the discussion: the use of metrics to dictate funding; the entry of the private sector in education, encouraged by the government; and the growing use of technology and online resources.

Thematic Session 2

English Studies, “Employability”, and the Employers’ Perspective

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RA opened the session by inviting CB to describe his experience of the implementation of employability policies in the Open University. CB offered a brief overview of the issues surrounding employability in the UK indicating the emphasis on providing students with skills for employment. This echoed the emphasis on giving HE an instrumental aspect put forward in the previous session. In the Open University’s Arts Faculty, as elsewhere, an ‘employability statement’ has been agreed which has a fourfold aim: (1) to ensure that students understand employability opportunities and the skills they are expected to acquire; (2) to develop the students’ transferable skills; (3) to ensure students understand and reflect on the skills they acquire; and (4) to building up expertise within the digital literacy framework and the kind of

transferable IT skills graduates would need. In the Arts faculty, this approach is driven by university policy, and is thus top-down, but it is also motivated by perceptions of student interests, going beyond ideas of simple vocational training to raise aspirations and setting out the value of education to students' working careers. CB argued that the evidence is that there is a changing student demographic, with a higher number of students enrolling in study programmes with a view to gain better employability, and a decrease in purely personal reasons for study.

CeS speculated that sometimes, students could be pushed into degrees because of parental pressure. But she also insisted that the focus on transferable skills could be a turn-off when students are attempting to select a course of study. In her view, through English Studies the working world can be approached through the tropes and narratives available in literature (for instance, in the nineteenth century novels that have a focus on working conditions, such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*). Such approaches engage students more than simple instrumental approaches. SG argued that there was a vagueness surrounding the notion of graduate skills-set, and felt that some parameters should be specified in terms of identifying and measuring transferable skills if these were to be accepted as part of the English Studies curriculum. Often, he reflected, the concept of transferable skills seems to be a narrative without empirical and otherwise demonstrable parameters. CB reiterated that employability statements do indeed lay emphasis on identifiable, and on the students' ability to articulate these skills in a competitive marketplace. TB continued to question this point however, asking whether employability can be measured by the skills acquired, and whether this correlation was being too much taken for granted? MP agreed and said that there needs to be a better understanding of what employers want, and specifically from English graduates. Are English graduates, for example, made more employable with the acquisition of computer skills? Alternatively if a student aims for a job based on linguistic proficiency in the banking sector, how does that correlate with skills developed through studying English literature.

RA cited evidence that suggested that recruitment consultants may be looking at a number of evaluative criteria, such as institutional hierarchy, the class of degree, and the subject studied. This also raises questions about how employability can be measured, and the difference between short term employability gained from vocational training and the employability of English graduates. GregM replied that in the UK, English *is* considered desirable for public office jobs. GJV also mentioned that in India English graduates with communication skills are more employable in certain jobs, such as management jobs. GJV replied that the communication skills learnt by English graduates are transferable skills, but the name and brand-value of the college helps them move across fields; this means that there is a "simultaneity of processes" that makes English graduates from a particular college or university more employable. CeS added that English graduates are better placed to find the storyline/narrative within in workplace, and have better emotional intelligence – these, she insisted, were literary rather than linguistic talents. SG wondered still, however, if there was any evidence of literature graduates in management positions.

RA commented on the often repeated claim that graduates from public universities in India were 'unemployable', as opposed to those graduating from private universities focus more on employability and offer vocational courses (this again brought the private/public divide to the fore). SG cited the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Report based on a survey of employers, that found skills deficit within the Indian workforce, especially English language proficiency. MP asked whether there was any consensus on what constitutes a skill -- a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score? To get a TOEFL score, one does not need to have an English literature degree. SB wondered whether certain colleges in Delhi (and India in general) have better brand-value in a job market, and if so, what is it that these colleges do (apart from their historical brand-value) that develops and maintains their brand. AG argued that a college's brand is the most important but that this is largely determined by the

demographic composition of its students operating through the selection process; social factors outside the classroom could turn out to be more determinative of the brand and employability. TB added that the branding of an institution has to do not with the critical faculty inculcated within the classroom, but with the institution's reputation. In Delhi, to date, arguably the skills agenda, and the notion of 'value-added' education had had little impact on employability. SC suggested that in fact employers of English Studies graduates were not looking at what applicants had done at all as they expected to provide in house training for job-specific skills.

AH commented on the significance of university brands in the UK and said that the push towards articulating transferable skills also relates to the growth of mass education. Fifty years ago, the proportion of university students was quite small, and students relied on family and school networks and their attendant cultural capital. The education system now allows more number of students without that background to enrol for courses of study, and there is a concomitant need for articulating transferable skills for this new demographic.

SG returned to his point about the need for evidence, and pointed out – fore example – that during the period when employability policies had been in place youth unemployment has actually increased - 7-8% overall and 50% in the minority communities. The formulation of skills in non-academic terms, he suggested, had met with resistance from business leaders. The emphasis on skills reflected a monodimensional notion of employment, whereas conceptual freedom in the teaching of English studies may help create more employment. Equally he thought one might look for ways in which employment is generated (through research and study in the Humanities), rather than preparing students for employment “out there”.

CeS offered some counterposing evidence from a survey of English graduates working in the financial sector. Things they cited as desirable skills - for example the ability to assimilate large volume of text, deep-reading skills, analysing the workplace meetings as dramatic situations, employing a left-field approach, and considering the “what if” scenario- were specifically literary skills. CB argued also that the concept of transferable skills should be seen as a means to get students to reflect on what they have learnt, and suggested that his views and KS' views were not that different. SG responded that there was still a danger that transferable skills were used too often in bullet-point format and as bureaucratic formulae, something difficult to implement in liberal arts courses. CB agreed noting that skills such as critical thinking last longer, whereas vocational skills may be limited in their durability and long-term benefit to the learner. RA observed similarly that in small and medium enterprises, creativity is highly regarded.

RA went on to briefly describe a project at Glyndwr University that, like that led by CeS was funded by the UK English Subject Centre (as part of the Higher Education Academy). (It had been hoped that the Project Leaders could attend to present this themselves but at the last minute they had been unable to attend.) The project involved the creation an eleven week course with 20 credits. This was largely self directed but students were advised by a course tutor, and by representatives from the Career Services and the Centre for Entrepreneurial Skills. The aim was to develop a product; students were given the space to think about their creative skills and to use those skills to develop their ideas. RA understood that this was a success.

MP agreed with CeS' point of the importance of recognising and building narratives in the workplace (which English graduates can be seen to possess). He further reflected that the university should be viewed as the shaper of the working world, inculcating critical thinking skills needed for innovation and adaptation. He also noted the government policies should not be seen as detrimental to the discipline -- the four year undergraduate programme introduced in Delhi University had met with much resistance, but MP felt that it could offer more challenges and be more useful to students. SG and RA commented that similar pressures were ironically in Europe and the UK leading to the adopting of a 3 year norm, but also the possibility of accelerated 2 year degrees.

Thematic Session 3

English Language and English Literature as Components of English Studies

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SG opened the session, reflecting on the earlier discussions in India and their bearing on the UK situation. He suggested that English studies could be thought of as either a composite discipline or a single discipline (with its basis in philology and comparative literary studies). In this latter model Linguistics tends to have become separated off to a separate department. The Indian model of English studies, he noted, has been influenced by the UK. English departments (for example, Delhi University) have tended in India to centre literature, with linguistics on the margins. Moreover, literature is taught in a liberal humanist manner, so that language learning and linguistics are seen to be outside of the students' horizon. In the UK and in India, SG reflected, the tension can be articulated as one between ideas of literacy and literature. This makes for difficulties in the present situation in India, when the main debate revolves around English language proficiency. Colleagues in the literature department are anxious about having to teach language, while academics in linguistics consider their subject to have a specialist quality which places it differently from language teaching. SG added that it would be useful to compare this situation with the situation in the UK, and the models available in other countries like China, Brazil and West Africa. Outside the UK, over the last fifteen years, there has been an exponential growth of students who wish to acquire English language skills; in China, for example, the demonstration of English language proficiency is required by law for many occupations and qualifications.

GregM expanded SG's introduction with a review of the institutional place of English language studies in the UK. For instance, the School of English at his university (Lancaster) started out with both literature and language scholars. In 1974, however, there was a split, when the two streams were positioned as different departments in different faculties (English language now being in the Social Sciences). Currently, linguistics, with specialist research in corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, has little disciplinary/intellectual crosshatching with English literature. The question that now presents itself is whether collaborative efforts can make the two disciplines stand together as one unit. Currently, linguistics can be found as Applied Linguistics (in universities like Birmingham, Leicester and Sterling), Modern Languages (in Southampton) and in the Education Department (at the Open University and Leeds) but these linkages seem always politically charged. Often there are not enough faculty to constitute a linguistics department on its own. The danger of being under broader departments is that linguistics is marginalised as a discipline. Turning to the relative claims made for the separate subjects, English literature gets a large number of applications because of its position as a desirable degree conferring cultural capital, whereas English language makes the claims of practical application. In traditional A level courses, the Russell Group does not include English Language as an acceptable subject, but does include English Literature. GregM expressed concern that as institutions struggle for position, English language may be taught as a conservative subject, while in research terms it was becoming broader field with research in complex mixes of visual and other modes.

RS gave a complementary review based on his experience. In his view applied linguistics is not secure as a recognised discipline, while ELT has even less of an academic footing. The fortunes of ELT have waxed and waned. India was a stronger area for ELT in the British context in the 1950s, with the British Council supporting enterprises about how to teach English. Increasingly now however his own centre (the Centre for Applied Linguistics, Warwick University) caters for overseas students, mainly from China, aspiring to become teachers of

English. But the British Council does now want to have links with the universities supporting research into English language; their concern is that ELT is seen only in terms of being a practical activity, and more research is needed to discover wider potential. It seems now that the British Council is planning a survey of ELT research in India and also intends to promote it. Potential areas of research are - the Indian experience of ELT in terms of translation, teaching language through literature, assumptions about teaching English language through English (rather than regional languages), the role of other Englishes (the move away from standard English), teaching English to different linguistic groups, what happens in the classroom, the availability of learner support, the relationship of English to other languages – these are aspects of the Indian experience that could be illuminating for other countries, as well as provide a counterweight to instrumentalist and practice-oriented accounts of English.

The third presentation was by AH, drawing on her experience of the Open University. She argued that there should be no watertight distinctions between linguistics and English studies and synergies should be explored. The size of the department does matter, but the linking of language and literature is more important. The linking has advantages for the Language curriculum; at the OU it meant one could introduce issues familiar to students of English literature, such as postcolonial literatures and their sociolinguistic aspects. Similarly, there can be other synergies with Creative Writing (such as, how creativity can be studied in a systematic way, in terms of literary and everyday speech). These crossovers, AH suggested, could be introduced while retaining parts of the curriculum devoted to linguistics, such as phonology and grammar. On a separate point, AH said there is funding available for corpus linguistics, which has cemented the position of English Language in universities like Birmingham. Corpus linguistics has also gained interest in the literature department, where Digital Humanities has provided it a platform.

Turning then to the situation in Delhi, GJV observed that there had been synergies between linguistics and English literature at JNU. The English department first started as a linguistics department, and thinking about language and stylistics was part of research in the English department. Some of this was lost after the two streams (literature and linguistics) separated. The reason for this separation was that linguistics was seen as a much broader category, with interdisciplinary crossovers with neurolinguistics and the social sciences. GJV commented on the to and fro relation of linguistics and ELT referred to earlier. Resistance to the British Council's ELT promotion in India had partly been due to the fact that ELT had been present in India for quite some time, teaching English to students from South-East Asia and Africa. When ELT came to be seen as a fundraiser, the spin off was that language teaching became the main component of ELT, thus losing the academic interest of linguistics and literature departments. ELT research, GJV noted, is a growing field in India, exploring the service industry, call centre English, the variants of English that are understood by a large number of people, voice and accent recognition, and so on. Overall he felt that the divide between language and literature could be an artificial one.

TB agreed that the British Council had propagated ELT aggressively in the 1950s and the 1960s in India. A generation of teachers were trained at workshops in ELT, so much so that it came to be seen as the future of English department in India. TB felt that the British Council's role had been damaging in India - while it denigrated English literature as an elitist discipline, it provoked a reaction from English departments that kept linguistics at bay. MA explained that in JMI, the compulsory/general course English language is still taught by teachers of English literature. In many non-urban colleges, moreover, what gets taught in English departments is essentially the language (teaching on literary works is often paraphrased in the local language). MA registered his concern that there are currently no degrees in ELT, and ELT is also not a popular course because of dull coursework. There is also a value-laden perception of ELT, so that it is generally thought that those students who do not get admission in English literature go for ELT as their second choice. MP observed that ELT did not achieve the brand value in India

that it was anticipated to have. One of the reasons for this, he reflected, could be because of the multitude of ways in which language proficiency is acquired. ELT has also been seen as a neo-colonial imposition in India, with the Cambridge University press putting out standardised language books, while more demotic forms of Indian English were seen as a “form of errors”.

Thematic Session 4

English Studies beyond the Simple Canon of English Literature Part 1

Main Contributors: Richard Allen (RA), Tapan Basu (TB), GJV Prasad (GJV), Suman Gupta (SG), Makarand Paranjape (MP), Subarno Chattarji (SC), Mohammed Asaduddin (MA), Carla Sassi (CS), Richard Smith (RS), Saugata Bhaduri (SB), Anuradha Ghosh (AG), Ann Hewings (AH), Greg Meyers (GregM), Stephen Regan (SR), Scott Brewster (ScottB), Scott Hames (ScottH), Derek Neale (DN), Shafquat Towheed (ST)

RA opened the session by inviting comments on how English studies can develop through challenges to the curriculum as opposed to challenges from public policy. The session was designed to shadow interest in challenges to English Studies offered by an interest in ‘local’ cultures and writing, explored in Delhi. Here there would be strong focus on Scottish and Irish cultures. A particular focus would be the way English Studies might change in a context where the UK is described as having four countries (with contesting views about their political and cultural autonomy).

ScottH offered an overview of the HE sector in Scotland, noting that Scotland had always had autonomy in education. The identity politics of Scottish nationalism, he noted, has tended towards a democratic and egalitarian approach (the schooling system in Scotland, he commented, has been anti-elitist since the seventeenth century). Despite the interest in the forthcoming September 2014 referendum on independence linguistic nationalism is a minor aspect of that debate. Nationalism (in politics) does not drive teaching or influence the way students approach literature in Scotland; Scottish literature is a minority pursuit alongside other literary studies in the UK, typically seen as an optional add-on. The University of Glasgow currently offers the only degree in Scottish literature, while the focus in Edinburgh is on learning Scottish literature (as a distinctive body of writing) and English literature side by side. It can be argued that Scottish writers have defined themselves against a perceived British elitism, and resisted being subsumed within British structures of cultural governance. Postcolonial critical theory, ScottH mentioned, is often used as a model of interrogation, and there is much debate within Scottish literary studies about perceiving Scotland as a colony. How Scottish literature features in the education system thus does bear some comparison with the marginalisation of other cultures but this does not have a big impact on how English Studies is taught in universities.

SC asked ScottH to comment further on the role of linguistic nationalism. ScottH responded that when political nationalism failed in the 1970s, the debate shifted to the cultural sphere, but without necessarily intersecting with Scottish politics. Official political nationalism over time distanced itself from cultural nationalism, focusing on the economy and on political policy. These two strands (of cultural nationalism and political nationalism) might perhaps join in the lead up to the referendum. In Scotland English has, however, become a vehicle for identity politics, focussed on non-standard forms of English and dialectical variations. Gaelic is a threatened language, surrounded generally by a sense of exoticism. A text using a demotic form of language (such as elements of Scots) became, in ScottH’s experience, alien and other in the classroom. CS suggested this might be related to the fact that Scottish literature was not taught in schools in Scotland until 2012, and felt that there may have been a sense of provincialism associated with the language in Scotland.

CS then discussed the impact of Scottish literature in a continental European context, and argued that it suffers from a “double dislocation” in Italy, English being a second language and

Scottish literature requiring a further specialisation. She also suggested that Scottish literature and English literature have remained in a bubble of their own, disconnected from European literature at large. However, in Italy, CS noted, English is replacing French as the new international language. Also, the theoretical fields of postcolonialism, film studies and gender studies have been introduced via English Studies in Italy and made a lasting impact. While she viewed English as a transnational and interdisciplinary space, she perceived a disciplinary shift in terms of going back to, and thus naturalising, the canon within the curriculum. In this context Scottish literature could be used to interrogate such naturalisation, a means of exploring the possibility of a composite picture arising with the local and global aspects of English literature.

RA invited comments from the Indian delegates about their experience of the interaction of regional literature and English. TB commented that in the context of post-partition India, Pakistani or Bangladeshi writing can hardly be claimed to fall under the rubric of Indian literature, though all three might fall within a 'three nation' approach within the framework of South Asian Literature. SG commented on ideas of nationalism and origins. In India in the 1990s, he noted, postcolonial theory was used to question the English literary canon. SG also mentioned Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992), and briefly discussed the implications of Crawford's claim that Scotland had a kind of prior/originary right to English literature. AH commented on the feeling of otherness in the context of non-standard English and dialects; a common opinion was that the teaching of Standard English should be the norm, but with efforts to encourage people to think about the notion of "standard" more critically.

SR then commented on the situation from an Irish Studies perspective. He thought that the wide and varied syllabus of English had been at risk of being standardised. Earlier, in a MA module on Irish literature, one would typically have Joyce and Yeats on the syllabus, but they were taught without topical references, and more in the line with practical criticism. Now Irish literature is taught both with greater contextualisation, and as a means of interrogating the canon, with - for example - Irish literature being included in genre based modules in English studies, such as the elegy, memoir, autobiography, travel and nature writing. Further research, SR suggested, could employ theory-driven models that would expand the notion of English literature, and include debates about identity and nation. He suggested the value of collaboration between Irish and Scottish studies, so that Wales, Scotland and Ireland could be thought of in terms of an "archipelagic imagination".

ScottB gave a further perspective on Irish studies and noted that Irish literature is written either in Irish or in English; geographically, it includes the inhabitants of Ireland and its Diaspora. There is what he called a "dispersed perspective" bearing on Irish literature. ScottB disagreed with an easy concatenation of Irish Studies and postcolonial studies, arguing that if Ireland were to be considered a colony, then it was problematically so as a white colony. He registered a disinclination to pack Irish studies within neat theory-led labels. ScottB further noted that students are increasingly interested in studying Irish literature through popular culture, and that this could offer ways to think about globalisation, the nature of cultural commemoration, and literature's role in these processes. In Irish cultural studies, he observed, literature could be used to articulate ideas about memory and translation, to bring to the fore a minority literature, to explore where Ireland fitted in the project of modernisation, and to examine its relevance for contemporary understanding of identity and policy.

GJV offered a Delhi perspective and considered what it means to be studying regional literature in a different language (such as English). Literatures that grow out of vernacular tradition and with local contexts, he argued, do not immediately fit into a broad conceptualisation of English literature. Thus, the critical emphasis should not be on a policy of inclusion, but should also consider how one thinks about literature. Indian Literature in English, he insisted, cannot be read without comparison to Indian literatures. He talked about the adoption of Indian writing by the Anglo-American academy in terms of postcolonial studies, and argued that it has had the

effect of making Indian and expat literature “chic” (even within India), but which does not make it more relevant to the local context. TB and SC commented then on the situation of Modern Indian Languages in Delhi University. MIL is shrinking in terms of the number of faculty and students, research output and so on. Students who want to research regional language literature, on the other hand, are applying to the English department but there too often the research on regional literatures, conducted without establishing proficiency of either the student or the teacher in the corresponding vernacular language, becomes too theory led and driven by identity politics. The vernacular is meanwhile valorised as authentic and originary, while English is considered to be inauthentic. ScottH commented that more generally the value attributed to the vernacular carries a political charge (whether seen in essentialist terms or not). But CS argued that the national/international and the vernacular could both represent a powerful line of resistance.

MP argued that since local tendencies and transnational flows interact in the space of English studies, these possibilities couldn't be framed in terms of an either/or debate. He also observed that the archipelagic literatures are still part of the British Isles, and shared a UK nationality of sorts where they stuck to a larger identity while still asserting local rights. In the comparison with India, MP noted a similar tendency of asserting a minority and niche position (which can manifest in terms of job reservations or dissertation writing) within the broader frame of English Studies. English Studies seems to carry a brand value that no one wants to give up and this continues despite theories of post-colonialism, post canonicity and 'post English'. MP speculated on the possibilities of research in regional language departments that was combined with a degree in English, to reconcile these issues. English studies could potentially offer a way forward for discussing regional literature written in Bengali or Tamil, and offer ways of considering the interrelationships between regional literatures. It would be accepted that students could/would access these works in their English translation, thus making for a vibrant classroom space. This offers a more positive view of the Modern Indian Language situation described above, and an alternative to the view put forward by Harish Trivedi at the previous workshop that English is 'linguicidal' of other languages.

RA then invited MA to offer an overview of the role of translation in English studies in India, and the relation between regional literature in India and canonical literature in English. MA agreed that English studies had a certain brand-value attached to it. However, English teachers began to recognise in the 1960s and 1970s that classroom transactions were meaningless without an Indian context; consequently, in the 1990s they began including literary sources from regional Indian traditions and tried to not rely overly on the Western canon. This was also matched by a historical interest in the freedom struggle leading up to India's Independence in 1947 and post-partition identity formations, and both were incorporated within the rubric of English Studies. Translations took place from regional languages such as Bengali and Urdu into English, and Dalit writing began to appear. MA argued that solidarity across languages in India was not, and is still not, possible without translation. English studies has thus appeared as a site for working in other areas, and taking a holistic look at issues such as gender by culling material from different regional sources. MA also commented on the history of translation in India. In brief a majority of the early translators of regional works were British. Translation only picked up after Indian publishers began to set up business after independence but even so, translated works were part of publishers' backlists. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, translation has become more respectable. Translators now have their names on the cover page, and are paid for their efforts, with copyright for example, now split between the author and the translator. Translating works is also given more weight in terms of promotions within the university framework. Thus, there is growing potential for the excavation of regional literature by people who have multilingual capabilities.

RA concluded the session by commenting again on the strength of the 'English Studies' brand, noting that many of the innovative subject areas discussed in the session featured in degree

courses in English Studies only as options within year 3 of an undergraduate programme. The areas *were* available to students but in a most likely constricted form.

Thematic Session 5

English Studies beyond the Simple Canon of English Literature Part 2

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RA introduced the session, saying it would deal with two areas, each offering a particular challenge to the English Studies curriculum: creative writing chosen because of the scale of expansion in the UK, and Book History chosen because of its particularly interdisciplinary challenge. DN then introduced Creative Writing as a growing field, with an increasing number of student enrolments. He described it as egalitarian offering students the opportunity to be participators in their subject. Its relationship between Creative Writing and English studies however is not easy. Moreover, within itself the canon of Creative Writing has recently become more fractured, with multi-media productions being incorporated into creative writing courses alongside such modules as Professional Writing and Creative Writing for the Stage (Birmingham University) and poetry and life writing (University of East Anglia). Creative Writing, DN noted, has developed since the 1990s as MA courses, and additionally as undergraduate programmes and PhDs. Teaching is largely through participatory workshops, and the courses are communication heavy. Some of its elements do tally with literary theory, such as point of view but as often if not more so there were differences. In English Literature studies students are encouraged to question the notion of the author; in Creative Writing the student is going back to being an author. One particular focus now is away from the notion of the author towards a conceptualisation of the writer, with more dialogue about the writing process.

SG questioned whether the teaching of creative writing in English doesn't have a conservative dimension, defending the canon because the language in which a course is taught has a relationship to the kind of writing that gets emulated. That is, if reading literature written in English must needs have some bearing on the ability to write in English, then the selection of texts read for inspiration and emulation must hint at the canon. DN replied that in Creating Writing courses, texts are indeed selected as examples. But he was less ready to accept SG's argument, saying that, for example, historical canonical texts are little used in Creative Writing. Contemporary texts that are favoured as examples, rather than canonical texts. Writing itself also incorporates the knowledge of rules and the breaking of rules, so that there is an element of challenge to the canon.

TB asked colleagues if there were any courses on Creative Writing offered in Indian universities, except the Diploma offered by the Indira Gandhi National Open University. He wondered whether the proliferation of Creative Writing programmes in the UK was tied to increased opportunities for getting published. There has been a similar growth of the publishing industry in India, but Creative Writing programmes had not yet been widely introduced. DN agreed that publishing and creative writing have a reciprocal relationship but with the democratisation of writing, he had also saw that getting published in the conventional way is not every student's desire. MP said that JNU offers a course on creative writing, but not a full degree. He then argued that wherever English language spreads, as in Singapore, these patterns (growth in publishing, creating writing programmes being offered in universities) begin to emerge. AG added that in JMI, creative writing was taught but as part of the School of Mass Communication Studies.

ST then offered a brief overview of Book History. As a field of enquiry, he noted, Book History has developed from both historical and quantitative approaches. Book History allows for ways

of approaching a text that is in distinction from literary theory. Book History, ST noted, is implicitly democratic; it approaches the material of study without attaching any prior value judgement to it. In this sense, it does not work with set ideas of canon, and can in fact be used to question canon formations. Book History, ST commented further, can also offer new ways of formulating research questions (both multi- and interdisciplinary), and remarked that book historians often have a crosshatching of research interests with another field/discipline, such as the history of science or literary studies. The downside to this interdisciplinarity is that Book History cannot claim a strong formalised identity for itself although it does have a professional identity through, for example, the Society of the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP). Book History exists in a marginal place, at the periphery of all disciplines but it has tremendous internationalising and interdisciplinary impulse, and is amenable to languages in translation, and the relationship between languages, production and publication choices, and authorship.

RA concluded by remarking on the strong interdisciplinary element in Book History and linked this to a similar tendency in Scottish and Irish Studies, driven in the latter case by the desire to understand the context of the text. This seemed an important element in thinking how English Studies might develop.

Closing Session

Prospects for English Studies: Understanding Students

Main Contributors: Richard Allen (RA), Tapan Basu (TB), GJV Prasad (GJV), Suman Gupta (SG), Makarand Paranjape (MP), Subarno Chattarji (SC), Mohammed Asaduddin (MA), Carla Sassi (CS), Richard Smith (RS), Saugata Bhaduri (SB), Anuradha Ghosh (AG), Ann Hewings (AH), Stephen Regan (SR), Scott Brewster (ScottB), Scott Hames (ScottH), Derek Neale (DN), Shafquat Towheed (ST), Adil Mehdi (AM)

This session began with a briefing on the pilot survey instituted as part of the project following the first Delhi Seminar, and the potential it demonstrated for further research of this kind. RA said that and SG summed up progress to date, reminding colleagues that it had become clear that no systematic evidence of what students needed or wanted out of English Studies existed, nor were the students' motivation and reasons for enrolling in the course fully understood. The pilot survey sought to explore how this might be remedied and had a response from around 600 students. The results had been processed, but the analysis was still on-going.

There was general agreement that the idea of a follow up project that would extend the surveys to other parts of India was a good one. In that context RA asked whether a particular socio-economic group was determining a particular kind of English language acquisition in Delhi in the present survey. SG observed that this was a matter of demographic, with high income groups located in Delhi. SC agreed that different levels of proficiency are often indicative of a different demographic, and SG hoped that future samples would cover a range of possibilities, including students from vocational colleges. ST suggested the use of social media strategy for future questionnaires, with a semantic analysis of free text answers. SG responded and from his experience of collating free text answers from the pilot survey, a variable response emerged. While the qualitative aspect does not always find a match with the quantitative aspects, the additional cost of analysing qualitative answers as well as ensuring the security of return of a long questionnaire, made free text answer a less viable possibility. AG suggested that since language competencies are also needed by other disciplines such as maths or sociology. Such subject specific locations (such as business or science) should be reflected in the questionnaire, so that what is created is not just a standardised English language module, but teaching modules aimed at the specific needs of target groups.

This was the last session of the Project workshops and discussion then turned to other issues. TB observed that what had been covered during the project was the direction English Studies

was taking in publicly funded universities in India. He suggested that future research should look into the private sector, the curriculum and pedagogy of private universities, and also take into consideration small town India to arrive at a more cohesive picture. TB also hoped that the project would consider South Asia more generally, and explore how English studies have survived in other countries. RA, SG and DN commented on the need to study small colleges and private education institutions emerging in Britain, and the fee situation in increasingly uncertain times. SC remarked that the self-reflection following from the pilot project and survey should be extended to other universities in India.

SG commented that Delhi has a cosmopolitan base where students mostly talk to each other in English, and AG added that the medium of communication between students is hybrid English. ScottH asked whether institutional legitimization of such Englishes was absent in India, to which SG replied that considerable academic work had been done on hybrid English, or Hinglish, together with linguistic research into the phenomenon. He commented on the language mixing and code-switching involved in demotic forms of Indian English, and said that to dismiss forms such as Hinglish was akin to dismissing Creole or Pidgin. GJV gave the example of *Chutnefying English: The Phenomenon of Hinglish* (2012) edited by Rita Kothari and Rupert Snell, and agreed with SG that Hinglish should be taken seriously and seen as a process of democratisation, in opposition to elitist or standard form of English.

AM then raised the question of how the questions addressed in the workshop would play out in the context of small towns in India where the interest in English is as intense but the demographic composition different. He referred to the way ELT had been introduced in religious schools in small town in India. AM further commented on the visibility of English in India – it appears as the language of advertisements and billboards, and as labels on pens and drink packages. In fact, navigating through daily life could be very difficult without a rudimentary knowledge of English. He pushed for the need to extend the scope of the project to outside Delhi and similar metropolitan centres; there is vast amount of data that can be collected, he noted, and small town India is rich in possibilities for research. Research into the way English is taught would be valuable, citing examples of it being taught through playacting, and the way English texts are often taught in Hindi in the classroom. AM reflected that the curriculum now offers greater flexibility and openness, and he located the resistance to teach English language among the teachers. AM reiterated what had been a key theme of the workshops. For students, the idea of doing a degree in English precedes any ideas on the content of what they are taught (in terms of theory and so on). The aesthetic matters that teachers of English literature dwell on, are to students a by-product of their main impulse to do the degree, that is, language proficiency. AM argued here the need to demarcate between literature and language teaching, a distinction that can become blurred when both are taught within the same course. The question is, who can take care of language needs?

In conclusion RA remarked that the Prospects for English project had achieved the laying of much of the groundwork through its pilot survey, had posed important questions about the way English studies might or might not develop, and the directions it could take in India and the UK. The comparative framework had proved beneficial as cultural difference invited comments and opened up a variety of issues that had been addressed in the three thematic workshops. A similar comparative framework within future research would be valuable.