

Varieties of English in the Indo-Pacific

Directors: Pam Peters and Kate Burridge

Responsible Academy: Australian Academy of the Humanities

Accepted by the UAI in 2015, as one of its major projects (enterprise 86)

The *Varieties of English in the Indo-Pacific (VEIP)* project is an international network of research initiatives on English in the diaspora, in countries close to or islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The project involves scholars in English linguistics in more than twenty universities. Their research focuses on new forms of language and language practices that result from English coming into contact with other languages in multilingual contexts.

In many developing countries, 21st century English is diversifying from its source variety in British settlements on the Indian Ocean (and American settlements in the Pacific) with continuous acculturation. *VEIP's* sociolinguistic research on contemporary English in diverse multicultural societies affords great insights into the adaptability of a world language used in tandem with other languages in daily interactions. The use of English by multilingual speakers allows them to engage freely in language mixing or code-switching, and also translanguage practices. Extensive contact has given rise to hybrid varieties (such as Taglish in the Philippines), and to multilingual interactions on the internet. The juxtaposition of English with another language can be seen at street level in bilingual signage in Hong Kong [PHOTO #1]. Through this lively language contact, elements of local culture, and social and economic practices become embedded in regional varieties of English, and visible in the linguistic landscape, as in the commodities sold in a Sri Lankan shop [PHOTO #2], or the services offered by a Ugandan entrepreneur [PHOTO #3]. *VEIP* research may involve anthropological field work, as with Fijians engaged in an annual grave-cleaning ceremony [PHOTO #4], which culminates in a kava session. An anthology of 16 papers presenting *VEIP* research on the interface between language and culture has been proposed to Cambridge University Press (under review).

Current models of world English that postulate a genetically based hierarchy are being re-examined by *VEIP* researchers, to develop lateral perspectives on the interrelations among regional varieties, and possible epicentral influences among them. This is the focus of a new DAAD-funded project for *VEIP* researchers in Australia and Germany, collaborating in a multidimensional study of shared linguistic features in two zones of the Indo-Pacific. The data from language corpora, language surveys and lexical records will show whether Indian English exercises some epicentral influence on those of Sri Lanka, Pakistan or Bangladesh, and Australian English on that of New Zealand or Papua New Guinea (Tok Pisin).

Intercontinental collaboration among *VEIP* scholars is also vested in synchronic and diachronic research on the Hansard records of parliamentary discourse kept in British Commonwealth countries including South Africa [PHOTO #5], Australia and New Zealand. Hansards contain a wealth of written data on standard regional Englishes going back over a century. The record includes speeches and debates (more or less verbatim), and some audio-recordings of debates from recent decades. This

project, funded initially by Macquarie University, will support multidimensional research on changing linguistic features, and the larger changes of register taking place in English world-wide.

English is increasingly being adopted in Indo-Pacific countries that have never been colonised by English-speakers, including China, Korea, Thailand and Indonesia, and used as the consultative language in ASEAN forums, where ministers of the *Association for South East Asian Nations* meet regularly. The use of standard English as a lingua franca in these meetings provides a further research focus for VEIP researchers

Further information on the research of the *Varieties of English in the Indo-Pacific* project can be found at its website <<https://goto.mq/VEIP>>

The VEIP scientific committee includes:

Professor Jenny Cheshire, University of London

Professor Andy Kirkpatrick, Griffith University, Brisbane

Professor Bernd Kortmann, University of Freiburg

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, University of Melbourne

Professor Miriam Meyerhoff, University of Auckland

Professor Edgar Schneider, University of Regensburg

Professor Jeff Siegel, University of New England



*1: A bilingual sign in downtown Hong Kong (photo courtesy of Professor Carolin Biewer)

A photograph of a menu board for a Sri Lankan juice shop. The board is yellow with black text and lists various fruit drinks with their prices in Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR).

Pineapple Juice	200/-
Lime Juice	150/-
Mixed Fruit Juice	250/-
Strawberry Juice	300/-
Tamarind Juice (Siyambata)	250/-
Belly Juice	250/-
Kalamancy Lime Juice (Heen Naran)	250/-
Passion Fruits Juice	280/-
Apple Juice	280/-

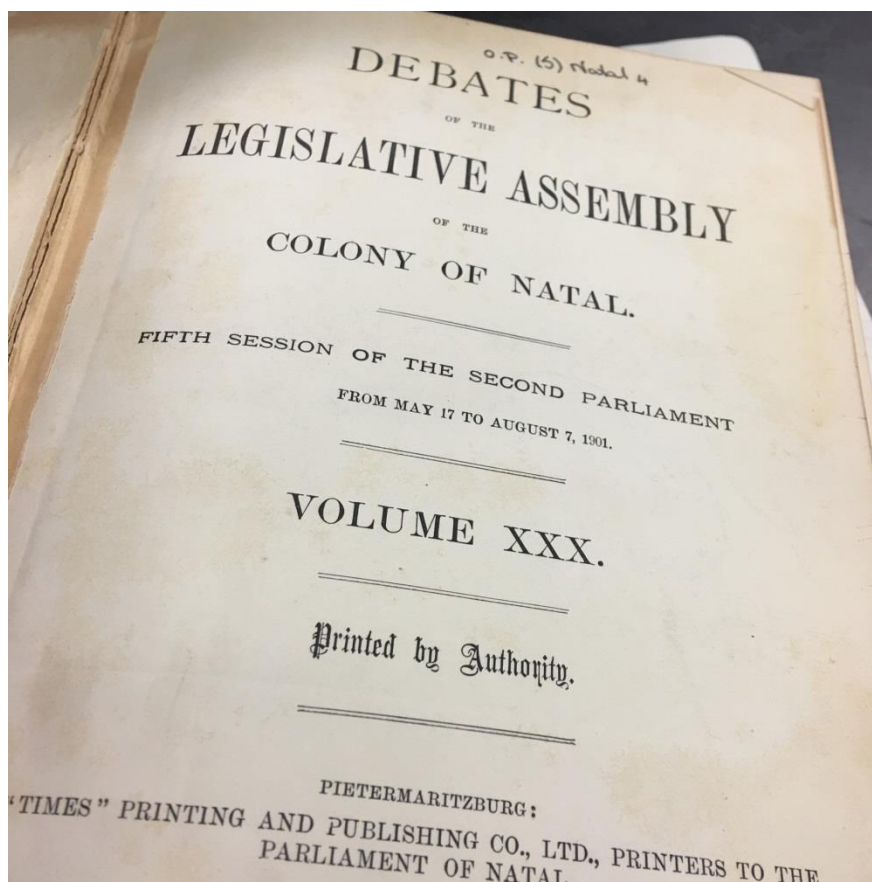
#2: Regional fruit drinks offered in a Sri Lankan juice shop (photo courtesy of Ms Shariya Algama)



#3: Advertising sign for laundry services from Uganda, where *dobby* renders Kiswahili *dobi* “a person who does other people’s washing and ironing” (photo courtesy of Professor Christiane Meierkord)



#4: Linguist Professor Carolin Biewer with Fijian informants (photo courtesy of Mr I Sila)



#5: Historical Hansard record from Natal, dating from before it became part of the Union of South Africa in 1910 (photo courtesy of Dr Haidee Kruger)