



# Redefining Language Proficiency Testing: Addressing Cultural Biases and Proposing Comprehensive Solutions.

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## *Abstract*

This study explores the problems of English language test takers while dealing with the reading materials of major international English language assessments. The primary focus is to scrutinize cultural biases ingrained in the reading materials of widely-used language examinations like IELTS or TOEFL, shedding light on the challenges these biases pose for test takers who must swiftly comprehend cultural content, often with limited prior knowledge. The research is divided into two main sections. The initial part explores the significance of high-stakes assessments, exemplified by IELTS or TOEFL, in determining global English proficiency. The subsequent section critically assesses the adverse aspects of linguistic dominance apparent in high-stakes testing materials, explaining the commercialization of English language education and its impact on social class divisions. The paper further examines pricing strategies, cultural hegemony, and the control exerted by central nations over these assessments. The study meticulously evaluates the social, economic, and psychological burdens disadvantaged test takers face, with a central focus on proposing alternative international reading materials for widely recognized language examinations like IELTS and TOEFL.

**Keywords:** Globalization; EFL; Inequality; Linguistic Imperialism; Capitalism; Educational Imperialism

## Chapter One:

### 1.1 Introduction

An increasing number of students prefer to study at a university abroad (Healey, 2008; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010). This research delves into the perspectives of both educators and students regarding the utilization of IELTS/TOEFL in their local educational context and its role in promoting English as a global language. According to Neil (2006), TOEFL holds increasing significance in the Asian EFL context, where learners aspiring to study abroad recognize the test's importance and aim for high scores. The discourse on the influence of these assessments unfolds on two fronts. Firstly, it examines the prevalence of standard American and British English variants in TOEFL or IELTS reading materials, underscoring the dominance of British and American culture and civilization. This paper outlines specific strategies for enhancing learner proficiency in these tests.

Secondly, it highlights the prestige and impact associated with TOEFL or IELTS, exemplified by its widespread adoption in higher education institutions in Asian non-English-speaking countries. Neil (2006) asserts that the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is indispensable for Japanese (and, in a broader context, Asian) university students aspiring to pursue education in English-speaking countries like the United States. According to Study portals globally, over 10,000 educational institutions approve IELTS, while TOEFL is preferred by more than 11,500 institutions worldwide, notably in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, and Germany. This paper explores key test-taking strategies in a highly successful IELTS or TOEFL preparation program. The 2002-2003 official publication of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) revealed that Asian students ranked in the lowest ten percentile globally

on the TOEFL (ETS, 2003). The findings from this study underscore the imperative to reevaluate and eliminate biases against test-takers within the Bangladeshi context when employing IELTS or TOEFL.

## 1.2 Background

McKay (2002:1) argues that the pedagogy surrounding international language instruction requires a distinct set of assumptions compared to teaching other second or foreign languages. She challenges the prevalent dependence on the native speaker's model in English Language Teaching (ELT), noting the tendency to favor the linguistic and cultural contexts of the United States and the United Kingdom. Liu (2011) and many other researchers mention that international students who were successful in pre-admission language proficiency tests faced difficulties coping with the English language demands of their programs, and these difficulties resulted in negative academic, psychological, social, and emotional effects such as self-doubt, low self-confidence, segregation, anxiety, loneliness, ineffective group work, and hostility towards the host country (Andrade, 2009; Brown, 2008; Burnett & Gardner, 2006; Khan, 2009; Kodama, 2007;) In a recent survey encompassing approximately 900 international students in Australia, Russell et al. (2010) revealed that a notable 41% of these students grapple with substantial levels of stress. This stress is often linked to feelings of homesickness, cultural shocks, or perceptions of discrimination. Aligned with McKay's perspective, this research aims to underscore that assessments should prioritize evaluating learners based on their effective language use rather than testing their knowledge of native speakers' cultures and customs.

## 1.3 Research Problem

This research is prompted by Davidson's (1994) critique of the 'Imperialism of major international tests,' specifically asserting that high-stakes assessments like TOEFL or IELTS may demonstrate bias against individuals proficient in international English communication, but unfamiliar with the inner circle variety. This discussion critically examines TOEFL and IELTS components. The study's findings emphasize the imperative to reevaluate higher education admission criteria, advocating for a more equitable assessment that eliminates bias against test-takers using TOEFL and IELTS.

## 1.4 Purpose statement

This research critically examines the claim that TOEFL and IELTS insufficiently gauge a test-taker proficiency, emphasizing the exclusive focus on North American and British English variants, posing challenges for diverse candidates. This small-scale study is significant for addressing obstacles encountered by Asian students in navigating IELTS and TOEFL, especially in the evolved reading section.

## 1.5 Reading Section Challenges

The reading section focuses on Western-centric themes, potentially challenging Asian students less familiar with these topics and the idioms, expressions, and vocabulary prevalent in North American or British English. Spanning diverse subjects, including science, technology, history, and literature, the materials may pose difficulty for Asian students, impacting their ability to understand and respond to questions in a limited time. According to Khan, some words in the TOEFL tests have different referential meanings in British, American, and Australian English. The words and vocabularies are more culturally specific to North American contexts rather than the global perspectives (Khan, 2009). This research aims to encourage critical thinking regarding the potential imperialistic aspects of TOEFL and IELTS.

## 1.6 Delimitation:

This study examines challenges in IELTS or TOEFL reading materials, with a focus on potential cultural biases. Two English Department professors from different universities were interviewed. To address time constraints, we selected universities and coaching centers in Banani and Mouchak, which are in Dhaka, Bangladesh—distributed questionnaires to 50 students. Insights from educators and coaching centers determined if IELTS or TOEFL impacts the Bangladeshi population imperialistically. The study specifically explores cultural bias in IELTS or TOEFL reading materials, aiming to contribute insights to the language assessment discourse, particularly in diverse cultural contexts.

## 1.7 Limitation:

While several studies explore related themes, this research uniquely focuses on the Bangladeshi perspective. Data collection involves interactions with two university teachers and students from two Dhaka-based coaching centers. Time constraints restrict the geographical scope of Dhaka city, with potential expansion to other districts in future initiatives.

## 1.8 Definition of Terms

**Imperialism:** The dominance of a powerful nation over a less powerful one, exercised through hegemony.

**Educational Imperialism:** The manifestation of imperialism within the education sector, as exemplified by international testing systems like IELTS and TOEFL, disseminating their ideologies globally.

## 1.9 Central Research Questions

1. What are the common challenges Bangladeshi students face with the reading materials of IELTS /TOEFL?
2. How might the advocacy for English as an International Language (EIL) contribute to mitigating cultural biases inherent in the reading materials of standardized tests like IELTS or TOEFL?

## 2. Imperial English and Its Testing

This article explores the consequences of English as a unifying force in global business, shedding light on the concept of "linguistic imperialism" introduced by Phillipson (1993) and further developed by Phillipson and Karmani (2005). Phillipson emphasizes that linguistic imperialism is a result of complex power dynamics encompassing social, cultural, military, economic, and political factors. According to Benesch (2001), critical pedagogy is concerned with institutional power relations. Language teaching, as a way of life, carries the ideology of its producers.

Presently, English Language Teaching (ELT) is predominantly shaped by central countries by using their norms and imposing their ideas on peripheral countries. ELT becomes a means of imposing desired behaviors and attitudes on other groups, allowing ideological, political, and social messages to be exported to the periphery. High-stakes exams like IELTS and TOEFL have become gatekeepers determining access to higher education in central countries. Students from privileged urban backgrounds, attending better schools, and receiving specialized commercial supplementary courses become the prime clientele for passing these exams.

Mulderrig (2003) observes the rapid ascent of this examination battery to assessment dominion in international EFL, illustrating how hegemony operates in the global educational policy empire.

### 2.1 The Institutional Dynamics of Language Testing

Understanding the historical roots of IELTS and TOEFL is essential for comprehending their institutional frameworks. McNamara (2002) advocates for a critical analysis of industrialized language testing, particularly in the context of TOEFL and IELTS.

Templer (2004) highlights that TOEFL, controlled by the Educational Testing Service, became a requirement for foreign applicants to American colleges and universities. Templer (2004) further says that the exam, setting arbitrary score thresholds, holds power over undergraduates and post-graduate students alike.

## Chapter-2

### 2.1 Literature review:

According to Graddol (2006:81), the ownership of English cannot be limited by imposing boundaries. Assimilating with Graddol's view this research tried to establish that English language education should be focused on spreading English as an international language. Kachru (1985) says that the majority of language speakers in the world live in an expanding circle. He also said that the control of English-speaking countries is maintained through hegemony rather than political imposition (Kachru,1985). Graddol (2006) mentions TOEFL as a source for earning profits to the publishers, who spread TOEFL to promote American English and their cultural norms. Templer (2004) says that the publisher of TOEFL achieved huge economic gains by selling TOEFL preparation materials in the market. This research reveals that language assessment tests such as TOEFL or IELTS inaccurately measure a test taker's proficiency. This is because the items assess candidates based on native English, which may be unfamiliar to many test takers. The study suggests that IELTS or TOEFL may not be a valid measure, as English is widely used in expanding circle countries and is more international than British or American English. (Educational Testing Services) (2001) states that TOEFL measures a candidate's understanding of North American English. Smith (1976) says that "international language" is a means to communicate and interact with people from different nations. He further mentions that English as an international language belongs to no single culture.

### 2.2 IELTS and TOEFL Test items

Both IELTS and TOEFL reading tests are designed to assess a range of reading skills, including the ability to understand main ideas, details, implied meanings, and the writer's opinions and attitudes. They also evaluate the ability to identify relationships between ideas and to comprehend different types of texts, such as academic articles, essays, and reports. Through these TOEFL/ IELTS reading materials, British and Americans are spreading their culture and language worldwide.

The TOEFL Institutional Testing Program Examinee Handbook (ET, 2001) from ETS emphasizes that each institutional version of TOEFL evaluates a candidate's comprehension of North American English (ETS, 2001:5). Templer (2004) cautions that the global dominance of TOEFL could potentially give rise to a TOEFL-centric generation of EFL learners, impeding progress towards a more internationally inclusive perspective on English.

A teacher at Saifur Coaching Centre in Bangladesh, specializing in preparing students for TOEFL, asserts that learners aspiring to secure placements in international universities must undergo tests that may be detached from their cultural context, and English variety assessed in TOEFL does not necessarily align with the English utilized in day-to-day interactions with native speakers.

## 2.3 Educational institutions and imperialism:

In Bangladesh IELTS or TOEFL is used in Dhaka University admission tests and also in other universities and colleges in Bangladesh and is regarded as a valuable tool for students who would like to study in America, the UK, Canada, and Australia. According to the Embassy of the United States, all students must take the TOEFL examination. TOEFL test scores are valid for 2 years. It costs substantially more for the test.

## 2.4 How IELTS or TOEFL is disseminating in the capitalistic market

In the book "Capital: A Critique of Political Economy", Karl Marx, talks about "Commodities and Money," laying the groundwork for understanding the capitalist system. According to him, the capitalistic markets kept ever growing, and the demand kept going up. This research suggests that IELTS and TOEFL exams exist because of their increasing demand in the global market. In the context of international education and employment, English proficiency has become a valuable commodity. As businesses and academic institutions expand globally, the demand for individuals with strong English language skills has risen, responding to the capitalist dynamics described by Marx.

## 2.5 Negative impact of the imposition of reading materials of IELTS/TOEFL

In different articles, Rogers and Fasold say that Elites get an education in those institutions and speak the language of colonizers. Thus, the retention of the colonizers' language maintains socioeconomic discrimination in the society (Fasold, 1991; Rogers, 1990). Therefore, the language of the colonizers is used in those institutions and has become the key factor for social mobility, power, and prestige (Fasold, 1991; Rogers, 1990). They further say that in this respect, the hegemony of the colonizers continues, and ex-colonies depend on the one-way flow of information from the dominant society. Choi, 2003 says that, generally they do not create or produce anything; they just consume the ready-made prescriptions prepared by their ex-bosses. This kills self-confidence and creativity and always keeps them in the dominant position (Choi, 2003).

Isik, 2008 said, "Because of this, the dominant language cannot improve itself to meet the needs in the fields mentioned above, and a kind of discrimination and gap occurs between them. The dominant language may replace some of the functions of the dominant one in this respect. Since the dominant language continues to generate new concepts and terminology, the gap between the dominant and dominant languages continuously increases, making the dominant one more dependent on the dominant one. Since the dominant language is usually the language of science, technology, music, fashion, and art, governments often make plans to teach it to their citizens, and people feel the need to learn it. This facilitates a one-way flow of information from the dominant to the dominated language, and the dominated becomes the borrower of new concepts and lexical items." (Isik, 2008: 126).

According to Pennycook and Roger, consequently, the center produces the materials about the ideas and principles they have produced and monopolizes the materials development process (Pennycook, 1989; Rogers, 1990).

## 2.6 Economic Dynamics of TOEFL

Isik (2008) emphasizes the economic advantages flowing from the center to the periphery due to the one-way dissemination of information. The center profits by selling ideas, dispatching native speaker ELT experts and teachers, and marketing monolingual ELT materials globally. The financial burden on periphery countries for EFL education, marked by the high cost of course books, raises concerns about exploitation (Phillipson, 1993; Rogers, 1990). Official institutions from the center in periphery countries guide ELT through workshops and seminars, potentially imposing their perspectives on local teachers. (Phillipson, 1993; Rogers, 1990).

## 2.7 IELTS and TOEFL and Linguistic Imperialism

Khan (2009) criticizes TOEFL for its specificity to inner circle varieties of English, arguing that the norms in the test may not align with the linguistic diversity present in various countries. Davies (2009) supports this criticism, contending that TOEFL's focus on North American English may not accurately reflect the proficiency of test-takers. Jenkins (2006) advocates for a test based on English as an International Language (EIL) interaction, representing the linguistic diversity of its speakers.

## 2.8 Cultural Assimilation Through IELTS and TOEFL

Success in TOEFL and IELTS not only requires linguistic proficiency but also entails assimilation into central language patterns and cultural norms, posing challenges in EFL contexts. The imposition of culturally loaded elements through language learning materials exacerbates this challenge (Alptekin, 1996; Pennycook, 1989; Phillipson, 1993).

## 2.9 Impact of IELTS and TOEFL on Local Culture

Many researchers in different articles discuss the erosion of national sovereignty and cultural identity in developing nations due to the one-way flow of information from the center to the periphery (Alptekin,1996; Pennycook,1989; Phillipson,1993). Isik (2008) warns against the imposition of ideas from the center without considering local norms, leading to potential failure. The dominance of the target language and culture, without filtering through local norms, may hinder effective language teaching and result in culture-specific language learning. Language shock is caused by local accents and dialects that are difficult to understand (Marr,2005).

## 2.10 Local educational institutions and imperialism

IELTS or TOEFL is used in many universities in Asian countries as a valuable tool for students who would like to study abroad. Brown (2004) proposes that TOEFL is used for placement purposes in developing countries because they are readily available and have high face validity. Lantaigne (2006) suggests that placement tests should include information about the curriculum that the students will encounter.

## 2.11 Minimize the imperialistic effects of TOEFL

Nowadays the lingua franca status of English is commonly welcome (Alptekin, 2002; Jenkins, 2006; Kayman, 2004; McKay, 2003; Modiano, 2001a). It is now commonly mentioned that English has become a common language of international communication. Besides the native speakers, it is spoken as a second or foreign language all over the world. The new identity of English, a tool for international communication, makes it break out its boundaries and encompass the whole world. When this new role of English is reflected in ELT, it leads to new or alternative perspectives in ELT philosophy, methodology, and materials. Therefore, ELT cannot imitate any specific native speaker model nor be founded on any culture-specific topics. This would free English learners from any imposed target values. Rather, a wide variety of topics, intercultural contexts, and varieties of English can be used in ELT in a country where English is spoken as the mother tongue. Hence, there is no need to impose culture-specific elements and native speaker models on them. These do not reflect their reality and needs.

Naturally, this kills learner motivation. Moreover, they may develop negative attitudes towards the language learning process because of the target culture-loaded materials and class work. Thus, neutral topics and contexts can fit in them, so that they will feel the urge to learn English, solve real-life problems, and foster positive attitudes towards topics. This may cause more personal involvement and better performance in the learning process. Not only does this foster language education, but it strengthens the international identity as well. While dealing with international topics presented within international contexts, EFL learners may feel that they are members of an international community. In such contexts, dealing with international topics is more relevant than what they do with English and their reality.

Hence, considering the lingua franca role of English while designing English course programs and developing materials is likely to cause more student participation, give rise to positive attitudes, and lead to better performance in ELT (Isik,2008:137).

In different articles Canagarajah, Fasold, and Kumaravadivelu mention that language education does not take place in a vacuum, it takes place within a context. Therefore, the entire context should be considered for a successful language education; otherwise, failure is inevitable. In other words, considering extra-linguistic factors in language teaching is of great importance for the success of a language program, especially in an EFL-native context. Since every context is unique, a special language-teaching program must be prepared for each particular context (Canagarajah, 2006; Fasold1991; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

## 2.13 Development of Local EFL Materials

Isik (2008) underscores the significance of creating materials that align with the realities, topics, and objectives of the local context to address challenges posed by materials from the center. While integrating international content and various English varieties in ELT materials may alleviate some issues, it falls short of offering a comprehensive solution. These materials might lack the specificity needed to cater to the unique demands of an EFL context, and they remain neutral without imposing culture-specific norms or models (Isik, 2008:140).

Moreover, in different articles Canagarajah and Kumaravadivelu argue that materials designed for an international audience may not adequately capture the issues, culture, and realities of a specific EFL context, thus failing to meet its distinct requirements (Canagarajah, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Isik (2008) highlights that addressing unfamiliar topics and contexts may introduce cognitive burdens, making the learning process more challenging for learners. However, selecting and incorporating local familiar topics and contexts into ELT can establish a personal connection for both learners and teachers with the materials (Isik,2008).

Isik (2008) advocates for the development of local ELT knowledge and materials as a means to enhance the self-confidence and creativity of ELT methodologists and teachers. This approach fosters personal involvement from both teachers and learners in language education. Consequently, the quality of ELT improves, and the EFL country gains independence from the center (Isik, 2008).

Assimilating with these scholars' views this scholarly article proposes a few ways that may alleviate imperialistic biases in IELTS or TOEFL contents, which may include:

**Diverse Content Sources:** IELTS / TOEFL contents should include reading passages, listening materials, and speaking topics from a wide range of global sources, representing different international cultures, regions, and perspectives. These may incorporate materials that reflect various English accents, such as Australian, Canadian, South African, and Indian, to expose test-takers to linguistic diversity.

**Cultural Neutrality:** IELTS / TOEFL contents should avoid questions or content that assumes knowledge of specific cultural practices, historical events, or societal norms that may be unfamiliar to individuals from certain regions. These may ensure that questions do not favor a particular cultural context and are accessible to individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

## Cultural Sensitivity Training for Test Developers:

They must train test developers and examiners to be culturally sensitive and aware of potential biases in test content. They will conduct regular reviews and audits of test materials to identify and eliminate any unintentional cultural biases. Furthermore, they should establish advisory committees with representatives from different regions to provide insights on cultural relevance and appropriateness. IELTS or TOEFL test takers should offer free workshops or online resources to help candidates become familiar with different English accents and communication styles.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive, non-experimental, and analytical research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The data collection process involves the utilization of two distinct methods:

1. **Questionnaire:** Collected data through a questionnaire distributed to 50 students from various public and private universities, as well as attendees of two renowned coaching centers, all of whom had experienced the IELTS or TOEFL exam, including those who were unsuccessful. The analysis of responses to the nine questions provided valuable insights.
2. **Interviews with University Teachers:** interviewed two university teachers who possess significant insights into the IELTS or TOEFL exam using the same questionnaire. Their responses played a crucial role in enriching the data analysis.

### 3.2 Theoretical Framework

Graddol's (2006:82) perspective serves as the theoretical foundation for this study, asserting that there is no singular approach to teaching or learning English, no uniform motive, syllabus, textbook, assessment method, or variety of English for learning. Graddol emphasizes the international spread of English, rejecting limitations based on boundaries.

Davies (1991) highlights efforts to bridge the gap between native and non-native speakers, while Graddol (2006) challenges the concept of nonnatives, suggesting it encompasses a larger group than native speakers. Phillipson's (1992) concept of 'educational imperialism' is referenced, noting that countries in the expanding circle often adopt ideologies from those in the inner circle.

Graddol (2006) specifically implicates TOEFL in promoting American English, and cultural norms, and contributing to the economic gains of the represented government. Considering these perspectives, the study explores the comprehensive solutions to eliminate potentially imperialistic aspects of TOEFL or IELTS from Bangladesh.

### 3.3 Setting

The study was conducted within a formal setting, encompassing data collection from two university educators affiliated with East West University and Southeast University in Bangladesh. Furthermore, engagement with coaching centers such as Gateway and Mentors

facilitated the administration of questionnaires to students undertaking IELTS or TOEFL exam preparation. Notably, two instructors who had demonstrated proficiency in IELTS or TOEFL were interviewed to obtain their insights through the survey.

### 3.4 Sampling

In this study, 50 students were selected from diverse backgrounds associated with coaching centers (25 students from Gateway and another 25 students selected from a mentor coaching center) in Bangladesh. These students are enrolled in Bengali medium programs where English is a mandatory subject, and their proficiency in English is presumed to align with the established syllabus. The respondents, originating from Bangladesh, are in the process of acquiring English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with two senior educators from different universities, recognizing the potential limitation in capturing the comprehensive impact of IELTS or TOEFL imperialism. To address time constraints, a random selection of 50 students from the identified coaching centers was undertaken. It is important to note that the respondents were chosen from coaching centers with the assumption that their English proficiency reflects the broader population preparing for IELTS or TOEFL exams in Bangladesh.

### 3.5 Instrumentation

The study used a questionnaire with 8 questions to ask students among them 7 are multiple choice and 1 open-ended about their thoughts on whether IELTS or TOEFL has imperialistic aspects. The questions are included at the end for reference. At the beginning of the research, students were given knowledge about the goal of this study and were given assurance that the answers would be kept private. The first part of the questionnaire had instructions using a four-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree). The questions were carefully connected to make sure the answers flowed well. The questionnaire had both questions with specific answers and questions where students could share more details. Students were asked to complete the survey.

The researcher designed the questions to uncover any imperialistic aspects in IELTS or TOEFL reading materials. The questions covered different areas, including what students think, any problems they see in IELTS or TOEFL reading materials, cultural biases, and the importance of a country's assessment system. Question 7 specifically asked about common challenges students face during IELTS or TOEFL exams. Also, the researcher interviewed two professors from respected universities, aligning with the main research questions.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process for this research was methodically executed, employing a combination of questionnaires and interviews to glean insights from both students and teachers regarding IELTS or TOEFL. University educators were reached out personally, with a comprehensive questionnaire designed to capture their perspectives on the subject. In-person visits to prominent coaching centers, namely Gateway Coaching Center in Banani, Dhaka, and Mentors Coaching Center in Mouchak, Dhaka. The data collection process was facilitated by the distribution of questionnaires among students enrolled in IELTS or TOEFL preparatory courses. These questionnaires were administered immediately following the conclusion of their respective classes, with an assumed return rate of 50%. Teachers, on the other hand, submitted their completed questionnaires. Additionally, a deeper understanding of teachers' viewpoints on issues related to reading materials was sought through personal interviews. This meticulous approach aimed to gather a comprehensive and nuanced dataset, enriching the subsequent analysis of the imperialistic aspects associated with IELTS or TOEFL.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected from the prescribed samples underwent meticulous hand tabulation and analysis, focusing on frequency counts and mean scores. The mean score, calculated as the sum of all subjects in a group divided by the number of subjects, provided a quantitative measure of average performance or behavior within the group (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989: 215).

The mean score for each item was determined by summing all scores and dividing by the number of subjects. This approach enabled the researcher to distill substantial data into a more manageable form, offering a clearer depiction of group performance. The data analysis focused on responses to seven key questions from the questionnaire that we provided to them. Seven key questions from the questionnaire are provided in Appendix 2.

The responses to these questions were pivotal in deriving conclusions for the study. An affirmative consensus from a significant number of respondents would support the research hypothesis. Frequency counts and percentages for each item's response options were compiled into tables. The data was initially tabulated and subsequently presented descriptively. The analysis encompassed both quantitative and qualitative aspects, requiring a three-month timeframe for completion.

### 3.8 Obstacles Encountered

Throughout this research, the researcher encountered minor challenges during the data collection phase. Some impediments arose concerning a subset of completed questionnaires, revealing certain nuances in the data collection process. Notably, instances were observed where students omitted numeric entries in designated boxes for specific items. Moreover, challenges arose in the retrieval of complete questionnaires from respondents. Teachers, constrained by time limitations, exhibited delays in submitting their completed questionnaires.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Analysis of Survey Data

In this chapter, we thoroughly analyzed the information gathered from both student and teacher questionnaires. The analysis concentrated on counting how often certain things were mentioned and calculating the average scores, to extract important insights from the responses.

### 4.2 Results of Teacher's Questionnaire Survey

This is displayed in Appendix 4

For Question 1:

- Agree: 1 teacher
- Strongly Agree: 1 teacher
- Mean Score: 3.5

For Question 2:

- Strongly Agree: 2 teachers
- Mean Score: 4.0

For Question 3:

- Strongly Disagree: 1 teacher
- Strongly Agree: 1 teacher
- Mean Score: 2.5

For Question 4:

- Strongly Agree: 2 teachers
- Mean Score: 4.0

For Question 5:

- Strongly Agree: 2 teachers
- Mean Score: 4.0

For Question 6:

- Strongly Disagree: 1 teacher
- Strongly Agree: 1 teacher
- Mean Score: 2.5

For Question 7:

- Agree: 1 teacher
- Strongly Agree: 1 teacher
- Mean Score: 3.5

The responses were measured on a 4-point scale, where Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, and Strongly Agree = 4. The mean scores provide a quantitative summary of the level of agreement or disagreement among the teacher respondents for each statement. These findings will be further discussed and interpreted in the subsequent sections of the scholarly article

### 4.3 Detailed Discussion of the Student's Questionnaire Survey Results

Before going to the details discussion, it is mentionable here that the interpretation key used for the discussion of the results is: 1.00-2.25 = negative attitude, 2.26-3.00 = not satisfactory, 3.01- 3.75 = satisfactory and 3.75-5.00 = very satisfactory.

A detailed discussion of the student's questionnaire survey results is displayed in Appendix 3.

For the first question among the 50 respondents for the question, 1 student ticked "strongly disagree", 1 student ticked "disagree", 8 students ticked 'Agree', and 24 students ticked 'Strongly agree'. The mean score is 3.62. So, the student's attitude is satisfactory.



For the second question, 6 students ticked “strongly disagree”, 6 students ticked “disagree”, 4 students ticked ‘Agree’, and 18 students ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 3. So, the student’s attitude is not satisfactory.

For the third question, 10 students ticked “strongly disagree”, 10 students ticked “disagree”, 20 students ticked ‘Agree’, and 14 students ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 2.7. So, the student’s attitude is not satisfactory.

For the fourth question, 1 student ticked “strongly disagree”, 1 student ticked “disagree”, 3 students ticked ‘Agree’, and 16 students ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 3.62. So, the student’s attitude is satisfactory.

For the fifth question, 2 students ticked “strongly disagree”, 2 students ticked “disagree”, 1 student ticked ‘Agree’, 17 students ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 3.5. So, the student’s attitude is satisfactory.

For the sixth question, 4 students ticked “strongly disagree”, 3 students ticked “disagree”, 10 students ticked ‘Agree’, 4 students ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 2.6. So, the student’s attitude is not satisfactory.

For the seventh question, 1 student ticked “strongly disagree”, 1 student ticked “disagree”, 12 students ticked ‘Agree’, 14 students ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 3.44. So, the student’s attitude is satisfactory.

Finally, it is noticed that for Questions No. 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 the students have expressed their satisfaction towards this study. For Questions 3 and 6, the students expressed their dissatisfaction with the study.

#### 4.4 In-Depth Analysis of Teacher's Questionnaire Survey Results

The results of the teacher’s questionnaire survey which have already been presented in Appendix 4 of this paper have been discussed below:

Here the interpretation key of the teacher's attitude is 1.00-2.25 = negative attitude, 2.26 -3.00= not satisfactory, 3.01 -3.75 = satisfactory, and 3.76-5.00 = very satisfactory.

An In-Depth Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire Survey Results is displayed in Appendix 4

The number of the total respondent teachers was 2. The details of the results of the teacher’s questionnaire survey are given below:

For the first question among the 2 respondents to the question, the mean score is 3.5. So, it is satisfactory.

For the second question, 2 teachers ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 4. So, it is very satisfactory.

For the third question, 1 teacher ticked ‘Strongly Disagree’, and 1 teacher ticked ‘Strongly Agree’. The mean score is 2.5. So here teachers had shown their negative attitude towards the study.

For the fourth question, 2 teachers ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 4. So, it is very satisfactory.

For the fifth question, 2 teachers ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 4. So, it is also very satisfactory.

For the sixth question, 1 teacher ticked ‘Strongly Disagree’, and 1 teacher ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 2.5. So here the teacher’s response is not satisfactory.

For the seventh question, 1 teacher ticked ‘agree’, and 1 teacher ticked ‘Strongly agree’. The mean score is 3.5. So, the teacher’s response was satisfactory.

Finally, it is noticed that for Questions no. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 the teachers have expressed their satisfaction with this study. For Questions No. 3, and 6, the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction and disagreed with the study.

#### 4.5 Researcher’s evaluation using the questionnaire (Displayed in Appendix 2)

In this section, the researcher has presented her evaluation using the same questionnaire that was used to get the teachers’ and students’ opinions. The researcher’s evaluation has been given below.

In answer to the question “IELTS or TOEFL Reading materials are often irrelevant to the test takers’ previous English background, do you agree with the statement?” The researcher strongly agrees because the researcher thinks that TOEFL is biased against individuals who may be proficient in using English for international communication but have not been exposed to the inner circle variety of English. Some topics seem unknown to him because of cultural distance.

In answer to the question: "IELTS or TOEFL reading texts often deal with low-frequency words that are not commonly necessary in the prospective study and living in the North American situations. Do you agree with the statement?" the researcher strongly agrees because her study gives her knowledge about how the IELTS or TOEFL test uses low-frequency words that are not commonly necessary in international contexts.

In answer to the question: "Do you agree with the statement that "Reading comprehension is designed to measure the ability to understand short passages similar in topic and style to those found in North American Universities?" The researcher strongly agreed because when she looked for sample questions for IELTS or TOEFL she saw that in the IELTS or TOEFL test, many topics were used which are seen in the American context only. As an example, she can talk about the passage based on the celebration of the centennial anniversary of America's independence from England which has taken from virtual IELTS or TOEFL from Test magic.

In answer to the question: "To be successful on IELTS or TOEFL tests, the EFL learners are to assimilate not only the Linguistic standards the center puts forth but also the Anglo-Saxon culture." Do you agree with the statement?" the researcher ticked Agree.

In answer to the question: "Placement tests should include information about the curriculum the students will encounter." Do you agree with the statement?" the researcher ticked Agree. Because she got the message from other respondents who appeared in the IELTS /TOEFL test but could not get a good score. They also feel that if the IELTS or TOEFL test includes international topics for reading passages it will save them time and they will be able to utilize those in their other answering sections.

In answer to the question: "Dealing with unfamiliar issues and context may bring cognitive burden and make the learning process more difficult for learners. Do you agree with the statement?", the researcher ticked Strongly Agree.

In answer to the question: "The center sells ideas, sends native speaker ELT experts and teachers, and sells course books to the periphery. - Do you agree with the statement?" the researcher ticked Strongly Agree because the students who appear in the IELTS or TOEFL test face problems with reading passages. For that reason, they buy various preparatory course books and do coaching in different places. In that way, they spend money on IELTS or TOEFL tests. The American Center and its agencies get money and benefits.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive conclusion to the entire study and offers recommendations based on the empirical survey findings to address the deficiencies identified in the reading materials of IELTS or TOEFL.

#### 5.2 Conclusion

Upon a careful review of the research findings, it is essential to recommend to the governing board overseeing IELTS or TOEFL to meticulously devise a strategy for selecting reading materials. Additionally, the examination notices that British and American cultural topics impose an additional burden on students unfamiliar with such themes.

The proposed solution involves incorporating international contexts, topics, and variations of English into IELTS or TOEFL reading materials. By enabling students to connect their personal experiences and interests with English Language Teaching (ELT) materials, they can actively contribute their ideas to the learning process. This approach not only saves time and energy but also facilitates a more engaging language-learning experience.

#### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the collective insights obtained from student and teacher surveys, coupled with the researcher's evaluation, it is recommended that the deficiencies in IELTS or TOEFL reading materials should be addressed. Neglecting international goals, policies, relations, and resource availability, these materials, rooted in the norms of the dominant culture, often result in most non-native students failing the IELTS or TOEFL exam. To mitigate these issues, administrators, and teachers involved in IELTS or TOEFL are urged to consider the following recommendations.

## 5.4 Alternative Perspectives for ELT to Minimize Linguistic Imperialism's Detrimental Effects:

1. Filtering Knowledge for Contextual Adaptation: Instructors in non-native countries should filter knowledge based on their cultural context before presenting it to students, facilitating easier accommodation.
2. Leveraging English as a Lingua Franca: Acknowledge English as a lingua franca for international communication and incorporate a diverse range of topics and intercultural contexts in IELTS or TOEFL materials to avoid cultural monopolization.
3. Considering Extra-Linguistic Matters in Language Teaching: Recognize the significance of the entire context for successful language education. Collaboration with experts from non-native cultures during the planning phase can lead to more inclusive materials.
4. Developing Local EFL Materials: Create materials that reflect the realities, topics, and aims of the local context, addressing challenges posed by centralized materials and methodologies.

However, as indicated by the study results, systematic implementation of the above recommendations by IELTS or TOEFL program administrators and teachers could enhance learning satisfaction among enrolled students.

## 5.5 Further Studies

While this paper primarily addresses issues related to IELTS or TOEFL reading materials, there remains ample room for further research. Potential areas of exploration include the price of TOEFL exams, challenges associated with IELTS or TOEFL writing materials, and other sides that may pose difficulties for students.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Undoubtedly, assessments like IELTS or TOEFL play a pivotal role for students in the Asian EFL context aspiring to pursue higher education abroad. Consequently, addressing the issues related to its reading materials becomes imperative. A positive resolution to these issues will not only enhance the effectiveness of the IELTS or TOEFL assessment but also contribute to the academic success of students in the Asian EFL context.

## Appendices:

### Appendix: 1

Table 1: The distribution of students and teachers in each sector

| Institution          | Number of Teachers | Level of Students                                   | Number of Students |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| Gateway              |                    | 1st and 2nd year of private and public universities | 25                 |
| Mentors              |                    | HSC passed  | 25                 |
| Southeast University | 1                  |   |                    |
| East West University | 1                  |   |                    |

## Appendix: 2

Sample Questionnaire of Students and Teachers:

General instruction:

Please put a tick on the most appropriate of the four options under each question from 1-8.

1. "IELTS /TOEFL Reading materials are often irrelevant to the test takers' previous English background." Do you agree with the statement?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagrees
2. "IELTS /TOEFL reading texts often deal with low-frequency words that are not commonly necessary in the prospective study and living in the North American situations." Do you agree with the statement?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagrees
3. "Reading comprehension is designed to measure the ability to understand short passages similar in topic and style to those found in North American Universities?" Do you agree?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagrees
4. "To be successful on IELTS /TOEFL tests, the EFL learners are to assimilate not only the linguistic standards the center puts forth but also their culture." Do you agree with the statement?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagree
5. "Placement tests should include information about the curriculum the students will encounter." Do you agree with the statement?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagrees
6. " Dealing with unfamiliar issues and context may bring cognitive burden and make the learning process more difficult for learners." Do you agree with the statement?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagrees
7. "The center sells their native ideas, sends native speaker ELT experts and teachers, and sells course books to the periphery." - Do you agree with the statement?
  - A. Strongly agrees
  - B. Agree
  - C. Disagree
  - D. Strongly disagrees
8. Could you please write (in 2/3 sentences) your feelings about the TOEFL test that you took?

## Appendix-3

Table 2: Student's Questionnaire Survey

| Statements   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean Score |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| " IELTS or TOEFL Reading materials are often irrelevant to the test takers' previous English background." Do you agree with the statement? | 1                 | 1        | 8     | 24             | 3.62       |

| Statements  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean Score |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| " IELTS or TOEFL reading texts often deal with low-frequency words that are not commonly necessary in the prospective study and living in North American situations." Do you agree with the statement?          | 6                 | 6        | 4     | 18             | 3          |
| "Do you agree with the statement that "Reading comprehension is designed to measure the ability to understand short passages similar in topic and style found in North American or other foreign Universities?" | 10                | 10       | 20    | 14             | 2.70       |
| "To be successful on IELTS or TOEFL tests, the EFL learners are to assimilate not only the Linguistic standards the center puts forth but also the Anglo-Saxon culture." Do you agree with the statement?       | 1                 | 1        | 3     | 16             | 3.62.      |
| "Placement tests should include information about the curriculum that the students will encounter." Do you agree with the statement?  | 2                 | 2        | 1     | 17             | 3.50.      |
| "Dealing with unfamiliar issues and context does not bring any cognitive burden and does not make the learning process more difficult for learners." Do you agree with the statement?                           | 4                 | 3        | 4     | 10             | 2.6        |
| "The center sells native ideas, sends native speaker ELT experts and teachers, and sells course books to the periphery." Do you agree with the statement?   | 1                 | 1        | 12    | 14             | 3.44.      |

## Appendix-4

Table 3: Teacher's Questionnaire Survey

| Respondent No: | Number of Questions |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----------------|---------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                | Q1                  | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 |
| 1              | 3                   | 4  | 1  | 4  | 4  | 2  | 3  |
| 2              | 4                   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  |

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