

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS SOCIAL CAPITAL: A STUDY OF ONLINE ENGLISH PRIVATE TUTORING IN TAIWAN

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**Abstract:** *The worldwide expansion of globalization contributes to the dominant status of the English language and furthers the expansion of linguistic imperialism. Underpinned by the concept of globalization, this study situates in the context of online English private tutoring (EPT) and aims to explore the image of the English language and examine what it reflects in society and education. Data were collected from learners' testimonials presented on the website of one famous online EPT company based in Taiwan. Content Analysis was adopted to analyse learners' stated learning goals in their testimonials. The findings indicate the English language is understood as a form of social capital, allowing access to better career development, higher education and the realization of dreams. Implications of the English language as social capital in society, education and the global were discussed.*

**Keywords:** *online EPT; social capital; globalization; shadow education; Taiwan*

## Introduction

The end of colonization does not bring an end to the powerful English language, but English has still been a dominant and powerful language worldwide. The expansion of globalization leads to increased constant contact between people from all over the world and contributes to the significant position of English as a global/international language which facilitates communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds. The spread of globalization makes learning the English language become a prevalent phenomenon worldwide.

The rapid spread of English has been argued by scholars to contribute to the expansion of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1988), which may devalue indigenous languages and cultures (Phillipson, 1992) by privileging certain groups of people who are proficient in English or have much access to English language learning (Pennycook, 1995). English is regarded as a gatekeeper for people to be part of certain groups and benefit from them. English as a dominant/global language worldwide leads to unbalanced power relations between English languages and other languages (Pennycook, 1998). This unbalanced power relations between the English language and other languages are shown in the rapid growth and worldwide expansion of the English language teaching industry, especially in the English private tutoring market.

Learners of English, both native and non-native, subscribe to English private tutoring to learn English with the intention to meet their needs. Due to the fee-charging nature, English private tutoring has been argued to create an edu-business (Ball, 2012) industry in which English as a commodity can be sold or bought. English as a product, from the economic perspective, shows the way how the English language is connected to and part of the material world. Notably, it also unveils that English is regarded as a capital that individuals can own, accumulate and benefit from it (Dandy & Pua, 2014).

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According to Bourdieu, social capital refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.248-249). Thinking with Bourdieu, the phenomenon of learning English can be seen as the institution acts which allow individuals to obtain membership in a network of relationships. Instead of benefitting from the network, members also bring benefits to the communities. Following this line, the influence the English language has (i.e. the discourses of globalization, linguistic imperialism etc.) contributes to its powerful and dominant status.

Language may be regarded as a mode, a form, a concrete reality of relations between people in society (Clark, 2006). The image of the English language not only reflects the relations between English and other languages but also between the English language and society. This study situates in the context of online English private tutoring and data were drawn from English learners’ testimonials and profiles presented on one popular English private tutoring company based in Taiwan. Underpinned by the concepts of globalization and social capital, this paper aims to explore the image of the English language and examine what it reflects in society and education by analysing English learners’ stated learning goals.

## Theoretical Framework

The widespread of the English language in the world is considered an incidental result of colonial expansion and globalization (Spolsky, 2004). The spread of English further makes English become the dominant and powerful language in many domains, such as technology, economy, politics, society, education and so on. The dominant and powerful status of the English language implies linguistic hierarchization which favours the English language over other languages. On the one hand, this has been a positive thing in many parts of the world; on the other hand, it has been argued to lead to the development of linguistic imperialism proposed by Phillipson (1992).

Linguistic imperialism is defined by Phillipson that “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structural refers broadly to material properties (for example, institutions, financial allocation) and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties (for example, attitudes, pedagogical principles)” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). Linguistic imperialism first took place through colonisation and military powers (Knowles, 1998). Through the colonial era, colonisers impose their language and power, which makes their language more dominant, privileged, and powerful than the indigenous languages. The end of the colonial era does not end the prestige of the colonisers’ languages; rather, they remain the same status in the government and education system in the colonial countries. For example, English enjoyed high prestige as the chief official language for the government, laws, education and international business in Hong Kong during the British colonial era. After the end of British colonization in Hong Kong, English remains a ladder to success and a gatekeeper to higher education, better jobs and social positions (Lai, 2021). That is to say, English is linked with prestigious jobs, socio-economic positions and higher education. This results in individuals’ belief that a high level of proficiency in English would open up a brighter future and benefit those who are proficient in English. Here it reveals that English is understood as a form of capital, allowing access to economic, social and higher education opportunities.

The phenomenon of the English language as capital is not limited to colonial areas only, but it expands into other areas of the world. For example, Lin (2012) points out that in Taiwan thinks the “mastery of English is considered important for accumulating personal capital and English is regarded as a socio-cultural asset” (p. 70). Globalization can be seen as one of the significant factors leading to this expansion. Globalization leads to increased constant contact between people from all over the world and reinforces the significant position of English as a global/international language which facilitates communication between people from different linguistic backgrounds. English is perceived and used as a language for individuals to be able to be connected to/get involved in global tasks. The

prestige English enjoys leads to the inequalities between English and other languages (Lai, 2021) and the imbalanced continued allocation of more resources to English than to other languages.

In response to the global/international status of the English language, many countries have had reformation on English language education policy and developed strategies of internationalisation (Haigh, 2002; Yang, 2002). The changes and reformations in English language education policy to meet the challenges of globalization make the English language powerful, allowing access to economic and social opportunities such as jobs, services, and connections (Park, 2011). This reflects that the English language is understood as a form of capital and this indicates how the phenomenon of globalization contributes to the development of the English language as a capital.

To cope with the challenges of globalization, at the micro level, individuals subscribe to English private tutoring to obtain good English ability. Private tutoring is also well-known as shadow education as it mimics mainstream education and changes as it does (Bray, 2013). However, research indicates that private tutoring is in a process of growing out of the shadow and transforming from mimicking mainstream education to providing solutions to educational issues (Zhang & Bray, 2020). For example, Chang (2019) suggests that one type (franchised Children American English *Buxiban*) of English *buxiban* (*Buxiban* is a term used to refer to private tutoring in Taiwan) in Taiwan is growing beyond the shadow of mainstream education by developing its curriculum, teacher training program, assessment system and teaching materials for English learners to be able to connect the self to the world and meet the challenges of globalization. The research not only suggests English private tutoring's transformation but also unveils the impact of globalization on this transformation.

The expansion of globalization furthers the spread of English and reinforces the prestige of English as a global/international language (Shahid, 2021). The dominant status of English affects not only mainstream English education but also the English private tutoring industry. English private tutoring plays a significant role in English language learning as many English learners, both native and non-native English speakers, subscribe to English private tutoring to learn English. Because private tutoring has become a worldwide phenomenon (Mori & Baker, 2010), research on the impact of globalization on English private tutoring can provide us with in-depth insights into the relationship between globalization and English language learning/teaching.

## English Private Tutoring

Private tutoring, also known as shadow education, is regarded as activities which aims to improve students' academic performance in mainstream education (GyÖri, 2020). The three aspects of private tutoring are (1) tutoring in academic school subjects, (2) additional provision besides mainstream schooling, and (3) the intention of financial gain (Bray, 2013). Private tutoring can be delivered in different forms, such as one-on-one, small-group, or lecture-type. Due to its fee-charging nature, it is regarded as an edu-business industry and it has been argued to reproduce social classes, leading to inequality and social stratification (Tsiplakides, 2018).

The metaphor 'shadow' is used to indicate shadow education is a type of education which is closely connected to mainstream education. As aforementioned, Bray (2013) claims that shadow education mimics mainstream education and changes its shape as mainstream education does. Except for the impact of mainstream education, shadow education operates like an assemblage in which society, culture, education, and business are entangled and interact with each other (Chang, 2019). In other words, this type of education is not simply connected to and affected by mainstream education, but it is regarded as part of the whole dynamic ecosystem of education and society. As societies and states become more competitive, partly due to globalization, school systems also become more sophisticated and flexible that in turn expands the demand for tutoring (Bray, 2013).

With regard to English private tutoring, as discussed earlier, the expansion of globalization makes the dominant and global status of the English language in communication systems become more visible and contributes to the rapid and highly-demand for English language teaching. In response to the challenges caused by globalization, Taiwan has undergone a major transformation in

its education system by reforming English educational policy and curriculum to equip its citizens with the English skills to get involved in/connected to the world. Private tutoring is part of the ecosystem of education broadly, so the transformation happening in mainstream education reflects in English private tutoring. Given the impact of globalization, a certain type of *buxiban* in Taiwan is in the process of growing out of the shadow of mainstream education by providing English courses which aim to equip learners with the English skills to allow them to connect the self to the world (Chang, 2019).

Compared to research conducted to explore the impact of globalization on mainstream education, little has been known in the field of English private tutoring. As English private tutoring plays a significant role in English language learning, discussion related to what is happening in English private tutoring will provide us with a more comprehensive understating of the impact of globalization on English language teaching in the world.

## English in Taiwan

In Taiwan, the privileged, powerful and dominating position of English is a complicated phenomenon in which politics (Lu, 2011), economics (Brown, 2015), and educational system (Chen & Johnson, 2004; Lu, 2011; White, 2013), culture and society (Lin, 2012) and personal achievement (Jonathan, 2013) entangle and interact with each other (see Chang 2019, p.451). Additionally, English is the only foreign language that is included in the formal educational curriculum, tested in the entrance examinations and further plays a role of a gatekeeper in receiving higher education and a key to better careers and higher social status (Jonathan, 2013). Lin (2012) pointed out that people in Taiwan think the “mastery of English is considered important for accumulating personal capital and English is regarded as a socio-cultural asset” (p. 70). The spread of globalization contributes to the status of English as an international/global language and further makes learning English become a ‘national campaign’ in Taiwan (Tsou,2013). This is also known as ‘English fever’.

Learning English in Taiwan has long been a compulsory part of the curriculum in secondary and tertiary education. In order to improve individuals’ capacity to meet the challenges emerging with globalization, English language learning and teaching in Taiwan has undergone a major transformation in the last two decades. The Taiwanese government has announced a series of educational reforms in the evaluation and curriculum system. In the year of 2001, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that English education is now included in the curriculum in primary education from Grade 3 to Grade 6. In 2014, English listening is included as a formal and compulsory part of the Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students. For higher education, English listening has been an optional part of the College Entrance Examination since 2013 and it becomes compulsory in 2015. Furthermore, according to the 12-year curriculum guidelines, the goal of English education in Taiwan intends to balance the development of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), enhance students’ communication skills in English and cultivate students’ other abilities (such as critical thinking, analysing ability, creative ability) by adopting a student-centred teaching approach (Chang 2019, pp. 451-452; 461). Except for the changes (i.e. including listening in the Entrance Examination) in the evaluation system, in 2021, the Taiwanese government launched the Bilingual 2030 policy which intends to boost the competitiveness of Taiwan’s young generation, build on the advantage as a Mandarin-speaking nation, further strengthen English communication skills of the citizens and help bolster their global competitiveness (National Development Council, 2022).

However, although English listening is included in the entrance examinations, the evaluation system still mainly focuses on grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary and writing. The scores of entrance examinations are used for senior high school or university admission. In order to prepare students for these significant entrance examinations, the curricular standards at school education are well known to focus on grammar-translation, with accuracy emphasized over fluency, by building students’ knowledge of English grammatical structures, which further results in the marginalization of listening and speaking instruction (Chen & Tsai 2012, as cited in Chang 2019, p. 452). That is, the

teaching method (teacher-centred, grammar translation) and teaching focus (e.g. test-driven) of formal schools do not correspond to the 12-year curriculum guidelines.

Since schools cannot provide enough training on English listening and speaking for students to cope with the new educational reformation, most of the students and their parents seek help from private tutoring which offers courses to balance the development of English four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing (Chang 2019, p. 452). Given the high demand for English private tutoring, a 60-billion-dollar English private tutoring market per year is created (Chi, 2017) and a variety of *buxibans*, such as Win-Lee *buxiban*, (franchised) Children American English *buxiban*, online English private tutoring, one-on-one English tutoring etc., are established to meet the market demand and learners' needs. Again, this shows that the expansion of English private tutoring is affected by changes in mainstream education. Notably, this indicates that English private tutoring does not mimic mainstream education only but it functions to complement what is missing in mainstream education.

## Methodology

This study is situated in the context of online English private tutoring and data were drawn from English learners' testimonials and profiles presented on one popular English private tutoring company based in Taiwan. This online EPT company offers one-on-one private tutoring courses via its platform. Learners register to obtain the membership and create an account which allows them to select courses, tutors and dates/times to learn English. Tutors are categorised into three groups, English native speakers tutors from the inner circle (i.e. UK, USA, Australia etc.), non-native English speakers tutors from the outer circle (i.e. Philippines) and Taiwanese bilingual tutors. The tuition fees vary based on the tutors that learners select. Courses instructed by tutors from the inner circle cost more than those by tutors from the outer and expanding circle.

In the testimonials, learners indicated their name, occupation, and gender and included a photo of themselves along with sharing their reasons for participating in online EPT, learning goals, their experiences with tutors/the online EPT company, their prior English learning experiences and opinions about mainstream education. Notably, using testimonials as a data source is not unproblematic as testimonials are a common type of marketing strategy utilized on supplier websites (Davis, 2013), acting as customer endorsements of a product to attract prospective customers. Hence, it is likely that testimonials with more positive customer experiences will be presented on supplier websites, which raises issues of data credibility, such as assuring the testimonials project accurate information and correspond to reality. However, this study aimed to explore learners' learning goals for participating in online EPT. Hence, their testimonials on their learning goals were less likely to act as customer endorsement and could be seen as reliable and useful data reflecting real-life learners' learning goals for participating in online EPT. Similar studies which adopted testimonials as data could be found in Briant, Doherty, Dooley and English's (2020) paper. In their paper, they used 160 parent testimonials posted on the websites of 16 private tutoring suppliers in Australia. They then argue that parent testimonials use emotional appeals to construct private tutoring as a resolution to parents' fateful moments (Briant, Doherty, Dooley, & English, 2020). Fateful moments refer to "dilemmas that are perceived by the individual as 'high consequence' "according to Giddens (1991, p. 131).

Data for this study were collected from June to October of 2021 and 176 learners' testimonials and profiles were collected for analysis. One of the challenges in collecting data from a website is that saves of the webpages as HTML files using a web browser "tend not to preserve the way advertisements, images, animations, and page layout were rendered at the time the webpage was saved" (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p.172). Due to the 'instantly impermanent' (Perlmutter, 2003) characteristic of webpages, all the testimonials were screen-captured and saved as PDF files for analysis. With regard to ethical clearance, I did not consider it necessary to seek consent from the participants because the information on their testimonials was publicly open to everyone without any requirement for access to it (see Chang 2019, p.454). The testimonials were written in Mandarin (N=175) or English (N=1). Data were analysed in Mandarin and then translated into English by the

researcher who is bilingual in English and Mandarin. To ensure the credibility of the translation, back-translation (Tyupa, 2011) was adopted. The translated text was re-translated back into Mandarin by two research assistants who did not see the original text. In order to keep anonymity, the participants were marked as participants 1, 2, 3 etc. followed by their occupation.

Content analysis can be understood as a research method for the interpretation of the content of texts through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Text data may be in visual or auditory forms and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Kondracki, Wellman & Amundson, 2002). In this study, content analysis was adopted to analyse 135 responses from 176 participants' testimonials with the intention to construct themes of English learners' learning goals, which then reflected the image of the English language. Notably, the number of responses did not correspond to the number of participants because some of them did not share their learning goals.

I adopted the manifest analysis approach to coding the data. The manifest analysis allows researchers to examine the data systematically and quantitatively by counting what is observable and tangible. It focuses on what is said by the participants and allows the researcher to stay very close to the text, use the words themselves and describe the visible and obvious in the text (Berg, 2001). Applying manifest analysis, I generated 20 codes which were then categorized into 12 sub-themes and 4 themes (refer to Appendix A). Codes including the terms 'work', 'job' and 'colleagues' were categorised into the theme 'learning English for work' which consisted of four sub-themes, namely learning English for work communication, learning English for more/better work opportunities, learning English for returning to work, and English is significant at work. Codes with the terms, such as 'study abroad' or 'university', were merged into the theme 'learning English for having access to higher education'. Codes, such as 'English language intuition', 'good English ability', 'English becomes part of life' and 'have the ability to think/speak in English', constructed the theme 'learning English as a second language'. The theme 'learning English to improve personal non-work related English communication skills' included three sub-themes (1) improve English speaking, (2) improve English listening and (3) communication for travelling.

## Findings

I applied Content Analysis to analyse learners' stated learning goals presented in their testimonials. Twenty codes were generated and then merged into 4 themes. They were (1) learning English for work, (2) learning English for having access to higher education, (3) learning English as a second language, and (4) learning English for improving personal non-work related English communication skills.

### *Learning English for Work*

In the dataset, 21 out of the 135 responses indicated that English learners subscribed to online EPT for work purposes. One response pointed out English is significant for work (Example 1) and 5 out of 21 responses stated they learned English in order to have access to more and better work opportunities as examples presented below:

1. When I started working, I noticed the significance of English at work. (participant 20, employed individual)
2. Without English ability as a tool, less work opportunities. (participant 25, employed individual)
3. Good English speaking ability is necessary for better work opportunities (Participant 122)



Additionally, 8 responses suggested that they learned to improve their English communication skills because they needed to use English to communicate with foreigners at work (i.e. clients, colleagues, people from different countries). Examples are presented below:

4. I need to improve my speaking and listening skills because I need to have meetings with foreign clients and colleagues. (participant 32, employed individual)
5. I need to use a lot of English at work because I need to communicate with foreign engineers. (participant 93, employed individual)
6. In my position at work, I need to communicate with people from different countries, so I need to overcome a variety of English accents. (participant 96, engineer)

Using English as a medium for making effective communication with people from different countries unveils the global, international and dominant status of English language (Shahid, 2021).

### *Learning English for Having Access to Higher Education*

The powerful and dominating status of the English language is also shown in higher education. In Taiwan, English is the only compulsory foreign language subject that is tested in the university entrance examination.

7. English is significant in either university or future. (participant 54, student)

The example above shows how the English language plays a significant role in higher education and the future in Taiwan. In the dataset, participants further indicated how the English language plays the role of a gatekeeper to higher education.

8. I participate in online English tutoring because I am going to sit an IELTS test and I am very nervous in speaking English. (participant 171, student)
9. I want to study abroad, so I need to pass IELTS or TOEFL. (participant 3, student)

Examples 8 and 9 indicate individuals need to pass certain international English language tests to obtain admission to overseas universities. Example 9 further shows the English language is understood as a tool for individuals to realize their dreams and then enhance personal development. Participants' perception of English as a gatekeeper to higher education and a tool for realizing personal dreams reflects their attitudes toward the English language and the image English presents: English is more powerful and dominant than other languages. This reflects the dominance of the English language over other languages (i.e. Example 7) and shows the impact of linguistic imperialism on the ideological property (for example, attitudes, and pedagogical principles) (Phillipson, 1992) between English and other languages. Furthermore, the examples above indicate that English is conceptualized as a form of capital that individuals can own to achieve their goals (i.e. access to higher education, realization of dreams or better/brighter future).

### *Learning English as a Second Language*

In this dataset, participants pointed out that they wished to have good English ability as example 10 shows below:

10. I always want to have good English ability (participant 127, student)

Additionally, two responses in this study indicated English learners' desire to have English as part of their life. They stated the desire to have the ability to speak/think in English or maintain good English language intuition. Examples are presented below:

11. Force myself to speak and think in English and make it become a habit (participant 28, employed individual).
12. I want to cultivate the ability to think in English (participant 40, employed individual)
13. Cultivate English language intuition to have good English ability (participant 71, student)
14. I wish English can become part of my life (participant 151, student)

Examples 10 to 14 reflect not only English learners' awareness of the significance of English but also their desire to master English. Their wish to make English become part of daily life or become a habit points out learners' desire to master the English language and use it as a second language in daily life. The desire to learn English as a second language reflects the privileged, powerful and dominant position of the English language and shows the English language is understood as a form of communication in daily life in Taiwanese society. Furthermore, the dominant and significant status of the English language is shown in the Taiwanese government's Bilingual 2030 policy which aims to adopt English as a second official language in Taiwan. The plan to adopt the English language as a second language discloses the dominance of the English language over other languages and unveils the impact of linguistic imperialism.

#### *Learning English for Improving Personal Non-Work-Related English Communication Skills*

Learners' desire to improve their non-work related English communication skills shows that English is understood and used as a form of daily communication. In the dataset, 105 out of 134 responses highlighted the desire to improve English non-work-related communication skills. The examples below illustrate that learners desire to improve their English proficiency to be able to make communication with others from different linguistic backgrounds and use English confidently in daily life and in travelling.

15. When traveling abroad, I felt very frustrated because I even couldn't speak a sentence correctly to foreigners. Suddenly, I was aware of the usefulness and necessity of English. In order to have a smooth trip next time, I decided to subscribe to this one-on-one online EPT course. (participant 140, employed individual)
16. My (English) speaking ability is relatively poor. I wish to improve my communicative ability to talk to foreigners. (participant 46, student)
17. (When I went) travelling in Australia, I found my listening skill was poor when (I needed to) communicate with others. (participant 67, employed individual)

Notably, for non-work-related English communication skills, learners highlighted their strong desire to master speaking (N= 82) and listening (N= 17) skills. Additionally, 6 out of 135 responses indicated that English speaking and/or listening training in mainstream education was limited or even ignored, which resulted in their struggling in speaking the language.

18. In my prior English learning experience at school, English teaching focused on listening and reading skill. I seldom had chances to practice speaking English in a class of 30 to 40 students. (participant 49, student)
19. Looking back at my English learning experiences in mainstream education, it is full of frustration because the focus of teaching is on passing entrance examinations, such as grammar, reading, vocabulary and phrases. There is almost no chance to practice speaking. (participant 94, student)



20. What I have learned at school can't let me communicate with foreigners properly. (participant 146, student)

In the examples above, learners indicate the lack of speaking practices in mainstream education. This unveils online English private tutoring as providing the services which are lacking in the formal education sector. Furthermore, 4 responses stated they participate in online EPT to practice English speaking and listening because the training provided in certain types of English private tutoring is also limited.

21. Having attended American English *buxiban* for many years, I am still afraid of speaking English. So I want to try this online EPT course to overcome my fear of speaking English. (participant 125, student)
22. I attended English *buxiban* for better academic performance. However, when I encountered foreigners and needed to use English, I even can't speak a full sentence. (participant 143, student)
23. Win-Lee *buxiban* lacks one-on-one English speaking opportunities. (Participant 21, student)
24. I have attended franchised American English *buxiban* for many years, I still do not know how to speak English and also feel afraid when I need to speak English. (participant 85, student)

The finding that learners used online EPT to complement the educational issues in both mainstream education and private tutoring is noteworthy and significant in the field of English private tutoring. It revealed private tutoring is in the process of transforming, from mimicking mainstream education into solutions to educational issues happening in mainstream education (Chang, 2019) and other types of English private tutoring.

It is notable to point out that learners indicated one of the reasons for improving personal English communication is to be able to communicate with foreigners effectively and successfully. The word 'foreign' and 'foreigners' occurred 22 times. Learners' desire to be able to communicate effectively with foreigners can be interpreted as their desire to be involved in/connected to the world. The desire to be able to talk to or chat with foreigners via English discloses Taiwanese English learners' perception of English as a global language and reflects the dominant status of English in the world.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate the dominant, powerful and influential status of the English language in education, society and personal development. Furthermore, the English language is regarded as social capital, allowing individuals to benefit from the influential network of the English language. Given its wide use in many domains across the world, learning English has become a pervasive phenomenon and the number of English learners shows a visible increase all over the world (Yung & Chiu, 2020). This makes not only the size of the network of connections individuals can effectively mobilize but also the volume of the network expands dramatically. The development of globalization can be seen as one of the factors contributing to the expansion of the network of the English language as English is intimately tied up with globalization (Pennycook 2009, p.113).

Globalization is not limited to economic processes only. Kumaravadivelu (2008) sees globalization as new "interconnections and flows among nations, economies and peoples" (p. 32). Participants in this study indicate their desire to learn English for better communication with people from different linguistic backgrounds at work or when travelling. The desire to establish interconnection with people by means of the English language reveals the significance of the English language, then motivates individuals to learn English and helps contribute to more efficient production of English language teaching. The increasing demand for English language learning is shown in both national

and private educational sectors. As mentioned earlier, English language learning and teaching in Taiwan has undergone a major transformation in order to meet the challenges of globalization. The launch of the Bilingual 2030 policy is evidence to show the dominant and influential status of the English language in mainstream education.

Research on Taiwanese learners' language attitudes towards English language, Mandarin, and Southern-Min (a local language spoken in Taiwan) indicates that English is evaluated most positively and the users of English are evaluated most positively in the higher social status (Liu, 2018). It further points out that the English language received much attention from both the government and individuals is perceived as privileged because of its seemingly 'pragmatic' function (i.e. access to education, career promotion etc.) in Taiwanese society. The participants of this study also highlight the significance of the English language in the domains of education and career development. Though the Bilingual 2030 policy aims to strengthen citizens' English proficiency without devaluing the official language (Mandarin), I argue that the Bilingual 2030 policy has the potential to devalue other local languages from the perspective of learners' language attitudes. The employment of the Bilingual 2030 policy may have a negative impact on other local languages. Issues related to it demand the policymakers' attention.

In order to meet the challenges of globalization, mastery of English is regarded as a necessity to obtain membership in the network. That is, the perception of the English language as social capital is reinforced by the expansion of globalization. The desire to master English is shown in the dataset where participants desire to learn English as a second language by using/thinking in English in daily life. In order to have good English ability and make English become part of life, individuals seek support and assistance from English private tutoring, which creates a 60-billion-dollar English private tutoring market in Taiwan (Chi, 2017). Hence, I argue that English as social capital driven by globalization can be seen as a significant factor contributing to the visible growth of English private tutoring. In line with this, as the network of English language learning expands, the industry of English private tutoring grows, too. More significantly, learners further state that they seek support/assistance from English private tutoring to have better English ability because the listening and speaking training in mainstream education is limited or even neglected. This finding unveils online English private tutoring is regarded as a solution to educational issues existing in mainstream education. Moreover, this transformation discloses the close relationship between mainstream education and reflects private tutoring's part of the whole dynamic ecosystem of education.

For Bourdieu, capital is power and his empirical descriptions of social capital focus on its role in the creation of a class society. English as social capital creates a group, of English elites, that favour individuals who are proficient in English and have access to a better career and higher education. This is shown in the dataset where learners point out that good English ability leads to better career development and English is significant in higher education. The spread of English also contributes to significant social inequalities (Pennycook, 2009). The production of the English elites group may lead to the production of a social class (Agyekum, 2018) in which individuals with good English proficiency are privileged and powerful.

Moreover, the findings reveal that learners pay for attending online EPT to obtain better English ability, allowing them to have membership in this group. This points out that English private tutoring plays a significant role in English language learning except for mainstream education. Notably, due to the fee-charging nature of English private tutoring, people from higher social class backgrounds are able to afford or invest more in EPT to obtain a higher level of English proficiency than others. This may result in the reproduction of social classes as individuals from higher social classes may be more likely to obtain membership of the 'English elites' group and have access to a better career, higher education and social classes.

## Conclusion

Kumaravadivelu (2008) suggest that globalization results in the transformation of contemporary social life in all its economic, political, cultural, technological, ecological, and individual dimensions (p. 32). This study demonstrates the expansion of globalization reinforces the perception of English as social capital and helps contribute to a growing industry of English language teaching/learning in both national and private educational sectors. The findings indicate the penetration of the power of the English language into education and society. I argue this penetration to be another expansion of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) on both material properties (i.e. Bilingual 2030 policy) and ideological properties (i.e. learners' attitudes toward the English language).

Pennycook (2009) suggests that "it is evident not only that English is widely used across the globe but also that it is part of those processes we call globalization. What this means for English, other languages and cultures, and processes of global change, however, is much harder to determine" (p. 113). The findings of this study indicate the potential negative impact of the spread of the English language on other local languages in the expansion of globalization. Further research on this area conducted in different contexts will provide a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Although this study situates in the context of Taiwan, the impact is not limited to Taiwan, but it can be prevalent around the world given the easy access to online courses. The findings of this study add to the literature on both English private tutoring and online EPT from L2 learners' perspective. The limitation of this study is the data source. This study analysed Taiwanese English learners' testimonials posted on the online EPT's website. Although learners share their learning experiences and stated learning goals in the testimonials, there is no room for the researcher to dig into what is presented in the testimonials. For future research, I suggest a one-on-one or focus-group interview with participants allow researchers to have in-depth insights into the data.

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## Appendix A: Codes and Generated Themes

	Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Examples
1.	learning English for work	Work communication	work communication	I want to improve English communication skills at work. At work, I need to communicate with clients from different countries.
			greet foreigners at work	I need to greet foreigners at work.
			meeting colleagues	I have meetings with foreign colleagues.
			use English at work	I found I can't use English properly at work.
		learning English for more/ better work opportunities	Work/job opportunities	With good English ability, there are better work opportunities. I want to have more work opportunities.
		learning English for returning to work	return to work	I plan to return to work and believe good English ability is important at work.
		English is significant at work		English is always significant at work.
		2.	learning English for having access to higher education	study abroad
higher education	university			English is very important in either university or future.
3.	learning English for improving personal non-work related English communication skills	improve English speaking	speaking	I want to improve my English speaking skill.
			talk to foreigners	I hope I am able to talk to foreigners
			conversation	I want to have more opportunities to practice English conversation.
			speak English	I am afraid of speaking English.
			pronunciation	I would like to improve pronunciation.
		improve English listening	listening	My listening is not very good. I want to improve my listening skill.
		communication for traveling	traveling	I love to travel and need to use English as an international language for communication I participate in online EPT to learn English because I would like to have a smooth traveling.



	Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Examples
4.	learning English as a second language	good English ability	good English ability	I always want to have good English ability.
		English language intuition	English language intuition	I want to cultivate English language intuition.
				Force myself to speak and think in English.
				I want to cultivate my ability to think in English.
		English becomes part of life	part of life	I wish English can become part of my life.
			become a habit	Force myself to speak and think in English and make it become a habit.
			use English in life.	I want to improve general English skills and use English in life.

