

# English: well beyond the inner circle dominance

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## English: well beyond the inner circle dominance

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### Abstract

What makes a language global goes far beyond its linguistic features. Although status of globalization may be largely determined by political tradition, economic strength, militaristic might and respect for human rights, one significant requirement does seem to escape fair assessment of a 'globalized language'. Here is where English finds itself: the flow of an ever increasing number of lexical items to and from the language, and similarly, an ever expanding cultural heritage due to amalgamation with outer cultural and societal characteristics. In this study, we will look into to what extent cultural elements of the outer circle were carried over into the language by authors producing literary works in an inner-circle language environment. Plots, settings, and characters in these works were analysed and thematised to illustrate the striking phenomenon of how now English has ceased to be the so-called 'property' of the inner circle only.

**Keywords:** English; culture; inner-circle; outer circle; globalisation

### Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool through which we transmit written and oral data in our daily lives. When it is employed in communicative contexts, it is tied up with culture in various and intricate ways (Kramersch 2009: 3). Culture is a broad, detailed, and a continuously altering concept, which can be viewed from various perspectives, such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and communication, which all in their own way contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural awareness and intercultural communication (Wintergerst and McVeigh 2011).

While anthropologists see culture from the dimension of human beings, sociologists look at it based on the study of social contact between people and groups; psychologists refer to it by considering the mind and behaviour; and linguists view this phenomenon from a perspective of human language (Wintergerst and McVeigh 2011). Language, constructing a world of messages, with all its ranges, emerges in all aspects of daily life. When faced with diverse messages, when trying to understand our identity and build bridges to others' identities, culture stands there to assist us (Agar 1994: 28). Language and culture are interrelated dimensions of a whole mirroring a society. Although language and culture may be kept separate from each other, the result is a significant loss of required data for a genuine interaction the lack of whose awareness endangers the self to take a

<sup>1</sup> First author's Rank, University, Faculty, Department, email; **MUST BE WRITTEN**

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23 more universal and less egoistic form (Bada 2000; Genc and Bada 2005). Kramersch (2013) states the  
24 power of culture in language learning by putting specific emphasis on it in her each study. So, it is  
25 time for the ELT field to regard the significance of the global position of English with regard to  
26 proper pedagogies and educational stuffs that will aid the students become brilliant bilingual and  
27 intercultural humans who are able to perform well in both national and international contexts  
28 (Alptekin 2002).

29 Being a universal language, English has an impact on a high number of people in several  
30 cultures in a spectrum of beneficial ways (Kachru 1990). It is clear that the most common grouping  
31 'Englishes', specifically in the language education terminology, has been the classification of  
32 English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign  
33 language (EFL). In addition to this categorization, we see the model put forth by Kachru (1985)  
34 covering a status of the language consisting of three circles": *inner*, *outer*, and *expanding*. Kachru  
35 (1985) states that the *inner circle* reflects the typical cultural and linguistic basis of English (ENL); the  
36 *outer circle* refers to the institutionalized non-native diversities of English (ESL) where we see  
37 colonization; and the *expanding circle* stretches along the places where diversities of English are used,  
38 notably in EFL contexts.

39 Based on the premise of this categorization, therefore, this study deals with literary texts  
40 from the world of literature produced in English by authors with *outer circle* backgrounds. For ease,  
41 *outer* and *expanding circles* will be treated under the *outer circle* umbrella term.

#### 42 43 **Research questions**

44  
45 This paper investigates the inner and outer circle cultural compounds ingrained in the literary works  
46 of authors originating from an *outer circle* culture, and aims to find solutions to the following  
47 research questions:

- 48 1. What are the characteristics of *inner/outer circle* cultural elements employed in the literary works of  
49 authors coming from an *outer circle* culture writing in English?
- 50 2. At what frequencies do such cultural elements assert themselves in the *inner/outer circle* literary  
51 works of authors coming from an *outer circle* culture writing in English?

#### 52 53 **Data Collection**

54  
55 The data of the study was gathered from four books authored by writers belonging to an *outer*  
56 *circle* environment, yet producing works in English. The authors were selected from a list of writers  
57 who, in their childhood, were exposed to their native cultures. The forthcoming reason for  
58 choosing these authors is that they come from different cultural backgrounds. In our examination  
59 of each novel, we focused on cultural characteristics reflecting inner and outer circle English  
60 compounds. The books were examined and as a result, included cultural inner/outer circle  
61 elements were classified as *Media*, *Movies*, *Technology*, *Places*, *Sports*, *Geography*, *Personality*, *Names*,  
62 *Nationality*, *Faiths*, *Literary Figures/Works*, *Food & Drinks*, and *Titles*.

#### 63 64 **Instruments**

65  
66 As was stated above, four novels were selected for this study, and the authors who wrote the books  
67 were using English as a second or third language. The books, by which the authors were known  
68 best are *Honor* by Elif Shafak, *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, and  
69 *Lolita* by Viladimir Nabokov.

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74 **Findings and Results**

75  
76 Initially <sup>1</sup> for every theme <sup>2</sup>, a frequency test was run employing the SPSS (v. 20.0) statistical package.  
77 Then, a chi-square test was run to describe any significant difference <sup>2</sup> in dispersion of overall  
78 themes. Finally, examples for every cultural compound were provided regarding inner/outer circle  
79 cultural characteristics.  
80

81 Table 1.

82 *Inner and Outer Circle Themes in the Book, Honor*

Themes	Inner		Outer	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
Media	2	100.0	-	-
Movies	2	100.0	-	-
Technology	4	80.0	1	20.0
Sports	2	67.0	1	33.0
Places	15	54.0	13	46.0
Personality	2	34.0	4	66.0
Names	7	22.0	25	78.0
Nationality	4	20.0	16	80.0
Faiths	1	11.0	8	89.0
Food & Drinks	-	-	4	100.0
Titles	-	-	3	100.0
Geography	-	-	2	100.0
Literary Figures or Works	-	-	2	100.0
<sup>1</sup> Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)		0.000	0.000	

83 As can be understood from Table 1, regarding the cultural themes in the book, *Honor*, except for  
84 very few themes like *media* (100.0%), *movies* (100.0%), *technology* (80.0%), *sports* (67.0%), and *places*  
85 (54.0%), the outer circle cultural themes are significantly dominant in the overall thematic  
86 dispersion: *food & drinks* (0.0% inner; 100.0%, outer): *faiths* (11.0%, inner; 89.0%, outer): *nationality*  
87 (20.0%, inner; 80.0%, outer): *names* (22.0%, inner; 78.0%, outer): *personality* (34.0%, inner; 66.0%,  
88 outer): *titles* (0.0%, inner; 100.0%, outer): *geography* (0.0%, inner; 100.0%, outer): and *literary figures*  
89 (0.0%, inner; 100.0%, outer). Thematic samples reflecting these themes are presented below:

- 90 • The Daily Express, The Times. (inner circle *media*)
- 91 • The Gold Rush, The man from the Alamo. (inner circle *movies*)
- 92 • Austin Montego, Buick, Cadillac. (inner circle *technology*)
- 93 • Mercedes. (outer circle *technology*)
- 94 • Chelsea, Nottingham Forest. (inner circle *sports*)
- 95 • Moscow Dynamo. (outer circle *sports*)
- 96 • Barnsbury, Birmingham, England, Hackney, London, Shrewsbury, Square. (inner circle
- 97 *places*)
- 98 • China, Iran, İstanbul, Turkey, Urfa, Vietnam. (outer circle *places*)
- 99 • Harry Houdini, John Wayne. (inner circle *personality*)
- 100 • ABBA, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar. (outer circle *personality*)
- 101 • Alex, Andrew, Bill, Katie, Martin, Patrick. (inner circle *names*)
- 102 • Esma, İskender, Kader, Pembe, Salim, Tariq. (outer circle *names*)
- 103 • British, English, Irish. (inner circle *nationality*)
- 104 • Bangladeshis, Chinese, Indians, Indonesians, Pakistanis, Turkish. (outer circle *nationality*)
- 105 • Christian. (inner circle *faiths*)
- 106 • Muslim, Quran, Ramadan. (outer circle *faiths*)
- 107 • Baklava, Halva, Sahlep. (outer circle *food & drinks*)
- 108 • Muhtar, Shah, Sultan. (outer circle *titles*)
- 109 • Mount Ararat, River Euphrates. (outer circle *geography*)
- 110 • Hansel and Gretel, Nasreddin Hodja. (outer circle *literary figures/works*)

111

112 **2**able 2.113 *Inner and Outer Circle Themes in the Book, On the Road*

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Themes	Inner		Outer	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
Technology	2	100.0	-	-
Places	56	93.0	4	7.0
Geography	8	89.0	1	11.0
Names	20	83.0	4	17.0
Personality	8	73.0	3	27.0
Nationality	3	43.0	4	57.0
Faiths	-	-	1	100.0
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000		0.000	

115

116 From Table 2, with 100.0%, the theme, *technology*, emerged only in the inner circle, with no  
 117 occurrence in the outer circle. It is clearly understood **1** that the theme, *places*, in the inner circle  
 118 (93.0%) was observed to strikingly surpass its outer circle equivalent (7.0%). The theme, *geography*, in  
 119 the inner circle group (89.0%) was considerably utilised with more frequency compared to its  
 120 correspondent in **1** the outer circle (11.0%). Furthermore, the theme, *names*, in the inner circle  
 121 (83.0%) appeared as the fourth strongest theme in the inner circle with significant dominance over  
 122 its outer circle equivalent (17.0%). Additionally, the theme, *personality*, in the inner circle group  
 123 emerged as the fifth strongest theme (**1** 0%) outnumbering its counterpart (27.0%) in the outer  
 124 circle. However, from our observation **2** we can detect that the theme, *nationality*, in the inner circle  
 125 (43.0%) was slightly outnumbered by its outer circle equivalent (57.0%). Finally, the theme, *faiths*,



126 with no occurrences in the inner circle, appeared with 100% frequency in the outer circle. Thematic  
127 samples related from the book, *On the Road* are presented below:

- 128 • Cadillac, Ford. (inner circle *technology*)
- 129 • Canada, Colorado, Connecticut, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco. (inner circle *places*)
- 130 • Egypt, France, Gothenburg, Paris. (outer circle *places*)
- 131 • Adirondack Mountains, Hudson River, Hudson Valley, Lake Michigan, Mississippi River,  
132 Nevada Desert. (inner circle *geography*)
- 133 • Nile. (outer circle *geography*)
- 134 • Eddie, Hector, Jane, Stuart, Tim, Tommy. (inner circle *names*)
- 135 • Carlo, Chad, Chiquito. (outer circle *names*)
- 136 • Charlie Parker, Columbus, Jack Dempsey, Richard Rawlings, Roy Johnson, Tim Grey  
137 (inner circle *personality*)
- 138 • Goethe, Modigliani, Schopenhauer. (outer circle *personality*)
- 139 • American, Irish, Scotch. (inner circle *nationality*)
- 140 • French, Indian, Italian, Mexican (outer circle *nationality*)
- 141 • Buddhism. (outer circle *faiths*)

142

143 Table 3.

144 *Inner and Outer Circle Themes in the Book, Heart of Darkness*

145

Themes	Inner		Outer	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
Technology	1	100.0	-	-
Geography	2	67.0	1	33.0
Personality	2	67.0	1	33.0
Names	3	60.0	2	40.0
Faiths	1	50.0	1	50.0
Places	6	35.0	11	65.0
Nationality	1	10.0	9	90.0
Food & Drinks	-	-	1	100.0
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000		0.000	

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147 From Table 3, we can observe that the theme, *technology*, though with a single occurrence, emerged  
148 only in the inner circle group. *Geography*, with 67.0% in the inner circle, was seen to be second  
149 strongest theme to outnumber its correspondent in the outer circle (33.0%). Following is *personality*  
150 with a similar percentage (67.0%) in the inner circle surpasses the outer circle occurrence (33.0%).  
151 With 60.0% of emergence in the inner circle, the theme, *names*, similarly did surpass its equivalent in  
152 the outer circle (40.0%). Interestingly, the theme, *faiths*, emerged with equal percentages both in the  
153 inner (50.0%) and outer circles (50.0%). Contrary to previously occurring themes, the theme, *places*,  
154 in the inner circle (35.0%) was outnumbered by its counterpart in the outer circle (65.0%). Similarly,  
155 the theme, *nationality*, in the inner circle emerged with a mere 10.0%, compared to an overwhelming  
156 occurrence of its correspondent in the outer circle (90.0%). Lastly, the theme, *food & drink*, though  
157 with a single occurrence, emerged only in the outer circle group. Thematic samples pertaining to  
158 these themes are illustrated below:

- 159 • Martini Henry. (inner circle *technology*)
- 160 • Golden Hind, Thames. (inner circle *geography*)
- 161 • Erebus. (outer circle *geography*)
- 162 • Francis Drake, John Franklin. (inner circle *personality*)

- 163 • Eldorado. (outer circle *personality*)
- 164 • Charlie, Marlow, Nellie. (inner circle *names*)
- 165 • Fresleva, Kurtz. (outer circle *names*)
- 166 • Christian. (inner circle *faiths*)
- 167 • Buddha. (outer circle *faiths*)
- 168 • Erith, Essex, Deptford, Gravesend, Greenwich, London. (inner circle *places*)
- 169 • Africa, China, India, Mediterranean, North Pole, Rome. (outer circle *places*)
- 170 • English. (inner circle *nationality*)
- 171 • Dutch, French, German, Indian, Romans, Russian. (outer circle *nationality*)
- 172 • Falernian wine. (outer circle *food & drinks*)

173

174 Table 4.

175 *Inner and Outer Circle Themes in the Book, Lolita*

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Themes	Inner		Outer	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
Faiths	1	100.0	-	-
Places	14	48.0	15	52.0
Names	14	45.0	17	55.0
Personality	5	45.0	6	55.0
Geography	1	33.0	2	67.0
Nationality	4	31.0	9	69.0
Literary Figures/Works	-	-	4	100.0
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000		0.000	

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178 By looking at Table 4, it is clearly understood that the theme, *faiths*, occurred only in the inner circle  
 179 group with only one occurrence. The theme, *places*, in the inner circle (48.0%) was slightly  
 180 outnumbered by its counterpart (52.0%) in the outer circle. Besides while the theme, *names*,  
 181 appeared with 45.0% in the inner circle, it was encountered with 55.0% in the outer circle. Similarly,  
 182 the theme, *personality*, occurred with the same percentages (45.0%, inner circle; 55.0%, outer circle).  
 183 Regarding the theme, *geography*, the inner circle occurrence (33.0%) was highly outnumbered by that  
 184 of the outer circle (67.0%). In the same vein, the theme, *nationality*, in the inner circle (31.0%) was  
 185 significantly surpassed by its equivalent in the outer circle (69.0%). Finally, the theme, *literary*  
 186 *figures/works*, emerged (100.0%) only in the outer circle group. Thematic samples pertaining to such  
 187 cultural themes are represented below:

- 188 • Christmas. (inner circle *faiths*)
- 189 • America, California, Canada, Derby, Massachusetts, New York. (inner circle *places*)
- 190 • Bahamas, Bermudas, Florence, Italy, Paris, Portugal. (outer circle *places*)
- 191 • Annabel, Clare, Cooper, Johnson, Monique, Roland. (inner circle *names*)
- 192 • Lepcha, Maximovich, Mirana, Rahab, Taxovich, Valechka. (outer circle *names*)
- 193 • Hugh Broughton, James the First, Keats. (inner circle *personality*)
- 194 • Marlene Dietrich, Nefertiti, Van Gogh. (outer circle *personality*)
- 195 • Danube, Riviera. (outer circle *geography*)
- 196 • American, Canadian, English. (inner circle *nationality*)
- 197 • French, Indian, Russian, Slavic, Spanish, Swiss. (outer circle *nationality*)
- 198 • Kreutzer Sonate, Les Miserables, Petrarch. (outer circle *literary figures/works*)

199 Table 5.  
200 *Inner and Outer Circle Themes in Overall Books*  
201

Themes	Inner		Outer	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
Media	2	100.0	-	-
Movies	2	100.0	-	-
Technology	7	88.0	1	12.0
Places	91	67.0	44	33.0
Sports	2	67.0	1	33.0
Geography	11	65.0	6	35.0
Personality	17	55.0	14	45.0
Names	44	48.0	48	52.0
Nationality	12	24.0	39	76.0
Faiths	2	17.0	10	83.0
Literary Figures/Works	-	-	6	100.0
Food & Drinks	-	-	5	100.0
Titles	-	-	3	100.0
Chi-Square (Asymp. Sig)	0.000		0.000	

202 When we look at the thematic occurrences in the analysed four books, it is easily observed that the  
203 themes, *media* and *movies*, occurred only in the inner circle group (100.0%), while no such  
204 occurrences were detected in the outer circle. Besides, the theme, *technology*, was highly seen in the  
205 inner circle (88.0%), compared to its rather scant occurrence (12.0%) in the outer circle. Similarly,  
206 the themes, *places* (67.0%), *sports* (67.0%), *geography* (65.0%), and *personality* (55.0%) in the inner circle  
207 have proven to dominate the occurrences of those in the outer circle (33.0%; 33.0%; 35.0%; 45.0%  
208 respectively). However, the themes, *names* (48.0%), *nationality* (24.0%), and *faiths* (17.0%) in the inner  
209 circle were outnumbered by those of the outer circle (52.0% 2, 76.0%; 83.0% respectively). Finally,  
210 *literary figures/works*, *food & drinks*, and *titles* emerged solely in the outer circle group (100.0%); no  
211 occurrence of these theme were observed in the inner circle.  
212

213

214 Table 2  
215 *Overall Inner and Outer Cultural Elements for the Four Books*  
216

Overall Cultural Characteristics	Inner		Outer	
	ToM	%	ToM	%
	190	52.0	177	48.0

217

218 From Table 6, the inner circle dominance can clearly be seen to be seriously challenged by the outer  
219 circle, where the observed themes presented 48.0% of emergence, slightly short of the 52.0% of  
220 occurrence of these themes in the inner circle. This finding is rather interesting since the outer  
221 circle authors analysed in this study used English as an instrument to express ideas, the themes they  
222 employed to represent these ideas were significantly selected from their own indigenous cultural  
223 background.  
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## 228 Discussion and Conclusion

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Research of cultural compounds utilised in course books targeting English language learners does exist to an extent where the researchers strictly limited themselves to an English language teaching environment only. Such research conducted by Taş (2010); Rajabi and Ketabi (2012); Celik and Erbay (2013); Roshan (2014) is by no means comparable to this study where we solely endeavoured to identify the use of cultural elements in literary works produced by authors of an outer circle background. To our knowledge, this piece of research, if not the only, it certainly is one of the scantiest of its kind.

The picture drawn by four literary works illustrates that:

- Both inner and outer circle cultural elements did emerge constituting 13 themes which were presented in order of frequency in the inner circle from the highest to the lowest: *media, movies, technology, places, sports, geography, personality, names, nationality, faiths, literary figures/works, food & drinks*, and *titles*; and
- Although with a slight difference, the inner circle elements (52.0%) were employed more frequently in the analysed literary works compared to those of the outer circle (48.0%). Although this slight difference exists in the dispersion of both types of circles, it is, by no means, significant, and certainly does not give an outright supremacy to the inner circle, which may be interpreted that the English language has already gained a universal status embraced by the international community.

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Few, if not none, would argue against the existence of such a status. Crystal (1997), in his fair assessment, did state that what enables a language to gain an international status (thus, dominance over others) depends on economic, political, technological and militaristic might of the society in which it is spoken; and admittedly, no other language at this present time could be more eligible for such a place than English, whose permeability has allowed an influx of cultural elements from other languages to infiltrate and be welded to the very core. The fact is that English, unlike some other languages (where some 'associations' were set up to 'protect' them against 'foreign' influence!), has always kept its doors wide-open to the so-called 'foreign' influence with no apprehension of being 'adulterated' and thus rendered 'non-national'.

At a time where humans, and whatever is related, are increasingly introduced to inner-circle countries, notably, the UK, it is not surprising that we see the reflection onto literary works. Some fifty years ago or so, a literary work would be heavily loaded with inner-circle elements, yet now, as this study has revealed, almost half of the themes occurring in the works produced by English-writing writers with an outer-circle background do not indeed reflect inner-circle characteristics. Moreover, as is the case in Rajasthan, India now, the State is in the process of banning the works of British authors with inner circle themes for they were regarded as incomprehensible: "the majority of the students simply can't understand. In some cases, even teachers struggle to understand words and phrases in a text." (Western writers out 2016). This being the case, can we still talk about a language, i.e., English, with inner-circle dominance? Viewed from the present trajectory, this does not seem to be the case. As for the future, it is highly likely that we will see more and more of such cultural elements employed in English; while some would be comprehensible to the inner-circle inhabitant, some would sound 'alien' and probably require some intercultural-literacy.

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