



MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL
INNOVATION FOR TECHNOLOGY

**ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF
ENGLISH IN INTERNATIONAL
BUSINESS IN MAURITIUS**

Final Report

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MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

This research project was prompted by two main factors. Firstly, there is the personal motivation and interest in the topic, having spent more than 30 years' running Business English seminars for employees and organisations from all the sectors in the Mauritian economy. Secondly, the repeated observations in various newspaper articles on the use of English in Mauritius, particularly with reference to the declining standard of English used, seemed to coincide with my own observations concerning the level of English shown by the participants, not just on the Business English seminars, but also on any training seminar requiring a sustained mastery of the language. I thus felt that a research project carried out from the practitioner's standpoint could help inform the debate on languages in the school curriculum and training programmes.

1 THE CONTEXT

The economy of Mauritius, which has always been export-oriented, is undergoing a major restructuring process away from labour-intensive low-tech activities, such as sugar and mass production of basic garments in the EPZ textile factories, towards knowledge-based high-tech service activities in tourism, offshore and ICT.

The tourism sector is targeting niche markets in the luxury segments, such as the organisation of international conferences, golf tournaments and eco-tourism. Offshore activities include management companies, investment companies, freeport and transshipment activities. The ICT sector covers activities in the cyber-city and call centres. Mauritius aims to be a regional hub in the South-east Indian Ocean area in the ICT and offshore sectors.

In addition to the appropriate technical knowledge and skills, success in these knowledge-based activities on the international scene is also dependent on proficiency in the main language for international business, English.

However, while Mauritius prides itself on its multilingualism, the situation with respect to the proficiency in English in the conduct of international business activities on the island is far from satisfactory.

Although English is the official administrative language and the official medium of instruction for the education system in Mauritius, it is not the preferred language for most Mauritians, irrespective of their educational level or professional activity. French is the preferred European language, while Mauritian Creole and, in some areas, Bhojpuri, is the usual language for everyday discourse. English has largely been confined to official written communication and documents, and formal events such as official openings of seminars and conferences. Even in the National Assembly and law-courts, despite its official status, English is not used exclusively.

2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of this research project were to:

- assess the proficiency in the use of English in international business and export activities in Mauritius
- measure the extent of the gap between the level of proficiency in English shown by Mauritian employees and that required for success in international markets
- make recommendations to improve the level of proficiency in the use of functional English for business purposes.

Underlying these three specific objectives was the general assumption that successful completion of the School Certificate entailed the acquisition of a sufficient level of mastery of general English, which would then be enhanced and strengthened through the Higher School Certificate and any post-secondary academic or professional educational cursus. Therefore, it was originally thought that if the gap could be identified, then proposals could be made for targeted training to upgrade the level of proficiency shown by both new entrants on the work market and employees already in service.

3 METHODOLOGY

It should be underlined that this project was carried out from the standpoint of the practitioner and was aimed at providing elements for a better response to the language needs of professionals. The justification for this distinction between rigorous scientific research model and the professionally-oriented research model is aptly described in the article by Warren Bennis and James O'Toole, *How Business Schools Lost Their Way*, in the Harvard Business Review of May 2005.

The project comprised two main components:

- Desk study and literature review
- Field study of stakeholders identified in the desk study.

3.1 DESK STUDY

The preliminary desk study confirmed the existence of the four groups of stakeholders identified in the proposal, namely:

- the promoters: Government and other official institutions promoting Mauritius on the international business scene (Ministry of Trade and International Commerce, Board of Investment, EPZDA, MIDA, Financial Services Commission, etc)
- the providers, that is, the educational and training system in Mauritius
- the users, Mauritian firms and organisations needing employees with a high level of proficiency in international English, in particular call centres and other ICT-related activities, and
- the actors, Mauritian employees having to use English in the execution of their work.

However, after monitoring of advertisements for job vacancies in the major daily and weekly newspapers in the period March-May 2005, the scope of the third group, the users, was widened to include all sectors of business in Mauritius. Job vacancies in various front-line positions in retail, distribution and service activities were stipulating a good command of both spoken and written English, without necessarily being directly involved in international business transactions. This change had a direct impact on the setting up of the data base and the design of the questionnaire which will be discussed below.

3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review examined the official texts concerning the languages in use in Mauritius, for example, the Constitution of Mauritius, the Education Ordinances and the Censuses. Relevant aspects of theory and application in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language and for special purposes (TEFL, TESOL and ESP) were also reviewed. The situation in other multi-lingual countries that are also active in international business was examined to identify appropriate strategies to meet the required levels of proficiency in international English.

3.3 FIELD STUDY

The field study comprised four main elements:

- a questionnaire
- interviews
- focus groups
- observations / ‘mystery shopping’.

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

3.3.1.1 Setting up of the data base

As stated in Section 2.2, the definition of the third group of stakeholders was widened to include all sectors of the Mauritian economy. This meant that the scope of the data-base for the field study had to be adjusted accordingly. It was, therefore, decided to use the mailing list that CCL uses to distribute its circulars for its training activities, as this list already covers the three groups of institutional stakeholders identified in the Desk Study. The list was reviewed and enhanced by the addition of newcomers to the ICT sector that had been identified through newspaper advertisements, consultation of member lists published in the 2004 Annual Reports of the Mauritius Employers’ Federation and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry and information gained from various regulatory bodies such as the ICTA.

3.3.1.2 Design of questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed with following aims:

- to cover as wide a spectrum of possible business activities which could be conducted in English
- to build up a profile of the personnel using English in the course of their duties (post held, qualification attained, fluency in spoken and written English)
- to obtain views on the use of English in Mauritius
- to obtain suggestions on how to improve the level of English in Mauritius.

There was also need to keep the format as simple as possible to encourage the main target audience, busy executives or their assistants, to respond.

The final questionnaire contains 23 questions divided into 5 sections:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| • Profile of respondent: | Questions 1 to 7 |
| • Language use: | Questions 8 to 11 |
| • Profile of Mauritian personnel using English: | Questions 12 to 17 |
| • English as a recruitment requirement: | Questions 18 and 19 |
| • Use of English in Mauritius: | Questions 20 to 23 |

Questions 1 to 22 are in table form and require the respondent to check a list or give a rating. Only Question 23 was left open to invite suggestions on how to improve the level of English in Mauritius.

A copy of the questionnaire and covering letter is annexed (Annex 1).

3.3.1.3 Dissemination and collection of questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent out by normal post with a short explanatory covering letter in mid-May. The deadline was fixed at 31 May 2005. The number of copies sent was 1120. The respondents could choose to reply by fax, e-mail or normal post. Most preferred to fax their sheets. The deadline was extended to mid-June as the initial response was rather slow. The number of completed questionnaires received was 122, that is, 11%.

The list of respondents is given in Annex 2.

3.3.1.4 Data input

The data input was started at the end of May and was completed by mid-June 2005.

3.3.1.5 Analysis

The data analysis was carried out from mid-June to mid-October 2005.

3.3.2 Interviews

The interviews were carried out from October 2005 to January 2006. In the light of the findings from the questionnaire, it was decided to interview representatives from the main regulatory and tertiary institutions in the state education system and private educational institutions that have taken a definite standpoint with respect to English as the medium of instruction. The managers of two leading call centres who had responded to the questionnaire were also interviewed. The list of persons interviewed is given in Annex 3.

3.3.3 Focus Groups

Given that the problems encountered in using English were common to all the sectors responding to the questionnaire, it was decided to conduct focus groups with the employees attending courses at CCL on Business English, customer care and telephonist/receptionist skills in the period August to November 2005. The participants on these courses were asked:

- when they used English in the course of their work and/or at home;
- what difficulties they experienced in using English
- what suggestions they had to improve the level of English used in Mauritius.

A focus group was also conducted with the academic staff of the English Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Mauritius. The aim of this focus group was to discuss the situation of English at the tertiary level with respect to the future employment of graduates.

3.3.4 Observations / ‘mystery shopping’.

The observations were carried out in three ways:

- site visit to an established call centre working on the UK market
- observation of two classes at a English-medium private primary school
- ‘ad hoc’ observation when using English to telephone for appointments or on arrival at the reception desk.

3.4 Problems encountered

There were two main problems:

- Setting up a data-base that was sufficiently wide-ranging
- Respecting the schedule of activities (Form 1020)

3.4.1 Setting up of data-base

This stage took longer than anticipated for two main reasons:

- the information about companies in ICT and BPO was scattered in various official bodies
- as explained in Section 3.3.1.1, the scope of the data base had to be widened in the light of observations made concerning profiles for posts advertised in the local press.

3.4.2 Schedule of activities

The original time-scale for the study was four months, March to June 2005. The delay caused by the changes in the data base and the subsequent review of the questionnaire affected the rest of the schedule.

As stated in Section 3.3.1.3, the collection of sufficient questionnaires was slower than expected, which in turn delayed the start of the analysis of findings.

With the election campaign and subsequent change in government, it was decided to delay the interviews and observations until early September to ensure that the various stakeholders were in a position to respond effectively. This decision was most serendipitous, as it has enabled us to take into account the present debates on literacy, curriculum reform and the admission criteria for secondary education.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was ongoing throughout the various stages of the field study and covered the following sources:

- ♦ official texts on education and language policy in Mauritius
- ♦ books and reports, both local and international, on education and language issues in development policies
- ♦ press articles in the local press and major international business magazines
- ♦ literature on the teaching of English to non-native speakers (NNS) for general and specific purposes (TEFL, TESOL and ESP).

4.1 The official status of English in Mauritius

The Constitution of Mauritius states: *‘The official language of the Assembly shall be English, but any member may address the chair in French.’* (Chapter III, Part II, section 43 *Official language*) Concerning eligibility for election as a member of the Legislative Assembly, the Constitution states: *‘...a person shall be qualified to be elected as a member of the Assembly if, and shall not be qualified unless, he (4) is able to speak and, unless incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause, to read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable him to take an active part in the proceedings of the Assembly.’* (Chapter III, Part I, section 27). In section 28, the Constitution also requires that the nomination of a candidate is *‘published in the English language in the Gazette and in a newspaper circulating in the constituency for which he is a candidate ...’*.

The Constitution makes no specific reference to the language to be used in the judiciary since this question had been settled in the first decades of the British colonial administration. Various ordinances were decreed in the period 1815 to 1845 with respect to the use of English in legal proceedings and the promulgation of laws in the colony of Mauritius, culminating in the 1845 *Order in Council: Use of English Language in Superior Courts* and its application on 15 July 1847. (Carpooran, 2003)

However, with respect to the appointment of judges of the Supreme Court, the Constitution states in Chapter V, section 72 (4): *‘No person shall be qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court unless he is, and has been for at least five years, a barrister or advocate*

entitled to practise in a superior court in the United Kingdom.' This necessarily implies a more than adequate mastery of the English language.

The Education Ordinance of 1957, which is still in force, states:

'The Director of Education ...shall ensure ...(d) the more effective teaching of English and the spread of the English language in the Colony;' Part 11, section 3). Section 43 of the First Schedule concerning the medium of instruction and teaching of languages states:

- (1) In the lower classes of Government and aided primary schools up to and including Standard III, any one language may be employed as the medium of instruction, being a language which in the opinion of the Director is most suitable for the pupils.*
- (2) In Standards IV, V and VI of the Government and aided primary schools the medium of instruction shall be English, and conversations between the teacher and pupils shall be carried on in English: provided that lessons in any other language taught in the school shall be carried on through the medium of that language.*
- (3) The Director may make provisions for the teaching of other languages other than English which are current in the Colony, and for their study in any Government and aided primary school, and may require an Education Authority to make arrangements for such teaching in any of the primary schools under its control.'*

While none of the official texts actually state that English is the official language of the country, the fact that it is cited as the language of the legislature, judicature and education system is taken to mean that it is in practice just that. When one also considers that the entire administrative system that was set up during British colonial rule was kept intact after independence, and along with it the language used, namely English, then if only for reasons of expediency, the need for all Mauritians to master English properly should be self-evident.

But, it is also important to note, starting with the interpretation of the terms of Article 8 of the 1810 Capitulation concerning the respect of the laws, customs and religion of the settlers (*que les habitants conservent leurs Religion, Lois, et Coutumes*), whereby 'customs' is taken to include 'language used', pluralism has always been recognised as being part of the Mauritian fabric. (Ramdoyal, 1977) In fact, as is often stated, Mauritius has a unique linguistic advantage over other new nations, the continued use in the country's affairs of two of the major international languages, English and French, and, to a lesser extent, some of the main Asiatic languages, which, with the present trends in world trade, are set to grow in importance

in international communications. The over-arching question, which is beyond the scope of this present study, is how well Mauritius is using this linguistic capital.

The figures published by the Central Statistical Office from the 2000 Population Census on the use of languages in Mauritius show quite clearly that despite its quasi-official status and preponderance in the official life of the country, English is not the main language of everyday discourse on the island. Not even 1% of the population usually speak English at home. Moreover, 30% of the Mauritians with English-speaking forefathers no longer usually speak the language at home.

Population Census 2000: Table D9 - Resident population by geographical location and language usually spoken at home

Country, Geographical District, Municipal Ward/Village Council Area	Total	Language usually spoken at home										
		Bhojpuri	Chinese languages	Creole	English	French	Hindi	Marathi	Tamil	Telegu	Urdu	Other and N. stated
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS	1,178,848	142,387	8,748	826,152	3,512	39,953	7,250	1,888	3,623	2,169	1,789	141,377
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS - Urban	503,045	9,910	4,340	386,754	2,260	29,460	2,158	487	1,229	295	478	65,674
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS - Rural	675,803	132,477	4,408	439,398	1,252	10,493	5,092	1,401	2,394	1,874	1,311	75,703

Population Census, 2002: Table D10 - Resident population by language of forefathers and language usually spoken at home

Country, Island and Language of forefathers	Total	Language usually spoken at home										
		Bhojpuri	Chinese languages	Creole	English	French	Hindi	Marathi	Tamil	Telegu	Urdu	Other and N. stated
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS												
Total	1,178,848	142,387	8,748	826,152	3,512	39,953	7,250	1,888	3,623	2,169	1,789	141,377
Arabic	806	2	-	643	5	20	-	-	-	-	26	110
Bhojpuri	361,250	126,702	34	187,129	349	1,137	2,609	9	19	21	134	43,107
Chinese languages	22,715	2	8,433	11,092	125	904	-	-	-	-	-	2,159
Creole	454,763	547	109	423,246	397	10,492	56	5	22	8	61	19,820
English	1,075	-	1	88	747	119	7	-	2	-	-	111
French	21,171	4	4	1,469	151	17,877	2	-	2	-	-	1,662
Hindi	35,782	5,082	7	20,962	282	512	3,466	8	3	4	2	5,454
Marathi	16,587	184	-	12,778	40	82	8	1,778	-	-	-	1,717
Tamil	44,731	117	6	36,644	137	546	11	1	3,443	2	-	3,824
Telegu	18,802	241	-	13,175	32	199	9	2	5	2,065	-	3,074
Urdu	34,120	302	7	29,349	185	381	50	-	-	-	1,356	2,490
Other and not stated	167,046	9,204	147	89,577	1,062	7,684	1,032	85	127	69	210	57,849

4.2 English as a Global Language

The phenomenon of one language taking precedence over another and acquiring international status is not new. Nor, as Crystal ((1997) shows, is it linked to any intrinsic characteristics of any particular language that make it easier to learn than others. He writes: *“Ease of learning has nothing to do with it. Children of all cultures learn to talk over more or less the same period of time, regardless of the difference in the grammar of their languages.”* He ascribes the initial rise in influence of a language to the political and military power of its people, Greek with the armies of Alexander the Great, Latin during the Roman Empire, Arabic with the Moorish armies of the eighth century, followed by Spanish, Portuguese and French through the great expeditions of the Renaissance and later. The spread of English throughout the world from Elizabethan times to the present day is no exception. Crystal identifies economic power and technological advances, particularly in communications, as being the crucial factors to maintain and expand this influence in the present day. He writes: *“But international dominance is not solely the result of military might. It may take a militarily powerful nation to establish a language, but it takes an economically powerful one to maintain and expand it. This has always been the case, but it became a particularly critical factor early in the twentieth century, with economic developments beginning to operate on a global scale, supported by the new communication technologies – telegraph, telephone, radio – and fostering the emergence of massive multinational organisations. The growth of competitive industry and business brought an explosion of international marketing and advertising. The power of the press reached unprecedented levels, soon to be surpassed by the broadcasting media, with their ability to cross national boundaries with electromagnetic ease. Technology, in the form of movies and records, fuelled new mass entertainment industries which had a worldwide impact. The drive to make progress in science and technology fostered an international intellectual and research environment which gave scholarship and further education a high profile.”* He concludes his argument by saying: *“Any language at the centre of such an explosion of international activity would suddenly have found itself with a global status. And English (.....) was in the right place, at the right time.”*

The eventual rise of English as a global language had been noted much earlier. For instance, John Adams wrote in a letter to Congress dated 5 September 1780. (Crystal & Crystal, 2000): *“English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last or French is in the present age. The reasons of this is obvious, because the increasing population in America, and their universal connection and*

correspondence with all nations will, aided by the influence of England in the world, whether great or small, force their language into general use, in spite of all the obstacles that may be thrown in their way, if any such there should be.”

In 1898, in reply to a journalist's question on what he considered to be the most decisive factor in modern history, Bismarck observed “*the fact that the North Americans speak English*”.

Baugh and Cable (1978), Scrum (1986) and Bryson (1990) are among the many specialists and writers who also have told the tale and come to the same conclusion. In the foreseeable future English is the language of international communication and global business. This phenomenon has inspired umpteen articles in current affairs and business magazines. One of the earliest is the special report published in Newsweek in its 15 November 1982 edition, which was aptly titled ‘*English, English Everywhere*’, a barely disguised reference to the plight of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. We could say that Mauritius is like the Ancient Mariner's boat, a speck in the huge sea when one considers the English-speaking zones that surround the Indian Ocean. As an indication of the interest given to the issue, an extract from this article was published in an English language textbook for final year secondary school pupils in French schools. (Hachette, 1985)

Most writers agree that while estimating how many people in the world speak English is a difficult task, there are as many non-native speakers of English as native-speakers, if not more. Bryson (1990) talks of around 400 million each. Crystal (1997) talks of around 350 million each, but adds that since in several countries where English is used as a second language no reliable estimates exist, this number could be considerably more. The essential thing to note in all of these accounts is the reason why so many people are learning English, economic advancement at national, corporate and individual level.

By 2001, BusinessWeek was talking of *the English Divide* in its lead article *Should everyone speak English?*, by which it meant those Europeans who spoke English and those who did not. The main thrust of the article was to show how essential mastering English had become in getting a job or a promotion throughout continental Europe. One Italian CEO was quoted as saying “*Europeans who don't know English are running a marathon in house shoes.*” (BusinessWeek, August 2001)

In its 2005 report *Towards Knowledge Societies*, UNESCO sees knowledge of English as an essential requirement in reducing both the ‘digital divide’ and the ‘knowledge divide’. In its list of factors contributing to the ‘digital divide’ the report states: “*Language: It is a major obstacle to the participation of all to knowledge societies. The emergence of English as the lingua franca of globalization leaves little room for other languages within cyberspace*”.

Concerning the ‘knowledge divide’, the report states: “*In the emerging knowledge societies, exponential growth in the quantity of knowledge produces a growing gap between those who have access to knowledge and culture, and learn to master them, and those who are deprived of such access. (.....) it is not sufficient to reduce the ‘digital divide’(and other inequalities in the access to the world of culture); we must also reduce the ‘knowledge divide’, which is liable to grow exponentially. Training in the new information and communication techniques requires a high level of education, knowledge of English (our underlining) and the art of navigating in an ocean of information.*”

In its discussion on “*equipping learners with the skills and competencies they need to succeed in a knowledge economy*”, the World Bank specifically mentions the need for skills in an international language. It states: “*Policymakers in developing countries need to ensure that young people acquire a language with more than just local use, preferably one used internationally.(.....) People seeking access to international stores of knowledge through the Internet require, principally, English language skills.*” (IBRD/World Bank, 2003)

It should be noted, however, that both reports recognise the fundamental right of every person to learn and use the language of his/her immediate environment. The UNESCO report devotes a whole chapter to the question of *Local and indigenous knowledge, linguistic diversity and knowledge societies*.

So, it can be seen that the choice and use of English worldwide has gone far beyond the administrative need for continuity in the transition from colonial rule to post-independence and autonomous national government, such as identified earlier in the discussion on the official texts concerning the use of English in Mauritius. Its usefulness as a neutral language in the process of post-independence nation-building is also of less relevance today. Even the strong, and understandable, reactions against the continuing use of the language of the former colonial power, such as expressed by Gandhi in India in 1908 and Kenyatta in Kenya in 1974,

as part of a coherent expression of issues of national identity that were important in the early post-colonial era, are now a thing of the past. (Crystal, 1997)

4.3 Which English?

The extraordinary spread of English throughout the world has given rise to the development of many varieties of English, Caribbean English, South Asian English, Nigerian English, Singaporean English, to name but four. That languages change over time is not a new idea. In his *Ars Poetica*, the Roman poet Horace (1st Century BC) describes so aptly how languages are in constant state of flux:

*Multa renascentur quae iam cecidere, cadentque
Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est ius et norma loquendi.*

*“Many a word long disused will revive, and many now high in esteem will fade, if Custom
wills it, in whose power lie the arbitrament, the rule and the standard of language.”*

(translation E H Blakeney, quoted by Crystal and Crystal, 2000)

Otto Jespersen writes in the preface of his *Modern English Grammar* (1909):

*“It has been my endeavour in this work to represent English Grammar not as a set of stiff
dogmatic precepts, according to which some things are correct and others absolutely wrong,
but as something living and developing under continual fluctuations and undulations,
something that is founded on the past and prepares the way for the future, something that is
not always consistent or perfect, but progressing and perfectible – in one word, human.”*

(quoted by Crystal & Crystal, 2000)

From this development have emerged the concepts of ‘world Englishes’ and ‘non-native Englishes’. Kachru’s three-circle model gives a clear picture of this complex linguistic reality with the inner circle of the traditional native-speaker countries (USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), the outer circle of the former British colonies most of whom are now members of the Commonwealth (Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, etc.) and the expanding circle of all the other countries that see English as the key to international trade and economic expansion (for instance, China, Japan, the new states in the old Communist bloc, Latin America, etc.). (Kachru, 1982).

In discussing the notion of accepted norms, Kachru considers that the native-versus-non-native dichotomy is misleading and unrealistic, as the non-native speaker of English will

increasingly adopt a localised variety of English as the norm. Furthermore, he writes: *‘A speaker of a non-native writer may engage in a variety-shift, depending on the participants in a situation. An educated Indian English speaker may attempt to approximate a native-English model while speaking to an Englishman or an American, but switch to a localised educated variety when talking to a fellow Indian colleague, and further Indianise his English when communicating with a shopkeeper, a bus conductor or an office clerk. There are thus degrees of approximation to the norm, depending on the context, participants, and the desired end result of a speech act’*. (Kachru, 1990)

The issue of norm is one that many leading non-native writers of English have commented on. As an Oxford undergraduate in the 1950s Ved Mehta learned the writer’s craft by following his tutor’s advice to study how other authors made their work effective and memorable by finding the right voice and the right style. The 1925 edition of the Oxford Book of English Prose with extracts from Chaucer to Shaw became his guiding light. As a result, Mehta’s style changes to suit the subject. In his introduction to *‘A Ved Mehta Reader: The Craft of the Essay’*, he says how difficult the task of selection was because he had always *‘enjoyed experimenting with different genres and forms’*. But there was another “*complicating factor, which was that I grew up in India, America, and England, and because my subjects were drawn from all three countries they gave my various books different tones and colours, for one cannot write about Calcutta in the same manner that one would write about Oxford, nor can one write about Oxford in the same manner that one would write about New York’*”. (Mehta, 1998)

When discussing the relationship between the African writer and the English language, Chinua Achebe wrote: *“The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience ...I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.”* (Achebe, 1975)

But not everyone feels so sanguine about such variety. Dr Robert Burchfield, editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, thinks that *“the English language is breaking up and has been*

since the 18th century, into quite a number of different dialects. In due course they will be as different as French and Spanish and Portuguese are from one another. It will take several hundred years for this process to mature”. (Time, May 1986)

Kachru sums up the situation as follows:

“The question of norms for localized Englishes continues to be debated, though the tone is becoming more one of realism and less one of codification. Furthermore, the educated non-native varieties are now being increasingly recognised and defended, both on attitudinal and on pedagogical grounds. The national uses of English are being separated from the international uses, and the nativized innovations are now being considered as essential stylistic devices for non-native English literatures. One notices a shift of opinion toward considering such localised varieties different, not necessarily deficient.” (Kachru, 1990)

Writers such as Brink, Gordimer, Markham, the two Naipauls and Walcott are sufficient proof of the wealth of linguistic and literary creativity springing from these new Englishes.

McCrum (1986) sees a similar dual situation emerging in the business and professional world. *“Our own view remains comparatively unchanged. English is not about to become a universal lingua franca, as some have suggested; neither is it likely to splinter into a Babel of competing tongues, at least in a world of telefaxes and satellites. The most obvious future for English is at a powerful, standardized, international level co-existing with a localized, non-standard, indigenous level.”*

Crystal (1997) notes that a written standard English already unites the English-speaking world. He discusses the eventual emergence of a ‘World Standard Spoken English’ (WSSE) which English-speakers from different countries would use when conversing in an international context, such as a conference or the Internet, while using their local variety of English in their home country.

We may conclude that competency in English means, among other things, being able to cope with such diversity and respond appropriately. Although Mauritius is part of the Kachru’s outer circle, as seen earlier, in Section 4.1, only a tiny group in the Mauritian population actually use English at home. The question now is how equipped are Mauritians to meet the communication challenge in international business, and more specifically in English-speaking circles.

4.4 English in the Mauritian education system

Despite the fact that the 1957 Education Ordinance clearly states that English is the medium of instruction from Standard III onwards, the language issue in the school curriculum has been, and still is, the subject of much debate (Ramdoyal, 1977, Carpooran, 2003). Various reports and other official policy documents on education in Mauritius have tried to address the issue.

For instance, the 1947 Nichols Report on Secondary Education in Mauritius has this to say with reference to the award of the English Scholarships (the precursor to the present laureate system):

“I have already referred to the handicap of an insufficient knowledge of colloquial English and the need for a more realistic teaching of the language in the schools. Since Mauritians seem to need the incentive of an examination for study, the General English paper in the Higher Certificate is a welcome innovation. But it must be framed to meet this particular need. I doubt the value of the translation section and should prefer to see more questions on current English. I suggest that the examiners should be asked to give considerable weight to this paper in making their awards and that a candidate who failed to reach a reasonable standard in it should be ineligible for a Scholarship.” (Nichols, 1947)

Nichols’ comments on the Scholarship system as a whole are also very edifying. *“But there is another side of the picture which should be viewed with a judgement unclouded by sentiment: forty or fifty boys compete for the Scholarship each year and two are successful; the rest, many of them very able boys who have come within a few marks of the laureates, have no reward for their labours except priority in appointment to a clerical post in the Civil Service. The gap between success and near-success is too great. More than this, the whole of the work of the school centres round this one Examination and is distorted by it. Boys are driven relentlessly on to the goal by parents and private crammers until study becomes a tyranny.”* (Nichols, 1947)

His comment on the link between education and employment is also food for thought in the context of today’s global knowledge society. *“The Mauritian attitude to education is frankly utilitarian: children are sent to school to pass examinations and obtain certificates, for certificates are necessary to secure employment. The idea that a school has other functions*

than preparing pupils for examinations, such as training them for citizenship or promoting in them an appreciation of goodness, or beauty, is too rarely accepted.” He concludes his report by saying “For Mauritian children are industrious and mentally alert. They deserve a better intellectual education; they need an education which has as its supreme end the cultivation of social and moral qualities.”

When one considers the observation made at the international conference on *Ecole et plurilinguisme, quelle gestion?* (*Managing multilingualism in the school*) held at the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) in November 2005 concerning the composition question in the English and French papers of the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations, one cannot help wondering what progress if any has been achieved in how the aim and role of education are perceived in Mauritian society. According to the presenter, a Senior Lecturer at the MIE, 49.9% and 35.3% of the candidates get no marks for the French and English compositions respectively and that with the present marking system the composition exercise can be avoided and good marks still obtained. (*L’Express*, 23 November 2005, *Le Mauricien* 24 November 2005). When this state of affairs is confirmed by the Director Curriculum in an interview given two weeks later, there is cause for concern. (*L’Express Dimanche*, 11 December 2005)

The MES report on the 2005 CPE confirms the need for action when it states that the general level of English in all subjects is inadequate. In the English paper many students again did not attempt the composition question or, if they did, showed a very low level of imagination and capacity to develop a subject. Rote learning is still far too prevalent with the result that many students do not acquire the higher order skills of logical reasoning that would allow them to apply rules and formulae to situations other than the models given by the teachers. (*L’Express*, 11 May 2006)

The title given to the article on the MES report is in itself eloquent of the state of the Mauritian education system: *Le niveau d’anglais and le raisonnement, éternels parents pauvres du CPE* (*The level of English and logical reasoning, the eternal poor relations of the CPE*), especially when one considers the policy documents written in the wake of the introduction of the free secondary education some thirty years ago.

In 1979, the then Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, Sir Kher Jagatsingh, published a policy document entitled *'The Future in our Hands: Mauritian Education for Today and Tomorrow'*. In his introduction Jagatsingh writes:

"Our educational policy in the post-independence phase has been based upon our single-minded and relentless option to provide for the harmonious development of each and every Mauritian in the context of the delicate fabric of our plural society. We want the reforms we have carried out to permeate and to operate throughout Mauritian society.

With independence, there has been a growing realisation that the most important resource we have is our manpower. For a modern economy to function, its labour force should be prepared to acquire the relevant mental and physical skills as well as the right values and attitudes.

...

All our efforts are geared to adjusting the educational system to meet the manpower needs of the country. In particular, emphasis is placed on the democratisation of the educational system, the spreading out of schools and colleges evenly throughout the country so as to balance the educational facilities between the urban and rural areas and the diversification of the curricula."

As part of the means to these ends, a Commission of Enquiry on the problems in primary education was set up under the chairmanship of Frank Richard, the then Director of the Mauritius Institute of Education. The report published by the Commission in March 1979, which was aptly entitled *'Laying the Foundations'*, has this to say on the language question:

"Representations have been made to the Commission that there is an imbalance in the Primary programme of studies because far too much time is taken up with language study. 58% of the time is attached to language, 28% to Mathematics and the remaining 14% to all the other subjects that feature on the syllabus and exist only in name.

In spite of the large chunk assigned to language the general opinion is that language is badly taught, that too many languages are taught at the same time and the children have no time to master the mechanics of reading."

This point of view echoes that of Professor Meade, which Ramdoyal (1977) cites in his discussion on the language issue. Meade wrote in 1961: *"We are much more worried by one other factor which makes the teachers' task in a Mauritian primary school extremely difficult*

and is in great measure responsible for much of the undoubted inefficiency in the primary school system, and which is much more intractable than pressure of numbers, congestion and so on, since it springs from the complicated social and racial pattern of Mauritian life. We do not believe that we exaggerate when we say that the greatest handicap to successful education in Mauritius is that imposed by the multiplicity of languages in use. Children leave the primary schools in large numbers without having acquired anything worth calling literacy in any language though they have spent an intolerable amount of time dabbling in all three ...(with) teachers who are themselves masters of none of the three.”

As the Richard Commission found that the main question of which languages should be taught and when remained unsettled and that opinions varied considerably, it recommended in the section on Language Policy that:

- 1 The Ministry should study the alternatives proposed by the Commission.*
- 2 The faculty to learn an Oriental Language should be offered to all at parental option.*
- 3 Religious Education and the teaching of Oriental Languages should not be given simultaneously.*
- 4 Consideration should be given to the risk interest in the simultaneous presentation of several languages at Primary level.*
- 5 It is advisable to have a National Language Commission to study Language Teaching.*

One of the language experts consulted by the Richard Commission, Mr Rodney Phillips, then Lecturer in English at the MIE defined the position of English in a discussion paper *Language in Primary Education* (August, 1979) as follows:

“According to the criteria used in this paper, English cannot be classified as an L2 in Mauritius. Although it is the official language it is not acquired before the age of 6, except in a minority of cases of conscious parental policy. By the time the child reaches Primary School, English could well be a third or fourth language. For this reason, despite its official status and ‘presence’ within the Mauritian context, English is taught as a foreign language in Primary and Secondary schools.

The case for including English within the school curriculum rests on the fact that it is one of the most important world languages. This is established according to various criteria, such as the number of native-, second-, and foreign-language speakers; its geographical distribution through countries and continents; its use as the main vehicle for the spread of scientific and

technological ideas; and the politico-economic influence of the people who speak it. English is not structurally or aesthetically superior to any language. But it is important for socio-economic and demographic reasons, in international relations and trade, and in the propagation of knowledge throughout the contemporary world.

In Mauritius, English is not ethnically-bound, and has therefore served the function of a 'neutral' language for the last 150 years. It is the language of the Legislative Assembly and the Law Courts, of Government documents, reports and communiqués, of cyclone warnings (together with Bhojpuri, Kreol and French) of road signs and of job interviews in both the public and private sectors. Non-Catholic Christians sometimes use it in their services. It is one of the languages of tourism. It is used in broadcasting, entertainment and travel abroad (India, Australia, Europe, South Africa). It is used, above all, in its written mode – in formal correspondence inside and outside Mauritius, in form-filling (income tax, passport application, school transfer, census, etc), and in answering examination questions. It is the medium of instruction at later-Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. The fact that English is the medium of instruction has been the basis of the new curriculum materials recently introduced into Secondary schools up to the Form III level.”

In his paper Phillips proposed a staggered approach to the introduction of the three literate languages, English, French and an Oriental Language, along a continuum from oral initiation to literacy, while giving increasing importance to English as it gradually assumed its function as medium of instruction. (Phillips, 1979)

In an earlier study, Philip Baker described the language situation in Mauritius as complex in which “English, French and Kreol have become associated with ‘knowledge’, ‘culture’ and ‘egalitarianism’ respectively, while other languages are largely identified with what may be termed ‘ancestral heritage’. In informal conversation ‘egalitarianism’ is generally a more important matter than ‘culture’, ‘knowledge’ or ‘ancestral heritage’, and thus Kreol is usually adopted in such circumstances. In formal situations, however, either ‘culture’, ‘knowledge’ or ‘ancestral heritage’ may be the most significant feature, and so French, English or an oriental language will normally be employed as appropriate to the circumstances. Written language is usually associated with ‘culture’ or ‘knowledge’ and it is thus French and English that the Mauritian usually reads and writes. The oriental languages suffer the disadvantages of their scripts. A recognised orthography for Kreol might lead to some limited growth in Kreol as a literary medium, but it seems likely that most islanders with

a serious interest in writing will prefer to do so in a language understood in other parts of the world.” (Baker, 1972)

Since then, other researchers have also drawn attention to the importance of English not just as the ‘official’ language but also a ‘knowledge’ language, despite its very shallow roots in the everyday life of Mauritius. (Stein, 1982, Hookoomsing, 1987, Hookoomsing, 2001)

The figures published by the Central Statistical Office from the 2000 Population Census on the languages read and written would appear to confirm the status and function of European languages as sources of ‘knowledge’ and ‘culture’. 60% of the respondents said that they read and write European languages and another 18% said that they read and write both European and Oriental languages. (It is, however, a pity that the figures for the various languages computed as European are not given separately.)

Population Census 2000: Table E2 - Resident population 12 years of age and over by sex, age and languages read and written

Country, Island, Sex and Age (in years)	Total	Languages read and written									
		None	Creole only	Bhojpuri only	Creole and Bhojpuri only	Oriental languages	European languages	European and oriental languages	Other	Not stated	
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS											
Both sexes											
Total	937,520	139,648	30,527	2,229	3,396	22,309	564,271	171,062	596	3,482	

More recent reports and policy documents have tended to shift the focus from the acquisition of a specific European language as a knowledge tool and to talk about literacy and numeracy with respect to the overall performance of primary school. Nor has there been any recent policy statement with respect to the promotion of English as an essential element in developing the human resources needed to make Mauritius become the ‘knowledge hub’ that some decision-makers would aspire too.

The NPCC Discussion Paper *Competitiveness Foresight: What orientations for Mauritius?* (January 2005) talks of the need for Mauritius to increase and diversify sources of export income in ‘*areas where ICT/BPO is making rapid inroads, as well as in transport services, and in potentially new areas of outsourcing such as the provision of global health and education services as well as global media and entertainment services*’. It even evokes the

possibility of Mauritius becoming an international city state, with a role similar to that of Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai. However, among the constraints identified, the paper only talks in general terms of the *‘insufficiently diverse or sufficiently skilled human resources base’*.

In order to achieve its vision of *‘a creative and competent HR base’*, the Human Resource Development Council identified eleven strategic objectives in its Action Plan, including:

- ♦ *Strategic Objective 2: promote a national training culture, lifelong learning and employability*
- ♦ *Strategic Objective 6: promote employability skills including literacy and numeracy in the workforce.’* (HRDC, 2004)

In a document entitled *Developing Mauritius into a Knowledge Hub and a Centre of Higher Learning* published by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research in June 2005, we read in Chapter 3: *The new economic trajectory* at paragraph 3.10:

“Currently, the demand for labour in Mauritius is increasingly geared towards higher-level skill. This process will be accentuated as Mauritius moves gradually towards a knowledge-based economy. Thus, adopting the right policies in education and training is critical. Policies will also be needed to enhance broad access to skills and competencies and constantly upgrading those skills and competencies in line with the introduction of new technologies. This includes providing broad-based formal education for both knowledge and skills acquisition, establishing incentives for firms and individuals to engage in continuous training, multi-skilling and lifelong learning, and improving the matching of labour supply and demand in terms of skill requirements.”

By way of contrast, we could consider the clear policy statement made by the Singaporean Minister of Education in an interview to the *Straits Times* in 1985:

“Improving the proficiency in English among our pupils is the most important task. I make no apologies for this emphasis. Singapore is an international city. Our children will require a good knowledge of English if they are going to find work when they leave school. The task of improving English would be especially important from 1987 when it would be the principal language of instruction in all schools. All the pupils would also be using it as first language.” (Foley, 1988)

In the light of the above policy statements, the compilation of statistics for the 2004 school examinations published by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate makes interesting reading with respect to acquisition of competency in the two major European languages used in Mauritius at both primary and secondary levels.

Extract from Table 4: CPE Results: Performance of school and private candidates subjectwise (including Rodrigues)

Subject	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
English	68.1	69.7	71.3	69.9	71.2	70.1	72.9	70.6	70.3	68.8	71.3
French	71.7	71.9	72.2	72.7	74.1	72.5	73.5	72.8	74.6	74.2	73.9

Extract from Table 6: CPE: % achieving grade in each subject (boys and girls): English

	Grade					
Year	A	B	C	D	E	F
1996	23.3	11.4	11.6	11.7	13.3	28.8
1997	30.6	11.1	10.3	9.1	8.8	30.1
1998	21.4	11.9	12.4	11.7	14.0	28.8
1999	22.6	12.0	10.6	10.5	14.6	29.9
2000	25.3	12.4	12.2	12.0	10.9	27.1
2001	28.5	10.9	10.3	9.4	11.5	29.5
2002	17.3	18.9	11.2	10.5	12.5	29.7
2003	25.8	15.6	8.2	7.4	11.8	31.2
2004	19.3	18.7	10.7	10.1	12.6	28.7

Extract from Table 6: CPE : % achieving grade in each subject (boys and girls): French

	Grade					
Year	A	B	C	D	E	F
1996	31.3	12.5	11.7	11.5	10.2	22.9
1997	30.9	13.0	12.4	11.3	9.4	23.0
1998	34.9	14.0	12.9	9.7	7.8	20.8
1999	33.3	12.8	11.3	9.6	8.0	25.1
2000	32.3	12.1	11.1	10.5	9.3	24.7
2001	32.7	11.6	10.2	9.8	9.5	26.2
2002	27.6	20.6	10.6	8.8	7.8	24.6
2003	29.5	17.7	9.7	8.6	7.5	27.0
2004	24.4	17.4	10.2	10.0	9.9	28.2

Extract from Table 25: School Certificate (1999-2004) Performance of school candidates subject-wise

Subject	Examined 1999	% Pass 1999	Examined 2000	% Pass 2000	Examined 2001	% Pass 2001	Examined 2002	% Pass 2002	Examined 2003	% Pass 2003	Examined 2004	% Pass 2004
English Language 1125	14124	89.6	12751	90.7	12521	91.2	14189	89.8	14452	92.9	14492	91.7
English Language 1126	3114	76.2	1925	89.9	1725	90.7	2491	83.3	2350	85.7	2707	88.7
French	17147	92.0	14673	95.5	14220	95.7	16580	92.4	16710	91.8	17088	92.4

Extract from Table 28: School Certificate 2004: Grade distribution subject-wise

Subject	No Examined	% Grade									% V good	% Credit	% Pass	Total passed
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(1-2)	(3-6)	(7-8)	(1-8)
1125 English Language	14492	98	264	1057	681	944	2436	4985	2819	1208	362	5118	7804	13284
		0.7%	1.8%	7.3%	4.7%	6.5%	16.8%	34.4%	19.5%	8.3%	2.5%	35.3%	53.9%	91.7%
1126 English Language	2702	-	-	-	-	5	53	966	1378	305	-	58	2344	2402
		-	-	-	-	0.2%	2.05	35.7%	50.9%	11.3%	-	2.1%	86.6%	88.7%
3104 French	17088	1871	1544	3446	1007	1548	2612	2193	1561	1306	3415	8613	3754	15782
		10.9%	9.0%	20.2%	5.9%	9.1%	15.3%	12.8%	9.1%	7.6%	20.0%	50.4%	22.0%	92.4%

While it can be argued that the number of passes at both CPE and School Certificate is increasing, a closer look at the spread of grades earned sheds a different light on the level of competency attained. At CPE level, not only are 30% of the candidates failing in English, another 22% are only gaining mediocre results (grades D and E). Another 25% earn reasonable grades (B and C), but only 23% reach the top grade (A). This does not portend well for performance in other subjects given that English is the medium of instruction. Although the number of children reaching grade A in French is higher, there are still around 30% failing.

At School Certificate level, the trend towards passes with lower grades is much more marked in English than in French. One major factor contributing to this difference is that the French examination is assessed as a second language, while the English examination is assessed for full competency in Standard English. Given the prevalence of French in everyday life in Mauritius, when compared to English, one would be forgiven for expecting even better results in French.

The high number of failures and low pass marks in both languages does suggest that other factors are at work, one of which must be the issue of using the mother tongue at least at primary level. Ramdoyal (1977) notes: *“Starting three foreign languages at the same time at age five places an enormous burden on the child. For many children this has led to poor standards in oracy and to functional literacy in English.”* John Clark, the British Council specialist in ELT at the Mauritius Institute of Education in the late 1970s, talked of ‘*educational failure at the primary level*’ and ‘*future illiteracy*’ for those who could not cope with this linguistic overload. (Clark, 1975)

To overcome this problem, Clark advocated a thorough review of the existing language policy within schools and a clear definition of the aims for teaching each of the main languages present in Mauritius. He identified three aims of teaching English in Mauritius:

- *the effective learning of English as a medium of communication with other countries for the purposes of trade, information, politics, professions and culture, etc;*
- *the effective learning of English as an official language for government and business purposes;*
- *the effective learning of English as a medium of instruction at school and as a means of studying after school.’* (Clark, 1975)

In its paper submitted to National Debate on Curricular Reforms in October 2005 entitled *Views on Curricular Reforms*, the Mauritius Employers' Federation suggested '*a utilitarian approach to language teaching at the primary and lower secondary stages*'. The MEF felt that: '*Language teaching should aim at the acquisition of the basic communication and learning skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – to ensure the acquisition of other relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes and lay the foundations for further learning and training.*' With respect to the development of Mauritius' regional role, the MEF views '*language as a vital component of Mauritius' strategic options.*' '*For an economy with extensive international links, with the development of offshore activities, with the promotion of tourism, languages can be highly valuable asset. Languages interface with the business environment and widen the scope for business and employment opportunities not only locally but also worldwide.*' It deplores the fact that '*from CPE right through to HSC few students are really aware of the formidable potential of languages as a means of securing gainful employment in an economy which is not only opening up to the world but which is intent on playing a prominent role in the region.*' (MEF, October 2005)

UNESCO considers that '*In the light of the many challenges presented by the expansion of knowledge societies and the need to recognise that linguistic diversity is a treasure contributing to human knowledge and to the many different ways of gaining access to knowledge..... the school should henceforth encourage the expansion, within pluralistic education communities, of a multilingual culture, reconciling the requirements of the teaching of a mother tongue and of several other languages.*' It recommends that '*This multilingual education should begin as early as primary level since, according to linguists, age 11 marks the end of the "critical period", the age when "the ear, until then the natural organ of hearing, becomes national". Hence it is important in the twenty-first century to promote an education that is at least bilingual and, so far as is possible, in all countries that have the necessary means, trilingual.*' (UNESCO, 2005)

But, judging from the present discussion on literacy and numeracy within the proposed curriculum reform little progress would seem to have been made on the language issue in the Mauritian curriculum. Despite the official adoption of Grafi Larmoni in 2005, the status and role of Kreol as the dominant mother tongue in the education system is still not fully accepted in all circles. Moreover, nor is acquiring the desired level of functional competency in English for the proper development of a skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st century perceived as a core aim of language teaching.

4.5 Teaching and learning English in a multi-lingual environment

In the debate on how to encourage a proper use of English, the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius (2nd century AD) on correct language use are worth considering:

“It was the critic Alexander who put me on my guard against unnecessary fault-finding. People should not be sharply corrected for bad grammar, provincialisms, or mispronunciation; it is better to suggest the proper expression by tactfully introducing it oneself in, say, one’s reply to a question or one’s acquiescence in their sentiments, or into a friendly discussion of the topic itself (not of the diction), or by some other suitable form of reminder.” (Meditations, Book 1, verse 10)

If he was writing today, Marcus Aurelius would have talked more in terms of communicative competence, knowledge acquisition and learning strategies, which goes to show that the core issue was and is how to acquire the language skills needed for meaningful interaction with one’s fellow human beings. In other words, we learn a language because we need to. Probably one of the most striking examples of this is the use of the immersion method during World War II to teach German to spies who were to be sent behind enemy lines as part of the preparation for the D-Day offensive by the Allied forces. The trainee spies were told quite simply that their lives would depend on how well they spoke German once they had been parachuted into occupied territory. The final sequence of the film *The Great Escape* (Sturges, 1963) shows Richard Attenborough, who played a leading role of a British officer commanding the escape plan from the German POW camp, boarding the bus that was to take him and one of the other escaped Allied officers to safety over the Swiss border. The Gestapo officer following them spoke them in English and they turned round. In the days following their escape he had been speaking fluent French while acting and dressing as a real French person. With one foot on the step to safety, the need to assume a foreign identity evaporated.

While the need to master English in the multilingual context of Mauritius is certainly less dramatic, it is just as vital to the country’s economic survival and success, as the preceding discussion has shown. The question now is how to enable the successful acquisition of a language that is for most of the population totally foreign.

Richards (1990) identifies five components in curriculum development processes in language teaching: needs analysis, goal and objective setting, syllabus design, methodology, and testing and evaluation. Needs analysis can be split into two main types: *situation needs analysis*

which focuses on the profile of the learners and teachers and on the administrative and structural context in which they will perform, and *communicative needs analysis*, which focuses on collecting information about the learner's communicative needs in the target language. Richards (1990) defines curriculum goals as being '*general statements of intended outcomes of a language program*', which in turn can be broken down into more specific objectives, including behavioural, skills-based, content-based and proficiency-based objectives. Syllabus design is directly linked to these stated objectives and is concerned with the choice and organisation of the appropriate instructional content. Richards (1990) identifies seven types of syllabuses in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses: structural, functional, notional, topical, situational, skills and task or activity-based. He points out that a syllabus is normally a combination of these types and is essentially a job specification of what is to be done and the standards or criteria to be met.

Richards (1990) also reminds us that 'methodology' is not synonymous with 'methods'. Appropriate methodology cannot be predetermined nor imposed. It is '*characterised as the activities, tasks and learning experiences selected by the teacher in order to achieve learning, and how these are used within the teaching/learning process. These activities are justified according to the objectives the teacher has set out to accomplish and the content he or she has set out to teach. They also relate to the philosophy of the program, to the view of language and language learning that the program embodies, and to the roles of teachers, learners and instructional materials in the program*'.

With respect to testing and evaluation, Richards (1990) lists six main types of tests, proficiency, placement, achievement, diagnostic, criterion-referenced and norm-referenced, all of which aim at assessing the learners' performance in the target language. Evaluation is aimed at determining whether the programme is effectively achieving the goals and objectives set.

Although this study is concerned with English in the business context, the preceding discussion has shown that this is not the only use of the language in Mauritius. In the context of an eventual strategy to improve the level of professional English used in Mauritius, it would therefore, be too limiting in terms of the teaching/learning process to focus solely on the methodology of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The notion of *continuum* proposed by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) clearly shows how success in ESP teaching depends on that of General English courses, as shown in the diagram below.

Table: Continuum of ELT Course Types (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998)

GENERAL

SPECIFIC

Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5
English for beginners	Intermediate to advanced EGP courses with a focus on particular skills	EGAP/EGBP courses based on common-core language and skills not related to specific disciplines or professions	Courses for broad disciplinary or professional areas, for example, Report Writing for Scientists and Engineers, Medical English, Legal English, Negotiation/Meeting Skills for Business People, etc	1) An 'academic support' course related to a particular academic course 2) One-to-one work with business people

Note: EGP: English for General Purposes
EGAP: English for General Academic Purposes
EGBP: English for General Business Purposes

When one considers the syllabus set for the Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level examination in English Language, it is clear that the goals and objectives set satisfy the needs of learners in Positions 2 and 3 of the continuum.

'AIMS

To develop the ability of candidates to:

- ♦ *communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in speech and writing;*
- ♦ *understand and respond appropriately and imaginatively to what they read and experience;*
- ♦ *enjoy and appreciate reading texts in the English Language.*

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Candidates should be able to:

- (i) *recount personal experience, views and feelings;*
- (ii) *use language to inform and explain*
- (iii) *show an awareness of how spoken and written communication varies according to situation, purpose and audience;*
- (iv) *read a variety of texts accurately and with confidence;*
- (v) *select, retrieve, evaluate and combine information from written texts;*
- (vi) *appreciate the ways writers make use of language*
- (vii) *employ different forms of writing to suit a range of purposes;*

- (viii) *plan, organise and paragraph, using appropriate punctuation;*
- (ix) *choose a vocabulary, which is suited to its purpose and audience, and use correct grammar and punctuation;*
- (x) *write in Standard English;*
- (xi) *spell accurately the words within the working vocabulary;*
- (xii) *write legibly, and present finished work clearly and attractively.'*

The introduction to the syllabus for the General Paper GCE Advanced Subsidiary Syllabus 8009 is also very clear on what is expected of candidates with regard to their mastery of English.

'The AS General Paper is multi-disciplinary, its subject matter drawn from across the curriculum. The syllabus encourages in candidates the ability to make cross-curricular links; to develop a maturity of thought to appropriate to students at this level; and to achieve an understanding and usage of the English language which enables them to express arguments, ideas and opinions in a reflective and academic manner.'

To make sure that Mauritian candidates have really understood how important their use of English is to their success in this paper, a special note is added to the overall syllabus which includes the following instructions:

'The paper will test the candidate's understanding and use of English and the extent to which he or she has achieved a maturity of thought appropriate to sixth-form students in their second year. It is not primarily a test of general knowledge.

...

Paper 2: Three questions will be set based on information given in the question paper. One question will test comprehension of an English prose passage as a whole and in detail; ability to re-express in continuous form material supplied in the paper; the knowledge and understanding of common English usage; the others may be based on information given in the form of notes, statistics or diagrams or may take the form of tests of logical or scientific reasoning.'

Thus, this notion of continuum (Dudley-Evans, 1998) reinforces the need for concern about the low grades earned by Mauritian schoolchildren in the primary and secondary

examinations noted in the discussion in Section 4.4 with respect to their future success in using English in their careers.

The definition of appropriate methodology given by Richards (1998) points towards the dynamic and pivotal role that the English Language teacher must play in the teaching/learning process. In a decidedly down-to-earth and practical approach based on years of experience of teaching English in Africa, Bright and McGregor (1970) write: *‘The teacher of English has the responsibility of equipping his pupils with the skills they need to pursue their studies in all other subjects either immediately or in the future. This is not to say that English is ‘the most important subject on the timetable’ and thereby forfeit the goodwill of our colleagues who teach everything else. But in the hands of a good teacher the English course certainly services every other academic activity in the school and a good many of the extra-curricular ones.’* They underline the necessity for the English Language teacher to *‘have the wide-ranging enthusiasm and imagination that can make his English course a sort of clearing house for ideas and interests which branch out into all the other subjects that the pupils are studying in school, beyond them’*. To succeed in his mission, the English teacher needs the *‘active cooperation’* of the teachers in the other content subjects. *‘As soon as pupils spot that correctness and fluency in speech and writing matter only to the English teacher, and that the biology, physics and mathematics staff are happy to decipher the ungrammatical and interpret the inaudible, they will consciously practise correct language habits only in English lessons and the English teacher is practically wasting his time and theirs.’* On the other hand, if all the teachers pull together on the issue of correct language use, *‘then pupils will soon notice that good language habits matter to all the teachers all the time, and their language skills will be practised and improved in every lesson and school activity.’* (Bright, 1970)

When it comes to ESP teaching, the need for the teacher to go beyond the traditional activities general grammar and vocabulary acquisition and assume the role of *‘ESP practitioner having five key roles, teacher, course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator,’* becomes even more acute. (Dudley-Evans, 1998) As they are *‘not the primary knower of the carrier content of the material’*, ESP teachers must also take real interest in the disciplines or professional activities of the learners. They must also be flexible and willing to take risks in their teaching to be able to respond to the concerns and issues expressed by their students. (Dudley-Evan, 1998)

Bhatia (1993) also emphasises the dependence of ESP teaching on the requirements of other disciplines and areas of expertise, and hence the importance of the collaboration between the ESP teacher and the other teaching staff. In his view, ESP teaching *'requires advanced preparation in the form of elaborate needs analysis indicating specific knowledge and understanding of skills and abilities that the learners need to acquire, the texts and tasks they need to handle, the target situations they are likely to participate in and the roles they are likely to assume after they complete the ESP course.'* He draws attention to the difficulty in assessing attainment in ESP, as it *'does not relate to the knowledge of language usage, but to an ability to use language to communicate in a specific area. The real test of success of any ESP course should be based on the performance of learners in actual target-situations, academic or professional, for which they have been trained.'* (Bhatia, 1993)

In his proposal for language teaching in primary education, Phillips (1979) emphasises the need for English to be taught from the ESP perspective and the role of English as a servicing language for content subjects across the curriculum.

The question is how many English teachers in the Mauritian education system see their role in this light. In the light of the comments on teacher performance in the MES 2005 report, it would appear not many.

4.6 The competition

Information on the out-sourcing of the call centre industry and other BPO activities from the USA and Europe was gathered through monitoring of articles published in major business magazines, in particular, *The Economist* and *BusinessWeek* during the period December 2003 to December 2005. These two magazines were chosen because:

- they are readily available in Mauritius and are thus a source of information available to business decision-makers in the country
- they enjoy international standing as information sources on current business trends.

This monitoring brought to light several main competitors in outsourcing, in particular:

- India
- The Philippines
- Central and Eastern Europe
- Vietnam.

4.6.1 India

As the globalisation of white-collar services accelerates, India is described as being at the hub of the process, ‘*with its wealth of well-educated English-speaking young people commanding, by rich-world standards, very low wages*’. (*The Economist*, February 2004). The sheer numbers mean that the IT firms, both foreign and Indian-owned, can find the right talent to fill the jobs that cover an ever-widening variety of tasks, from the basic call-centre and data processing work to highly sophisticated design and research. Already in 2001, *The Economist* described India as *back office to the world*. (*The Economist*, May 2001)

For instance, in 2000 GE Capital International Services opened a state-of-the-art facility, the John F. Welch Technology Centre, in the Bangalore technology park. By mid-2001 the GECIS centre was employing 600 people, nearly a third of them with PhDs. It could deploy 60 scientists on its plastics business alone. (*The Economist*, May 2001). In December 2003, the centre counted 1,800 engineers, a quarter with PhDs, engaged in fundamental research for most of GE’s 13 divisions, ranging from aerodynamic designs of turbine-engine blades to the study of the molecular structure of materials to be used in DVDs for short-term use. Since its opening the centre’s engineers have filed 95 applications for patents in the US. (*BusinessWeek*, December 2003)

Even when discussing the problems and shortcomings of working in India, mention is consistently made of the use of English being a major advantage. In its special report on *Outsourcing and IT in India: The Bangalore Paradox*, *The Economist* describes how the city is struggling with major infrastructure shortcomings common to many Indian cities. Yet, in the race to gain place in the global outsourcing market, '*India remains well-placed to win a big share of the business. Its biggest regional competitors are China, and for English-language voice work, the Philippines. Both compete with India on price, but neither can match its annual supply of more than 2m English-speaking graduates.*' (*The Economist*, April 2005)

Another major factor driving India's success is the optimistic attitude shown by its young talented citizens who are highly motivated and willing to work the hours in a sector that they see as a dream come true, especially those working at the design level of the industry. (*BusinessWeek*, March 2004). For others it is the way to have the best of both worlds, work in a state-of-the-art sector with a high standard of living and return to one's home country, particularly as the American job market has become tight. (*BusinessWeek*, December 2003; *Le Nouvel Observateur*, February 2006)

India is already taking steps to ensure that it can meet the growing demand for knowledge workers at home and abroad. Computer science and mathematics already figure strong in tertiary education. The Indian Institute of Information Technology in Bangalore is completely wired for Wi-Fi and has classrooms with videoconferencing to beam sessions to another 300 colleges. The number of engineering colleges is set to increase by 50%, to nearly 1600, by 2008. The elite tertiary institutions, the IITs, are enlisting the help of India's rich diaspora population, particularly their former students now settled in the US, through donations and research links with top US science universities such as Stanford. The diaspora helped found the Indian School of Business, including the tie-up with Wharton School and Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School. (*BusinessWeek*, December 2003)

4.6.2 The Philippines

Another serious competitor in the BPO sector is the Philippines. The numbers involved are much lower, 380,000 English-speaking graduates annually as opposed to India's 2 million, with more accountants than engineers. Outsourcing is seen to be an attractive solution to the employment problem in the archipelago, as it provides a way to stay at home and earn a decent living. For instance, in one major BPO operation qualified nurses are employed to transcribe clinical diagnoses by US doctors and dentistry graduates to copyedit English-language scientific journals. (*BusinessWeek*, March 2004)

4.6.3 Central and Eastern Europe

Since 2003 the choice of location for call centre and BPO operations has been influenced by not just the availability of low-cost highly qualified personnel, but also cultural affinity and similar or even identical time zones. As more firms in the UK and the USA realise the importance of after-sales service and technical support in improving customer retention and loyalty, the more sensitive and complex tasks requiring intimate customer knowledge are being handled at home, in spite of the higher wage rates. Miscommunication due to the different ways English is used by Americans and Indians is a risk that several upmarket brands are not willing to take. (*The Economist*, May 2004)

The region that can offer cultural affinity, friendly time zones together with highly qualified, hard-working and motivated employees with relatively low wage costs is Central and Eastern Europe. Central Europeans are also multi-lingual, with English, French and German widely enough spoken to provide a good pool of potential call centre operators. As the former Communist countries develop closer links with the European Union, near-sourcing is an increasingly attractive proposition. (*The Economist*, December 2005)

The universities and technical schools built under the Marxist regimes in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania continue to produce top-notch graduates in engineering, mathematics and computing who have been trained in bridging the gap between complex technology and low-cost systems with limited resources. Poland alone turns out 55,000 graduates a year in mathematics, science and technology. The quality of work is world-class, the motivation to work hard high and the wages low. (*BusinessWeek*, December 2005)

4.6.4 Vietnam

A possible new contender in the mass call centre market is Vietnam ‘*where taxes are low or negligible, officialdom actually helps, and qualified and willing labour is plentiful*’. (*The Economist*, December 2005)

4.6.5 The situation in Mauritius

When these findings are compared to various articles and reviews on the offshore business services, BPO and IT sectors in Mauritius in such publications as *Business Magazine*, *Eco-Austral*, as well as the major daily newspapers, the situation in Mauritius is seen to be less than adequate, as comments are regularly made about the lack of suitably qualified people to work in these sectors and the generally poor mastery of English, irrespective of the academic level attained.

For example, in March 2004, the Director of the Financial Services Promotion Agency deplored lack of qualified professionals in the legal and financial sectors who were perfectly competent in both English and French. (*Le Mauricien*, March 2004). In the *Business Magazine* article *Centre d’appels/BPO: nouveau pôle de croissance: secteur porteur d’emplois*, the managers of two leading call centres said that the level of proficiency attained by HSC holders in both English and French was not specialised enough and that the level of general knowledge and geography was also insufficient. (*Business Magazine*, May 2004) The same assessment is made in the *Eco-Austral* article *Développement des centres d’appel: difficile de créer plus d’un millier d’emplois par an*, to which is added the comment that businesses should not be expected to do the work of the schools in teaching languages, geography and general knowledge. The lack of adequate language skills is mentioned again in the *L’Express Dimanche* article *Promotion de l’investissement: Maurice prepare son offensive TIC pour 2005*. (*L’Express Dimanche*, November 2004)

In May 2005, the CEO of Teleforma, a major American BPO firm established in Mauritius, found that the level of English in Mauritius was in rapid decline and that not enough was being done to promote English in Mauritius. He considered this situation worrying given that English is the language of technology, and that the English-speaking market is ten times larger than the French-speaking one. He felt that Mauritians needed intensive accent and pronunciation training (*L’Express*, May 2005). During the forum on the BPO sector organised

by the ACT, association that groups together companies in the IT/BPO sector, in March 2006, the low level of language skills was again mentioned as a major handicap in developing the sector. It would, thus, appear that the level of bilingualism in Mauritius is not as high as is often thought and certainly not what the foreign companies in the IT/BPO expected and need.

The Gartner report on the BPO sector in Mauritius, which was commissioned by the Board of Investment, Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd and the Financial Services Promotion Agency and published in September 2004, recognises that one of the country's strengths is its bilingual population, but qualifies that assessment by saying that *the level of spoken English and written French needs improvement*. The report considers that since English is the medium of instruction in the majority of schools on the island, most Mauritians can write English quite well, but that the level of their spoken English is very low. (*Le Mauricien*, September 2004)

The Financial Times Special Report on Mauritius also talks of the language issue. (*Financial Times*, March 2006) It says that *Mauritius is touting its good telecommunications infrastructure, educated French- and English-speaking population and a raft of investment incentives as it seeks to draw more international companies to what it sometimes calls "the cyber-island."* But it also says: *Others say that the quality of English in Mauritius needs improvement. Many islanders speak it haltingly, even though it is their country's official language.* It reminds readers of the warning made in 2004 by David Snoxell, a former British High Commissioner to the island, that *English was "declining badly" in favour of French, the most-spoken foreign tongue*. Such comments in a special supplement aimed at informing international investors are food for thought.

Further food for thought comes from the comments made by several British visitors to Mauritius who have been involved in promoting the English language in some way or other. David Snoxell's assessment of English in Mauritius was made during an interview published in *L'Express* just before he left Mauritius. He said: *The fact that Mauritius is bilingual is immensely important in selling the country as a cyberisland. I would like to add a caveat though. English is declining badly here and it's partly the fault of the media who have taken a policy decision on English. Young people learn to read and write English but their oral ability is declining. I'm sad to say that I've spoken more French here than English. It gives the impression of a country rather stuck in a narrow historical and literary base.* (*L'Express*, November 2004)

His comment on the media is very pertinent. His interview was published in English, instead of the usual practice of translating articles or interviews from English into French with some original comments kept in English, unless they are to be included in a special English language supplement, such as *Outlook* in *L'Express*. By way of example, the interview given by Ms Rosalind Burford in November 2005 as outgoing Director of the British Council was published in French in *L'Express Samedi* on 12 November and in English in the *Outlook* supplement the following Tuesday. The interview given by Sir David Green, Director General of the British Council, during his visit to Mauritius was published in French in the normal Monday edition of *L'Express* on 14 November. If Mauritius is really bilingual, then interviews given in English should be published as they stand.

In assessing the state of English, Ms Burford had this to say:

First, I believe that Creole is French-based so it is easier for all Mauritians to learn French than English. The French government has also invested a lot of money in language in Mauritius and it has proved successful. But this is not the only reason. The way teachers teach English to the pupils may also be one of the reasons for this decline. They concentrate more on reading and writing and not on listening and speaking. This creates an unusual effect; as young people read and write well, they think they speak well. And because they speak with their friends who have the same standard of English as they have, they think they speak well. They do not see any problems as they can make themselves understood. There may be a feeling that their English is good enough. Our teaching centre has identified spoken language as the main weakness of students in Mauritius. (L'Express Outlook, November 2005)

She also identified the lack of exposure to English in the media as being another major factor in the decline of English in Mauritius.

In fact, all the representatives of the British Council, both past and present, agree that there is need to improve the level of oral English in Mauritius and that the process of learning the language could be much more fun than it is at present. (*L'Express Outlook*, March 2006) But the British Council cannot and should not do the job on its own. The lead must come from the Mauritian authorities to which the British Council will give its support through the activities organised by the new Knowledge and Learning Centre that has replaced the old library in the Rose Hill premises. The Director General was very clear on this point. (*L'Express*, November 2005)

Concerning the availability of a skilled workforce, both the Gartner report and the FT supplement mention the problem of *scaleability*, *that is the ability to hire many new employees at one go to serve a fast-growing client*. The FT supplement talks of Mauritius's small size as being a built-in limit. The Gartner report states: *In an environment where scale is one of the key decision criteria for offshore outsourcing, Mauritius is not the choice for companies looking to establish thousand seat centres*. It also draws attention to the issue of the level of qualification for recruitment in BPO work. Mauritius again compares unfavourably with its main competitors, India, the Philippines and, for the French-speaking market, Northern Africa, since they are recruiting at diploma and degree level, whereas the majority of recruits in Mauritius are secondary school leavers.

The statistics published by the BPO Secretariat of the Board of Investment show that at the end of February 2006, 107 firms were working in the BPO/IT-Enabled Services sector and were employing about 4300 persons. These figures are encouraging for Mauritius, but when compared to India and the Philippines, to name but two competitors, the need to ensure that all actual and potential employees in the BPO sector are fully competent to international standards is absolutely crucial to the success of the venture.

5 FINDINGS

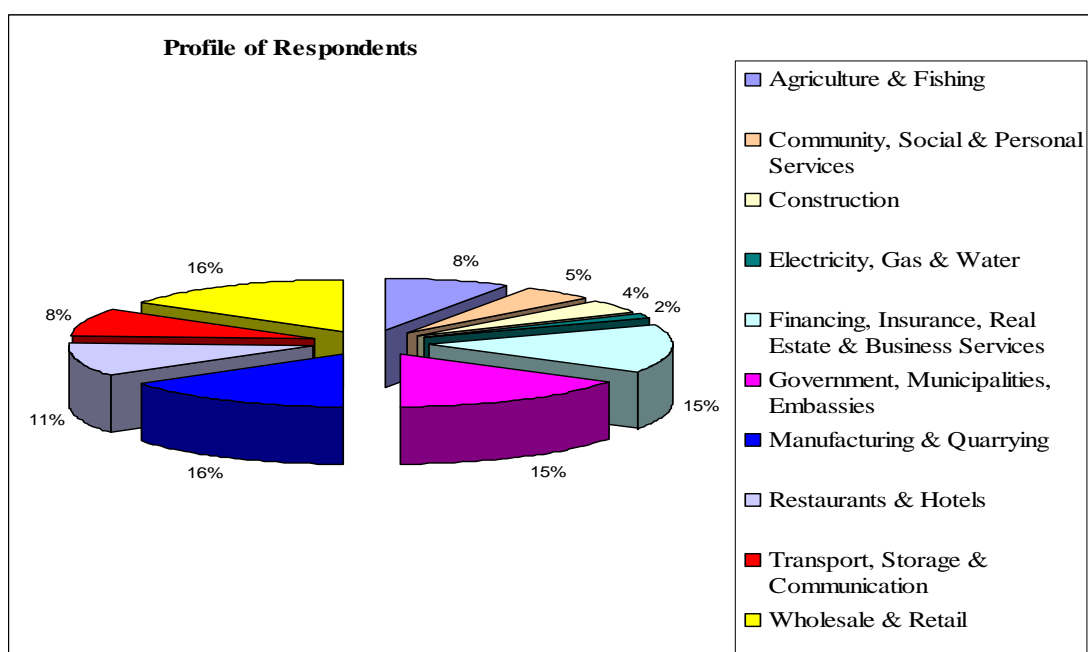
5.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions 1 to 5: Profile of Respondents

The total number of respondents was 122 from 1120 questionnaires.

The breakdown by sector of activity is shown in the table below. (*Question 5*)

Main sector of activity	Number of respondents
Agriculture & fishing	10
Community, Social & Personal Services	6
Construction	5
Electricity, Gas & Water	2
Financing, Insurance, Real Estate & Business Services	18
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	20
Manufacturing & Quarrying	19
Restaurants & Hotels	13
Transport, Storage & Communication	10
Wholesale & Retail	19
Total:	122



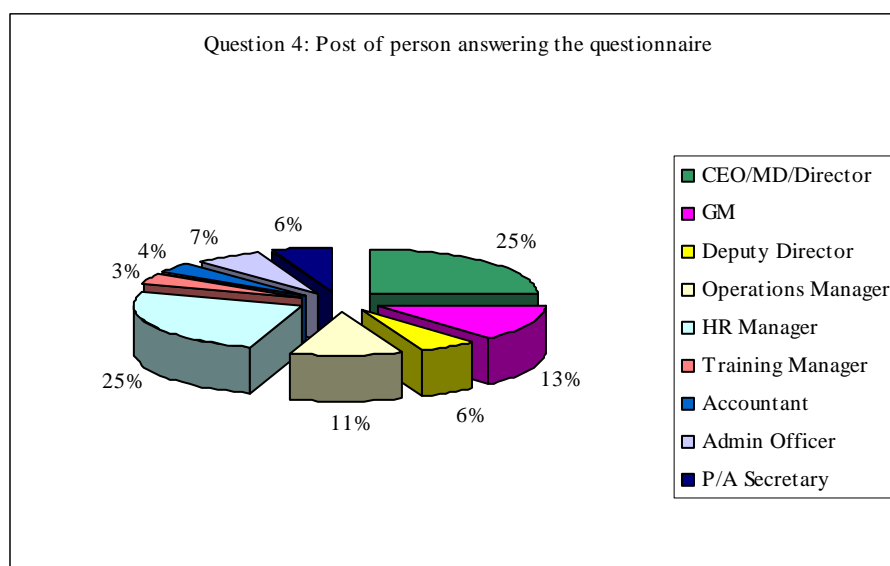
It should be noted that the classification used is based on that used by the Central Statistics Office and the Mauritius Employers' Federation. The firms working in BPO and ICT are thus classified under *Transport, Storage & Communications* (call centres, logistics firms) or *Financing, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services* (offshore finance, management, trusts and other intermediation activities).

While the data input was being carried out, it was noted that the term *call centre* was being used to describe not just international call centre work, but also the customer service counters, more precisely the telephonists handling customer contacts, for firms dealing in goods on the domestic market.

Question 4: Post of person answering the questionnaire

Main sector of activity	CEO/MD/ Director	GM	Deputy Director*	Operations Manager**	HR Manager	Training Manager	Accountant	Admin Officer	P/A Secretary
Agriculture & fishing	1	2	0	0	4	1	0	2	0
Community/Social/Personal Services	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Construction	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electricity/Gas/Water	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	8	3	0	1	3	1	0	1	1
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	1	1	6	4	4	0	0	3	1
Manufacturing/Quarrying	5	3	0	3	4	0	1	2	1
Restaurants/Hotels	0	3	0	0	7	2	1	0	0
Transport/Storage/Communication	0	1	1	1	4	0	1	0	2
Wholesale/Retail	6	2	0	3	5	0	2	0	1
Total:	31	16	7	13	31	4	5	8	7
% of total	25.4	13.1	5.7	10.7	25.4	3.3	4.1	6.6	5.7

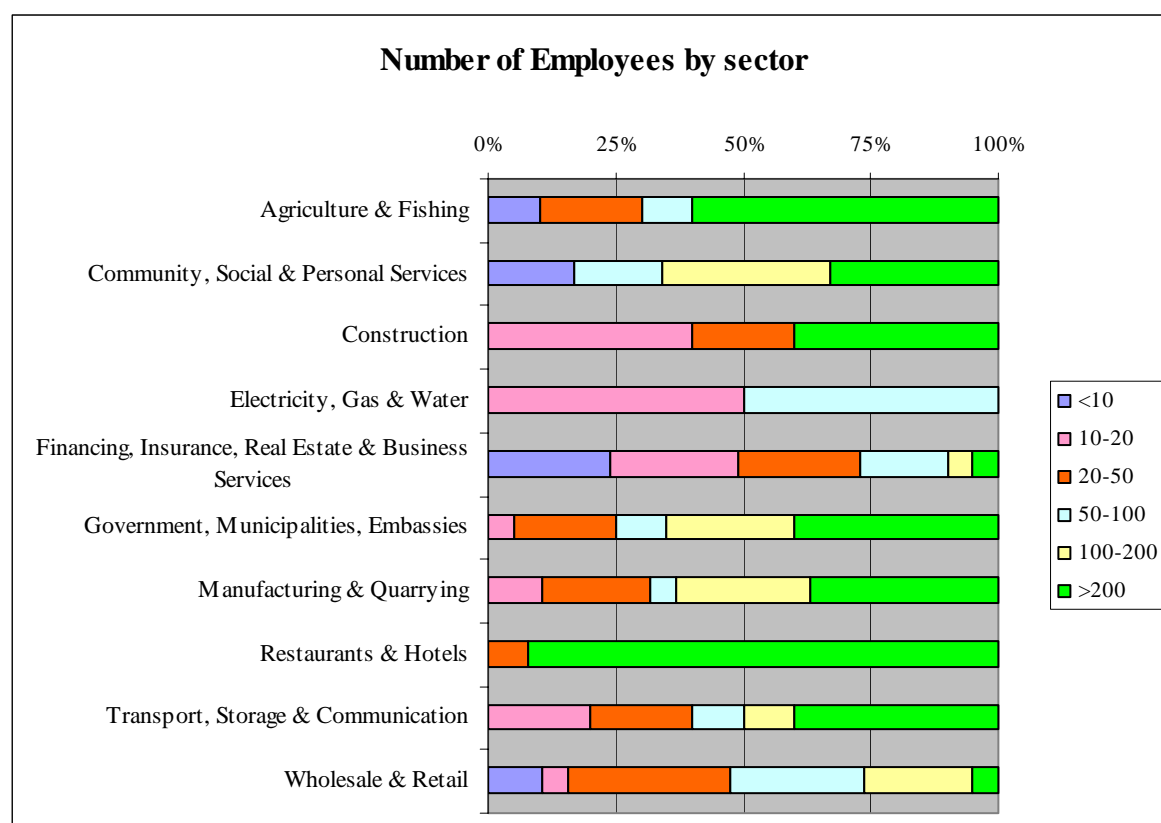
Note: * includes Assistant Secretary, Deputy Town Clerk in Government Category
 ** generic term including Chief Inspector, Chief Engineers in Government Category



It is interesting to note that 47 questionnaires (38.5%) were completed by the senior-most executive (CEO, MD, Director, GM), another 20 (16.4%) by the deputy or a senior line manager and a further 35 by the HR and training managers (28.7%). In other words 102 out of 122 questionnaires (83.6%) were completed by those persons closely involved in the strategic development and operational management of their organisation.

Question 6: Number of employees by sector

Main sector of activity	<10	10-20	20-50	50-100	100-200	>200
Agriculture & fishing	1	0	2	1	0	6
Community, Social & Personal Services	1	0	0	1	2	2
Construction	0	2	1	0	0	2
Electricity, Gas & Water	0	1	0	1	0	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	4	5	4	3	1	1
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	0	1	4	2	5	8
Manufacturing & Quarrying	0	2	4	1	5	7
Restaurants & Hotels	0	0	1	0	0	12
Transport, Storage & Communication	0	2	2	1	1	4
Wholesale & Retail	2	1	6	5	4	1
Total number of companies by sector	8	14	24	15	18	43
% of Total	6.5	11.5	19.7	12.3	14.8	35.2



The potential number of employees covered by the questionnaire is between 11,000 and 16,000.

It should be noted that the majority of large companies (>200 employees) answering the questionnaire is found in the Restaurant & Hotels sector. When one considers the importance of languages at all levels of operation in tourism activities, this already gives some indication of the number of employees for whom excellent language skills are vital to their level of performance and efficiency.

Question 7: Which countries does your company do business with?

Table 7.1: Total number of countries named by region (multiple answers allowed)

Main sector of activity	Africa	The Americas	Asia	Australasia	Europe	Indian Ocean	Mauritius	Middle East	Worldwide	Total
Agriculture & fishing	4	5	2	1	14	3	3	1	0	33
Community/Social/Personal Services	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	2	8
Construction	2	1	4	2	10	4	2	2	0	27
Electricity/Gas/Water	2	1	4	2	5	3	0	0	0	17
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	7	4	13	1	19	7	4	1	2	58
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	5	2	10	1	15	4	7	0	1	45
Manufacturing/Quarrying	8	5	11	3	18	15	3	1	0	64
Restaurants/Hotels	2	0	1	0	32	0	0	0	3	38
Transport/Storage/Communication	1	3	6	1	5	3	0	1	4	24
Wholesale/Retail	14	4	22	4	16	4	0	2	5	71
Total:	45	25	74	16	136	44	20	8	17	385
% of total	11.7	6.5	19.2	4.2	35.3	11.4	5.2	2.1	4.4	100

The breakdown by country is given Annex 4.

The predominance of the European market is clearly shown, particularly with respect to the tourism sector (136 responses out of 385, that is, 35.3%). When one considers the choice between English and French as the language for international communication, English would be the required language for 45.6% of respondents to carry out their overseas trade, compared to 42.6% for French, the remaining 11.8% being those who replied *Europe*, as shown in Tables 7.2 and 7.3.

Table 7.2: European Market: Required International Language: English

Level of competency of overseas counterpart	UK	Scotland	Ireland		Austria	Denmark	Germany	Holland	Sweden	Turkey		Total
Native speaker	38	1	1									40
Possible use as Second Language					2	1	13	3	1	2		22
Total:												62

Table 7.3 European Markets: Required International Language: French

Level of competency of overseas counterpart	Belgium	France	Luxembourg	Switzerland		Italy	Portugal	Spain		Total
Native speaker	3	34	4	6						47
Possible use as Second Language						8	1	2		11
Total:										58

The importance of regional trade is also underlined. Except for Senegal and the COMESA (1 response each only), the African countries mentioned are from the English-speaking zone, with South Africa on top with a count of 36 out of 45. While it is true that French is the predominant language in the countries listed under the Indian Ocean, the importance of English in official life in the Seychelles (10 counts out of 44) should be remembered.

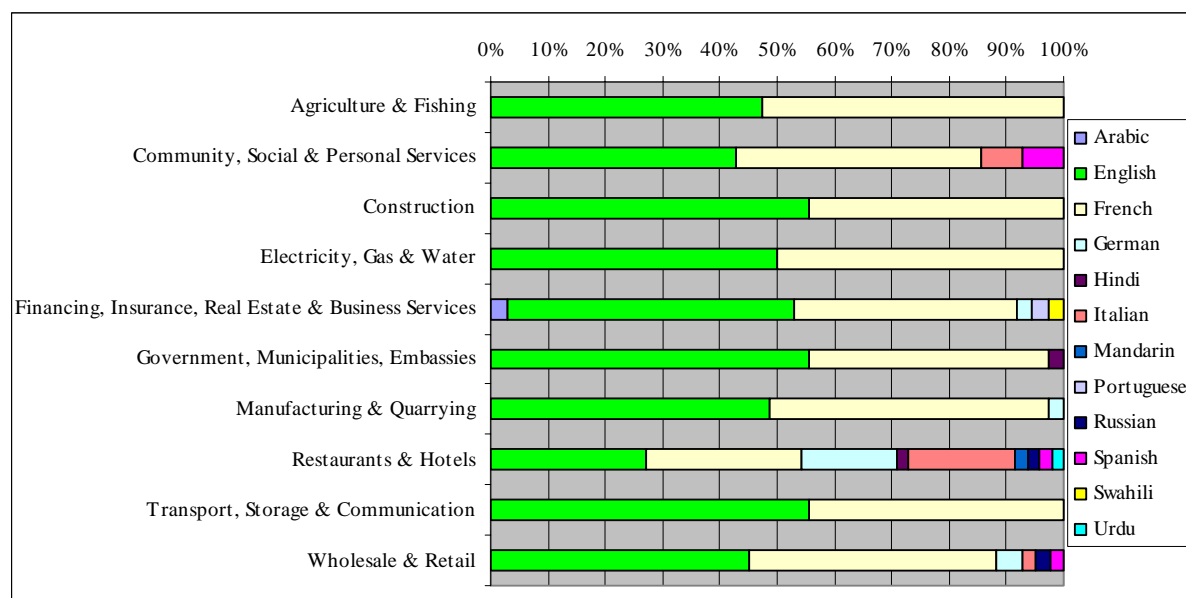
All the other areas mentioned in the responses, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and the Middle East, are English-speaking zones.

This means that of the total 385 responses, 54 (14%) are working with French-speaking counterparts, 33 (9%) remain undetermined (*Europe*: 16 and *Worldwide*: 17) and 298 (77%) are interacting with English-speaking counterparts.

Given the need for Mauritius to reduce its dependency on the European market and diversify its sources for both exports and imports, these figures already give an indication of how important the proper mastery of English at international level will be to the eventual successful diversification of markets.

Question 8: Which international languages does your company use in its business activities?

Main sector of activity	Arabic	English	French	German	Hindi	Italian	Mandarin	Portuguese	Russian	Spanish	Swahili	Urdu
Agriculture & fishing		9	10									
Community/Social/Personal Services		6	6			1				1		
Construction		5	4									
Electricity/Gas/Water		2	2									
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	1	18	14	1				1			1	
Government/Municipalities/Embassies		20	15		1							
Manufacturing/Quarrying		18	18	1								
Restaurants/Hotels		13	13	8	1	9	1		1	1		1
Transport/Storage/Communication		10	8									
Wholesale/Retail		19	18	2		1			1	1		
Total:	1	120	108	12	2	11	1		2	3	1	1



This question was aimed at situating the use of English with respect to other major languages used in international business. The answers clearly show how predominant English is as a business language in Mauritius. It is also clear that, apart from French, the other major languages are hardly used, even in the hospitality sector. This is matter for reflection in the thrust to diversify Mauritius' source markets. It could well mean that the countries concerned

by these other languages have chosen the route of expediency and prefer to communicate in English, albeit at a level acceptable to the international business world. A recent article in *The Economist* would seem to confirm this hypothesis, as it describes the efforts that China is making to ensure that enough of its people can speak English adequately for the 2006 Olympic Games in Beijing. (*The Economist*, April 2006)

Question 9: How much of your company's business is conducted in English?

Type of Communication	Number of responses							
<i>Spoken</i>	No answer	<10%	10-25%	25-50%	<50%	50-75%	>75%	>50%
Face-to-face	6	38	17	20	75	18	23	41
Telephone contacts	4	34	30	19	83	18	17	35
Audio conference	47	30	6	7	43	11	21	32
Video conference	54	30	9	5	44	8	16	24
<i>Written</i>								
Brochures	16	5	8	16	29	25	52	77
E-mail	3	6	6	11	23	27	69	96
Fax	3	5	3	11	19	32	68	100
In-house magazines	32	21	6	8	35	13	42	55
Letters	2	6	2	10	18	26	76	102
Memos	5	10	5	7	22	26	69	95
Minutes	4	13	6	4	23	24	71	95
Reports	4	7	5	7	19	24	75	99
Staff manuals	10	16	5	9	30	20	62	82

The answers clearly show that English is used much less in spoken communication than in written communication. They also show that the high-tech means of spoken communication, audio and video conferencing, are little used or not all.

Question 10: *Have you any English-speaking expatriate staff working for your company?*

Yes	40
No	79
No answer	3

Question 11 *If yes to Question 10, please complete the table below.*

Main Sector of Activity	Director	Senior Executive	Middle Mgt / Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Technician	Other
Agriculture & fishing	2	1	0	0	0	1
Community/Social/Personal Services	1	0	1	0	0	2
Construction	1	3	2	0	0	0
Electricity/Gas/Water	0	0	0	0	1	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	6	8	8	0	0	0
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	1	2	0	0	33	1
Manufacturing/Quarrying	4	9	3	0	1	0
Restaurants/Hotels	4	7	9	0	0	1
Transport/Storage/Communication	2	5	2	1	1	71
Wholesale/Retail	7	2	6	0	2	0
Total:	28	37	31	1	38	76

One call centre and a ministry account for the exceptional figures under Technicians and Others.

Otherwise, as most of the respondents are employing only one or two English-speaking expatriate staff, their impact on the use of English in daily business appears to remain limited.

Question 12: How often do your company's personnel use English in their work? Please rate from 0 to 5 using the scale below.

<i>0 = Never</i>	<i>1 = Not very often</i>	<i>2 = Quite often</i>	<i>3 = Often</i>	<i>4 = Most of the time</i>	<i>5 = Always</i>
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Table 12.1: Spoken Communication: average rating for each category

Main Sector of Activity	Director/ Senior Executive	Operation/ Middle Mgt	Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Telephonist/ Receptionist	Technician	Customer Contact	Call Centre
Agriculture & fishing	1.4	1.1	0.4	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.3	n/a
Community/Social/Personal Services	1.8	1.7	1.3	2.3	1.7	0.3	1.1	n/a
Construction	3	4.3	3	2.4	2	2	2	0.8
Electricity/Gas/Water	4	2.5	1	1.5	1	2	1	1
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	3	2.5	1.8	2.2	2.1	1.2	2.1	0.7
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	2.9	2.5	2	2.2	1.4	1.8	1.6	0.7
Manufacturing/Quarrying	2.4	1.7	0.8	1.6	1.6	1.1	1.4	0.3
Restaurants/Hotels	2.3	2	1.7	1.7	2.5	0.9	2.9	1.2
Transport/Storage/Communication	3.6	2.8	2.3	2.2	2.3	1.5	2.6	1.7
Wholesale/Retail	2.2	1.6	1.2	1.4	1.8	0.7	1.4	0.6
Overall average	2.7	2.3	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.6	0.8

Table 12.2: Written Communication: average rating for each category

Main Sector of Activity	Director/ Senior Executive	Operation/ Middle Mgt	Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Telephonist/ Receptionist	Technician	Customer Contact	Call Centre
Agriculture & fishing	2.9	2.2	1.3	2.5	1.3	1.2	0.8	0
Community/Social/Personal Services	2.5	2.2	1.8	3	2	0.7	1.2	0
Construction	4	3.8	2.2	3.2	2	2.6	2.4	1.4
Electricity/Gas/Water	4.5	4.5	3.5	4	1	3	1.5	1
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	4.5	4.1	3	4.2	3.6	2.5	3.3	0.8
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	4.3	4.3	3.6	3.7	2	2.8	2.6	1
Manufacturing/Quarrying	3.3	2.8	1.8	2.7	1.4	1.7	1.9	0
Restaurants/Hotels	4.1	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.2	1.5	3.4	1.9
Transport/Storage/Communication	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.6	3.1	2.9	3.7	1.9
Wholesale/Retail	3.3	3.1	2.3	2.9	2.5	1.7	2.5	0.6
Overall average	3.7	3.4	2.6	3.3	2.2	2	2.3	0.8

The answers to this question confirm the tendency noted in Question 9 that English is used more in written communication than spoken. The link between the frequency in using English, both spoken and written, and the position held in the organisational hierarchy should be noted. Senior and middle management and their administrative support staff have the highest rates, while the supervisory, technical and front-line positions remain quite low. Even so, only two out of the 20 groups of managers registered 4 and above (*most of the time*) in spoken communication and 9 in written communication, while only two out of the 10 groups of administrative/secretarial staff registered 4 and above in written communication, and none in spoken communication.

It would be reasonable to suppose that the frequency with which English is used is linked to the nature of work and duties assigned to the post. Senior and operations managers would have more cause to use English, for instance, when handling official papers, meeting foreign clients and travelling abroad, than, say the average supervisor or technician. However, the low scores registered by the front-line positions, telephonists, receptionists, customer contact and call centre personnel, do give cause to wonder what happens when they do have to use English when faced with someone who speaks nothing else.

Question 13: Which qualifications do these personnel hold?

Category of personnel	<SC	SC	HSC/ BAC	Diploma	Degree Licence (BA, BSc)	Masters Maîtrise or higher	Professional (eg: ACCA/ CIMA ICSA)
Directors/Senior Executives	2	11	23	30	53	46	50
Operation/middle managers	0	18	31	49	50	22	21
Supervisors	16	42	36	34	15	7	3
Administrative/secretarial	0	45	72	34	11	2	4
Telephonists/receptionists	12	68	39	7	2	2	0
Technicians	23	30	28	22	7	1	2
Customer contact personnel	5	34	43	18	14	4	1
Call centre personnel	4	12	15	2	1	0	1
Office attendants/drivers	3	3	2	0	0	0	0

Another reason for the lack of use of English may well be the level of formal education attained. The answers to Question 13 show a clear correlation between educational qualifications and post held. This is not surprising as most posts are recruited with a definite level of qualification attached. On the other hand, given that school is the means by which most Mauritians come into sustained contact with English, the earlier a person leaves formal education, the less likely s/he will have attained a broad and sustainable mastery of the language. Again, one can only wonder at what happens when low-qualified personnel meet up with the English-speaking visitor at their work-site.

Question 14: How fluent do you consider these personnel to be? Please rate from 0 to 4 using the scale below.

<i>0 = Not fluent at all</i>	<i>1 = Somewhat fluent</i>	<i>2 = Fluent</i>	<i>3 = Very fluent</i>	<i>4 = Native Speaker</i>
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Table 14.1: Spoken communication: average rating for each category

Main Sector of Activity	Director/ Senior Executive	Operation/ Middle Mgt	Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Telephonist/ Receptionist	Technician	Customer Contact	Call Centre
Agriculture & fishing	2.2	1.6	1	1.6	1	1.2	2	n/a
Community/Social/Personal Services	1.8	2.5	1.7	2.4	2.5	1.5	2.3	n/a
Construction	3	2.2	2.7	2	2.2	1.8	2.5	2
Electricity/Gas/Water	3.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2	2	2
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	3	2.5	2.2	2	2	2.1	2.5	2
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	2.5	2.2	2	2	2	1.8	1.7	2
Manufacturing/Quarrying	2.3	2	1.2	1.7	1.7	1	1.8	2.5
Restaurants/Hotels	3	2	2	2.3	2.4	1.5	2.2	1.8
Transport/Storage/Communication	3	2.6	2	1.7	1.8	1.4	2	1.8
Wholesale/Retail	2.2	2.3	1	2	1.6	1.5	2	2
Overall average	2.6	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.6	2.1	2

Table 14.2: Written communication: average rating for each category

Main Sector of Activity	Director/ Senior Executive	Operation/ Middle Mgt	Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Telephonist/ Receptionist	Technician	Customer Contact	Call Centre
Agriculture & fishing	3	2.1	1	1.9	1	1.3	2	n/a
Community/Social/Personal Services	3	2.7	1.5	2.6	2	0	3	n/a
Construction	3	2.7	2.2	2.2	1.5	1.3	3.3	n/a
Electricity/Gas/Water	3.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	2	2	2	2.5
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	3	2.5	2.5	2.2	2	2.1	2.6	2.3
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	3.5	2.5	1.8	2	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.8
Manufacturing/Quarrying	2.2	2	1.4	1.7	1.5	1	1	1
Restaurants/Hotels	3	2.5	1.8	2	2.2	1.5	2	2.2
Transport/Storage/Communication	3	2.7	2.1	1.9	1.3	1.7	2	2
Wholesale/Retail	2.3	2.3	1.6	2.2	1.8	1.6	1	2
Overall average	2.9	2.4	1.7	2.1	1.7	1.4	2	1.7

The answers to this question confirm that fluency in English is directly linked to the level of qualification attained, as the highest scores are obtained by those groups of personnel who have post-secondary qualifications.

However, the predominance of level 2 ratings would suggest that most personnel are reasonably fluent in both spoken and written English. Given the lack of interaction with expatriate English-speaking staff (Question 10), it is not surprising that no group of personnel gained a level 4 rating (*native speaker*). However, the low number of level 3 rating (*very fluent*), of which all but two concern the Director/Senior Executive group, is another indication that the level of English in Mauritius is not up to the requirements of international business.

Table 14.3: Level of rating by group of personnel for spoken English

	Number of sector groups by post								
Scale of rating	Director/ Senior Executive	Operation/ Middle Mgt	Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Telephonist/ Receptionist	Technician	Customer Contact	Call Centre	Total
4 Native speaker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 Very fluent	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
2 Fluent	5	9	6	7	6	2	8	6	49
1 Somewhat fluent	0	1	4	3	4	8	2	2	24
0 Not fluent at all	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not applicable (n/a)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

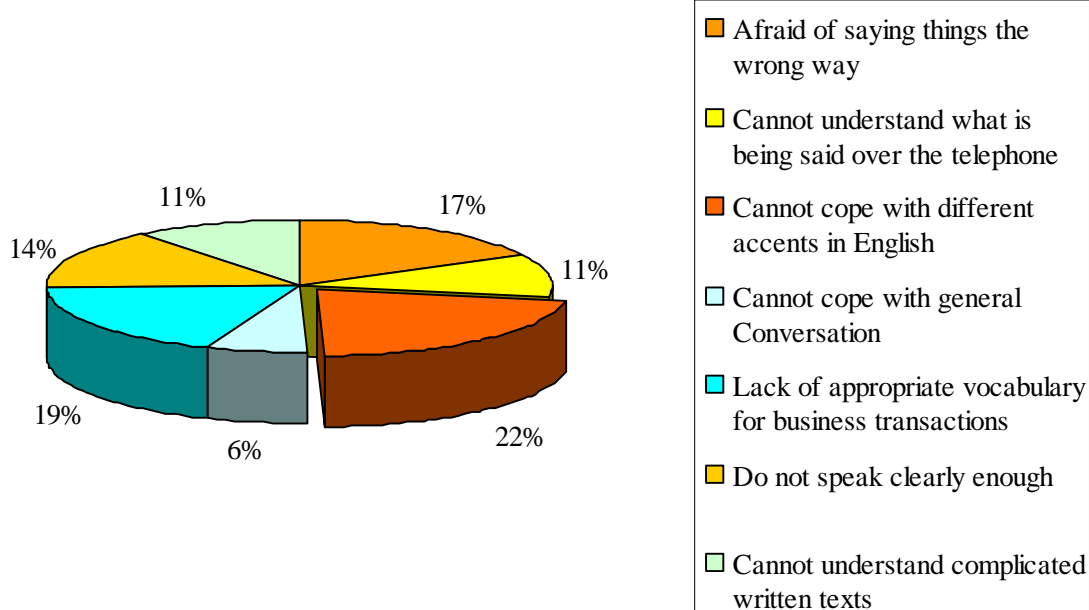
Table 14.4: Level of rating by group of personnel for written English

	Number of sector groups by post								
Scale of rating	Director/ Senior Executive	Operation/ Middle Mgt	Supervisor	Admin / Secretarial	Telephonist/ Receptionist	Technician	Customer Contact	Call Centre	Total
4 Native speaker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 Very fluent	8	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	10
2 Fluent	2	10	3	7	4	2	6	6	40
1 Somewhat fluent	0	0	7	3	6	7	2	2	27
0 Not fluent at all	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Not applicable (n/a)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

Question 15: What difficulties do your company's Mauritian personnel have in using English?

Main Sector of Activity	Afraid of saying things the wrong way	Cannot understand what is being said over the telephone	Cannot cope with different accents in English	Cannot cope with general conversation	Lack of appropriate vocabulary for business transactions	Do not speak clearly enough	Cannot understand complicated written texts
Agriculture & fishing	5	2	7	3	5	2	3
Community/Social/Personal Services	2	1	2	1	2	1	0
Construction	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
Electricity/Gas/Water	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	10	5	11	4	10	7	2
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	8	5	11	4	9	10	5
Manufacturing/Quarrying	10	7	13	3	11	12	5
Restaurants/Hotels	8	5	11	1	10	6	7
Transport/Storage/Communication	3	2	5	2	5	5	3
Wholesale/Retail	10	5	11	2	8	3	8
Total	57	35	73	21	63	48	36
% of Total	17	11	22	6	19	14	11

What difficulties do your company's Mauritian personnel have in using English?



The two most common problems, *not understanding different accents* and *lack of appropriate vocabulary for business transactions* are directly linked to the lack of exposure to English speakers from overseas. A resulting lack of confidence when using English is quite understandable, as is shown by the third most common problem *afraid of saying things the wrong way*. This lack of confidence is also shown by the fourth problem *not speaking clearly enough*, as proper articulation is a mark of confident mastery of a language. The problem of *not understanding what is being said over the telephone* is consistent with the findings for Questions 12 and 14 concerning frequency and fluency in the use of spoken English. The difficulty in *understanding complicated written texts* ties in with the findings for Question 13 concerning the level of education attained. That *coping with general conversation* attracts the lowest score is quite consistent with the overall fluency rating of 2 in Question 14.

Of the five comments made under *Others*, three respondents mentioned the lack of practice, another one felt that instructions can be incorrectly assimilated and a fifth said that in both English and French *staff would sometimes find it difficult to deal with difficult customers i.e. they would not be able to use the right words / not be convincing or reassuring enough to the customers*, which comment sums up quite nicely the situation as a whole.

Question 16: Have you taken any steps to improve the level of English in your company?

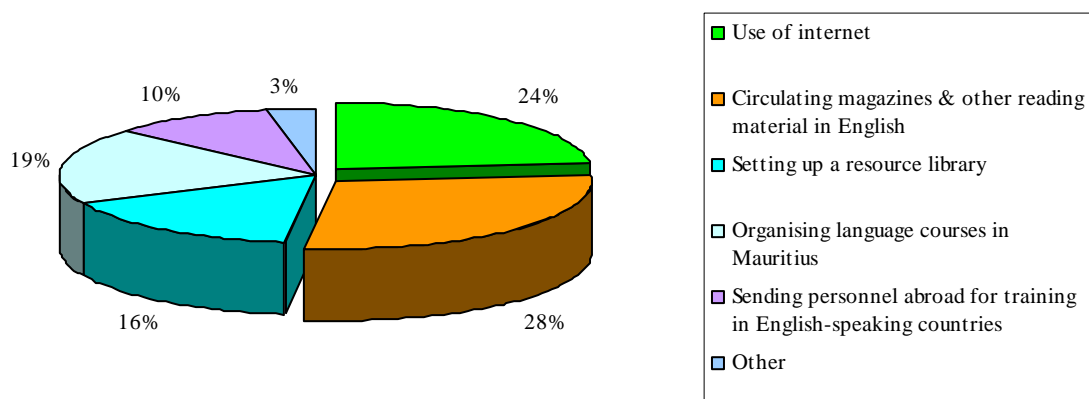
Main sector of activity	Yes	No	No answer
Agriculture & fishing	5	5	0
Community, Social & Personal Services	2	3	1
Construction	2	3	0
Electricity, Gas & Water	1	1	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	8	9	1
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	11	9	0
Manufacturing & Quarrying	6	12	1
Restaurants & Hotels	10	3	0
Transport, Storage & Communication	4	5	1
Wholesale & Retail	4	15	0
Total	53	65	4
% of Total	43.4	53.4	3.2



Question 17: If yes, which ones? (multiple answers permitted)

Main Sector of Activity	Use of Internet	Circulating magazines & other reading material in English	Setting up a resource library	Organising language courses in Mauritius	Sending personnel abroad for training in English-speaking countries	Other
Agriculture & fishing	2	3	0	3	1	1
Community/Social/Personal Services	2	2	1	1	1	1
Construction	1	2	0	0	0	0
Electricity/Gas/Water	1	1	0	0	1	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	5	7	5	6	3	1
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	9	9	9	4	2	0
Manufacturing/Quarrying	4	3	0	2	0	1
Restaurants/Hotels	3	4	3	7	2	0
Transport/Storage/Communication	4	4	3	0	2	0
Wholesale/Retail	1	3	2	2	2	0
Total	32	38	22	25	14	4
% of Total	24	28	16	19	10	3

If yes, which ones?



The fact that more than 50% of the respondents said that they are not doing anything to actively improve the level of English in their company could be explained in the following ways:

- ❖ The present level of English used by their personnel is sufficient for the current needs of the business.
- ❖ As yet, the personnel have managed to cope and so no major problems with customers or suppliers caused by an inadequate use of English have arisen.
- ❖ In both situations, the need for specific language training is not perceived as a priority in their training and development strategy.

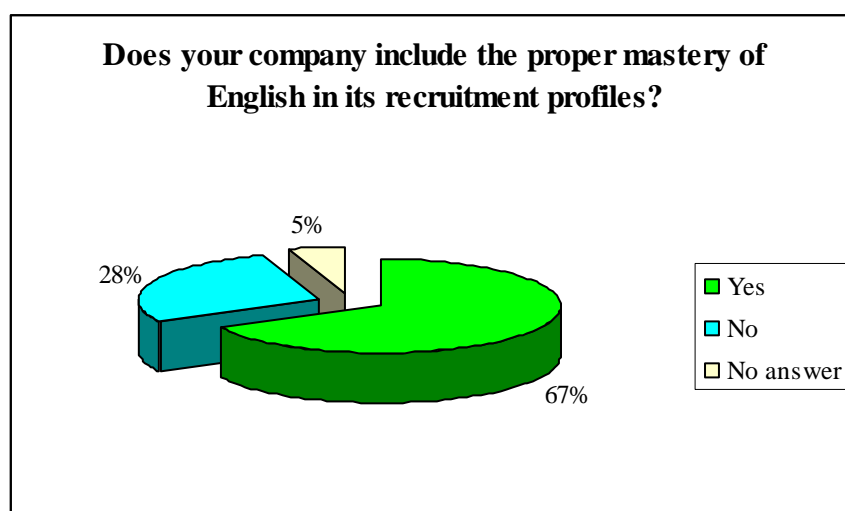
Even those respondents who answered *Yes* would appear to prefer more passive and less costly ways of addressing the issue, the success of which depend on the individual employee's motivation to consult websites and read articles and books in English. The two sectors in which a more active approach is noted, *Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services* and *Restaurants and Hotels*, are those sectors in which proper mastery of English is already a necessity.

Four responses were obtained under *Other*:

- ❖ sending personnel for training locally (a sugar estate)
- ❖ scientific writing courses (a research institution)
- ❖ showing English TV programmes (a call centre)
- ❖ encouraging staff to write memos in English (a textile factory).

Question 18: Does your company include the proper mastery of English in its recruitment profiles?

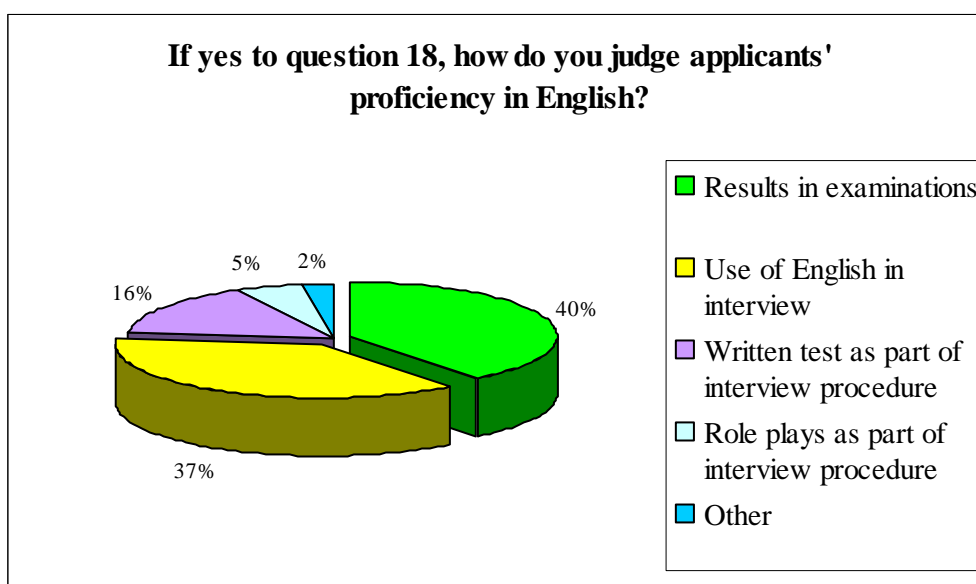
Main sector of activity	Yes	No	No answer
Agriculture & fishing	5	5	0
Community, Social & Personal Services	2	3	1
Construction	0	5	0
Electricity, Gas & Water	1	1	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	16	2	0
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	15	3	2
Manufacturing & Quarrying	8	10	1
Restaurants & Hotels	10	2	1
Transport, Storage & Communication	9	1	0
Wholesale & Retail	16	2	1
Total	82	34	6
% of Total	67	28	5



The fact that the majority of respondents answered *Yes* to this question validates our decision to open up the scope of the survey to users in all sectors of business in Mauritius (Section 3 *Methodology*, Page 6)

Question 19: If yes to Question 18, how do you judge applicants' proficiency in English?

Main Sector of Activity	Results in examinations (eg: SC, HSC General Paper)	Use of English in interview	Written test as part of interview procedure	Role plays as part of interview procedure	Other
Agriculture & fishing	4	3	1	0	0
Community/Social/Personal Services	2	1	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0	0	0
Electricity/Gas/Water	1	1	0	1	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	11	13	7	2	0
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	15	12	7	1	0
Manufacturing/Quarrying	8	5	3	0	1
Restaurants/Hotels	9	8	2	1	1
Transport/Storage/Communication	5	8	4	2	1
Wholesale/Retail	11	13	2	2	1
Total	66	62	26	9	4
% of Total	40	37	16	5	2



Most respondents would appear to adopt a standard approach to assessing language proficiency by relying on educational qualifications and the ability to express oneself during the interview and in a written test. This finding is consistent with the findings for Questions

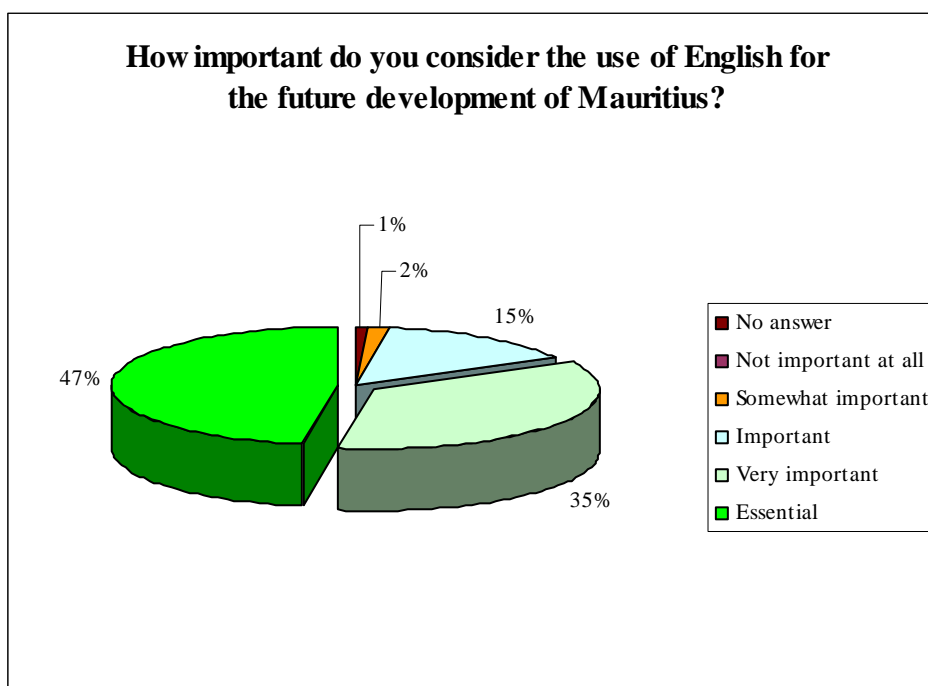
12 and 14 concerning frequency and fluency in use, which showed better scores for written English, Question 13 concerning educational level and Question 15 about the problems encountered, where respondents found less difficulty in reading complicated texts than handling discourse with English speakers from overseas.

There would seem to be little attempt to assess language proficiency in a more rigorous and result-oriented manner, for example through the systematic use of role plays.

Under *Others*, one respondent assesses how candidates presented their CVs, another uses an assessment centre, a third takes note of *past experience in their job* and a fourth, one of the major hotels, commented that *very often candidates have very good results in English at SC/HSC, but their oral English is just fair*. The latter respondent uses educational results and performance during interviews to assess candidates' English.

Question 20: How important do you consider the use of English to the future development of Mauritius?

Main Sector of Activity	No answer	Not important at all	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Essential
Agriculture & fishing	0	0	1	2	4	3
Community/Social/Personal Services	1	0	0	0	1	4
Construction	0	0	1	1	2	1
Electricity/Gas/Water	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	0	0	0	1	7	10
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	0	0	0	1	11	8
Manufacturing/Quarrying	0	0	0	5	3	11
Restaurants/Hotels	0	0	0	0	5	8
Transport/Storage/Communication	0	0	0	3	4	3
Wholesale/Retail	0	0	0	5	5	9
Total	1	0	2	18	43	58
% of total responses	0.8	0	1.7	14.8	35.2	47.5



Given that 97.5% of the respondents answered *important*, *very important* and *essential*, we can conclude that most businesses are aware of the issue, but, in the light of the responses to Questions 16 to 19, are not yet ready to address the matter in a determined manner.

Of the three respondents who gave less importance to English, two have predominantly French-speaking markets and a third is a French-speaking company that works exclusively on the local market.

Question 21: How do you find the level of English used in Mauritius generally? Please rate from 0 to 5 using the scale below.

<i>0 = Very poor</i>	<i>1 = Poor</i>	<i>2 = Somewhat inadequate</i>	<i>3 = Adequate</i>	<i>4 = Good</i>	<i>5 = Excellent</i>
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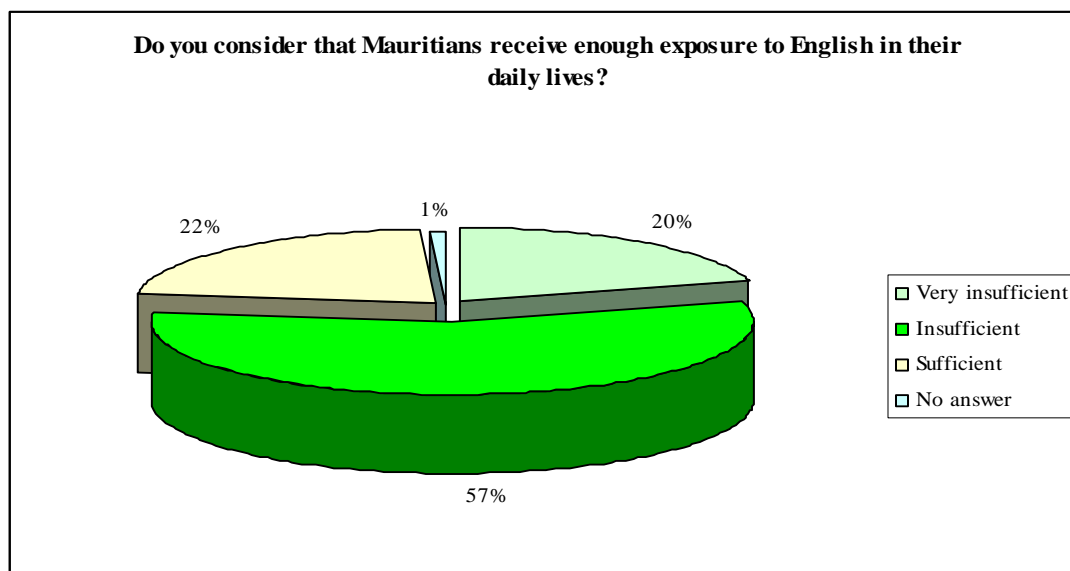
The average rating for each sector is given below.

Main Sector of Activity	Spoken English	Written English
Agriculture & fishing	2.1	3.2
Community/Social/Personal Services	2.8	3.4
Construction	2.8	3.2
Electricity/Gas/Water	3.5	3.0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	2.3	3.3
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	2.5	3.4
Manufacturing/Quarrying	2.6	3.0
Restaurants/Hotels	2.7	3.2
Transport/Storage/Communication	2.8	3.0
Wholesale/Retail	2.2	2.6
Overall average	2.6	3.1

The ratings obtained for this question are consistent with those in Questions 12 and 14. They reinforce the comment made that the English spoken and written in English is sufficient for local purposes, but not necessarily for international business. In other words, the situation in Mauritius would seem to be approaching the dual situation described by Kachru, McCrum and others that we have discussed in Section 4.3 *Which English?*, that of one level and variety acceptable to discourse between two non-native speakers (NNS < > NNS) and of another between a non-native speaker and a native speaker (NNS < > NS). Given the lack of exposure noted in Questions 10 and 15, the second, a more exacting level of language proficiency is already seen to be lacking.

Question 22: Do you consider that Mauritians receive enough exposure to English in their daily lives?

Main sector of activity	Very insufficient	Insufficient	Sufficient	No answer
Agriculture & fishing	3	5	2	0
Community, Social & Personal Services	2	2	1	1
Construction	0	4	1	0
Electricity, Gas & Water	0	1	1	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	4	11	3	0
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	2	12	6	0
Manufacturing & Quarrying	4	11	4	0
Restaurants & Hotels	5	6	2	0
Transport, Storage & Communication	0	7	3	0
Wholesale & Retail	5	10	4	0
Total	25	69	27	1
% of Total	20.5	56.6	22.1	0.8



The answers to this question are consistent with those of previous questions. A majority rating of *insufficient* is consistent with the fluency rating of 2 to 3 obtained for Question 14. So, without being unduly pessimistic, most respondents would appear to agree that there is room for improvement.

Question 23: What do you suggest to improve the level of English in Mauritius?

Table 23.1: Number of respondents by sector

Main sector of activity	Suggestion made	No suggestion
Agriculture & fishing	7	3
Community, Social & Personal Services	4	2
Construction	3	2
Electricity, Gas & Water	1	1
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	14	4
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	17	3
Manufacturing & Quarrying	12	7
Restaurants & Hotels	10	3
Transport, Storage & Communication	7	3
Wholesale & Retail	14	5
Total	89	33
% of Total	73	27

The interest in improving the level of English in Mauritius is apparent in all sectors, regardless of whether their activity is oriented towards the local market or overseas trade. However, one respondent in the *No suggestion* group considered that enough was being done already *via TV, newspapers, at school and life in general*. The rest in this group did not make any comment.

In the *Suggestions made* group, one respondent in the Manufacturing and Quarrying sector felt that the question was too broad to be answered in a sentence as *everything remains to be done*. Another from Manufacturing and Quarrying together with one from Wholesale and Retail felt that more incentive should come from the government without saying exactly in what way. Comments made by three other respondents (two from Community, Social and Personal Services and one from Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services) gave the impression that the status of English as the official language was weakening. One said *Keep it the official language of the country*. The second felt that *French is being used*

everywhere. I have the feeling that English is losing its true colour and could be the third official language. English is only being used in public sector, for meeting, etc, not so much used in private sector. The third suggested Emphasize English as an official language of communication for business.

The more specific suggestions made were common to all sectors and can be grouped into the following categories:

- ❖ using the language
- ❖ learning and practising the language
- ❖ teaching the language.

Using the language

Under this category come the notions of exposure to international English and use of English in daily life, including business activities. The overall conclusion is that most respondents realise that Mauritians are not in sufficient contact with the language as it is used abroad by native or other second language speakers. In other words, the answers to this question confirm the findings in other answers to the questionnaire, namely that English in Mauritius is confined to specific, mainly formal uses and as such is not really adequate for the requirements of international business. However, three respondents seemed to limit the scope to that of British English as two from the Government sector talked of *newspapers from England, more radio and TV programmes in British English* and a third in the Finance sector said *If English spoken and written is to be gauged by the UK standard then the only way to improve is to have English UK exposure.*

Two respondents, one from the Government sector and another from Restaurants and Hotels, just commented that there should be more exposure to English in everyday life, without saying how. One respondent from Manufacturing and Quarrying suggested *Educate the population to use English as an effective medium of communication*, while another in the Government sector talked of *sensitising people to the fact that poor communication is to their personal detriment.*

The media, in particular television and films, were identified as the main means for improving contact and exposure with international English. The Internet was not mentioned at all.

Reading was identified as another major means for exposure with several respondents suggesting lower prices for books, magazines and newspapers.

One respondent from Manufacturing and Quarrying felt that *official media policy was not promoting English language sufficiently*. Another respondent from an offshore company commented, perhaps a little drily, *English being its official language I always wondered why most radios and TV channels have over 90% of non-English transmission. These are good medium to expose people to the language*. A third in real estate services suggested that the media should devote at least 50% of their time and space to English. Five respondents also criticised the practice of dubbing English films in French (four in Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services and one in Transport and Communication).

This evaluation of language policy and practice in the local media is consistent with the current language needs of Mauritian firms as shown by the results concerning the countries with which Mauritian firms do business (Question 7) and the international languages used (Question 8). It shows clearly the gap between what is being provided and what is needed.

Table 23.2 Using the media to promote English

Main sector of activity	Through media in general	More cinema & TV films	No dubbing in French	More TV programmes	More radio programmes	More & cheaper books, magazines & newspapers
Agriculture & fishing	0	2	0	0	0	0
Community, Social & Personal Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	1	0	0	0	0	0
Electricity, Gas & Water	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	2	3	4	1	1	1
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	0	6	0	4	4	6
Manufacturing & Quarrying	0	1	0	2	0	1
Restaurants & Hotels	0	2	0	2	1	3
Transport, Storage & Communication	1	3	1	4	4	6
Wholesale & Retail	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	17	5	13	9	17

The potential role of the foreign diplomatic missions in increasing exposure to English was also mentioned through the suggestions from three respondents who called for more activities by the British Council and, in one case, the British High Commission (one each from Business Services, Restaurants and Hotels and Wholesale and Retail). It should be noted that the questionnaire was circulated before the renovation of the British Council offices and opening of its new Knowledge and Learning Centre. It should also be said that the British High Commission is responsible for consular and diplomatic affairs and the British Council for cultural and educational affairs. That being said, it is important to note that none of the other English-speaking diplomatic and cultural missions were identified as possible sources for increased exposure to the language.

Concerning the use of English in daily life, two comments in particular summed up the present situation very neatly. One respondent in Community, Social and Personal Services felt that *We should speak it more often and do not feel embarrassed to speak it among Mauritians*. The second in Wholesale and Retail said that *Mauritians are more at ease speaking English for technical/academic topics but not concerning day-to-day conversation*. Such tendency to avoidance is not conducive to the effective use of the language when faced with a native speaker from overseas.

More specific suggestions on how to increase the use of English in daily affairs emphasised the need for Mauritians to make a deliberate effort to use English more often in general conversation with family, friends and colleagues. One suggestion in particular from a respondent in the Government sector brings to a light, albeit unwittingly, an important hindrance to the sustained use of English in everyday discourse, the constant need to choose between two major European languages, English and French, if one does not want to use Kreol or any of the other languages used in Mauritian daily life. *The medium of communication should be English or French not only during interviews/meetings but all day, at office, schools, colleges and other working places*.

Learning and practising the language

Respondents identified five main ways to learn and practise English:

- ❖ wide reading of books, magazines and newspapers, from an early age (primary school)
- ❖ watching cartoons, particularly for young learners

- ❖ competitions within individual schools and at national level in debating, elocution and spelling
- ❖ setting up ESP courses for adults
- ❖ role plays to improve overall proficiency in spoken English for both school-children and adults, and acquire appropriate behaviour patterns in professional situations.

Table 23.3 Ways to learn and practise using English

Main sector of activity	Reading	Cartoons	Competitions	ESP courses	Role plays
Agriculture & fishing	2	0	2	1	1
Community, Social & Personal Services	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0	0	0
Electricity, Gas & Water	1	0	0	0	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	1	0	3	1	0
Government, Municipalities, Embassies	3	0	2	0	0
Manufacturing & Quarrying	3	1	0	3	0
Restaurants & Hotels	2	0	0	1	1
Transport, Storage & Communication	2	0	1	1	0
Wholesale & Retail	3	1	1	0	0
Total	17	2	9	5	2

It should be noted that self-study using the Internet and other IT tools was not mentioned. The focus is squarely on more traditional methods, which most likely reflects the learning experience of the respondents themselves. The emphasis on reading should be underlined, as it can also address another need that one respondent in the BPO sector mentioned, that of cultural knowledge. As described earlier in the discussion on India and other competitors (Section 4.6), cultural affinity is now recognised as a determining factor in successful BPO operations. It is not enough to learn the basic mechanics of a language. Understanding the culture in which this or that language is used is vital to be able to empathise with customers and suppliers from abroad.

Teaching the language

The comments and suggestions concerning the teaching of English pinpointed the need to focus more on oral English, with more opportunity given for pupils to practise conversational English and not just academic reading and writing. Three respondents suggested that proficiency in spoken English needed to be assessed more rigorously, including one in Agriculture and Fishing who felt that Oral English should be considered a subject on a par with the others in the school curriculum. The need to start early at primary level was also mentioned. One respondent from the Government sector suggested *proper teaching of English since primary education by making use of the latest technology*, which is, in fact, the only reference to IT-based teaching/learning in the answers to the questionnaire.

It was also felt that the teachers needed help in upgrading not only their language teaching skills, but also their own proficiency in using English. One respondent felt that *teachers need to improve accent/pronunciation of their English*. Two respondents, one from Community, Social and Personal Services and the other from the Government sector, suggested that teachers should be trained by overseas experts. Two respondents, one in Agricultural and Fishing and the other in Finance and Insurance, criticised the tendency not to explain in English, but translate and explain texts for study in French. One respondent in Community, Social and Personal Services felt that there should be English-speaking teachers in the primary schools, and another in Finance and Insurance suggested that there should be more English-speaking schools.

These comments and suggestions made by adults that have themselves been through the education system and are now, in many cases, parents confirm the conclusion drawn in Section 4.4 *English in the Mauritian education system* that the system is not satisfying the linguistic needs of the country in the global world of the 21st century.

5.2 THE INTERVIEWS

5.2.1 Regulatory and tertiary institutions in the state education system

The institutions concerned are the Ministry of Education (Curriculum Development), the University of Mauritius (UOM), the University of Technology Mauritius (UTM), the Mauritius College of the Air, the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) and the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES). All the persons interviewed were convinced that there is a serious need for a national drive to improve the level of English in all spheres. However, they felt that one of the main obstacles was the high level of complacency prevalent in educational circles concerning the level of English spoken. It would appear that the increasingly closed NNS<>NNS circle in the use of English noted earlier is comforting the opinion that the way English is used in Mauritius is good enough for the country's needs.

Another limiting factor identified by the interviewees is the heavy bias towards success in examinations, with its attendant focus on the right answer and so the quest for model answers. Teaching methods suffer accordingly and remain centred on rote learning and practice in answering past papers. The Oral English test in the School Certificate does not seem to have had much impact on the situation. The lack of exposure to international English in everyday life was seen to be a deterrent to encouraging teachers to enrich their teaching. There is not motivation to teach how to use the language creatively and imaginatively. Yet, this is precisely what is needed if a NNS is to interact meaningfully with a NS.

The language proficiency of the teachers was questioned. If the teachers themselves have not mastered English properly, there is little chance that they will teach it correctly. The respondents felt that in general new recruits to the profession showed a serious lack in proficiency, particularly in spoken English. One respondent who is directly involved in teacher training spoke of the tendency not to speak English shown by many trainees during lectures and training sessions. They will either say nothing at all or use French or Kreol in discussions.

The textbooks produced locally were criticised for being out of date and limited in scope. At present the primary school books are being rewritten, but not the secondary ones. The issue of school and classroom libraries was also raised. In general the book stocks are not renewed often enough, and, apparently there are still schools where these essential learning facilities

are not freely available. However, it was not possible to verify this information as this was outside the terms of reference of this study.

The discussion with one of the writers for the primary school textbooks shed more light on the link between the calibre of the teachers, the race for examination results and the choice of activities in class. Oral practice is encouraged through nursery rhymes, poems and songs, all of which have been recorded on compact disc and cassette and free copies are available at the MCA Resource Library for all schools. The question is how many teachers actually do use them.

The Director of the UTM felt that, until the level of English in Mauritius was greatly improved, the country will not be able to attract the substantial investment from major international players that it needs. His assessment as an English-speaking expatriate of the level of English shown by the students and personnel at UTM is consistent with the findings of the questionnaire (Questions 13 and 14). He found that it was a question of layers that depended on education and social standing, the top layer being that of the students and teaching staff, the middle layer being the clerical staff and the bottom layer the manual workers (drivers, maintenance, gardeners, etc). Within the top layer there is a noticeable difference between those students who had only learned and used the language in school and those who have had some exposure to the language in their family circle. Such natural exposure to English has a direct bearing on the latter group's academic performance, as they can express themselves in a more nuanced and creative manner.

The limited use of creative language on the part of the students whose experience of English is essentially school-based can be seen in the lack of appropriate linking devices to structure the progression in thought in their assignments in technical subjects and mathematics. As UTM is more oriented towards tertiary education for entry into the professional world, such a lack of spontaneous technical language and nuanced analysis will handicap the students' progression in their future careers. To remedy this, UTM is considering introducing a diagnostic test on arrival to identify those students needing to improve their writing skills and running a remedial course. Since 2001, students in their final year are required to make a group presentation in English on a current topic to the UTM staff and guests from industry as part of their assessment. This exercise has resulted in a marked improvement in their overall mastery of spoken English.

5.2.2 Private educational institutions

The institutions in this group are the DCDM Business School, Le Bocage International School and the International Preparatory School, that is, one from each level of education, tertiary, secondary and primary.

The information gained from the DCDM Business School is consistent with the findings in the questionnaire, the responses of those involved in teacher training and the experience of UTM with respect to the level and breadth of expression shown by students in their course work. Students at all levels, including those writing up their MBA thesis, have difficulty in expressing their ideas in English adequately. The respondents at DCDM felt that the level of English will continue to worsen unless remedial action is taken at all levels of the education system, and the amount of exposure to English in daily life is considerably increased. In the short term, DCDM offers additional classes in English for their students in Mass Communication, and a course in professional English, *Power English*, which is very successful. They also felt that the private sector should make more effort to upgrade the level of English of all categories of employees, according to the needs of the job and the sector.

The interviews with the two private English-medium schools, Le Bocage International School and the International Preparatory School, were aimed at finding out how these two institutions manage to get their pupils up to international standard in English.

The common factors identified by both Heads of School are as follows:

- 1 the educational philosophy of both schools and the consequent focus on the holistic development of the pupils which require interactive teaching methods and not rote-learning
- 2 the commitment to creating and sustaining an English-speaking environment throughout the school
- 3 the recruitment of teachers that are native speakers or second-language speakers with a high level of proficiency in English
- 4 a high level of investment in in-service training both in Mauritius and abroad
- 5 constant monitoring of the teaching-learning process by the school management to ensure adherence to the principle of individual accountability by all teachers
- 6 the insistence on formal lesson planning and setting of learning objectives on a daily and weekly basis within the framework of the main syllabus

- 7 the emphasis put on encouraging the pupils to undertake creative and research activities as part of their normal studies, thus broadening their linguistic needs
- 8 parental support in the learning process.

The combined effect of these factors means that in both schools children that have come from the main Mauritian education system do manage to catch up and acquire the proficiency in English needed to succeed in their studies. Not surprisingly, both Heads of School felt that the earlier a Mauritian child came into such a school environment, the better his or her chances of overcoming the lack of exposure to English elsewhere were.

The added bonus of having native speakers as classmates was also mentioned, but was not seen to be the most determining factor in the success of the two schools to create a full-blown English-medium learning environment. In fact, it was felt that if the schools themselves did not give the lead, then the expatriate English-speaking children would most likely finish up improving their French and Kreol, while the Mauritians would not benefit enough from the contact with these children, at least as regards their acquisition of English.

5.2.3 Call Centres

The interviews with the three managers of a leading call centre operation working on the UK market, though not exclusively, were aimed at getting more information on recruiting and training practices to ensure that the employees working on the platforms were up to the standard required by overseas clients. In the time between completing the questionnaire and being interviewed, one of the managers had moved to a new BPO operation working for a major French company. The other two managers were both native-English speakers resident in Mauritius, one of whom headed the operation and the other was in charge of the in-company on-the-job training and development programme.

All three agreed that it was difficult to find sufficient candidates whose mastery of English and/or French went beyond the linguistic requirements of academic examinations. Many applicants did not display sufficient ability or confidence to produce spontaneous and expressive language in response to that used by their native-speaker clients. On average, to find candidates with an out-going personality, a healthy curiosity in the world around them and an excellent mastery of the European language required for the post, they have to interview around 100 applicants, all of whom have the required paper qualifications. The

recruitment process includes tests in spoken and written English, interviews and role plays. Usually about half are found suitable for initial training for the job. Of these 50 some 25 stay the course and can be presented for the final selection by the client firm. Between 10 and 15 pass the final selection and are accepted to work on the platform.

These figures would appear to confirm the concern about Mauritius' potential for scalability as identified by the Gartner Report (2005) and the Financial Times (FT March 2006).

Contrary to what might be expected, the level of French acquired by young Mauritian job-seekers would also appear not to be up to the standards required by overseas clients. The manager who is now working in a French-speaking environment wondered whether the agents taking the calls were really able to understand all the minute details the client was listing in the way the client intended. In other words, the ability to read between the lines, catch nuances in expression and hear the unsaid would appear to be seriously lacking, be it in English or French.

To remedy this situation, the call centre working on the UK market has devised an intensive on-the-job training programme, which goes beyond the acquisition of specific product knowledge and an appropriate selling pitch. The programme is divided into two, with initial training in the use of appropriate language, English pronunciation, geography, English culture, and basic call centre and back office skills. This initial stage lasts two weeks. The second stage concentrates on product knowledge and simulated training in typical situations. This means increased training costs and delay in responding to client requests for new or additional staff on the platform, which makes Mauritius much less competitive than its main rivals, for instance India, who can find sufficient candidates with the basic linguistic skills.

In addition to the formal training programme, the trainers are present on the platform monitoring performance, giving advice and coaching individual employees during the working sessions. If several employees experience the same difficulty, then suitable corrective training is given to the group off the platform. Particular attention is given to developing an acceptably neutral but not flat accent and also to acquiring idioms and other speech items to make the interaction with the client more natural and genuine.

All three managers felt that such remedial training was a short term solution to meet the present acute need for qualified personnel and so enable the continued development of the

IT/BPO sector. However, the long-term sustainability and expansion of the sector required major changes in the education system to remove the need for the initial generic training and allow the firms in the sector to concentrate their energies on training specifically for the posts available. Suggested changes and additions included:

- ❖ a complete overhaul of how languages are taught in Mauritian schools to meet international standards, in particular, English and French
- ❖ the introduction of a third European language (German, Italian, Spanish)
- ❖ the reintroduction of geography throughout primary and secondary school up to Form V
- ❖ courses on European and American culture
- ❖ IT skills: key-boarding, word processing, handling data bases
- ❖ training in assertiveness and communication skills through activities such as debating societies.

Another problem that the IT/BPO sector is facing is the lack of specialised trainers in BPO and call centre work. The need for foreign expertise was underlined.

The question of funding for training was also seen to be a crucial issue. Since most of the training takes place before the candidates are accepted for employment by the overseas clients, the firms running such training are not eligible for refunds under the present training refund scheme. The proposed BOI/HRDC pre-training scheme is not yet properly functional.

5.3 THE FOCUS GROUPS

5.3.1 Participants on Courses at CCL

Given that the problems encountered in using English were common to all the sectors responding to the questionnaire, it was decided to conduct focus groups with the employees attending courses at CCL on Business English, secretarial skills and telephonist/receptionist skills in the period August to November 2005. Three courses were chosen.

Table 5.3.1: Focus Groups on Courses at CCL

Main Sector of Activity	Effective Writing for Business	The Professional Executive Secretary & Personal Assistant	Telephonists/ Receptionists	Total
Agriculture & fishing	0	0	2	2
Community/Social/Personal Services	0	0	1	1
Construction	0	2	0	2
Electricity/Gas/Water	0	0	0	0
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate/Business Services	2	4	6	12
Government/Municipalities/Embassies	2	4	1	7
Manufacturing/Quarrying	1	0	0	1
Restaurants/Hotels	2	0	1	3
Transport/Storage/Communication	6	0	1	7
Wholesale/Retail	1	0	4	5
Total number of participants	14	10	16	40

The participants on these courses were asked:

- when they used English in the course of their work and/or at home;
- what difficulties they experienced in using English
- what suggestions they had to improve the level of English used in Mauritius.

All the participants said that they used English at work for official purposes, such as greeting English-speaking visitors, correspondence and formal meetings. Those working in offshore business and financial services used more spoken English than the others through daily interaction with the English-speaking expatriate executives based in the Mauritian office. Only one person working in tourism who had lived in Australia for several years used English

regularly at home. Some of the others read books and magazines in English, and nearly everyone preferred to watch English films dubbed in French.

As a result of this lack of sustained exposure, most participants had difficulty in coping with different accents and finding the right expression to fit the occasion. Their answers thus corresponded to the findings for Questions 12 and 15 of the questionnaire.

Their suggestions for improving English in Mauritius corresponded to the answers to Question 23 of the questionnaire, with more exposure through the media, improving the teaching of English in schools and more emphasis put on training in professional English for adults.

5.3.2 University of Mauritius English Department

A focus group was also conducted with the academic staff of the English Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Mauritius. The aim of this focus group was to discuss the situation of English at the tertiary level with respect to the future employment of graduates. The focus group was attended by the Head of Department and five of the seven senior lecturers and lecturers working in the department. The other two were taken up with lectures.

The discussion was organised round the following three questions:

- 1 How would you assess the level of competency in English attained by your students with respect to (a) their academic studies, and (b) their eventual insertion in the labour market as teachers or in other professional fields?
- 2 Is the English Department involved in TEFL/TESOL/ESP activities? If not, why not?
- 3 What suggestions do you have to improve the overall level of English used in Mauritius, particularly with respect to the needs of the international business sector?

In response to the first question, all the participants agreed that the level of English displayed by new undergraduates was far from satisfactory and was even worsening from year to year.

The main problems noted were:

- basic grammar not properly mastered in both oral and written work
- ability to read and retrieve information generally poor
- use of quotes not properly signalled in written work
- lack of willingness to do oral presentations in English
- code-switching from English to French or Kreol in discussions during lectures
- generally passive, non-participative behaviour if lecturer insists on using only English in lectures and discussions.

All the academics present blamed the teaching methods used in the primary and secondary schools and the rat-race for top grades in the CPE, SC and HSC examinations for these shortcomings in their students' use of English. They felt that correcting and teaching such basic language skills should be done at secondary school level so that students come to the university equipped to handle the academic study of language and literature. However, to remedy the situation, the Department has started a module in writing techniques for first-year students, in which they learn how to analyse literary texts and write essays. Unfortunately, this initiative is not having as much impact as was hoped, as many students just see it as another subject, and not as the acquisition of essential skills, and so do not transfer what they have learned to their reading and writing in the other modules on their degree course.

As most of the language graduates become teachers, this does not augur well for the future. As said earlier, if the teachers themselves do not master English properly, how can we expect the pupils to do so?

In answer to the second question, the English Department is focussed on teaching the undergraduates on the BA Honours courses in languages, both single and joint subject. It is not involved in any TEFL/TESOL/ESP activities as yet, partly because none of the other faculties in the University have made any request for such support in their own degree courses and partly because the lecturers themselves are fully occupied with the teaching load in the department and, in any case, have not been trained in TEFL/TESOL/ESP methodology.

Their suggestions for improving the overall level of English in Mauritius centred on increasing the amount of exposure to the language in everyday life through the media and the internet. It was also felt that at government level there was no clear vision on how to promote

English as an international business language, and thus the responsibility to do so was not sufficiently engaged.

5.4 OBSERVATIONS / ‘MYSTERY SHOPPING’

The observations were carried out in three ways:

- site visit to an established call centre working on the UK market
- observation of two classes at a English-medium private primary school
- ‘ad hoc’ observation when using English to telephone for appointments or on arrival at the reception desk.

5.4.1 Site visit to call centre

The site visit comprised observation of the platform in action, including listening into a selection of real-time interactions between the agents on the platform and the customers calling from the UK. The agents were expected to cope with the full range of accents and expressions used in the UK as the callers came from all over the country. There was a marked difference between the agents that had spent some time in the UK and so had acquired near-native proficiency in English and those who had learned and used English only in the Mauritian context. As described earlier in section 5.2.3, this call centre is investing heavily in the targeted on-the-job training, which includes on-the-spot coaching by the trainers.

The call centre made available some recordings of the transactions for the purposes of this study. (However, it should be noted that for reasons of confidentiality the transcript of these recordings or a summary of the dialogues could not be annexed to this report.) Careful listening of these exchanges confirmed that agents who had little or no exposure to international English before coming to work at the call centre lacked many of the speech idioms that a native speaker would expect to hear in everyday dialogue. Also the flow of speech and quality of pronunciation still needed improvement, in spite of the intensive training received.

5.4.2 Observation of primary school classes

The classes observed at the International Preparatory School, Mapou, were the Year 3 (7-8 years) and the final year (10-11 years). The Year 3 class was working on money and prices. Pictures of articles were stuck on the board and mock coins given to the children. They then had to match their coin to the appropriate article, according to the value of the coin. The teacher elicited appropriate language from each child who carried out the matching game.

This activity produced lively and natural interaction in English not only between the teacher and the pupils but also among the pupils themselves, as several pupils wanted to have their turn at the same time.

The final year class were working on the theme *Myths*. They had been asked to find out more about the myths studied in class and report on their research. The aim of this homework was to encourage individual study and widen the children's reading range. In class they were asked to read out a text with appropriate expression and emphasis, which they did with great enthusiasm. To give another indication of the reading level required of the final year pupils, Rudyard Kipling's poem *If* was on the list for study later on in the term.

5.4.3 'Ad hoc' observations

The observations made on the use of English when telephoning for appointments or on arrival at reception desks during the normal course of activities at CCL confirmed the findings of the questionnaire. Only the contact staff at the major hotels systematically and confidently responded in English to an interaction initiated in English. Even in the Ebène cyber-tower, not all of the contact staff, that is the receptionists and security personnel, was able to handle an interaction with a native English speaker. Car park attendants anywhere were quite simply incapable of responding in English. Yet, very often these are the first employees that an English-speaking foreigner will meet on arrival.

5.5 REVIEW OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

The repeated comments about the teaching of English in schools gave rise to another line of inquiry that was not originally envisaged, namely a review of the school textbooks to see whether the teachers had the necessary materials to do their job. As said earlier (Section 5.2.1), the primary school textbooks have been rewritten and now include plenty of interactive activities and exercises to encourage a gradual acquisition of the spoken language. However, the overall content remains centred on general language needed in daily life, while teaching the language needed for the other subjects on the curriculum is still not addressed adequately. The numerous additional workbooks written by individual teachers are more focussed on examination success.

The situation is more worrying at the secondary level. The textbooks prepared locally for Forms 1 to 3 were written between 1996 and 1998, which is before the explosion of IT and the Internet in daily life. The books continue in the general interest vein of those used in primary school with no support given for the language needs of the other content subjects, such as economics, mathematics and the sciences. The various books written by individual local teachers for use in Forms 1 to 5 follow the same line. When one considers that all the major language dictionaries published by Cambridge, Collins and Oxford, to name but three, were revised in detail in the wake of the IT explosion of 2000-2001, to include all the new vocabulary and expressions now in daily use, and completely new editions published, one can start to realise the gap between the materials used by teacher and pupil and the language needs of today's job market.

The choice of imported books would appear to suffer from the same general purpose approach, even if they are more recent editions. In addition, many of them have been published in Singapore and have, therefore, have a heavy bias towards catering for Singaporean context, both linguistic and cultural. Another set of books have been published for the Caribbean market. It should be remembered that both of these regions prepare different secondary examinations from those in Mauritius. Not many of the more recent textbooks published by the language teaching specialists such as Cambridge, Collins, Macmillan and Oxford are widely available.

Yet all of these publishers have brought out course books, grammars and supplementary reading and audio materials that have been based on the extensive work carried out during the revision of the major dictionaries. Databases of contemporary language such as the British National Corpus, the Bank of English, the Cambridge International Corpus and the Oxford Corpus collection are the foundations for these new teaching materials.

Even if one decides to remain within the general purpose, examination-oriented approach, the recent compilation of past O-level examination papers for English (1991-2005) published by EOI shows the need for wide-ranging reading and good general knowledge for the candidates to make at least a reasonable attempt. (EOI, 2006) The reading comprehension passages in Paper 2 talk of places and incidents from all over the world, ranging from the mystery of Easter Island, the discovery of man's earliest ancestors, the *Titanic* disaster, a monsoon in Cochin and the acquisition of language. The composition and report-writing exercises in Paper 1 require a level of creative writing that can only be reached if the language and general

knowledge acquired by the pupil is sufficiently varied. The range of textbooks available locally is far from meeting these requirements.

The onus on the teachers to provide sufficient variety is, therefore, very heavy, even for the most motivated and talented. Buying extra books to fill the gaps also places an extra financial burden on parents of modest means. In the context of the present debate about helping the more vulnerable groups to rise out of the poverty spiral, this is not an ideal situation. In fact, it should spur the education authorities into an immediate revision of the course materials available to ensure that all Mauritian children have access to the language that they will need to ensure their lifelong employability, to use a popular slogan of the moment.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** The cross-sectoral analysis has shown that the proper mastery of English is essential for organisations in all sectors of the Mauritian economy, with 77% of all business contacts being with English-speaking counterparts. Therefore, while the specific language needs of the IT/BPO and tourism sectors, the two new growth sectors that are having to contend with stiff competition in the global English-speaking marketplace, are perhaps more evident, organisations in the more established sectors equally need to pay attention to the linguistic skills of their employees.
- 6.2** The overall level of proficiency in English is inadequate in all sectors, with only the senior-most executives showing a reasonable degree of fluency in both speaking and writing.
- 6.3** There is a strong correlation between educational qualifications, post held and proficiency in English, with the highest proficiency being shown by those respondents having tertiary qualifications and holding senior management posts. Given that most Mauritians first encounter English at school and then only use it for formal uses such as educational or business activities, this was to be expected. However, the very low proficiency scores registered by respondents holding key front-line posts such as telephone operators, receptionists and customer contact agents, is cause for concern when one considers that these employees are responsible for handling the initial stages of contact with a foreign customer or supplier.
- 6.4** However, the original hypothesis that the problem could be solved by offering targeted training in the specific language requirements of a particular sector has proved to be too narrow. The gap between actual and required proficiency originates in the level of general English attained during normal schooling. The examination results for the CPE and SC examinations clearly show that 50% of candidates have inadequate or even no mastery of the generic language skills, be it in English or French.
- 6.5** The comments concerning the language teaching in schools would seem to suggest that expectations concerning employable language skills are not being met by the Mauritian education system.

- 6.6** However, the employers do not seem to be willing to bridge the gap, at least in the short term, to meet the challenges of entering the global market. Over 50% of the respondents are not doing anything to actively improve the level of English in their organisation. Those who are addressing the issue would seem to prefer more passive and less costly ways of doing so. While it can be argued that remedial training in generic skills should not be the responsibility of the employer, the urgency with which Mauritius must diversify its markets and move more into the global English-speaking world does require a more energetic response.
- 6.7** From the training perspective, it is very difficult to achieve adequate linguistic competency in a specialist field if the generic language skills are lacking.
- 6.8** Another major problem is the general lack of exposure to English in everyday activities. English in Mauritius would seem to have got trapped in a narrow functional and static role that does not correspond to the dynamic needs of international business.
- 6.9** The role of the media in the lack of general exposure to English, particularly television and cinema, must be underlined. Showing such quintessentially English films as *Shakespeare in Love*, *Narnia* and *Harry Potter*, to name but three, in French defies comment. About the only activity that is regularly transmitted in English is football.
- 6.10** The field study showed that most Mauritians have little or no interaction with English-speaking expatriates. In the resulting closed circle of non-native speakers using the language for local administrative purposes the level of English attained is seen to be sufficient. The complacency factor is another issue that hinders a more proactive approach towards the acquisition of international English that would be on a par with that adopted by Singapore.
- 6.11** The elitist rat-race for top grades in examinations and a place in the ‘star schools’, which the on-going debate about the A+ grading has worsened, is stifling the acquisition of the creative, wide-ranging language skills needed for effective interaction on the international business scene. The present excessive focus on a chosen few obscures the fact that Mauritius must be able to use all its human resources to compete successfully with the bigger players such as India and Central Europe. Given the size of the world

market, even acquiring a niche entails mobilising the entire available workforce with the appropriate level of skill acquisition.

6.12 There is, therefore, urgent need for a complete overhaul of English language teaching throughout the education system: the recruitment and training of teachers, the teaching materials available, the methodologies chosen.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 OVERALL POLICY

The 2006-2007 Budget Speech included a statement of intent concerning the teaching of languages to meet the needs of the emerging ITC/BPO sector. While this is a step in the right direction, it is not enough. Putting all languages on the same footing obscures the essential difference between the multiple roles that English has in Mauritius and the role of other foreign languages that are needed to interact with overseas suppliers and customers. A clear policy statement on the lines of the Singaporean model by the Government through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources is needed to:

- ❖ reaffirm the primordial role that English has in education, administration, business and international relations in Mauritius
- ❖ insist on the need for a real improvement in the proficiency attained by all the active population
- ❖ indicate how the Government intends to achieve this aim.

7.2 IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM MEASURES

7.2.1 The media

The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), as the national station funded by public money, should take the lead and adopt a definite policy to stop dubbing English programmes and news interviews in French. If necessary, subtitles can be inserted as is already the case with some interviews given in English for the main Evening News at 19.30.

The MBC should also see how it can increase the broadcasting of BBC World, Skynews and other English medium current affairs and sports channels through its main channels at more convenient hours than the present early bird and late owl timings.

In the same way, newspapers should print interviews that have been given in English as they stand. Such initiatives as the English supplement *Outlook* in the Tuesday edition of *L'Express* and the articles in English in *Le Matinal* should continue and, if possible, increase.

7.2.2 In-service training

Until a more sustainable, nation-wide structure is set up, both private and public sector organisations must contribute to the overall upgrading of the Mauritian workforce by making the improvement in proficiency in English one of their priority training needs. Targeted training to meet immediate language needs must be set up with the aid of qualified native-speaker trainers and funded through the existing HRDC National Training Grant system. The methodology would be firmly based on current trends in ESP teaching as discussed in the Literature Review. The present initiatives taken by several leading call centres to organise on-the-job coaching should be encouraged and replicated throughout the IT/BPO sector, again with the support of the HRDC National Training Grant system.

Pilot projects such as the HRDC Pilot Project in Call Centre Operations and the proposed BOI/HRDC pre-training scheme must be launched full-scale, with, if possible, funding other than the National Training Fund, to follow on from the statement of intent made in the Budget Speech.

7.2.3 Internet connection

One of the major sources of contact with native-speakers in any of the world's major language is the Internet. Therefore, the implementation of current and projected initiatives to reduce the cost and increase the spread of connectivity at home, in schools and at work should be speeded up to help increase firsthand contact with international English.

7.2.4 Television as a language-teaching tool

In this age of rapidly expanding multimedia, the mundane television is still one of the cheapest and most user-friendly means of transmitting information. The recent introduction of the land connection for foreign stations through Channel 5 by the MBC has opened the door to a wider dissemination of knowledge to all levels of the population. By making this facility available in all schools, pupils, even from the most disadvantaged families, would be given the means to improve their English, widen their cultural horizons and so improve their overall general knowledge. In the same way as the MCA programmes are incorporated in the mainstream teaching, documentaries and other current affairs programmes on BBC World, for instance, could become an integral part of the educational process.

7.3 MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM MEASURES

Under this heading come proposals for measures that will take time to set up. But, given the urgency of the situation, work should start on their elaboration and implementation immediately. The time-frame should be ideally two to five years maximum.

7.3.1 Review of English Language teaching

The teaching methodology and materials of English at all levels of the education system must be upgraded in line with the recommendations of the European *Common Framework of Reference for Language Teaching* concerning communicative language competence with its three basic components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. (Council of Europe, 2001) The *Framework* defines these three components as follows.

‘Linguistic competences include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system, independently of the sociolinguistic value of its variations and the pragmatic functions of its realisations.’

‘Sociolinguistic competences refer to the socio-cultural conditions of language use. Through its sensitivity to social conventions (rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, sexes, classes and social groups, linguistic codification of certain fundamental rituals in the functioning of a community), the sociolinguistic competence strictly affects all language communication between the representatives of different cultures, even though participants may often be unaware of its influence.’

‘Pragmatic consequences are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges. It also concerns the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the identification of text types and forms, irony and parody.’

Thus, the current revision and rewriting of the primary school textbooks is a good start to solving the problem at its source. However, the focus needs to be widened to include the language needs of the other subjects on the curriculum. At primary school level, the methodology for teaching the other subjects should include a specific language component to ensure that the children acquire the vocabulary and style appropriate to the content. For the

secondary school, it will not be sufficient to focus only on the English language teachers. The English language ability of the subject teachers in the context of the subjects that they teach must be upgraded. All teachers, whatever subject they teach, must help their pupils acquire the full range of communicative language competence as defined above. The same applies to the lecturers and trainers in the tertiary education and professional training institutions.

Such a change in methodology and materials necessarily implies a similar change in the training of teachers, lecturers and trainers. Proficiency in English must become an integral part of their training with appropriate assessment procedures as part of the certification process.

7.3.2 Setting up a national resource library

The present burden on English language teachers and trainers to find suitable additional materials should be removed. The existing library van services and the distribution of audiovisual materials by the MCA and the MIE must be reviewed. It is not reasonable to expect teachers to collect the materials as this entails time off from school to do so. The materials should be produced in sufficient numbers to ensure that all schools receive a copy that is delivered to the premises.

The setting up of a national resource library under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources is thus proposed. The library would include all basic textbooks, both local and foreign, plus a wide range of supplementary textbooks and reading books, together with audiovisual materials such as cassettes, CDs, DVDs and videos and other teaching materials such as word cards, puppets and games, as required by the new teaching methodology described in Section 7.3.1. At the beginning of the school year teaching packs of all the basic materials would be set up for distribution to all schools in sufficient quantities for all teachers to have their own set. The packs would be distributed by the library vans on a loan basis and collected at the end of the school year. The packs would then be renewed each year and damaged materials replaced.

To improve the book stock of the school libraries, the library vans would visit each school once a term to distribute books on a loan basis. Each school would be allotted a number of books, depending on the number of pupils and, for the secondary schools, the range of subjects taught. The books would include the required texts for personal study for each

syllabus and also a wide range of general interest books. In this way, teachers could set up reading projects to encourage their pupils to read more for pleasure. Teachers could make special requests for books to support the topics on the syllabus for the term. Such a system would not only help the teachers to put into practice the new methodology, but also allow pupils from the disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors of society to have access to learning materials that will help them acquire the skills necessary to get out of poverty.

This initiative requires considerable state funding. But the provision of appropriate teaching and learning materials in sufficient quantities is an essential component of any state education system that aims to alleviate poverty, ensure lifelong employability and enable upward social mobility. So funding through the national education budget must be found. However, if the initiative is properly worked out, it would be quite feasible to negotiate with present foreign donor agencies to allocate their donations of books and other learning materials to this central resource.

7.3.3 Setting up a pool of qualified native-speaker English language teachers

To help bring the necessary language competencies into the education system, a pool of qualified native-speaker English language teachers needs to be set up. There are quite a number of qualified native-speaker teachers who are either resident or whose spouse is on a long-term expatriate contract in the country. These teachers could be employed on a contract basis to join the full-time staff working on curriculum development and materials writing, and provide language training to new teacher recruits and on in-service courses.

7.3.4 Setting up an English Language Centre

When one considers other countries where competency in international English has been identified as essential to their continued economic development, one notes that some sort of specialised coordinating structure has been set up to drive the initiative to upgrade the use of English. These can be dedicated centres for English language teaching set up within the framework of established universities, such as the Centre for English Language Communication (CELC) at the National University of Singapore (NUS), or specialised institutions such as the School of English Language Education at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages at Hyderabad, India, or the Language Teaching Institute of the SEAMO Regional Language Centre (RELC-LTI) at Singapore.

Given the similarities between the Mauritian and Singapore experience in multicultural and multilingual education and human resource development, the work done by the CELC in tertiary education and the RELC-LTI is of great relevance.

The CELC was established in 1979 as the English Language Proficiency Unit (ELPU) and is non-faculty teaching department in the National University of Singapore (NUS). In its 2004 handbook, it defines its mission as *‘To empower our students with effective English language and communication skills for their academic and professional life through innovative teaching, promotion of independent learning and pedagogical research.’*

The CECL offers regular courses to undergraduates in all faculties at the NUS that can be divided into three broad categories: (1) Basic English/English for Academic Purposes Courses; (2) Communications Skills Courses; and (3) Writing Courses. They aim to increase the students’ English proficiency, develop the students’ communication, critical thinking and writing skills for academic and professional purposes.

It offers special language-based training programmes for specific purposes for graduate students from not only Singapore, but also India, Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, the People’s Republic of China, South Korea and Taiwan. These graduate courses cater to these students’ diverse proficiency levels and enable them to conduct research, write academic papers in English and communicate research findings effectively.

In the light of the information gained from the UOM and UTM, a similar centre needs to be set up within the Mauritian tertiary education system. To avoid duplication of resources and reduce costs, it would be advisable to set up one centre that would service all tertiary education institutions in Mauritius.

The Regional Language Centre (RELCL) is an educational project of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) set up in 1968 and located in Singapore. The members of SEAMEO are: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway are associate members.

The RELC website describes the main task of SEAMEO RELC as being *‘to assist in the development of language teacher education in the SEAMEO region, a region of rapid economic development that is fast integrating politically and economically. SEAMEO RELC provides leadership to develop expertise and excellence in the field of language education and promotes cooperation and contact among language professionals in the region and beyond. As the language centre of Southeast Asia, it faces the challenge of staying relevant to the needs of the countries that are richly diverse in languages and cultures. SEAMEO RELC aims to help the region in communicating across cultures and languages to foster international understanding through cooperation in language education.’*

The RELC-LTI offers courses for students, teachers, adult learners and professionals, as well as special courses for officials and diplomats, and one-to-one courses for executives needing to develop job-specific language skills in a very short time. It also organises regular international conferences on language teaching, with a particular focus on English, which attract teachers and researchers from all the member and associate member countries. These conferences provide a dynamic meeting-place for the exchange of experiences and ideas that enables further improvement in the teaching of English throughout the South-East Asian region.

To meet the need to upgrade in English in all sectors, as identified in this report, an English Language Centre based on the RELC-LTI model should be set up. This Centre would coordinate all the initiatives listed in these recommendations and also provide the means for ongoing research to ensure that the teaching of English in Mauritius keeps pace with the demands of the global market-place.

As said earlier in the presentation of the CELC, duplication of resources and reduction of costs must be considered. Therefore, it may well be advisable to combine the two centres into one, at least in the first instance. Combining the academic, educational and professional programmes in one centre would ensure coherence and consistency throughout the whole educational and training system. Thus, the Centre could also provide support to the curriculum development and course writing teams at the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

Setting up such a centre requires funds, but above all it needs appropriate expertise, which at the moment in Mauritius is lacking. The 2006-2007 Budget Speech has clearly expressed the

need for Mauritius to break out of its present complacency and open up to foreign expertise. This is what both the CELC and the RELC did many years ago and are continuing to do. If Mauritius aspires to becoming a global performer, then in the teaching of English as in other spheres it must accept to benchmark its present performance against the other international players and learn how to use the language at a level acceptable in international fora.



Annex 1
Questionnaire
and
Covering Letter



Our ref: PNH/49/05
13 May 2005

Dear Sir/Madam

ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF ENGLISH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN MAURITIUS

We are carrying out a study on the use of English in Mauritian business organisations with particular emphasis on activities aimed at the international market. This study, which is funded by the Mauritius Research Council, aims to:

- ♦ assess the proficiency in the use of English in international business and export activities in Mauritius
- ♦ measure the extent of the gap between the level of proficiency in English shown by Mauritian employees and that required for success in international markets
- ♦ make recommendations to improve the level of proficiency in the use of functional English for business purposes.

We would, therefore, be most grateful if you could spare a few minutes to fill in the attached questionnaire on the use of English in your organisation. Could you please return your completed questionnaire by **Tuesday 31 May 2005**? Our contact details are:

- ♦ e-mail on ccl@intnet.mu,
- ♦ fax on 464-0744 or
- ♦ post to CCL, 1st Floor Regency Square, 4 Cnr Conal & McIrvine Streets, Beau Bassin.

We look forward to your collaboration in this study.

Yours faithfully

Patricia N Day-Hookoomsing
Managing Director

ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF ENGLISH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN MAURITIUS

Survey funded by the Mauritius Research Council
May-June 2005

PROFILE OF RESPONDENT

1 Name of company:

2 Name of person answering the questionnaire:

3 Post of person answering the questionnaire:

4 Contact details

Postal address:

Telephone: Mobile:

Fax: e-mail:

5 Main sector(s) of activity of company

.....
.....
.....

6 Number of employees: Please circle as appropriate

<10

10-20

20-50

50-100

100-200

>200

7 Which countries does your company do business with?

.....

LANGUAGE USE

8 Which international languages does your company use in its business activities?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate.

Arabic ☐

Portuguese ☐

English ☐

Russian ☐

French ☐

Spanish ☐

German ☐

Swahili ☐

Hindi ☐

Tamil ☐

Italian ☐

Urdu ☐

Mandarin ☐

Other (please specify) _____

- 9 How much of your company's business is conducted in English?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate

	<10%	10-25%	25-50%	50-75%	>75%
Face-to-face meetings					
Telephone contacts					
Audio conference					
Video conference					
Brochures					
E-mail					
Fax					
In-house magazines					
Letters					
Memos					
Minutes					
Reports					
Staff manuals					
Others (Please specify)					

- 10 Have you any English-speaking expatriate staff working for your company?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate: Yes ☐ No ☐

- 11 If yes to Question 10, please complete the table below:

Post	Number
Directors	
Senior Executives	
Middle managers/supervisory	
Administrative/secretarial	
Technicians	
Others (please specify)	

PROFILE OF MAURITIAN PERSONNEL USING ENGLISH

- 12 How often do your company's personnel use English in their work? Please rate from 0 to 5 using the scale below.

0 = Never	1 = Not very often	2 = Quite often	3 = Often	4 = Most of the time	5 = Always
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	Spoken Communication	Written Communication
Directors/Senior Executives		
Operation/middle managers		
Supervisors		
Administrative/secretarial		
Telephonists/receptionists		
Technicians		
Customer contact personnel		
Call centre personnel		
Others (Please specify)		

13 Which qualifications do these personnel hold?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate.

	<SC	SC	HSC/ BAC	Diploma	Degree Licence (BA,BSc)	Masters Maîtrise or higher	Professional (eg: ACCA/ CIMA ICSA)
Directors/Senior Executives							
Operation/middle managers							
Supervisors							
Administrative/secretarial							
Telephonists/receptionists							
Technicians							
Customer contact personnel							
Call centre personnel							
Others (Please specify)							

14 How fluent in English do you consider these personnel to be? Please rate from 0 to 4 using the scale below.

0 = Not fluent at all	1 = Somewhat fluent	2 = Fluent	3 = Very fluent	4 = Native Speaker
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	Spoken Communication	Written Communication
Directors/Senior Executives		
Operation/middle managers		
Supervisors		
Administrative/secretarial		
Telephonists/receptionists		
Technicians		
Customer contact personnel		
Call centre personnel		
Others (Please specify)		

15 What difficulties do your company's Mauritian personnel have in using English?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate.

- ♦ Afraid of saying things the wrong way ☐
- ♦ Cannot understand what is being said over the telephone ☐
- ♦ Cannot cope with different accents in English ☐
- ♦ Cannot cope with general conversation ☐
- ♦ Lack of appropriate vocabulary for business transactions ☐
- ♦ Do not speak clearly enough ☐
- ♦ Cannot understand complicated written texts ☐
- ♦ Other (please specify) _____ ☐

16 Have you taken any steps to improve the level of English in your company?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate: Yes ☐ No ☐

17 If yes, which ones?

- Use of Internet ☐
- Circulating magazines and other reading material in English ☐
- Setting up a resource library ☐
- Organising language courses in Mauritius ☐
- Sending personnel abroad for training in English-speaking countries ☐
- Other (please specify) _____ ☐

ENGLISH AS A RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENT

18 Do your company include proper mastery of English in its recruitment profiles?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate: Yes ☐ No ☐

19 If yes to Question 18, how do you judge applicants' proficiency in English?

- Results in examinations (eg: SC, HSC General Paper) ☐
- Use of English in interview ☐
- Written test as part of interview procedure ☐
- Role plays as part of interview procedure ☐
- Other (please specify) _____ ☐

USE OF ENGLISH IN MAURITIUS

20 How important do you consider the use of English to the future development of Mauritius? Please tick ✓ as appropriate.

Not important at all		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Essential	
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21 How do you find the level of English used in Mauritius generally? Please rate from 0 to 5 using the scale below.

0 = Very poor	1 = Poor	2 = Somewhat inadequate	3 = Adequate	4 = Good	5 = Excellent
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Spoken Communication		Written Communication	
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22 Do you consider that Mauritians receive enough exposure to English in their daily lives?
Please tick ✓ as appropriate.

Very insufficient		Insufficient		Sufficient	
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23 What do you suggest to improve the level of English used in Mauritius?

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.....

.....



Annex 2
List of respondents
to questionnaire



List of Respondents

- 1 A G Joonas Group
- 2 AccessCargo Ltd
- 3 Adamas Ltd
- 4 Administrators & Consultants Ltd
- 5 Agricultural Marketing Board
- 6 Airports of Mauritius
- 7 Alexander Forbes
- 8 Answerplus Ltd
- 9 Art Décor Ltd
- 10 Atics Ltd
- 11 Bacon Woodrow & Legris Ltd
- 12 BCM (Trustees) Ltd
- 13 Bentley Apparel Ltd
- 14 Bioculture Mtius
- 15 British Airways
- 16 Casela Nature Park
- 17 Central Statistics Office
- 18 Ceres Ltd
- 19 Ceridian Mtius Ltd
- 20 ChemTech Ltd
- 21 Civil Aviation
- 22 Colonial Beach Hotel
- 23 Constance Hotels Academy
- 24 Deep River Beau Champ S E
- 25 Delegation de la Commission Européenne
- 26 Ed Electronics Ltd
- 27 Emcar Ltd
- 28 Emtel Ltd
- 29 Esso (Mtius) Ltd
- 30 Expanda Mtius Ltd
- 31 Federal Trust (Mtius) Ltd
- 32 Filao
- 33 Fleurs des Tropiques Export Ltd
- 34 Gexim Group
- 35 Grays Refinery Ltd
- 36 Happy World Foods
- 37 Harel Frères Ltd
- 38 Hemery Trust Mtius Ltd
- 39 Hilton Mtius Resorts
- 40 IDP Education Australia
- 41 Iframac Ltd
- 42 Imagine Communications
- 43 Indian Ocean International Bank Ltd
- 44 Industrial Maintenance Products
- 45 International Gold & Platinum Ltd
- 46 International Motors Co Ltd
- 47 International Printers & Book Distributors Ltd
- 48 Investec Bank Mtius Ltd
- 49 Investment Professionals Ltd
- 50 JRE Ltd
- 51 La Plantation Hotel
- 52 Lamco International Insurance
- 53 Le Meridien Hotel
- 54 Legends Hotel
- 55 Les Gaz Industriels Ltd
- 56 Les Moulins de la Concorde Ltée
- 57 Les Pavillons Resorts
- 58 Limbada & Limbada (Mtius) Ltd
- 59 Maritim Hotel
- 60 Mauriplage Investment Co
- 61 Mauritius Deer Farming Society
- 62 Mauritius College of the Air
- 63 Mauritius Ports Authority
- 64 Mauritius Research Council
- 65 Mauritius Stationery Manufacturers
- 66 Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute
- 67 Mauritius Telecom
- 68 Medine S E
- 69 Ministry of Industry
- 70 Ministry of Infrastructure (Upper Plaines Wilhems)
- 71 Ministry of Infrastructure (Finance Section)
- 72 Ministry of Infrastructure (Mechanical Engineering Division)
- 73 Ministry of Infrastructure (L'Esperance Trebuchet)
- 74 Ministry of Infrastructure (Vacoas)
- 75 Ministry of Tourism & Leisure
- 76 Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development & Family Welfare
- 77 Ministry of Youth & Sports
- 78 Mon Loisir S E
- 79 Mon Tresor S E
- 80 MS Coraline Ship Agency
- 81 Mtius Jute & textile Industries
- 82 Mtius Standard Bureau
- 83 Mtius Tourism Promotion Authority
- 84 Municipal Council of Curepipe
- 85 Municipal Council of Port Louis
- 86 Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes
- 87 Municipal Council of Vacoas
- 88 Naiade Resorts
- 89 National Shoes Ltd
- 90 Nestle Products Mtius
- 91 New Maurifoods Ltd
- 92 Plumbelec Co Ltd
- 93 PPP Piping Systems Ltd
- 94 Premixed Concrete
- 95 Professional Cleaners Ltd
- 96 Rehm Grinaker Construction Co Ltd
- 97 Robert Antoine Training Centre
- 98 Rogers Outsourcing Solutions
- 99 Royal College
- 100 Savannah S E
- 101 Scomat Ltd
- 102 Service Bureau Ltd
- 103 Services 2000 Ltd
- 104 Shandrani Hotel
- 105 Shell Mtius Ltd
- 106 Shibani Knitting Ltd
- 107 Soap & Allied Industries
- 108 Sofap Ltd
- 109 Sofitel Imperial
- 110 Systems Building Ltd
- 111 Tenfa Marketing Ltd
- 112 The Residents
- 113 Twin Engineering Ltd
- 114 Unicorn Trading
- 115 Union Ducray Group
- 116 United Basalt Products Ltd
- 117 Universal Development Corporation
- 118 Venture Capital Partners Ltd
- 119 Wally Plush Toys Ltd
- 120 Water Research Co
- 121 Witel Ltd
- 122 Zig Zag Ltd



Annex 3
List of persons
interviewed



List of persons interviewed

Name	Post	Institution
Mrs Aruna Ankiah-Gungadeen	Acting Head of English Department	Mauritius Institute of Education
Mr Saoud Baccus	Senior Lecturer, Communication Department	DCDM Business School
Mrs Roselind Burford	Director	British Council
Mrs Sandya Chakowa	Research Officer	Mauritius Examinations Syndicate
Professor Eric Charoux	Director	DCDM Business School
Mrs Ida Coombes	Head of School	International Preparatory School
Professor Peter Coupe	Director General	University of Technology Mauritius
Mrs Elsa Genevieve	Deputy Head Teacher, Primary School	Ministry of Education & Human Resources
Ms Janice Farman	UK Operations Manager	Rogers Call Centre
Dr Satish Kumar Mahadeo	Head of English Department	University of Mauritius
Mr Santosh Kumar Mahadeo	Director, Curriculum Reform	Ministry of Education and Human Resources
Mr David Muddle	Headmaster	Le Bocage International School
Ms Claire Nemorin	Manager	Infomil Mauritius Ltd
Mr Karmaraj Nosib	Acting Training Centre Manager	Hotel School of Mauritius
Dr Preetam Parmessur	Director	Mauritius Institute of Education
Mrs Meena Seetulsingh	Director	Mauritius College of the Air
Mrs Jane Valls	General Manager	Rogers Call Centre



Annex 4

*Question 7: which countries does
your company do business with?*





Annex 5

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