

THE COMPARISON OF SRI LANKA AND KOREA PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify how the similarities of the Sri Lanka and South Korean public education systems. The Sri Lanka and South Korean education systems shared similarities due to a combination of modernization, colonization, and conservatism. Sri Lanka's elementary school education period is five years and middle school is four years, while in Korea, elementary school is six years and middle school is three years, the total is the same as nine years. The Senior Secondary (high school) education period in Sri Lanka is four years, while it is three years in Korea. Primary education in Sri Lanka lasts 5 years. Pupils aged 5-10 go through grades 1-5. Pupils are taught subjects in the 4 subject fields of the national curriculum: language, mathematics, environment related activities and religion. There is a wide variety of subjects taught in these schools including: First National Language, Second National Language, English, Health and physical education or Environment related activities, Religion, Co-curricular activities, Optional curricular. In Korea, the elementary school curriculum consists of subjects (or subject clusters) and Creative Experiential Activities. Subjects to be taught are Korean Language, Social Studies/ Moral Education, Mathematics, Science/Practical Arts, Physical Education, Arts (Music/Art), and English. Middle school subjects in Korea are Korean, English, Mathematics, Society / History/ Morality, Scientific/technical assumptions/information, Physical education, Art, etc. Korea and Sri Lanka have similar educational systems. However, In Sri Lanka, qualification exams [General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls)] start in high school and exist for college entrance, but not in Korea.

Keywords: Public education systems, qualification exams, Sri Lanka, South Korean.

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island nation in South Asia and known as Ceylon from the beginning of the British Colonial period in the late eighteenth century, this country gained independence in 1948 and adopted the name of Sri Lanka with a new constitution in 1972 (Aturupane and Little, 2020).

Korea also has a similar history of colonial rule and government established in the same year in 1948. Namely, the day marks the annual anniversary of the announcement that Japan would unconditionally surrender on August 15, 1945. All forces of the Imperial Japanese Army were ordered to surrender to the Allies. Independent Korean governments were created three years later, on 15 August 1948.

Values of an individual or populations are the fundamental beliefs, behaviors and attitudes that have been approved and accepted as what is good by society for a long time (Gamage et al., 2021). As a consequence of the constant transformation of society in terms of

culture, economics and politics, value and value systems have been unusually changed and distorted (Gamage et al., 2021). Faced with a rapidly changing world, Europe's school systems have produced the most information and knowledge to meet the demands of modern societies. Some of these changes will require additional investment, particularly in the early years of schooling. However, many Koreans' perception and understanding of ASEAN are not quite sufficient to accommodate this growing partnership due to the lack of educational concern on Southeast Asia in Korea's educational system (Ha, 2018).

Education plays an instrumental role in shaping one's way of thinking and view of the world. Thus, education is a basic human right and a global public good with the power to transform individual lives, communities and the planet for the better over generations. Education contributes to a country's development and society stability. Therefore, it is the milestone of a nation's maintenance. Education provides knowledge and skills to the population, as well as shaping the personality of the youth of a nation (Idris et al., 2012).

The pursuit of the greatest education has always been a top priority for human civilization. At the country level there is also a large amount of evidence that education increases the rate of economic growth (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2015, Damon et al., 2016). Public education systems in a nation provide the foundations for the future wellbeing of every society, yet existing systems are a point of global concern. Education System Design is a response to debates in developing and developed countries about the characteristics of a high-quality national education service (Hudson et al., 2020). There are many rival, richly detailed theories of the public education system. One way to get a handle on this complex literature is to see that each account of the public faces a series of key methodological questions (Higgins and Abowitz, 2011). A public school might be formed as a school in the interests of "the people" but not function in ways that serve the shared purposes of the people of that district.

The public education system is very important predominant education service proviser of general education in Sri Lanka (Jayawardena, 2016). Education in Sri Lanka is compulsory for ages 5 to 14 and free at government schools from kindergarten to the university level. Because of the variety of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, many schools teach only in either Sinhalese or in Tamil, though the elite schools also use English. [Lodric (2009), "Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life", Cengage Learning, 2009]. Most of the schools in Sri Lanka are maintained by the government as a part of the free education. Currently (as of 2021) there are 10,155 government schools. It is possible for Sri Lankan students to undertake vocational and technical training in the public sector. The disparity between geographical regions in education is another key problem that stimulus several adverse consequences in the primary and secondary education system in Sri Lanka (Alawattegama, 2020).

We hope this report will provide education information at subjects/subject areas for grades of the system in Sri Lanka and Korea which paired with research on what works and the voices of students can lead us toward a more sustainable, more effective, and more equitable public education system in both countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Education Commission (NEC) in General Education System in Sri Lanka commenced formulating National Education Policy for its third ten year policy reviewing cycle (Widanapathirana et al., 2016). Main findings of Nawastheen (2019) were that there were number of significant changes in the educational system in Sri Lanka, the intended goals of the

changes had failed due to the lack of readiness of the stakeholders especially the teachers in the system. Alawattegama (2020) expected to suggest alternative strategies to overcome the emerging issues in the free education system that would add value to the policy makers to objectively develop future strategies and policies relating to the education system of the country. Curriculum planning, design and development, in this sense, can be identified as the most sensitive stages of the process and therefore, these should be handled with utmost care (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, 2020).

Nakamura (2005) found that the Japanese system is basically similar to that in South Korea, but the pressures of entrance competition in South Korea are concentrated at the university admission stage, while pressures in Japan are dispersed between university and high school admissions. Hu and Yin (2023) showed that the change process of lifelong education policy in China and Korea.

There are studies on the educational system between Korea and Japan, Korea and Southeast Asian countries, but there is no comparative study between Sri Lanka and Korea.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects and Research Design

The approach of the study was qualitative and data was collected from various research studies or resources. Data relating to international curriculum development in the school systems was obtained from the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Sri Lanka and the relevant websites available in the World Wide Web. Especially, it is difficult to witness teaching in Sri Lanka's 3rd stage education system of Overall Structure of Education System on Southern Asia (Fig. 1).

Comprehensive education reforms have been carried out periodically to bring the education system on par with international trends. The reforms carried out in 1947, 1960-61, 1972, 1981, 1997 and 2006 are some of the landmarks in the pursuit of quality improvement in education (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, 2013).

The National Curriculum Framework discussed below has extracted the development goals of the Government of Sri Lanka adopted within the "A Vision for a Resurgent, Prosperous Country, 2019", which aims at producing (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, 2020);

- a law-abiding and productive citizen
- a happy family
- a disciplined, organized and peaceful society
- a vibrant human resource for a prosperous nation
- a healthy citizen - health is one of the main pillars in human capital development
- an informed and knowledgeable person
- a person with the culture of "Working for the Country"
- a person who respects the rights of differently abled and disabled people
- a belief that every child can learn and will be given the opportunity to do so

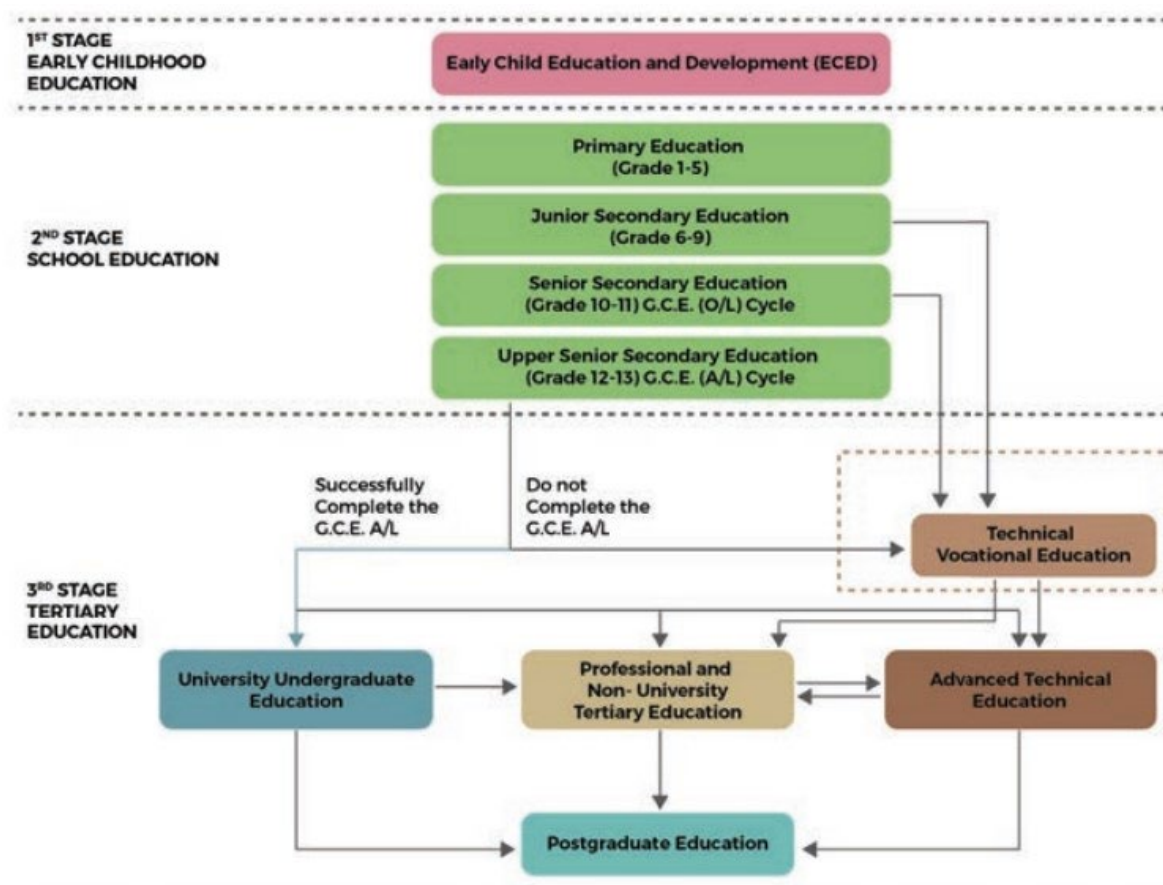


Fig. 1. Overall Structure of Education System of Sri Lanka. Source: Adopted from Suraweera (2015). E-learning in information management education in Sri Lanka.

RESULTS

Sri Lanka and Korea have similar educational systems (Table 1). However, Sri Lanka's elementary school education period is five years and middle school is four years, while in Korea, elementary school is six years and middle school is three years, the total is the same as nine years. The Senior Secondary (high school) education period in Sri Lanka is four years, while it is three years in Korea.

7th grade is called "Middle school 1st grade" in South Korea. Similarly, 8th grade is called "Middle school 2nd grade" and 10th grade is called "High school 1st grade". Tertiary education, also referred to as third-level, third-stage or post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of secondary education.

In Sri Lanka, qualification exams [General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls)] start in high school and exist for college entrance, but not in Korea (Table 2).

Table 1. Classification and school span in Sri Lanka and Korea education system

Sri Lanka Education System			South Korea Education System		
Classification	School Span	Age of Student	Classification	School Span	Age of Student
Pre-primary	Pre-school	3-5	Kindergarten		3-5 (4-6)
Primary	Grade 1	5-6	Elementary school	1st grade	6-7 (8)
	Grade 2	6-7		2nd grade	7-8 (9)
	Grade 3	7-8		3rd grade	8-9 (10)
	Grade 4	8-9		4th grade	9-10(11)
	Grade 5	9-10		5th grade	10-11(12)
				6th grade	11-12(13)
Junior Secondary	Grade 6	10-11	Middle school	7th grade	12-13(14)
	Grade 7	11-12		8th grade	13-14(15)
	Grade 8	12-13		9th grade	14-15(16)
	Grade 9	13-14			
Senior Secondary	Grade 10	14-15	High school	10th grade	15-16(17)
	Grade 11	15-16		11th grade	16-17(18)
	Grade 12	16-17		12th grade	17-18(19)
	Grade 13	17-18			

Korea : Nursery school, 0-2(1-3)

Table 2. Classification and school span of education system in Sri Lanka

Education	School/Level	Grades	Age	Years	Notes
Primary	primary	1-5	6-11	5	
Middle	Junior Secondary	6-9	12-14	4	
Secondary	Senior Secondary	10-11	15-16	2	G.C.E O/Ls - General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls): Students who are pursuing tertiary education must pass the G.C.E O/Ls in order to enter the collegiate level to study for another 2 years (grades 12-13) to sit for the G.C.E Advanced Level. On successful completion of this exam, students can move to tertiary education, there for the GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka.
Post-secondary	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level	12-13	17-18	2	The GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka.
Vocational	Vocational Diploma			2	Diploma from Technical Colleges leads to employment. Requires O-levels for admission.

Tertiary	Bachelor			3-4	General Bachelor (Bachelor of Science, Arts, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Laws) degrees are 3 years. Special Bachelor (Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Pharmacy, Bachelor of Dentistry, BSc, BA)

Sources: Ministry of Education & Higher Education Isurupaya. Battaramulla, Sri Lanka.

Primary education

Primary education in Sri Lanka lasts 5 years. Pupils aged 5-10 go through grades 1-5. Pupils are taught subjects in the 4 subject fields of the national curriculum: language, mathematics, environment related activities and religion (Table 3). From grade 3, pupils are taught English and the 2nd national language (Sinhala or Tamil) as subjects. At the end of the last year of primary education, pupils can take the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination.

School education in Sri Lanka is compulsory through to age 14, when students may disengage in favor of an apprenticeship or job. The first 5 years are spent in primary school. At the end of this there is an optional scholarship examination that may permit access to a superior grade of school.

The weekly timetable of primary education can vary between 16 and 24.5 hours, depending on the grade and age of the child. There is a wide variety of subjects taught in these schools. The weekly timetable of primary education can vary between 16 and 24.5 hours, depending on the grade and age of the child. There is a wide variety of subjects taught in these schools including: First National Language (Tamil or Sinhala), Second National Language (Tamil or Sinhala), English, Health and physical education or Environment related activities (Social studies, Science, Health, Physical Education, and aesthetic subjects such as Art, Music and Dancing), Religion, Co-curricular activities (Meditation, participation in cultural and religious festivals and events), Optional curricular activities (pupils in 5th grade can choose a subject with regards to their skills and interests, for example Art, Agriculture or Dancing).

In Korea, the elementary school curriculum consists of subjects (or subject clusters) and Creative Experiential Activities (Table 4). Subjects (or subject clusters) to be taught are Korean Language, Social Studies/ Moral Education, Mathematics, Science/Practical Arts, Physical Education, Arts (Music/Art), and English. In the case of grade 1 and 2, subjects include Korean Language, Mathematics, and integrated subjects of Moral Life, Inquiring Life, and Pleasant Life. Creative Experiential Activities include discretionary activities, club activities, community services, and career-related activities. In grade 1 and 2, Safe Life should be part of Creative Experiential Activities, providing authentic experiential activities.

Table 3. Number of periods for subjects/subject areas for grades 6 to 11 in Sri Lanka

Subjects	Number of forty-minute periods per week. Grades (6-11)					
	G. 6	G. 7	G. 8	G. 9	G. 10	G. 11
Religion	3	2	2	2	2	2
First language	5	5	5	5	5	5
English	5	5	5	5	5	5
Maths	5	6	6	6	6	6
Environmental studies	9	-	-	-	-	-
Science & technology	-	6	6	6	6	6

Aesthetics	4	3	3	3	3	3
Sinhala/Tamil as a 2nd language	2	2	2	2	-	-
Social studies/history	-	5	5	5	5	5
Life skills	-	3	3	3	-	-
Technical subjects	-	-	-	-	4	4
Groups activities	3	-	-	-	-	-
Additional subjects	-	-	-	-	4	4
Total periods per week	40	40	40	40	40	40

Junior secondary (middle education)

Four years of middle school follow to complete the compulsory education phase. The curriculum comprises pre-determined academic subjects with little or no choice allowed.

Grades 10 and 11 prepare secondary school students who wish to attempt their GCE O-Levels. However they must continue at collegiate levels for a similar period, and complete their A-Levels too, if they wish to subsequently enter university to study further.

The GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka. G.C.E O/Ls - General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls): Students who are pursuing tertiary education must pass the G.C.E O/Ls in order to enter the collegiate level to study for another 2 years (grades 12-13) to sit for the G.C.E Advanced Level. On successful completion of this exam, students can move on to tertiary education, there for the GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka.

In the near future it is projected that grades 6-9 will constitute the junior secondary stage of education, thereby functioning as the upper section of the junior school. Grade 6 will become the bridging year between the integrated curriculum of primary school and the subject based curriculum of secondary school. It will serve to inculcate the necessary study skills for secondary education while reinforcing the essential competencies to be acquired during the primary cycle, particularly in language and mathematics. The syllabi in grade 6 will be revised to meet these requirements.

There will be a common curriculum at this stage, comprising 9 subjects: first language, English, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, life skills, religion, aesthetics, health and physical education. (The teaching of a second national language, i.e. Sinhala for Tamil speaking students and Tamil for Sinhala speaking students will also be introduced at this level - when teachers are available.)

At the end of grade 9, a school-based examination, the Junior School Proficiency Examination, will test pupil achievement and result in the issue of a certificate.

Teaching methodology will emphasize learning through projects and practical work, as spelt out in the section on practical skills education. Concepts on peace education, conflict resolution, democratic values, human rights and environmental conservation will be integrated into social studies and other relevant subject content. The revision of syllabi and course guides, training of teachers and provision of facilities were scheduled to be for completion at grade 6 level in 1998 and for implementation in 1999. Reforms will be progressively introduced to grades 7 and 8 with the grade 9 curriculum revised in line with the new GCE "O" level curriculum.

Middle schools in South Korea consist of three grades. Most students enter at age 12 and graduate at age 14 or 15. These three grades correspond roughly to grades 7–9 in the North American Educational system. The middle school curriculum in Korea is shown in Table 5. Middle school subjects are Korean, English, Mathematics, Society / History/ Morality, Scientific/technical assumptions/information, Physical education, Art, etc.

Senior secondary (high school)

The present curriculum at this level is oriented to the GCE (OL or AL) examinations. The programme covers a period of 3 years; namely grades 9,10,11 for GCE (OL) and 2 years for GCE (AL) Collegiate level grades 12-13. At present, the GCE (OL) compulsory curriculum consists of the following subjects (some of which are inter disciplinary in nature): religion, first language, English, mathematics, integrated science, social studies and history, aesthetic education and life skills/technical subjects. In grade 9, students select 1 vocational type course (out of 53 such courses). In grades 10-11, 1 technical subject may be chosen from several options.

Under the proposed revisions, the time period for senior secondary education will be reduced to 2 years with classes designated grades 10 and 11. The curriculum will be made more flexible with the introduction of a number of core subjects and a number of optional subjects. Core subjects will be: religion, first language, English, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and history, aesthetic studies. Students will be permitted to select up to 3 optional subjects from the following: Sinhala/Tamil as a second language, history, geography, health and physical education, literature (Sinhala/Tamil/ English), modern or classical languages, technical subjects (from the list of approved technical subjects).

Table 4. Subjects and number of classes in Korea primary school system

Subjects	Total number of classes for 1st and 2nd graders	Subjects	Total number of classes for 3rd and 4th graders	Subjects	Total number of classes for 5th and 6th graders
Korean language	482	Korean language	408	Korean language	408
Mathematics	256	Mathematics	272	Mathematics	272
A decent life	144	Society / Morality	272	Society / Morality	272
A wise life	224	Science	204	Science/Practice	340
A happy life	400	Physical education	204	Physical education	204
Creative Experience Activities	238	Art (music/art)	272	Art (music/art)	272
		English	136	English	204
		Creative Experience Activities	204	Creative Experience Activities	204

The National Curriculum of Korea covers kindergarten, primary, secondary, and special education. The version currently in place is the 7th National Curriculum, which has been revised in 2007 and 2009. Since then, Korea has been revising the partial curriculum, and the latest ninth curriculum was conducted in 2022.

Table 5. Subjects and number of classes in Korean middle and high schools

Middle		High	
Subjects	Total number of classes for 3 years	Subjects	Mandatory completion of classes for 3 years
Korean language	442	Korean language	8
Mathematics	374	Mathematics	8
Society / History/ Morality	510	Society / History/ Morality	6
Scientific/technical assumptions/information	680	Science	10
Physical education	272	Physical education	10
Art (music/art)	272	Art	10
English	340	English	8
Choice ¹⁾	170	Technical assumptions/information/second language/Chinese/culture	16
Creative Experience Activities	306	Creative Experience Activities	18 (=288 hrs.)

1) Chinese characters, environment, living foreign languages (German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic, Vietnamese), health, career, etc

In Sri Lanka and Korea, their mother tongue is placed in elementary, middle, and high schools in the curriculum. English is also a regular subject in the curriculum. However, in Sri Lanka, English is a regular subject from elementary school, but not in Korea, it was conducted from the third grade of elementary school in 1997 due to some revision of the sixth curriculum, and it is a regular subject from the first grade of middle school to the third grade of high school.

DISCUSSION

In education, a curriculum is broadly defined as the planned standard sequences in education process. Curriculum is the central guide for all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to rigorous academic experiences. The structure, organization, and considerations in a curriculum are created in order to enhance student learning and facilitate instruction. Furthermore, the curriculum defines "why, what, when, where, how, and with whom to learn." (Braslavsky, 2003). Curricula are split into several categories: the explicit, the implicit (including the hidden), the excluded, and the extracurricular (Kelly, 2009; Dewey, 1902).

Private supplementary education refers to private lessons and learning outside of formal schooling purchased by families, has been widely practiced in East Asia, however, as educational competition for social mobility has intensified in many parts of the world (Park and Lim, 2020).

Over the last couple of decades, the development of the education system in Korea has been distinguished by a revolutionary and innovative spirit, propelling the nation into leading positions within the education market in the Asia-Pacific region (Krechetnikov and Pestereva, 2017). In Sri Lanka, the global community has committed to the Education 2030 Agenda, which calls for countries' policy actions to provide equitable and quality education, ensuring quality learning and skills that will matter for the changing world of work due to Industry 4.0, represented by automation and digitization of work (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, 2020; National Education Commission, 2022).

In conclusion, subjects in school class were very important components of student education and national policy for Sri Lanka and Korea governments. This investigation also presents a different proposal for the education class that could be more motivating for the students.

A major line of argument in institutional theory, as applied to comparative education, has been that national educational arrangements, and changes in them, reflect models obtaining in world society (Baker and Wiseman, 2006) .

In Korea, there are schools that learn the regular curriculum public and private, and there are non-public private schools such as alternative schools. In Korea, after public education was conducted, private education through private education was further highlighted. Private education is often expensive, so private education due to economic inequality for families (students) who take it and families (students) who do not take it becomes a social problem.

Most schools have night study at school due to the educational environment in which students' autonomy is added from public education to autonomous learning during private education. Special natural resources and Japanese colonies hindered economic development, and the Korean War devastated Korea's industrial and economic development without economic capital, which is said to have contributed greatly to the human resource.

What is unusual is that in Sri Lanka, religion is organized in the regular course. Even in Korea, it was a long-standing Buddhist country before modern times. However, religion is not a regular subject in elementary, middle, and high schools. Rather, they focus more on English and mathematics to enter the department of the university they want.

Elementary English education is an educational measure taken in the hope of contributing to the advancement of Korea's internationalization in the 21st century (Lee, 2000). It is well known that English is currently used as a Korean language in 21 countries, multiple official languages in 16 countries, and 76.7% of the world's students study English as a second language (or first language), and there is no country in the world that does not teach English at school, so it is almost an international language.

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