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The Ideological Construction of the Juggernaut of English: A critical analysis of American prestige press coverage of the globalisation of language

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Abstract

A given hegemonic order (re)produces itself in part by appeals to its apparent inevitability. This paper critically examines instances of precisely these sorts of appeals vis-a-vis the global hegemony of English. A condensed chapter from a recently completed dissertation, this paper critically examines selected texts taken from a pool of 275 accounts of the global rise of English published from Jan. 1, 1991 to May 1, 2003 in five American-owned prestige press publications. It focuses in particular on examples of the discursive construction of English as an unstoppable global juggernaut. It aims to draw attention to the valorization of English hegemony and to bring to critical light some of the paradoxical and often darker aspects of this global social phenomenon. The paper also aims to contribute to critical theoretical thought more generally. Change, linguistic and otherwise, is inevitable. However, the specific form it assumes is not inevitable. Thus, it is contended that the global rise of English must be critically identified as a particular, socially produced, and not-at-all 'natural' change.

Introduction

A given hegemonic order (re)produces itself in part by appeals to its apparent inevitability and incontestability. This paper engages instances of precisely these sorts of appeals vis-à-vis the global hegemony of English.¹ It critically examines selected texts taken from a pool of 275 accounts² of the global rise of English published from January 1, 1991 to May 1, 2003 in five American-owned prestige press³ publications - the *Los Angeles Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. The paper focuses in particular on examples of the discursive construction of English as an unstoppable global juggernaut.

The construction of English as inevitable in these core⁴ English country publications is part of what de Swaan (2001) has called the "self-fulfilling prophecy" of English. According to de Swaan - whose work is premised upon a rational-choice notion of the global rise of English that this paper seeks to problematize - the more people who "choose" to learn English and use it for various local, national, and international purposes, the more powerful its tug

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becomes, and the more other people are subsequently impelled to "choose" English for the same purposes. Media representations such as American prestige press accounts of the global hegemony of English play an integral ideological role in producing the global reality of the "self-fulfilling" prophecy. That is, the more the story of the global hegemony of English is told as one of an unstoppable juggernaut, the more it appears to be exactly this to large numbers of people. This includes the core English-speaking elite social actors who collectively form a large part of the readerships of the American prestige press publications selected for study here. Indeed, many of these readers may rely heavily upon prestige press accounts to make judgements about how "the German people," "the Indian people," or "the French" are responding to the global spread of English.

Much is at stake for many different social actors vis-à-vis the global hegemony of English. Among other things, the potential victory of an English monolingual and assimilationist linguistic ideology at the upper levels of the global social order has tremendous potential implications in terms of: the practice and ethics of multilingual reciprocity; the question of what is/is not cosmopolitan; campaigns for an egalitarian global cultural, linguistic, and communication order; questions of power and access to power; social hierarchy; various national and international identities; the future of smaller, less powerful languages; and the teaching of any language less powerful than English.

Because so much is at stake for so many people and because I believe the volume of critical discourse on the hegemony of English is comparatively low — as Sonntag (2003: 121) has noted, "Unfortunately, there is little recognition of the linguistic dimensions of globalization and even less consciousness-raising regarding global English hegemony" — I seek in this paper to challenge and problematize hegemonic discourses on the global expansion of English. The criticisms I levy are not meant to imply that the spread of English is a universally negative development. My critique is an attempt to draw attention to the valorisation of English hegemony and to bring to critical light, discussion, debate and reflection some of the paradoxical and often darker aspects of this global social phenomenon. My critique also aims to contribute to critical theoretical thought more generally. That is, the critique I construct of appeals to the inevitability of change vis-à-vis language, English, and globalisation is helpful, I believe, in terms of challenging and deconstructing a broad spectrum of dominating discourses rooted in appeals to the inevitability of social change. Such appeals frequently seek to preclude and/or seal off critique. In so doing, they provide powerful rhetorical cover for the naturalisation of particular forms of social domination, which are justified on the grounds that they are allegedly the natural expression of the inevitability of social change.

Method & Theory

I put the texts discussed below to what Hall (1975) has described as a "deep soak," or what I call a close reading. By this I mean that I ferret out "common-sense assumptions and presuppositions" (Fairclough 1995: 46) embedded in media discourse, describe and organise these assumptions in a systematic way, and relate these to the larger macro-sociological context in which they are located. Additionally, I concentrate on "what is included and what is excluded, what is made explicit or left implicit, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded, what is thematized and what is unthematized, what process types and categories are drawn upon to represent events, and so on" (Fairclough 1995: 104). I take for granted that media texts often reflect and help reproduce certain preferred, privileged, agenda-setting representations of the human social world. Blommaert (1999), Fairclough (1995), Fowler (1991), Hall (1975, 1980), Hall et al. (1981), and Wodak et al. (1999) are among those who have advanced such a view. In short, I view media coverage of issues such as the global of hegemony English as reflecting *and* influencing the nature of such social phenomena. Furthermore, I view language, and the study of language in (global) society, as central to understanding the power dynamics of globalisation. Sonntag (2003) is among those who have underscored the utility of the sociological analysis of language vis-à-vis globalisation. "The politics of global English," she (Sonntag 2003: 1) writes, "are the politics of globalization, both economic and cultural."

A Gramscian notion of hegemony serves as the primary theoretical prism through which I conceive of the global expansion of English, a social phenomenon most pronounced in global domains of power such as business, science and technology, international politics, and higher education (Graddol 1997, Pennycook 2001, Phillipson 1992). Clearly, Gramsci was not concerned with the rise of English globally and it is unclear how he would assess the global hegemony of English, though Ives (2004) has noted that Gramsci criticised Esperanto for its artificiality and for what Gramsci contended was a " 'bourgeois cosmopolitanism' ". Generally, Gramsci saw language as central to establishing, and to understanding, the "organization of consent" (Ives 2004). While he notes that Gramsci's perspective "has blind spots and requires further development" in terms of its application to various dimensions of globalisation, Ives (2004) contends that,

There is an important literature on Gramscian and 'neo-Gramscian' approaches to issues pertaining to globalization from the perspective of international relations. Gramsci provides many elements for such approaches, from epistemological and methodological frameworks to the concepts of hegemony, civil society and historic bloc in the analysis of complex relations of forces. (Ives 2004: 160)

Sonntag (2003: 6) has noted the utility of Gramsci for analysing the linguistic dimensions of globalisation: "The usefulness of the concept of hegemony is perhaps even greater for language scholars who are interested in global English than for sociolinguists who focus on social interactions between individuals, because in global English hegemony the international relations meaning of the term is conjoined with the Gramscian sense". Cox, an international relations scholar, proposes that "a world hegemony is . . . in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class" (1996: 137). Such an hegemony does not necessarily involve simple and direct coercion, although it can and it might. It hinges heavily upon the active consent of social actors to a particular capitalist world order whose general direction they might not have initiated but over which they nonetheless have some control. According to Ives (2004: 7), "Language is spread predominantly not by government or state coercion, military or police action, but by speakers accepting the prestige and utility of new languages, phrases or terms. Yet the idea that we have totally free choice over the language we use, the words we speak, is clearly misleading".

In short, "The spontaneous consent given by the great masses to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci 1971: 12) effectively captures the ways in which the global expansion of English has become largely a matter of heavily *directed* choice. It also underscores the significance of appeals to universality to this social phenomenon - as well as the active, though not necessarily critical acceptance of these appeals by human social actors. Gill (1993: 42), for example, has noted that "the capacity to claim with credibility that the expansion of the power of the United Kingdom served not just its national interest but a 'universal interest' as well" was critical in its rise as world hegemon. The same might be said of the United States and its historic and contemporary aspirations and claims to global universality, linguistic and otherwise. In drawing from Augelli and Murphy (1993), one might say that this paper - and the larger work from which it is extracted - examine, in concrete detail, the discursive means whereby a dominant national social group seeks to articulate its global "hegemonic aspiration" to itself, and to global "others."

I strategically selected the prestige press organs from which I draw in this paper. American members of the global elite, who are among those playing the most integral of roles in the hegemony of English, read these American-owned publications in large numbers. Thus, for example, a 2002 study of *The Wall Street Journal's* (*The WSJ*) readership found that 71% of its readers had a four-year college degree, that the average household income of readers was \$194,084 and that average household assets of its readership were a cool \$1.5 million (*The Wall Street Journal*. n.d.). Furthermore, two of the prestige press newspapers I

selected - *The New York Times* (*The NYT*) and *The Washington Post* (*The Post*) - are among the premier American agenda-setting newspapers on international issues and news (Wasburn 2002). Presumably, their agenda-setting effect includes American media coverage of global social issues such as the rise of English. The *Los Angeles Times* (*L.A. Times*) points toward the Asian rim, or a geographic region of the world with increasing economic power *and* one that has seen tremendous growth in English language learning, most notably in China (Graddol 2006). Additionally, the *L.A. Times* is published in a region of the United States heavily populated by Hispanics and in a state that borders Mexico. It thus can be considered a kind of Western U.S. prestige press gateway to Central America. The *International Herald Tribune* (*IHT*) is aimed at an affluent and elite international audience. Including it in my textual data pool gives me an opportunity to examine American representations of the spread of English to an international (English reading) audience.

The pool of prestige press texts from which I draw spans an approximately 12-year time frame, from January 1, 1991 to May 1, 2003, or, basically, from the first American-led Persian Gulf War to the declaration of "the end of major combat operations" in the Iraq War by U.S. President George W. Bush. This time period was selected for a number of reasons. Most central of these is the unprecedented rise of the U.S. as a single global superpower. Finally, my prestige press textual pool of 275 texts was generated using two databases, LexisNexis Academic and ProQuest, and more than 60 different keyword search strings. Among these were: English w/250 common language (w/250 means that the word English appeared "within 250 words" of "common language"), English w/20 unite, English w/20 progress, English w/100 domination, English w/250 imperialism, and English w/250 hegemony.

The Global Hegemony of English: A Brief Overview

English, in various forms, is spoken by an estimated 400 million people as a mother tongue and an additional 2 billion as a second and/or foreign language (Graddol 2006). Some estimates project up to 3 billion functional users of English by the year 2040, or the equivalent of approximately 40% of the world's anticipated population at that time (Graddol 2006). British colonialism has been acknowledged as the single most important historical force behind the global hegemony of English (Crystal 1997, Pennycook 1998, Phillipson 1992). The United States has influenced the contemporary global hegemony of English to a far greater extent than any other former British colony. The biggest American impact on the global expansion of English has been the synergy between American-led global capitalism and English. Phillipson (1992) and Holborow (1999) are among those who have made persuasive cases for this position. "The dominance of English today," writes Holborow (1999: 56-57), "is the continuation of a process started in the earliest days of capitalism,

deepened by the expansion of the British Empire and given further impetus by the commanding position of American capitalism in this century."

Although much scholarly inquiry has focused on the rise of English within the U.S. (Schiffman 1996, Schmidt 2000, Wiley 1996), little work has addressed American understandings of the *global* hegemony of English. This despite the clear significance of the American "dominant social strata" in terms of this intensifying global social phenomenon. Additionally, an extensive literature exists on the complex ways in which various peoples, states and regions from outside of core English-speaking countries are being affected by the global rise of English. Crystal (1997), de Swaan (2001), Graddol (1997), Pennycook (1998), Phillipson (1992), and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) are among those who have contributed to this literature. However, the potentially radically different ways in which powerful core elites understand and represent their unique relation to the global rise of "their" language has received less attention. In fact, systematic engagement of questions of American self-representation and understanding with respect to the global hegemony of English constitutes an essentially brand new scholarly undertaking.⁵ More specifically, no one has yet systematically mapped and analysed contemporary American media discourses on the global rise of English. In addition to critically engaging assertions of linguistic inevitability, then, this paper seeks to address a comparative dearth of scholarship examining American understandings and representations of the global rise of English.

Overview of the 275-text Data Pool

The New York Times (94 texts) and the *International Herald Tribune* (89 texts) published the most texts that addressed various dimensions of the global hegemony of English in contexts outside of the United States during the approximately 12-year time span selected. Texts from these publications accounted for two-thirds of the 275 articles gathered. *The Washington Post* was next with 50 texts. *The Wall Street Journal* (21) and the *L.A. Times* (21) lagged considerably behind.

I discovered a general, though not entirely consistent, trend upwards in terms of the number of texts devoted to some aspect of the global expansion of English across the time period examined. I located just nine articles in all five prestige press publications addressing the global hegemony of English published in 1991. The total number of texts published per year on this social phenomenon remained fairly constant through 1993, with 10 in 1992 and nine in 1993. The total jumped to 19 in 1994 and 29 in 1995. It dipped to 10 in 1996. Totals rose again in 1997 to 18. The years 1998-2001 contained the highest concentration of texts with 37 in 1998, 24 in 1999, 43 in 2000, and 44 in 2001. Totals plummeted to 16 in 2002, perhaps due to the September 11th attacks.

From a quantitative perspective, I found significant differences in terms of the five newspapers' coverage of the global hegemony of English. However, I did not find a similar difference in the nature of the coverage. Thus, for example, texts from *The NYT* and *The Washington Post* were no more, or less, likely than those from the *L.A. Times* or *The WSJ* to represent the rise of English positively, or negatively. More specifically, the story of English's hegemony in the five American prestige press publications selected was, across the five newspapers, consistently told through a number of discourses that both reflect and (re)produce long-running and deeply entrenched collective American notions about who Americans are, what Americans are about, and what America's legacy, linguistic and otherwise, means to Americans and the world. These discourses were the discourses of:

1. universal progress
2. triumphalism
3. populism
4. linguistic conflict and competition

The **discourse of universal progress** framed English in a largely positive fashion. It stressed English's basic utility and cast English, and language as a whole, in instrumental terms. Among other things, English was ideologically linked to the future, opportunity and success, universal knowledge production, and economic efficiency. English was also typically cast as neutral and, frequently, as inherently unifying. The **discourse of triumphalism** assumed two primary forms. The first *explicitly* cast the global rise of English as an affirmation of general American and/or core English-language speaking countries' intellectual, political, economic and cultural superiority. The second, which was far more common, represented the past, current and future global hegemony of English as an expression of a number of different naturalised social processes. The **discourse of populism** emphasised individual, creative appropriation of English, and of language in general. Rooted in a liberal pluralist and individualist paradigm, it largely bracketed power, attributing human action to individual choice. The **discourse of linguistic conflict and competition** placed English in competition with other languages and represented the global hegemony of English as a largely a-historical development requiring that much of the world to catch up to English-dominant countries. The basic inequalities inherent to a global linguistic order predicated upon the hegemony of English were rarely addressed. However, to varying degrees, the discourse of linguistic conflict and competition emphasised English as a threat to other languages and to linguistic diversity and multilingualism. The most prevalent of the four discourses was the discourse of populism. Among other things, it represented English as "the first choice," "the language of choice," "the overwhelming

language of choice," "overwhelmingly the language of first choice," "the language of choice for 80 percent of web sites," "a user-friendly language," and as "everyone's (language)."

Broadly speaking, three of the four discourses on the global hegemony of English - universal progress, triumphalism, and populism - represented this social phenomenon in largely uncritical terms. By uncritical, I mean that these discourses rarely problematized the global hegemony of English in terms of larger social relations of power, hierarchy, inequality or domination. They also generally constructed its historic and contemporary rise in positive terms. The discourse of linguistic conflict and competition included nearly all of those representations that pushed more toward critical conceptualisations of the global hegemony of English.

Although they emphasise different reasons for English's global ascendance, the discourses of universal progress, triumphalism, populism and, somewhat paradoxically, linguistic conflict and competition often, though not always, embraced a larger theme, that of the inevitable triumph of English. The 10 texts I analyse closely in this paper stand as especially interesting and salient examples of appeals to this pervasive and self-fulfilling idea. These texts range from those that reflect baldly stated realism, such as a short *Washington Post* piece that briefly addresses Daimler Benz' designation of English as an official language of intra-corporate communication to a longer, and much more nuanced, *NYT* story about the prevalence of English on the World Wide Web. Among other things, the latter story directly addresses the complicated question of so-called English "haves" and "have-nots." However, it, like most texts in my data pool, ultimately fails to engage in substantial critical socio-historical reflection. The common thread that binds the stories analysed below together is an insidious and uncritical circularity which casts English as the obvious, and foregone, solution to most, if not all, global language "problems" because it has apparently already established itself as *the* global language. Such a representation of the global hegemony of English abstracts English from the human social order while stripping it of its historicity and its rootedness in culture and various forms of social identity and struggle. It is to a sustained critical analysis of specific and revealing examples of the pervasive theme of the inevitability of English that I now turn.

English's 'inexorable' march

The level of consent to the hegemony of English was nearly always represented as overwhelming in the American prestige press texts I analysed. In contrast, opposition to English was invariably qualified opposition. So for example, an April 16, 2000 *New York Times* (*NYT*) text, "In Europe, some fear national languages are endangered," which focuses on the fascinating and complicated question of the rise of English in multilingual Switzerland,

and which draws attention to some of the potential effects of the global hegemony of English on multilingualism in that national context, paints English as being on a "inexorable march" across the Continent. It notes, for example, that "already more than half of the union's citizens believe that they are conversant in English." The story then *touches* on the question of domain colonisation, quoting David Graddol, who has written a number of reports on English for the British Council. Graddol represents domain colonisation as a basic fact of life in European countries that have national languages with comparatively few speakers and less linguistic power: " 'In some countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark,' said (Graddol), 'you can't live a full life as a citizen without speaking English, because some domains - business, science, even intellectual discussions - are in English now' " (Daley 2001: A1).

Though somewhat of an overstatement - English has made significant inroads into power domains such as science and technology in many European countries, but it has not completely supplanted national languages such as Swedish or Dutch in these domains - Graddol's charge that one cannot "live a full life as a citizen without speaking English" in multiple European countries is a provocative one. Certainly, it is provocative enough to merit either additional inquiry within this story, or to serve as the basis for an entirely new article or set of articles. However, "In Europe" does not critically engage Graddol's claim about domain colonisation and the ways in which it could potentially produce a dramatic linguistic domino effect.⁶ Like many texts I analysed, "In Europe" is complex; it shows *some* ambivalence toward the rise of English in Europe. Still, on a general level, it reflects the theme of the inevitability of English. Indeed, its failure to meaningfully address the issue of domain colonisation contributes significantly toward the naturalisation of the global juggernaut of English.

Domain colonisation embodies all the ingredients that make for a good international news story: conflict, competition, power, nationalism and national identity (The Missouri Group 2005). Additionally, because English's dominance is most pronounced in elite global contexts, the issue of domain colonisation would appear to have considerable appeal for readers of American prestige press publications. Yet I did not find a single text that *focused* on domain colonisation by English in my 275-story data pool. One possible reason for this not necessarily conscious sealing off of critique is that concentrating on English's widespread and penetrating colonisation of global, regional and national power domains goes straight to the more negative developments of this social phenomenon and potentially pushes too close to Americans' direct, and indirect, complicity in these developments. In short, sustained critical engagement of domain colonisation does not allow for the efficient construction of rhetorical cover for the naturalisation of particular forms of social domination.

Indeed, it threatens to do precisely the opposite: it threatens to expose some of the more profound, and potentially troubling, top-down aspects of the supposedly popularly, bottom-up driven expansion of English.

The naturalisation of language death

Another NYT text, this one grounded in a perspective that reflects concern for linguistic diversity, leans toward but does not fully embrace what could be described as a critical perspective on the global hegemony of English. Published in the August 15, 1998 edition under the headline "Too late to say 'extinct' in Ubykh, Eyak or Ona: Thousands of languages are endangered," the story focuses on the rapid disappearance of languages around the world.⁷ "Too late to say 'extinct' " gives voice primarily to linguists. They advance a number of theses about language:

- *languages do not simply reflect reality, but shape it;*
- *languages are a cultural resource, not simply a neutral instrument of communication;*
- *language death is a "natural" occurrence; therefore, attempts to slow this process are misguided, futile, and can even be said to constitute a back-door form of socio-economic oppression.*

Although it does not focus exclusively on English, "Too late to say 'extinct' " does implicate the hegemony of English in a precipitous drop in global linguistic diversity. However, it simultaneously and repeatedly links English to opportunity, and socio-economic upward mobility, thus mitigating English's representation as a "language slayer." It does so, for example, in the following passage: "But in today's more technologically connected world, that process (of language death) is hastening. English and a handful of other major languages that increasingly dominate the world are widely seen as passports to education and a brighter economic future" (Lewis 1998: B7). "Too late to say 'extinct' " also links linguistic and ecological diversity, thus making a connection proposed by number of scholars, including Tsuda (1997) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), who has established the analytical term "killer languages," or "languages whose (native) speakers have arrogated to themselves and to their languages more structural power and (material) resources than their numbers would justify, at the cost of speakers of other languages" (p.46).

Further on in the story, the author of "Too late to say 'extinct' " notes that, "Nor is cultural diversity the only loss. Luisa Maffi of Terralingua said indigenous languages could play a role in environmental preservation because they often reflect valuable ecological knowledge that

enable speakers to preserve their habitats" (Lewis 1998: B7). The story thus indirectly connects the global hegemony of English to the erasure of "valuable ecological knowledge." Yet in the very next sentence linguist David Crystal reduces English's historic and contemporary global hegemony to sheer happenstance:

English, it turns out, is the biggest language slayer. It was the language of the Industrial Revolution and remains the language of the world's biggest economy and remaining superpower. "It was always in the right place at the right time," said David Crystal, a retired linguistics professor from Reading University in Britain and author of "English as a Global Language". (Lewis 1998: B7)

After giving space to views on language that one could reasonably characterise as falling into a language rights category of perspectives on English, "Too late to say 'extinction' " naturalises linguistic disappearance by way of a series of quotes from linguists who lobby against linguistic preservation, and who therefore naturalise the inevitability of English. They do so in two ways:

- 1) they contend that standing up for language rights is, in fact, the real oppression, for it denies members of smaller language communities the (hegemonic) means by which to achieve upward mobility;
- 2) they collapse levels of analysis, contending that because global linguistic change is inevitable that the specific form such change takes is also inevitable.

The author of "Too late to say 'extinct' " notes that:

Organisations interested in preserving indigenous languages, including Terralingua and International PEN, which represents writers and translators, want to add a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights - creating a right to be educated in one's native tongue - to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the United Nations adopted in 1948.

But many argue that the disappearance of languages is inevitable. Peter Ladefoged of the University of California at Los Angeles has argued that linguists should record languages before they disappear but not necessarily try to save them. Preserving languages, he said, can impose political and economic costs by weakening unity and encouraging tribalism. It can also absorb scarce resources that might otherwise be used for development. Tanzania, he pointed out, promotes Swahili at the expense of tribal languages in the hope of creating a sense of nationhood in an ethnically diverse country. (Lewis 1998: B7)

Here, structural imposition of dominant languages is not represented as emanating from powerful linguistic actors promoting their own hegemonic rules of the (global) linguistic game. Instead, linguistic *preservation* is framed as an imposition. A monolingualism = unity vs. multilingualism = divisiveness opposition is constructed by Ladefoged, who precludes the possibility of unity predicated upon the practices of multilingualism and multilingual reciprocity.

"Too late to say 'extinct' " closes with a clincher paragraph⁸ that further naturalises language death as an inevitable trade-off for the benefits of modernity:

The loss of indigenous language and culture can be the price of entering the modern world, Mr. Ladefoged said. He remembered a speaker of Dahalo, an almost extinct Cushitic language in rural Kenya, who smilingly revealed that his sons spoke only Swahili. "He was proud his sons had been to school and knew things he did not. Who am I to say he was wrong?" (Lewis 1998: B7)

Although this text implicates English in global language loss, it resolves this darker tendency in favour of an ideological linkage premised upon the following equation: more powerful language(s)/English = progress and individual opportunity. Additionally, the text and the linguists whom it cites reverse the poles of domination. They position those who advocate for assent to a hegemonic order as liberators and construct those who push against such an order as oppressors.

English and universal progress

Like many texts that reflected a theme of the inevitability of English, some of the most interesting - including "Too late to say 'extinct' " - contained multiple contradictory views and statements about the global hegemony of English. A text similar to "Too late to say 'extinct' " in this respect was "Computer speak; World, Wide, Web: 3 English Words," published in the April 14, 1996 *NYT*. It problematizes some of the hierarchical tendencies of the global hegemony of English. It does so, for example, by contesting the easy equation which holds that English = universal knowledge production and consumption, and that, therefore, English = good. Yet after giving voice to critics of this equation, it seeks to impose a discursive resolution that ironically reproduces this equation. Rather than proposing an alternative to the hegemony of English in the realm of global knowledge production and consumption, it proposes more widespread English-language hegemony as a solution to English-language hegemony.

"Computer speak" opens with an ode to the inherently egalitarian nature of the Internet. According to the author, "The Internet has been pretty universally viewed as one of the great

democratic advances of the late 20th century. Nothing in human history has ever made more information more readily available to more people at lower cost" (Specter 1996: 1). However, rather than immediately plugging into the discourse of the Internet as a utopian democratic vehicle, "Computer speak" initially problematizes this sort of representation:

To study molecular genetics, all you need to get into the Harvard University Library, or the medical library at Sweden's Karolinska Institute, is a phone line and a computer.

And, it turns out, a solid command of the English language. Because whether you are a French intellectual pursuing the cutting edge of international film theory, a Japanese paleobotanist curious about a newly discovered set of primordial fossils, or an American teen-ager concerned about Magic Johnson's jump shot, the Internet and World Wide Web really only work as great unifiers if you speak English. (Specter 1996: 1)

Here, rather than simply drawing up the equation English = unity, "Computer speak," shows that unity comes on exclusive linguistic terms.

The text also gives voice to sources critical of English-language hegemony, and American hegemony in general. In fact, its first quote comes from a representative of a Russian Internet service provider who draws an analogy between the contemporary linguistic terrain of the Internet and colonialism:

"It is just incredible when I hear people talking about how open the Web is," said Anatoly Voronov, the director of Glasnet, Russia's best-known Internet provider. "It is the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism. The product comes from America so we either must adapt to English or stop using it. That is the right of any business. But if you are talking about a technology that is supposed to open the world to hundreds of millions of people you are joking. This just makes the world into new sorts of haves and have nots." (Specter 1996: 1)

"Computer speak" draws attention to American power vis-à-vis the global hegemony of English and constructs this social phenomenon as at least partially characterised by inequality. Of course, "Computer speak" also (re)produces a discourse of the inevitability of English:

For now if you want to take full advantage of the Internet there is only one real way to do it: learn English, which has more than ever become America's greatest and most effective export (carrying with it immense cultural power). It has been estimated that there are now more people who speak English as a foreign language than who speak it as their first language. English is already the language of diplomacy, scientific

discourse, air traffic control. But the implications of turning an international computer network into another platform for English - and the values it automatically carries - are immense. (Specter 1996: 1)

In explicitly referring to potential implications of English's hegemony, some of them presumably negative, "Computer speak" sets itself apart from the majority of the texts I analysed, many of which tended to cast English's rise in uncritical terms, most frequently as the expression of "popular choice." However, this NYT story ultimately reduces a wide range of potential implications of English's rise to a discussion of English "haves" and "have nots," implying that the solution to the hegemony of English is to simply give the "have nots" English. A Columbia University fellow quoted in the story explicitly advances this English have/have-nots perspective.

"Clearly in the short term this sets up a class distinction between the English-speaking elites and the non-English-speaking have-nots," said David Shenk, a fellow at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University who is writing a book on the information glut produced by the Internet. Mr. Shenk likens the absolute supremacy of English on the Web now to what happens as any major industry starts up. (Specter 1996: 1)

Here, "Computer speak" does acknowledge the ways in which capitalist tenets of economies of scale constrain and limit the potential for wild global cultural and electronic polyphony. This is a crucial observation. Maurais (2003) is among those who have proposed that there is: a) a clear link between the logic of economies of scale and linguistic survival; b) a direct link between the code underlying higher technology and linguistic survival. Without a critical political-economic mass, a language and language community may not thrive on the increasingly commercialised Internet, notes the author of "Computer speak." However, rather than underscoring the ways in which this objective reality might push against widespread linguistic diversity on the Internet, the author quotes a source who contends that other languages will simply "grow":

According to Christian Huitema, who is on the board of the Internet Society, which tries to set world standards, it takes about 2 million potential customers to establish a workable market. Japan now has close to 3 million, and it has become far less dependent upon and bothered by the hegemony of English than many other countries. "As the Internet grows, the body of people speaking other languages than English will grow as well," said Mr. Huitema. (Specter 1996: 1)

After devoting comparatively significant space to problematizing utopian discourses on the Internet "Computer speak," concludes by (re)producing precisely such a discourse. It does

so by way of a clincher paragraph that includes a quote from Mr. Huitema. The vision advanced by this source, one in which Third World children live on the same egalitarian (electronic) information plane as "educated (American) parents," holds tremendous appeal. However, it is premised upon the same easy English-for-everyone solution proposed earlier in the text:

"The effect of the Internet is to make information available at minimum cost and effort," (Mr. Huitema) said. "This is most beneficial to the current 'have nots' of our societies. High school students in desolated urban areas or university students in Africa can gain information on the Internet that is currently available only in the libraries of educated parents or Ivy League Universities. Learning basic English in order to reap that benefit seems like a sensible investment." (Specter 1996: 1).

This vision of global egalitarian transformation is predicated upon the "have-nots" playing by the hegemonic rules of the (linguistic) game laid out by the "haves." More egalitarian possibilities, for instance, the production of knowledge in other languages, universal multilingualism - for non-mother-tongue and mother-tongue speakers of English alike, or, most radically, the replacement of English with a neutral global language such as Esperanto, are not proposed in "Computer speak." This story, then, ends up casting, in circular fashion, English as the inevitable solution to universal global knowledge dissemination largely on the grounds of its apparently already self-evident status as the global language of knowledge and opportunity.

English as the ticket to upward mobility

An *International Herald Tribune (IHT)* article published February 12, 2001 under the headline "English bridges culture gap in Singapore" embraces a similar English "haves"/"have-nots" perspective. This perspective, which casts the rise of English as universally progressive, grounds itself in the assumption that the inevitable rise of English around the world will turn out to be an essentially positive phenomenon for all - as long, of course, as everyone is willing to transform their English "have-not" status into an English "have" status. The English "haves"/"have-nots" perspective reproduced in "English bridges culture gap" provides concrete and contemporary support for Sonntag's (2003: 23) claim that, "The association of English with both democracy and rationality is an old and persistent American liberal tradition. It is this ideological association that underlies the dominant American vision of linguistic globalisation - a vision of global English as an efficient tool to facilitate the spread of democracy."

To be fair, this *IHT* text does question the easy equation English = neutrality and the English = egalitarianism equation - but it does so only partially:

Miss Pang, of the Chinese Heritage Center, is concerned that for the children of lower-income Chinese Singaporean families who tend to use Mandarin or dialects at home, improving their English will be difficult.

"Some succeed," she said. "But I suspect that the large majority lose out because English really is an alien language to them. So they either go to the normal stream or technical schools or, worse, they drop out." (Richardson 2000: 15)

Ultimately, this text problematizes English's rise only in terms of an emerging hierarchy *within* Singapore, or in terms of Singaporeans highly fluent in English, and particular forms of it, and those less highly fluent. In doing so, it advances an English "haves" and "have nots" argument similar to the one in "Computer speak." According to this dichotomy, the main problem with English in Singapore is not the fact that in order to gain access to the global economy, Singaporeans have little choice but to acquire, at considerable individual, collective, and national economic and temporal cost and investment, high level English proficiency. The basic problem is that more Singaporeans are not fluent in English.

The logical extension of the implied solution to Singapore's intra-national English problems - equal and universal access to high-level English fluency for all Singaporeans - would be equal and universal access to high-level English fluency for all of the globe's people. If everyone was provided access to English - this is an English for everyone argument I encountered in many other texts - then, it is implied, hierarchy and inequality would disappear. There are a number of problems with this easy equation, which casts English as inherently, and inevitably, democratising. First, English's status as global hegemonic linguistic gatekeeper necessitates "giving" English to everyone in the first place so that they might have an equal chance at global upward mobility. This contributes to English's status as a global linguistic juggernaut. Second, a substantial intra-linguistic hierarchy and exclusiveness characterises English. A deep intra-English prestige differential is reflected, for example, in the ways in which Standard American English is privileged over other varieties of English such as African American Vernacular English in the American context. Indeed, it is perfectly plausible to view, as Schmidt (2000: 173) has put it: "Demands for a return to social peace and harmony, or (inter) national unity as demands for a return to a supposedly peaceful domination of one group by another." Additionally, an English for everyone approach needs to be problematized vis-à-vis questions of linguistic diversity, with respect to its potentially profound consequences in terms of the teaching and learning of languages other than English, and in terms of the ethics and practice of multilingual reciprocity.

Ultimately, media texts that represent the transformation of English "have-nots" into English "haves" as a solution to the hegemony of English - a solution which intensifies the hegemony of English - reverse of the poles of imperialism. They do so primarily by emphasising English's apparent global inevitability. Those actors who have historically pushed English to the far corners of the globe and sought to use it as a means of "co-opt(ing) indigenous elites into the lower levels of the colonial bureaucracy" (Parsons 1999: 30) and/or to anglicise select colonial subjects (Pennycook 1998) disappear from view only to re-appear as benefactors who would rescue the English "have-nots" from the throes of linguistic in-opportunity. Such representations suggest it is the lack of integration of "non-English speaking peoples" into a system characterised by Anglo-American English hegemony at its upper levels that is problematic, not the hierarchical global language system itself. In other words, the oppressors become liberators and the oppressed are cast as their own oppressors on the edifice of an allegedly inevitable global linguistic order historically constructed by the "liberators" themselves.

The global inevitability of English

In fact, only a handful of the 275 contemporary prestige press texts examined reflected a discourse of English-language triumphalism inflected by outright paternalism, arrogance and superiority. Most often, triumphalism was rooted in *matter-of-fact* assertions of the inevitability of the global expansion of English. In some cases, resistance to English hegemony as an apparently intensifying, snowballing linguistic juggernaut was represented in terms that would be familiar to fans of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* -Resistance to the English juggernaut, like resistance to The Next Generation's arch-enemy, "the Borg," was cast as futile. Worse perhaps, according to this view, to resist English is self-defeating. If English stands as the ticket to universal global success, upward mobility, cosmopolitan and transnational identity, the cool, the hip, the progressive, the future, and so on, to resist it is to prevent oneself from having access to all of these things. In reductive terms, the message is that to resist English is just plain stupid. Yet resistance to the hegemony of English is not objectively reducible to futility and foolishness. Multiple alternative paths exist, for example, to English monolingualism in the upper reaches of the global social order. Alternative languages such as Esperanto could be adopted and used by international organisations. An alternative form of English such as the phonetically spelled Anglic,⁹ or a move toward official codification and recognition of regional forms of English such as China English in global power domains represent different possibilities to universal global assent to Anglo-American English in power domains.

A defeatism of the sort that would please *The Next Generation's* Borg is apparent, for example, in the following excerpt from a May 19, 2002 *NYT* article published under the

headline "In Europe, going global means, alas, English." In it, a France-based academic assents to the (American) and English-language "way things are":

"(English) is the key market in the world as a consumer; it is the center of financial markets," said Subramanian Rangan, associate professor of strategy at the Insead business school outside Paris, whose language of teaching and research is English. "So with regard to products, financing, knowledge and technology, the United States has risen to unparalleled pre-eminence in these last years, and it doesn't seem there are contenders to change that. (Tagliabue 2002: 4)

Similarly, baldly stated realism courses through the following passage from a *Washington Post* story published September 20, 1998 edition under the headline "Two stars, in alignment: Germany's Daimler-Benz sees a marriage of strengths." Like the excerpt above, this one approaches English in terms of the intersections between English and international business:

Daimler also decreed that English would be its official language. That doesn't require Germans to speak English to other Germans, but Daimler requires that executives be capable of conducting any international meeting in English. In a sense it was just recognizing reality. English is the lingua franca of corporate Europe. (Swardson 1998: h1)

English as a unifier

An April 19, 1998 *Washington Post* article published under the headline "Eurocentricity: They can't even agree on the time for lunch" frames English as a "dawning reality." This column focuses on the "obstacles" standing in the way of European integration. According to the author, language is chief among these:

Language is probably the most obvious and powerful obstacle to culture-blending. Translators in Brussels are kept busy replicating documents in 11 languages (Austria, Luxembourg, Belgium and Ireland share languages with other countries), though business and even unofficial paperwork takes place in English, French or both. And the dawning reality, in Brussels and across Europe, is that there is only one language that everyone either knows or had better learn: English.

English is already the lingua franca of international trade, computers, scholarship, culture. Since it was born around here and prospers around the world, English may become, by default, the language of Europe. Which leads me to wonder whether, in

100 years, Portuguese or Dutch will have become folkloric tongues, like Breton is today in Northwest France or Cajun in Louisiana. (Trueheart 1998: C1)

The trope of the mythic tower of Babel surfaces here with multilingualism represented as a "powerful obstacle," and English as "the default language" around which Europe is unifying, and presumably will continue to unify. This text does link the hegemony of English to the potential erosion of linguistic diversity. However, it fails to problematize this erosion. Instead, the text casts the potential disappearance of Dutch or Portuguese as the inevitable price to be paid for cultural unification, English universalization and economic progress, and European de-Babelization. It thus frames English as the natural expression of apparently inherently progressive social change.

That the triumph of English might in fact come at the cost of other languages is also noted in a *NYT* text published in the July 19, 1998 edition under the headline "In Europe steps toward a common language." Yet this text generally emphasises English's allegedly intrinsic unifying capacities rather than its potential as a "killer language":

So strong is the tug of English in Europe that some have suggested it may one day emerge as the Continent's universal language, relegating Europe's other languages to the role of regional dialects, in much the same way that languages like Italian, German and even English itself triumphed during the industrialization of the 19th century over local dialects. (Tagliabue 1998: 4)

Whatever the future form of the global linguistic order, uncritical representations inflected by the theme of inevitability such as those above cannot reasonably be said to challenge, problematize, or undercut the global hegemony of English in a meaningful way. However, more overt expressions of triumphalism *might* inspire some readers to recoil and to resist more strongly than they might otherwise have the supposed triumph of the global hegemony of English, or the "end" of global linguistic history. The author's own critical response to such texts illustrates, in anecdotal fashion, the possibility of such a response.

Total global consent to English?

Consent to the inevitable global triumph of English represents another possible response. German author Peter Schneider contends in a *NYT* op-ed column published May 1, 2001 under the headline "Conquering Europe, word for word" that: "All this uproar [about English in Germany] is coming a little late. Although the administrative architects of the New Europe evidently refuse to acknowledge this *fait accompli*, the people of Europe have long since made their decision" (Schneider 2001: A23).

Schneider's consent to the inevitable triumph of English - which reduces all of Europe to an amorphous mass and, among other things, therefore incorrectly implies that English's rise has been essentially uniform throughout Europe - is mirrored in the following quote from a member of the French elite. This quote acts as a clincher paragraph in a different article, a March 3, 1992 *NYT* text published under the headline "Coffee with roll, garçon, and hold your tongue":

"It would be just as pointless to oppose the international use of English today as it would have been to oppose the worldwide use of French in the 18th century," Maurice Allais, a French economist and Nobel laureate, wrote in *Le Monde* some time ago.

"We must take the world as it is and not as we would like it to be." (Riding 1992: A4).

Here, the source quoted seeks to differentiate between "objective" and normative (linguistic) reality. However, he fails to acknowledge that the hegemonic contours of "objective" reality are in fact largely the result of a mostly successful struggle on the part of powerful groups of social actors to construct the rules of the human social game as they believe they *ought to be*.

Consent to the inevitable triumph of English spans discursive contexts. For example, in response to a questionnaire (Demont-Heinrich 2003) I administered in the fall of 2003 to 115 American college students and 15 students from nine non-English speaking countries at the Copenhagen Business School, a 22-year-old French respondent wrote, "Having English is a huge advantage for Anglo-Saxon countries. The world is unfair, but you have to deal with it." A 23-year-old German respondent offered the following response to a question about whether "everyone" should know English: "I think people from non-English speaking countries should know English. Why? Let's face it: English has become the global language."

In the end, contends Schneider (2001), the global triumph of English forces a perhaps uncomfortable reality upon people who hail from large, powerful language groups such as German or French speakers: The most powerful determine the linguistic rules of the (globalisation) game. This is a reality to which members of smaller, less powerful language communities have long since acquiesced, asserts Schneider (2001): "You don't hear the Danes, the Dutch or the Hungarians grumbling - smaller countries are used to learning other languages. And there's little indication that these linguistic 'traitors' are complaining to their therapists of acute identity trauma" (Schneider 2001: A23).

Schneider's is an interesting assertion. This is not so much because it illustrates the type and degree of consent by a member of a global elite for whom English is not a mother tongue, though it does do this. It is interesting because it draws attention to the ways in

which questions of language, whether on the local, national, regional level are basically questions of power. Those who hail from larger, more powerful language communities rarely alter their linguistic practices to adapt to less powerful groups. For example, few mother tongue German speakers in Switzerland bother to learn the endangered language Romansh, or even Italian (Dürmüller 1997). Alternatively, members of smaller language communities have little choice but to, as de Swaan (2001) puts it, learn "upward" and become multilingual. Schneider's observation that larger social relations of power generally determine linguistic practice contradicts repeated assertions in the texts examined that Europeans are *choosing* to learn English in a free-willed sense. Although I do not believe it is his intent, Schneider thus ends up undermining constructions of the hegemony of English as an inevitably egalitarian, unifying and democratising phenomenon.

Conclusion

I would suggest that the lack of outright opposition to English - and to its supposedly inevitable rise - in the texts examined here attests to a number of different factors. First, it potentially points to a rhetorical sealing off of alternatives to the global hegemony of English by the five American prestige press organs examined, most likely under the guise of extremism. It is implicitly suggested that only so-called fringe individuals and groups - typically not afforded meaningful voice in the American mainstream press - would suggest another language such as Esperanto, or French, or Chinese, or Anglic, as a possible alternative to English as a global language. Second, the apparently overwhelming consent to English points to the ideological power of a discourse such as universal progress. That is, at a general level of abstraction, appeals to efficiency, practicality and utility are powerfully persuasive and very difficult - though not impossible - to contest. This is true whether they underlie calls for the global hegemony of English, the regional hegemony of Spanish, or the national hegemony of German. Finally, an apparent lack of direct opposition to the global hegemony of English in the texts I examined can be read as both reflecting and reproducing the entrenched nature of its hegemony. Clearly, English's hegemony is a material matter. But it is an ideological matter as well.

In the end, a theme of the inevitable triumph of English comprises a crucial dimension of the social reproduction of this phenomenon. The more often that English is represented as inevitable, the more it in fact does become inevitable. Media representations such as those that I have examined above encourage more and more people see this social phenomenon as if it is in fact inevitable, "unstoppable," futile to resist. In other words, media texts that uncritically frame the hegemony of English as inevitable contribute to its very inevitability. While change *is* inevitable, the *specific form* it assumes is *not* inevitable. Social change is the result of ongoing human struggles for power and the hierarchical social relations that

both reflect and reproduce these struggles. Thus, while it does clearly represent an ongoing change, the global rise of English must be critically identified as a *particular*, socially produced, and not-at-all 'natural' change.

Notes

1. When I use the phrase "the hegemony of English," I refer to the hegemony of specific English language speakers and writers, meaning actually existing human social actors working toward the (re)production of a particular (global) linguistic order in which certain languages, and certain varieties of languages, are constructed as social mechanisms of exclusion and/or inclusion. In other words, as it is used here, the phrase "the hegemony of English," should be understood as acknowledging the reality of many different, hierarchically situated, Englishes.
2. This paper is an edited chapter from a recently completed dissertation (Demont-Heinrich 2006).
3. Stempel (1961) established the category prestige press in a study of newspaper coverage of the 1960 presidential election. He placed 15 newspapers in this category, including the *L.A. Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. The *International Herald Tribune* was not among these. However, it is owned and published by The New York Times Company (Columbia Journalism Review: Who owns what?).
4. Drawing in part from Kachru's (1992) inner/outer/expanding circles model of English in the global context and in part from McArthur's (1987) English Around the World model, I place the United Kingdom and its dominant English speaking former colonies-the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand-at the core of the global linguistic order. Both Kachru and McArthur have correctly noted that the ground is shifting away from the core in terms of sheer numbers of speakers of English. *However*, as McArthur (2000), Crystal (1997), de Swaan (2001), and others have contended, it is *still* the core countries whose dominant varieties of English are made to act as the standard in global domains of power.
5. Some examples of recent studies attempting to address this question include: Karstadt's (2002) "What do American undergraduates think?," and Kubota's (2001) "Teaching World Englishes to native speakers of English in the USA."
6. For example, if most cutting-edge medical research is published in English in a given country, then, at a minimum, journalists in that country who cover health issues must be fluent in English; further down the social knowledge hierarchy, citizens seeking medical information might also discover they need to know English in order to access to crucial medical information.
7. So dramatic is the rate of language disappearance that some linguists such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) have predicted that up to 90% of the world's languages will die out within the next 100 years.
8. A clincher paragraph is mechanism that allows journalists to maintain the appearance of objectivity while projecting a preferred reading onto the text via the last paragraph, or the last few paragraphs, of a story.
9. Swedish scholar R.E. Zachrisson devised a phonetic form of English-a language notoriously difficult to spell-called "Anglic" in 1930 (Baugh & Cable 1978). The following passage, which puts a new face on Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address, illustrates Zachrisson's system: "Forskor and sevn yeerz agoe our fadherz braut forth on this kontinent a nue naeshon, conseved in liberti, and dedikaeted to the propozishon that aul men ar kreaeted eequel" (Baugh & Cable 1978: 326).

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