

How has English become a World Language?

Where once Britain ruled the waves, now it
is English which rules them.

Questions to Ponder

- What is the Role of English Language in 3rd world countries?
- Why have other languages not prospered?
- How has the position of English strengthened?
- Justification for the continued use of former colonial languages?
- Whose interests do the present policies on language in education serve?
- How can one relate micro level ELT professionalism to macro level of global inequality?

The Status of English: an International Language Par Excellence

English has a dominant position in the following fields:

- Science & Technology,
- Computer, Software, Mass Media
- Entertainment, Sport, Youth,
- Research, Books,
- Trans-national businesses, trade, shipping, aviation,
- Diplomacy, International Organizations,
- Culture, Education systems etc.

In the Words of Director of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington

“From a minor language in 1600, English has in less than four centuries come to be the leading language of **international communication** in the world today. This remarkable development is ultimately the result of 17th, 18th, and 19th century British successes in conquest, **colonization, and trade**, but it was enormously accelerated by the emergence of the **United States** as the major **military world power** and **technological leader** in the aftermath of World War II. The process was also greatly abetted by the expenditure of **large amounts of government and private foundation funds** in the period 1950-1970, perhaps the most ever spent in history in support of the propagation of a language.” (Troike 1977:2)

Imposition of English Language

- During colonial times, English was imposed by force. However, contemporary language policies are determined by the state of the **market** (demand).
- The discourse legitimating the export of English to the rest of the world has been so **persuasive** that English has been equated with **progress** and **prosperity**.

Imposition of English Language

English as a second language (ESL) was believed to be a vital **key to development** by both the USA and by countries like Indonesia, Thailand, India, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria Columbia and Peru. (Fox 1975:36) (Ford Foundation's language projects officer)

Imposition of English Language

- ELT is not a purely linguistic, literary or pedagogical matter; instead, it is an international activity with political, economic, military, and cultural implications and ramifications.
- “Once we used to **send gunboats and diplomats** abroad; now we are sending **English teachers**” (International House Brochure, 1979)

Neutralization of English Language

- A Srilankan Minister proposed that the teaching of English throughout Asia, Africa and the Pacific should be placed on the same level as the World Health Organization.
- “The relative **unrelatedness of English** to ideological issues in much of the Third World today must not be viewed as a phenomenon that requires no further qualification. Westernization, modernization, the spread of international youth culture, popular technology and consumerism are all **ideologically encumbered** and have ideological as well as behavioral and econo-technical consequences.” (Fishman 1987:8)

Popular Narratives to Support the Imposition of English

- One characteristic of the majority of Third World countries in which English is a dominant language is that the wealth that English provides access to is very **inequitably distributed**. Such countries have **economies** which are **relatively weak** in the international balance of power, and the gap between them and the West has been widening in recent decades, despite aid of all kinds.
- English has been marketed as the **language of development**, modernity, and scientific and technological advance. It has also held out a promise which so far has been only **marginally fulfilled**.

ELT AID: A Tool for the Imposition of English Language

When ELT figures in an aid context, it has been financed for specific purposes, such as **the learning of English for science and technology** in higher education, for supporting English as a **medium of education** in schools, or to permit technical training for particular developmental goals (Iredale 1986:44). A second goal, according to the British donor, is that 'Naturally, when people learn English, for whatever purpose and by whatever method, they acquire something of the **flavor of our culture**, our institutions, our **ways of thinking** and communicating.

Are ELT Programs Really Effective?

- Rogers (1982) protests against the **promotion of English** creating false expectations among the **mass of educational push-outs** (a more honest and correct term than drop-outs) in the Third World, and refers to the poor cost-efficiency of English teaching and the lack of attention to the social context in which it takes place.

Hayes (1983) writes of unused, and possibly by implication unusable, syllabi and textbooks written by **expatriate 'experts'**.

Are ELT Programs Really Effective?

- Richards (1984) is skeptical of the **communicative language teaching** bandwagon, and pleads for greater accountability and evaluation in the area of innovation in language teaching methods.
- Brumfit (1985b) is concerned that the ELT professional methodologists seem to be committed to the notion that **process is content**, and that they **ignore the social and ideological messages expressed in language learning situations**.

Are ELT Programs Really Effective?

- Krasnick (1986) identifies **three ELT images** which **stigmatizes learners** as being deficient:
 1. They are in **need of remediation** (special education);
 2. They are treated as **non-students** (in need of language, not content);
 3. They need **re-socialization** (so that they can behave properly). ELT training focuses little on the educational and sociological fields that could equip its professionals to function more adequately.

English, the Dominant Language

- **Core-English Speaking Countries (Europeanized Societies)** : Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In all these countries, native speakers of English form the dominant group.
- **Periphery-English Speaking Countries:** (1) countries which require English as an international link language e.g Japan and Scandinavia. (2) countries on which English was imposed in colonial times

ESL vs EFL Countries

- The conventional definition of ESL countries is countries in which English is not a native language but where it is used widely as a medium of communication in domains such as education and government. This is so in Nigeria or Singapore.
- In EFL countries, English is not a medium of instruction or government, but is learnt at school, as is the case in France or Japan, for communicating with speakers of the language, or for reading texts in the language (definitions from Richards, Platt, and Weber 1985).

English in Core-English Speaking Countries

- The **use of one language** generally implies the **exclusion of others**, although this is by no means logically necessary. Functional bilingualism or multilingualism at the individual and societal level is common throughout the world.
- However, the general pattern in core English-speaking countries has been one of increasing **mono-lingualism**.
- The **advance of English**, whether in Britain, North America, South Africa, Australia, or New Zealand has **invariably been at the expense of other languages**.

Resistance to English Monolingualism (Canada)

- The **trend** towards mono-lingualism has been **partially challenged** in some parts of the Western world. For instance in Canada the **supremacy of English** has been successfully **challenged** and has given way over the past 30 years to a comprehensive **French- English bilingual policy** throughout the country, with special support given to French in Quebec (Bourhis 1984).
- In recent years some official support has also been given to the maintenance and cultivation of Canada's many '**heritage' languages**, of both immigrant and indigenous minorities (Cummins and Danesi 1990; Stairs 1988).

Resistance to English Monolingualism (Wales)

- In Wales, the rapid demise of the Welsh language over the past century has been arrested and the language is now more actively used in the **education system** from **nursery to university level**, the media, and the law courts (Lewis 1982; Williams 1990).

In both Canada and Wales, defying the might of English involved a protracted **political struggle, with loss of life on occasion**, before the dominant group would concede language rights to the dominated group.

Resistance to English Monolingualism (USA)

- In its early period, **the US valued diversity** of language and maintained the English legal custom of not regulating language officially or denying personal liberties in language.
- However, the late nineteenth century gave rise to the **promotion of a monolingual tradition** and emphasis on standard English as the mark of reason, ethics, and esthetics; the tolerance of diversity which had characterized the early national history declined' sharply.
- An English-only, **standard-English-preferred policy was institutionalized** though not legalized. (Heath and Mandabach 1983: 102)

Agents of English Monolingualism in the USA

- The decisive agent in this socialization process was the **school, with the teacher of English playing a pre-eminent role in promoting the assimilation of linguistically and culturally diverse children to Anglo norms** (Hernández-Chávez 1978).

The Impact of Monolingualism in USA

- The impact on the cultures and languages of the indigenous peoples of a monolingual policy has been devastating:
- Navajo children are taught in a foreign language: they are taught concepts which are foreign, they are taught values that are foreign, they are taught lifestyles which are foreign, and they are taught by human models which are foreign. The intention behind this kind of schooling is to mold the Navajo child (through speech, action, thought) to be like members of the predominant Anglo-Saxon mainstream culture. The apparent assumption seemingly being that people of other ethnic groups cannot be human unless they speak English, and behave according to the values of a capitalistic society based on competition and achievement. The children grow up in these schools with a sense of: (1) confusion regarding the values, attitudes and behaviour taught at home. (2) Loss of self-identity and pride concerning their selfhood-their Navajo-ness. (3) Failure in classroom learning activities. (4) Loss of their own Navajo language development and loss of in-depth knowledge of their own Navajo culture. (Pfeiffer 1975: 133)

Resistance to English Monolingualism

(Australia)

- Australia has seen an upsurge of activity and official report-writing encouraging the retention of a bilingual and bicultural identity for the many ethnic groups represented in Australia (Clyne 1982 and 1986; the journal Vox).
- Australia has commissioned a national language policy (Lo Bianco 1987), which outlines the principles that should guide a policy for all Australian languages, the relationship between English and other languages, language services, and a description of how the goals can be achieved. How far there will be greater power- sharing between English and other languages is still an open question (Smolicz in press), but the hegemony of English is now definitely disputed.

Resistance to English Monolingualism (New Zealand)

Steps have been taken in New Zealand to formulate a national languages policy (Hollis 1990). This affirms the right of all New Zealanders, of whatever linguistic origins, to have access to both English and Maori. It also stresses the importance of the minority languages of immigrants and refugees, and the need to learn the languages of trading partners, increasingly from the Asian and Pacific region (*ibid.*). Both English and Maori have the status of official languages. There has been an upsurge in Maori-language pre-schools; government departments are gradually adding Maori to their repertoires.

English in Periphery-English Countries

English is entrenched word-wide as a result of British colonialism, international interdependence, revolutions in technology, transport, communication and commerce, and because English is the language of USA, a major economic, political, and military force in the contemporary world. It is not only Britain which has gravitated towards linguistic homogeneity, but a significant portion of the entire world.

ESL vs EFL Countries

Important Issues

- Linguistic and pedagogic standards, language variation, the status of indigenized varieties of English, and the norms that should hold for learners of English in a variety of contexts. These issues are of central concern, as is the underlying question of who has the power to impose a particular norm and why.

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Influence of English in Periphery-English Countries

The pull of English is remarkably strong in periphery-English areas, not only among the clues who benefit directly from their proficiency in English but also among the masses, who appreciate that the language provides access to power and resources, whether in the slums of Bombay, where the English-medium school is a prestige symbol {Rajyashree 1986:46] or in Kenya, where parents have 'an acute understanding of the competitive nature of life chances (Obura 1986 421).

Example: Among a small but growing number of Western-educated Africans, the trend is to use English as the language of the home. This was observed in Ghana in the early 1960s (Chinebuah 1981:19), and has led one East African scholar to predict that By the year 2000 there will probably be more black people in the world who speak English as their native tongue than there will be British people' (Mazrui 1975:9).

Influence of English in Periphery-English Countries

- Globally, what we are experiencing is that English is both replacing other languages, as in Mazrui's example, and displacing them, as is happening in Scandinavia (Fishman 1977; Lutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1985b and 1986a). Displacement occurs when English takes over in specific domains, whether in computers or entertainment. In many former colonies there is a diglossic or triglossic situation, with the Colonial language still being used in high status activities, a Dominant local language (for example, Swahili) being used for less prestigious functions, and local languages used for other purposes.

Influence of English in Periphery-English Countries (Africa)

- African languages tend to be marginalized and lose out in the competition with European languages. Proficiency in the latter is essential for upward social mobility and privileged positions in society. Just as schools were the principal instrument for alienating indigenous minorities from their languages and traditional cultures (as in the case of the Welsh, the American native peoples, and the Australian aborigines, Jordan 1987a and b, 1988), it is schools in Africa which are stifling local languages and imposing alien tongues and values. 'The foreign colonial languages are more favoured now than they were before independence', writes the director of the Inter-African Bureau of Languages (Mateene 1980: vii). The use of vernaculars in - education has been gradually phased out' (Bokamba and Tlou 1980: 49).

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Influence of English in Periphery-English Countries

- The relationship between the learning of languages in educational establishments and the use of languages for a range of societal purposes is not a simple one, but there is no doubt that education is of paramount importance in transmitting values and modes of thought from one generation to the next. English has retained its privileged position in the educational process in Asia as well as Africa.

Influence of English in Periphery-English Countries (Singapore)

- **Singapore** has four official languages: Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English. but virtually all children are educated through the medium of English and are expected to study their mother tongue, the language of their ethnic affiliation, as a second language (Kuo and Jernudd 1988: 13-14). University education is now no longer offered in Chinese and is only available through the medium of English. In fact, although Malay is the sole national language, the medium of education at the National University of Singapore is English. It is government policy to Establish English as the language of Singapore's public, industrial, and modern business sectors, which means that people in their thirties feel handicapped by their limited English, as compared with those who have been at school more recently (Ghid 3), English is being promoted as a supra-ethnic language of national integration, and it is claimed that this accounts for the lack of inter- ethnic friction in Singapore.

Influence of English in Periphery-English Countries (India)

- Throughout India, at the secondary school stage a student has to learn at least three languages, one of which is English Annamalai 1988:9). The medium of instruction in higher education is generally English, despite efforts to reduce its importance. The quality of tertiary education in the humanities in India is sharply criticized (Kachru 1975 and Pattanayak 1981), among other things for excessive adherence to the academic tradition inherited from the colonizers. English functions as a Pan-Indian language, particularly among elite groups, / despite the impressive spread of Hindi since independence in many parts of the country and in spite of the consolidation of the dominant languages in each state (Khubchandani 1983).

Importance of English in Periphery-English Countries

- The importance of English in such African and Asian periphery-English countries is twofold. English has a dominant role internally occupying space that other languages could possibly fill. English is also the key external link, in politics, commerce, science, technology, military alliances, entertainment, and tourism. The relationship between English and other languages is an unequal one, and this has important consequences in almost all spheres of life.

The Pattern of Linguistic Imperialism

- The present distribution throughout the world of the major international languages-Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish is evidence of conquest and occupation, followed by adoption of the invader's language because of the Benefits that accrue to speakers of the language when the dominant language has been imposed. Language spread invariably occurs in conjunction with forces such as religion or trade, which are seen by some as extra-linguistic but the significance of Language as a tool for unification has long been recognized.

How do Western Powers Promote their Languages

- Britain, the United States, France, Germany, and, on a smaller scale, many other countries promote their languages by similar means, among them the following: training and research, for natives and non-natives, in the 'mother country'; scholarships for longer or shorter periods, courses, specialist visits; the production and promotion of textbooks, audiovisual materials, library services and gifts of books; the supply of teachers overseas and experts in curriculum development, advisory work, and in-service training; and cultural manifestations.

Opposition to the Dominance of English

- Opposition has come from many parts. Those protesting include colonized people, European parliamentarians, political enemies of core-English nations, guardians of the purity of languages that English intrudes on, and intellectuals from core and periphery- English countries. What the protesters have in common is a recognition of evidence of linguistic imperialism)and dominance, and a desire to combat it. The following brief examples provide an indication of some of the sources and types of protest:

Opposition to the Dominance of English

leaders of oppressed groups like Gandhi (1927), who protested against the alienation induced by English in India, the intoxication, denationalization, and mental slavery which the language brought with it, in public and private life. He also held English responsible for distorting education, where because of the time spent learning English the standard reached in other subjects was 'pitifully inadequate';

Opposition to the Dominance of English

- theoretical and empirical work on the ideology of colonizers and on the colonized consciousness of Third World subjects, in particular the role of language in causing colonized people to internalize the norms of the colonizers, which leads to cultural deracination (Fanon 1952 and 1961). This work has been of central importance in the development of racism studies (Mullard 1985; Gilroy 1987);

Opposition to the Dominance of English

- analysis of the forms and psychology of contemporary imperialism, for instance the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who, in a series of fictional and philosophical writings, analyses neocolonialism in Kenya, a typical periphery-English country, and shows how English serves to uphold the domination of a small élite and of the foreign interests that they are allied with (Ngugi 1981, 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1986);

Opposition to the Dominance of English

- denunciations of cultural imperialism, for instance a Nazi critique of the British Council, which identified the advance of English with the destruction of western civilization (Thier- felder 1940), and a recent official French study which sees the worldwide extension of English in almost identical terms, as the imposition of a linguistic uniformity which is intellectually and spiritually cramping and a threat to cultural and creative values (Haut Conseil de la Francophonie 1986: 341).