

**The business of English,
global panacea or pandemic?
Myths and realities of 'Global' English**

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**Language has always been
the handmaiden of empire.**

Antonio de Nebrija, 1493

Linguist endorsing linguistic imperialism

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Hans Joachim Meyer, 2011

**Politician worried about covert language policy
driven by market forces**

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James Coleman, 2006

British language expert falsely condoning 'global' English

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Christian gospel in symbiosis with 'global' English

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.... the English used as an international scientific language is not a lingua franca, a non-language. English is a completely normal language with its specific monolingual semantics, like all other languages. [...] It is the bearer, like all other natural languages, of a particular vision of the world. As such it is not universal and purely objective, which is what real lingua francas were.

Jürgen Trabant, 2012

German scholar denouncing loose use of the concept *lingua franca*

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How can we counteract the abuse of power that is intrinsic to linguistic hegemony? (...) we need to reflect on this model so as to see if and how it is possible to go along with using English without the risk of being anglicised into its conceptual structures, without being brainwashed by its linguistic patterns.

Pierre Bourdieu, 2001

Sociologist analysing how linguistic hegemony can be countered

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L'alternative est claire, en effet, bien qu'elle soit très rarement perçue : ou bien accepter l'une ou l'autre des fonctions sociales que la nouvelle définition sociale impartit aux producteurs culturels, celle de l'expert, chargé d'assister les dominants dans la gestion des “problèmes sociaux”, ou celle du professeur, enfermé dans la discussion érudite de questions académiques; ou bien assumer efficacement, c'est-à-dire avec les armes de la science, la fonction qui fut remplie longtemps par l'intellectuel, à savoir d'intervenir sur le terrain de la politique au nom des valeurs ou des vérités conquises dans et par l'autonomie.

Pierre Bourdieu, 1989

Bourdieu's choices for the intellectual

- 1. Uncritically implementing policies determined by those in power.**
- 2. Remaining ensconced in an ivory tower.**
- 3. Using the achievements of academic freedom and university autonomy so as to actively address acute socio-political problems.**

Global English?

- A necessary panacea?
- A myth?
- A project – agendas, agents?
- A pandemic?

*“The chief business of the American people is business”
(President Calvin Coolidge, 1925)*

- Implications for other cultures and languages?

Need for an understanding of the forces behind changes in the global linguistic mosaic, the historical origins of the expansion of English, and where we are heading.

Sources: Spanish, German, French,
Scandinavian languages, ...

Global English myth

*English is the only language you need in the
modern world*

Shift from *Weltliteratur* (Goethe)
to **World English**

RP: critique of
Crystal, Ostler, Coleman, Graddol

Johan Wolfgang von Goethe

texts in all languages enrich humanity

*Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt,
weiß nichts von seiner eigenen.*

**People who know no foreign languages
know nothing of their own.**

*Wer English kennt
braucht nichts von andere Sprachen.*

**Whoever knows English
has no need of other languages.**

linguicism

From state monolingualism to empires (Spanish, French, British, etc) with *linguistic imperialism* (Nebrija, Rivarol, Macaulay et al) as a variant of *linguicism*.

“ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language”

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas 1988

Example 1: university language policy

Scandinavia: financial rewards and promotion based on publication in English.

resistance

- **Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy**
- **Statement from German University Rectors**
- ***Deutsch in der Wissenschaft. Ein politischer und wissenschaftlicher Diskurs* (Oberreuter et al, 2012)**

Example 2: Singapore

English-medium education throughout school and higher education.

Consequence? Enforced language shift.

Over 50% of families have English as the main language in the home.

Linguistic capital

accumulation

-adding to one's linguistic repertoire

dispossession

-competence added at the expense of other languages

-structures and ideologies facilitate this

-identifiable agents, external and internal

glottophagie (Calvet)

lingua tyrannosaura (Swales)

lingua frankensteinia (Gandhi, Fanon, Ngũgĩ, Indian sociolinguists, First Nations scholars, RP)

Example 3: EU

- **Bologna process**
- **DG Research applications**
- High Level group on the **modernisation of higher education**, European Commission, June 2013, Recommendation 12, endorses English as *the* language of internationalisation, i.e. the sole international *lingua academica*
- English the **default EU in-house language**

Largely unquestioned hegemonic processes.

linguicist favouring of English

Délégation nationale à la langue française et aux langues de France, Annual Report 2006

‘... le français tend à devenir une langue de traduction et non plus de conception’.

In other words a monolingual culture and mindset within EU institutions affects both content and form – English in EU spoken and written discourse.

DGLFLF, bilan 2014

Droit au français et à pluralité linguistique

-Votre droit au français dans les manifestations, colloques et congrès scientifiques

-Guide des bonnes pratiques linguistiques dans les entreprises

www.francaisautravail.org

- Terminologie

-...

terra nullius

- ***Roman Catholic Papacy: Occupy the Americas 1513***
- ***John Locke 1698: Europeans have a (Christian) God-given right to occupy territory elsewhere. The myth of *unoccupied territory*, to which its benighted inhabitants had no claim or rights. They did not obey God's command to labour. This failure can justify indigenous dispossession and genocide by Europeans.***

‘The use of English as a world language’

In 1934 the Carnegie Foundation sponsored a US/UK conference in New York.

Agreement on the goal of *‘spreading English “as a world language” on a basis of UK-US collaboration’*.

This led to US funding of activities on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1930s and again in the 1950s with

- the creation of departments of applied linguistics,**
- the birth of the English Language Teaching profession/industry,**
- TESOL, IATEFL, initially national, now ‘global’,**
- Cambridge exams, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.**

Winston Churchill at Harvard, 1943



This gift of a **common tongue** is a priceless inheritance, and it may well some day become the foundation of a **common citizenship**. I like to think of British and Americans moving about freely over each other's wide estates with hardly a sense of being foreigners to one another. But I do not see why we should not try to **spread our common language even more widely throughout the globe** and, without seeking selfish advantage over any, possess ourselves of this invaluable amenity and birthright.

Winston Churchill's understanding of globalization, 1942



- **The power to control language offers far better prizes than taking away people's provinces or lands or grinding them down in exploitation. The empires of the future are the **empires of the mind.****

Harvard University, 6 September 1943

Churchills's five themes, 1943

- **UK/US unity**
- **military collaboration**
- **plans for global peace-keeping**
- **US/UK global dominance**
- **global English**

USA exceptionalism past and present

‘The whole world should adopt the American system. The American system can survive in America only if it becomes **a world system**’

President Harry Truman 1947

President Barack Obama 2014

‘Here’s my bottom line: America must always lead **on the world stage.**’

‘the cause of freedom across the world’

**The Margaret Thatcher Center For Freedom
at the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC
has as its main goal**

**to ensure that the US and UK
can ‘lead and change the world’**

www.thatchercenter.org

Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron, ...

cultura nullius

- US foundation funding for *research* in Europe from 1919 in social and natural sciences and medicine.
- In the *cultural cold war*, all western European countries experienced massive efforts by the USA, often funded by the CIA, to project Hollywood, influence intellectuals, reading habits and cultural and political life in general (Saunders 1999).
- *McDonaldisation* (Hamelink 1994, Ritzer 2011) has penetrated academia, the business world, the media, lifestyles and entertainment, clothing *et al* in countless ways.
- Neoliberal economic principles dovetail with cultural norms. American consumerist capitalism is projected as a *cultura nullius* of universal relevance, a necessity in the modern world (Kayman 2004).

Churchill in Copenhagen 1950 (1)

The first duty of a university is to teach **wisdom**, not to train, and to confirm **character** and not impart technicalities. We want a lot of engineers in the modern world, but we do not want a world of engineers. We want some scientists, but we must make sure that science is our servant and not our master... No amount of technical knowledge can replace the comprehension **of the humanities or the study of history and philosophy.**

Churchill in Copenhagen 1950 (2)

The advantages of the nineteenth century, the literary age, have been largely put aside by this terrible twentieth century with all its confusion, exhaustion, and bewilderment of mankind. This is a time when a firm grip on all the essential verities and values of **humanity and civilization should be the central care of the universities of Europe and the world.**

post-Churchill?

- academic freedom à la Bourdieu constrained
 - ‘engineers’ → economists committed to neoliberalism
 - EU constitutional treaty and policies
 - NATO globalised, English as *lingua bellica*
 - linguicism
 - English for ‘peace-keeping’
 - English-medium schooling worldwide
- global and local inequalities (the 99%)**

From *terra nullius* to *cultura nullius* to English as a *lingua nullius*

marketing of English as

- a language that **everyone** needs, English as a ‘basic skill’ (Graddol), the world’s ‘common language’ (British Council)
- **the** language of science, of European integration, international understanding, the language of ‘development’, etc.
- **deterritorialised**, as detached from its cultures of origin (UK, USA) and the forces that have determined its expansion worldwide.

These are selective, false, myths.

the *lingua nullius* project

English is **promoted** as though it serves all equally well, as if it played no role in intensifying the global and local gaps between the haves and have-nots, the obscenely rich in North and South countries and the Majority World.

English is **ascribed the role of a *lingua nullius***, reinforcing the myth and injustices of *terra nullius* and an environmentally destructive *cultura nullius*.

In the USA and Australasia, ***terra nullius* coalesced with English as a *lingua nullius***. This is now a global **project**. Global English is not a reality but a project behind which there are identifiable agents.

falsity of global English advocacy

The argument that you can **communicate in English with ‘people from almost any country in the world’** is flawed. You don’t get far in Latin America, southern Europe, most of Africa, the Middle East or Asia - even in India - with English outside elite circles and tourist sites. Even in Scandinavia, proficiency in communication in English above a crude spoken level is not widespread. Contrary to what Coleman asserts, the expansion of English **in higher education** in Europe consists almost invariably of English being added to national language repertoires rather than replacing them (Gregersen 2014, Phillipson in press). While English is of major importance for the global economy, assuming that it is so ‘basic’ that it is a requirement for economic success is contradicted by the fact that the economies of **China, Japan and Korea** succeed through using **local** languages in basic education, as do continental European countries.

Macaulay

Graddol



Macaulay

1. Denigrate and stigmatize the *local*
2. Glorify *one's own* culture and language
3. *Rationalize* the asymmetrical relationship
4. Implement a *technocratic* mission
5. *Ignore* wider *economic* rationales and goals
6. Fail to address the context of *military* occupation

Graddol

1. Indian learning of English is inadequate
2. The UK has the solution to India's problem
3. We are here to 'help' solve your problem
4. Our focus is on declared specific issues
5. The UK is not in it for the money
6. Global strategic interests are not referred to

lingua nullius discourse

- Martin Davidson, Chief Executive, British Council Annual Report 2009-10: '*English Next India* tells us that from education to the economy, from employability to social mobility, the prospects for India and its people will be greatly enhanced by bringing English into *every classroom, every office and every home*' (colouring added, RP).
- cf. Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, UNESCO.
- Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize for economics laureate, pleads for new, more equitable policies that could enable the needs of the entire population of India to be met.

ELF

The currently fashionable *English as a Lingua Franca* movement, the study of the use of English by people for whom it is not a first language, is a clear instance of promoting English as a *lingua nullius*, a language that is seen as divorced from societal power, in which anything goes, and native speaker norms are considered irrelevant. This empiricist exercise is theoretically and methodologically flawed, as many articles have demonstrated.

To conclude

‘Language in Global Management and Business’.

‘Language’ is used here in a generic sense, and therefore refers to languages in the plural.

‘Global’ is a deceptively feel-good adjective, one that is widely used opportunistically in relation to English.

Maintaining the vitality of all languages entails avoiding being **brainwashed** either at the **micro** level of concepts and discourse patterning originating in English or at the **macro** level of unquestioning faith in the structures and ideologies that strengthen English and neoliberalism and its devastating consequences.

Many language policies are **linguicist** overtly or covertly.

Contexts of uncertainty

- **Americanisation?**
- **European integration?**
- **Language policy?**
- **Chinese military and economic expansion, plus party control, plus promotion of Chinese worldwide.**
- **The future of English internationally is unpredictable.**
- **Churchillian ambivalence?**

risks

This workshop, and the research focus on the language dimension of business communication, would not be needed at all if intercultural, cross-linguistic communication was completely unproblematical. Analysis at the **micro** level, e.g. '*Imprisoned in English. The hazards of English as a default language*' Anna Wierzbicka (2014). English as a *lingua academica* builds on the semantics and grammar of how English evolved in English-using cultures, as Trabant, cited initially, insists, and is subject to massive **macro** level pressures.

The **monolingualism of research in the USA and UK** (including linguistics and applied linguistics) may serve to consolidate the dominance of English in covert hegemonic ways. It may serve to promote English as *a lingua nullius* in linguistic ways.

English as a *lingua economica*?

Panacea or pandemic?

- The idea that English is **global**, and in everyone's interest is patently false. ***Lingua nullius arguments*** are comparable to the claim by Margaret Thatcher that There Is No Alternative to neoliberalism, and Tony Blair claiming that this system is 'universal'. This myth is still in force despite the financial collapse of 2008 and banks being rescued by governments, and despite its appalling consequences for the many.
- **Advocates of English for all**, nationally and internationally, are false prophets. The argument that English is '**owned**' by all who use it ignores the political economy of English and the inequalities generated by and through English. English is not a **panacea**. It need not be a **pandemic**, provided linguistic capital accumulation does not entail the dispossession of linguistic capital invested in other languages.

Thank you

Kiitos

Tack så mycke

Tusind tak

Muchas gracias

Merci pour votre attention

Vielen Dank für ihre Aufmerksamkeit

