

LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

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1. Language policy

- the legalized, direct or indirect regulation of language use by a dominant power within a nation-state, its colonies and spheres of influence, or by consensual agreement between nation-states.
 - language policy has been intrinsic to the building of the nation state and its colonial practices (Billig 1995, Anderson 1983).
 - Language as always been in the service of power but also of those who contest power. What is at stake: Less linguistic diversity than semiotic diversity.
- Three case studies: France, Britain, the U.S

1.1 The case of France

The imposition of French on the French territory under the French Revolution in the name of *liberté, égalité* against Latin (Hagège 1985, de Certeau 1975).

Ancients vs. Moderns. Founding of the Académie Française 1635.

Antoine de Rivarol 1783 on the superiority of the French language

Survey of l'abbé Grégoire 1794 and the eradication of the patois

Universalité et mission civilisatrice de la France.

19-20th cent. French colonial empire : direct rule. French mandatory for all.

After WWII: Francophonie. Teaching of French as a foreign language (FLe) has three goals: political *res publica*, individual autonomy, personal creativity based on French culture of letters and the arts.

To-day in France: national language, regional languages (may be taught as electives: only Catalan, Occitan, Basque, Breton), minority languages (taught as FLs). Official discourse in France (as in Japan & Turkey) : « we have no minorities ».

1.2 The case of Britain

British colonial empire: indirect rule. Class stratification preserved, English only for the elites.

Economic exploitation of the colonies and linguistic law of the market.

Macaulay Minute 1835. Anglicists vs. Orientalists

After WWII: Cold War. Teaching of EFL/ ESL promoted by British Council, TESOL, ELT & US Agency for Intl. Devt (USAID) has three goals: economic success, individual agency, global community based on industry, trade and technology. Spread of English seen as natural, neutral and beneficial.

1.3 The case of the U.S.

- Colonial policy: e.g., 1900 direct rule and imposition of English in the Philippines

- Domestic policy: indirect rule based on economic (and now national) interests. No official national language.

On the one hand, linguistic *laissez-faire*: bilingual programs, language deskilling in the workplace, growing lg. diversity, lg. revitalization, promotion of heritage languages.

On the other hand, imposition of English: Prop.227, English Only, elite 'Anglo' schools, total immersion in English media, pop culture, movies, TV. No success without English.

Teaching of English in US public schools has conflicting goals: equal opportunity? economic success? access to the elites? training for the labor force?

- Global policy: indirect law of the market promotes English (Voice of America, CNN, Hollywood, popular culture, computer technology, missionaries).

2. English as a World Language

Kachru 1986: inner circle (UK, US, Canada, NZ, Australia); outer circle (e.g., India, Pakistan, Singapore, Nigeria); expanding circle (e.g., Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Israel)

Statistics (see Appendix).

The colonialist legacy:

English offers opportunities: General Electric in Bangalore (with accent fixers)

English reinforces inequalities: Engl.-medium schools in Hong Kong, Gujarati. Resistance to English (Canagarajah 1999, Lin 1999).

3. English as a Lingua Franca: The case of Europe

3.1 Multilingual Europe.

The European Union: an economic, financial, and political union of 12+ member states, with 41 different languages. Culture and education: hotly debated topics.

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992). Preamble:

- Considers 'the right to use a regional or minority language in private and public life is an inalienable right'
- Stresses the 'value of interculturalism and multilingualism'
- Considers 'that the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them' but rather 'an important contribution to the building of a Europe based on principles of democracy and cultural diversity within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity'.

FL learning tradition in secondary schools: compulsory L2, L3. Is English a second or a foreign language? English teachers trained in UK/US, UK textbooks and materials in Eastern and Central Europe; English-medium schools/programs in France, Germany.

For the 12 members of the E.U, a European Language Portfolio (Little 2002; Babylonia 1999, 2000). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* CUP (<http://culture.coe.int/portfolio>) for the teaching of communicative and intercultural competence.

Translation, interpretation within the E.U.

In language education: Growing interest in multilingualism. Alignment of curricula and degrees across the E.U. Two arguments for multilingualism: economic and cultural.

1996 European commission's White paper:

Proficiency in [three] Community languages has become a precondition if citizens of the European Union are to benefit from the occupational and personal opportunities open to them in the border-free single market. This language proficiency must be backed up by the ability to adapt to working and living environments characterized by different cultures.

2002 Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference*.

The rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed and a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding. It is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation and overcome prejudice and discrimination. (p.1)

2000 E.U strategic program to confront globalization and knowledge-driven economy:

New basic skills include IT skills, **foreign languages**, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills.

3.2 English as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer 2001): ELF Corpus building (like Internatl. Corpus of English).

4. Linguistic genocide, linguistic human rights (see Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas)

From the *Universal declaration of linguistic rights*, Barcelona 1996 (UNESCO):

Article 3

1. This declaration considers the following to be inalienable personal rights which may be exercised in any situation:

The right to be recognized as a member of a language community;

The right to the use of one's own language both in private and in public

The right to the use of one's own name

The right to interrelate and associate with other members of one's language community of origin;

The right to maintain and develop one's own culture.

2. This Declaration considers that the collective rights of language groups may include the following in addition to the rights attributed to the members of language groups in the foregoing paragraph:

the right for their own language and culture to be taught;

the right of access to cultural services

the right to an equitable presence of their language and culture in the communications media

the right to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations.

3. The aforementioned rights of persons and language groups must in no way hinder the interrelationship of such persons or groups with the host language community or their integration into that community. Nor must they restrict the rights of the host community or its members to the full public use of the community's own language throughout its territorial space.

Article 7

1. All languages are the expression of a collective identity and of a distinct way of perceiving and describing reality and must therefore be able to enjoy the conditions required for their development in all functions.

2. All languages are collectively constituted and are made available within a community for individual use as tools of cohesion, identification, communication and creative expression.

This covenant is still under discussion. Terms like 'language', 'language community', 'minority', 'efficient communication', 'mother tongue' are namely not unambiguous terms. Current debate: ethnic and cultural diversity (HLR)? or escape from class and poverty (English)? in response to the spread of English. (see Skutnabb Kangas 2002 & Brutt-Griffler's response 2002).

Discussion questions:

- Does a common language facilitate or impede understanding among people around the world?
- If English is the language of international communication, shouldn't it be standardized?
- Should immigrant workers to the US learn English even if their job doesn't require it?

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