The Politics of English as a World Language

New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies

Edited by Christian Mair
The Politics of English as a World Language

New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies
ASNEL Papers appear under the auspices of the
Gesellschaft für die Neuen Englischsprachigen Literaturen e.V. (GNEL)
Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English (ASNEL)
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Formatting and layout: Gordon Collier
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ASNEL Papers 7

Amsterdam - New York, NY 2003
The paper on which this book is printed meets the requirements of "ISO 9706:1994, Information and documentation - Paper for documents - Requirements for permanence".

ISBN: 90-420-0876-8 (Bound)
©Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam - New York, NY 2003
Printed in The Netherlands
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Linguistics, Literature and the Postcolonial Englishes
An Introduction

Christian Mair
Freiburg

The present volume offers a selection of papers read at the joint GNEL&MAVEN conference which took place from 6 to 9 June 2001 in Freiburg. The motto of the conference was “The Cultural Politics of English as a World Language,” an obvious allusion to the similarly titled pioneering study by Alastair Pennycook (1994). The motto was intended to define the concerns about the role of English in the postcolonial world likely to be shared by descriptive linguists, (critical) discourse analysts and literary scholars. GNEL, the ‘Gesellschaft für Neue Englischsprachige Literaturen’ [Society for the Study of the New English Literatures], certainly was the senior partner, and I am therefore particularly grateful that its executive agreed to open its 24th annual conference to the participants of the third MAVEN meeting. MAVEN is an acronym hiding a most politically incorrect label, ‘MAjor Varieties of ENglish.’ The question of what constitutes a major variety of English was provisionally answered by the conveners of the first MAVEN meeting in Växjö in Sweden in 1997, but not surprisingly, the focus of this conference on British, American/Canadian, Australian and New Zealand English was challenged even then, and a widening of the perspective was in evidence at the second MAVEN meeting in Lincoln (UK) in 1999. This wider perspective was evident both in the number of additional varieties included for discussion, and in a greater readiness to address the language-political, historical and cultural assumptions underlying any general answer to the question of what might constitute a major variety of English.
In addition to the practical benefits that a conference organizer derives from staging one integrated event rather than two separate consecutive conferences, there are also several good substantial reasons for bringing together scholars working on the new literatures in English and linguists dealing with varieties of English in the postcolonial context.

To start with linguistics, the ordinary business of English as a World Language studies has clearly been to produce ever more, and ever more fine-grained descriptive accounts of varieties of English around the world. Browsing the pages of *English World-Wide*, one of the defining publications of the field, one is awed by how many varieties have been treated over the years and how comprehensively they have sometimes been covered, but in spite of their obvious centrality to the matter, issues of language politics, culture and identity have not usually loomed large in the pages of this journal. *World Englishes*, the other leading journal in the field, has on the whole been somewhat more welcoming to a discussion of these issues, but the general order of priorities has been similar to that evident in *English World-Wide*. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that especially in recent years the trend towards a more inclusive definition of the subject of English as a World Language which has been in evidence at successive MAVEN meetings has been representative for the field as a whole, so that a joint conference with a group of literary scholars focussing on postcolonial writing in English was indeed overdue.

Postcolonial literary studies, in its turn, has always been a field in which people have been aware of the central importance of language to their concerns. Most of the field’s major theorists have been profoundly influenced by the linguistic turn in twentieth-century philosophy and in recent social and cultural theory, while practitioners are confronted with the multifarious complexities of language politics in the postcolonial societies emerging in the wake of Empire. Last but not least, there are the writers and artists themselves, whose presence in large numbers has always been a welcome distinction of GNEL meetings in the German academic landscape. Many of them hold strong views on the link between language, culture and identity – between the Metropolitan English standard and the colonial condition, on the one hand, and between the new Englishes, creoles and local vernaculars and liberation and authenticity, on the other. However, it is precisely this knee-jerk acceptance of the link between language and culture and an almost automatic and unreserved endorsement of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis which may make linguists baulk. After all, they have had to learn that in spite of more than two hundred years of post-Herderian and post-Humboldtian reasoning on the mutual iconicity of language and thought/culture, there has been pretty little empirical evidence to prove that such direct links actually
exist. Unlike writers and literary scholars, linguists are therefore more likely to emphasize linguistic universals and anthropological constants, thereby coming close to practising the very type of ‘essentialism’ shunned and condemned by the mainstream in postcolonial literary theory.

The publication of the conference proceedings would seem to be the appropriate moment to look back and forward, to see to what extent the two fields have taken notice of each other’s traditions, terminologies and concerns and have begun to engage in a productive cross-disciplinary dialogue.

During the conference itself, and on a person-to-person level, I was pleased to see that integration worked and that no prompts were needed to get conversations started across disciplinary boundaries. The present book, though, is an interdisciplinary venture more in the sense that it juxtaposes the points-of-view of linguists and literary scholars (and thereby usually shows how the strengths of one approach correspond to the weaknesses in the other, and the other way round) than in the sense of offering an integrated synthesis. However, in the present academic climate of ever-increasing specialization even such productive juxtaposition is an important first step on a path that will, I hope, eventually bring two distinct research traditions to coordinate their efforts for their mutual benefit and for the better understanding of a shared subject.

Surveying the collection of essays offered here from the editorial perspective, I felt that answers to two questions were needed to provide signposts for the reader:

1. What is the meaning of terms such as ‘language’, or ‘English’, or ‘standard’ – for linguists and for literary scholars?
2. Can we achieve a compromise between the apparently conflicting views held in the two camps about the validity of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis on the interdependence of language, culture and identity?1

As I will show, the answers to these two questions are in fact closely related. As for the linguists, they still tend to conceive of languages, dialects or varieties of English as decontextualized structural systems which can be described by listing their phonetic, grammatical and lexical features. This notion is prevalent even in much current sociolinguistics. William Labov and his many followers, for example, have shown that such systems are internally variable and that the variation observed usually correlates with regional, social, ethnic, age or gender parameters. However, a method which defines the social variable as independent and given, and the linguistic variable as dependent

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1 The original Whorfian triad is *Language, Thought, and Reality*. This, at least, is the title given to a collection of Whorf’s writings by the editor, John B. Carroll (see Whorf 1956).
and to be accounted for, leaves little room for asking questions such as the following:

— if the statistical profiles of quantitative-correlational sociolinguistics define average speaker behaviour, what is the range of variation available to an individual speaker in a specific situation?

— if quantitative-correlational sociolinguistics focuses on the unreflected and spontaneous language behaviour of nonstandard speakers, what is the status of the conscious and considered use of nonstandard forms by intellectuals, politicians and writers?

— what is the role of individual speakers’ and writers’ “acts of identity”\(^2\) in actively creating, enacting or performing social, ethnic and gendered identities?

Now, it may be that in the relatively stable and simple social framework provided by medieval feudalism, there were monostylistic speakers of, say, Scots or Lancashire English, who fairly consistently reproduced the features of abstract Scots or the abstract Lancashire dialect in their daily communicative practice. There may even have been a time in early-nineteenth-century colonial Jamaica when field slaves spoke the pure form of *patois*, the Jamaican creole, and nothing else, and domestic slaves, free blacks and local whites additionally commanded English prestige forms for formal communication – quite according to the predictions of the classic Labovian sociolinguistic model. However, the barest reflection will show that both traditional dialectology and mainstream sociolinguistics do not work for the postcolonial context. Nobody in Jamaica or in the Caribbean diaspora speaks Jamaican creole today in its consistent pure and basilectal form. By the same token, there are very few educated Indians or West Africans who, when using English, will

\(^2\) *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* is the title of a classic study by Robert B. LePage and Andrée Tabouret–Keller (1985) which challenges the assumptions of mainstream quantitative-correlational sociolinguistics. The authors’ aim is to do full justice to the speaking individual as the locus of linguistic choices before proposing any generalizations about the variability of linguistic systems. The book has the status of a minor classic in sociolinguistics. It certainly falls short of providing a fully elaborated theoretical model of its position but is accepted as fundamentally correct in a very general sense by many sociolinguists working in the qualitative, interaction-based or discourse-analytical traditions. However, it is significant that, unlike the pioneering studies by William Labov on language variation in New York City, on what he called the “Black English Vernacular” and on dialect change in Martha’s Vineyard, LePage’s and Tabouret–Keller’s investigations into emerging ethnicities in St. Lucia and Belize have not attracted followers and have thus not started any linguistic school.
not widely stray from the norms that are laid down as ‘West African English’ or ‘Indian English’ in the relevant textbooks.

So we might well ask whether, in the study of new varieties of English, it isn’t time linguists recognized the fact that long before ‘Jamaican creole’, ‘West African English’ or ‘Indian English’ end up as decontextualized constructs in linguistic descriptions, they exist as communicative practices available to real people who pursue their mundane aims in specific communities and in very specific historical and social contexts. What is needed is, thus, no more and no less than a discourse-based and dynamic model of varieties of English, which puts the context, the speaker and his/her intentions, and history back into the picture – and, even more importantly, also the fact that any given variety of English in the modern world never exists in isolation but in close contact with standard English and, in the postcolonial context, most likely also with numerous indigenous languages and local vernaculars.

Thus, to elaborate on one of our examples, Jamaican English (which is not the same as Jamaican creole!) is not chiefly a ‘product’, a variety or a range of varieties on a continuum characterized by phonetic, morphosyntactic and grammatical properties which need to be listed in a description. Rather, it needs to be seen as a ‘process’ and approached from the pragmatic level, through genres, historically evolving traditions of speaking and writing, or – in other words – as the contextualized, situated appropriation of a language by a postcolonial community on its own terms and for its own purposes. Genre conventions, historically evolving styles of speaking and writing and contextually situated communicative practices need to be understood before a structural description can be attempted.

That such a context-sensitive discourse-based approach to variation in English leads not merely to minor revisions in the existing picture but to a profound revaluation is shown, for example, by some fascinating recent work by Jan Blommaert (eg, 1999 and 2001), an Africanist and linguist, which in its novelty of approach is of equal interest to linguists and literary scholars. In a number of publications, Blommaert has pointed out that the chief issue in the use of the European ex-colonial languages in Africa is not the emergence of new varieties of these languages, not even their gradual indigenization through language contact but, rather, the fact that they are the medium for “grassroots literacy.” Blommaert has investigated the French writing of Julien, or the famous painter Tshibumba’s work on the history of Zaire. Julien, who has only very limited education, is encouraged to write his autobiography by a Belgian novelist, his former employer. His writing, however, is not just a struggle with the French language, but a physical and intellectual struggle in a much wider sense – from having to travel for weeks merely to obtain writing materials to retaining mastery over one’s own version of the
story when confronted with a novelist looking for exotic raw material for her fiction. Tshibumba’s world-wide reputation rests on his ‘naïve’ “History of Zaire” cycle of paintings, which celebrates the martyrdom of Patrice Lumumba. As a historian and intellectual, however, his status is marginal like Julien’s. What the two also have in common is the fact that they do not just ‘use French’ in the trivial sense that a German professional might be said to be using English for some purpose. Rather, as Blommaert shows, using French for these two writers is just one aspect of an excruciatingly painful and laborious process through which they aim to appropriate discursive power – be it in order to present their point of view to a European listener (Julien’s case) or to get a hearing for the local interpretation of the history of Zaire (Tshibumba’s case).

There are numerous ‘Juliens’ and ‘Tshibumbas’ awaiting reappraisal in anglophone postcolonial studies, too. Antera Duke, an Efik slave-trading chief of Old Calabar, wrote his “Diary” probably back in the 1790s. Similar material is contained and discussed in Görlach 1994 and Curtis, ed. 1967. These texts are used as sources for ethnography and history and – in linguistics – as indirect evidence for the reconstruction of early forms of West African Pidgin English. That first and foremost they are, in Jan Blommaert’s words, “grassroots writing” which is performed “in highly problematic economies of signs and resources” and might well repay study from a discourse perspective has largely gone unnoticed.

Still in Nigeria, there is the more recent tradition of Onitsha market literature. Based around the town of Onitsha, a literary tradition has sprung up since the 1940s which is a far cry from the postcolonial canon of Nigerian anglophone writing clustering around the work of Chinua Achebe and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka. But while neither Achebe’s nor Soyinka’s works have suffered critical neglect, Onitsha market literature has hardly ever been taken seriously in postcolonial criticism. Statistical representation in widely used databases may be a crude guide, but in the present case the figures speak volumes. Consulting the MLA bibliography on CD-ROM (on 2 July 2002), I obtained 681 hits in a keyword search for ‘Soyinka,’ 687 for ‘Achebe,’ and 31 for ‘Onitsha’. Of these 31, many were in fact not about Nigerian writing at all, but about J.–M. G. LeClézio’s Onitsha, or represented an ethnographic rather than a literary-critical perspective. Ogali A. Ogali, the foremost representative of the tradition, is honoured with six entries, most of them being the dedicated work of one scholar, Reinhard W. Sander.

What might the reasons be for this obvious neglect of an entire West African writing tradition? I do not want to speculate too comprehensively, but one reason is certainly that the language of the works strays too far from metropolitan usage norms and metropolitan norms of what is permissible
exotic-stylistic variation in an African context. The works of the Onitsha tradition are written in an English characterized by what to a native ear would appear as a strange mixture of register clashes, exoticisms, errors and flashes of idiomatic English and addressed to popular audiences spanning a variety of levels from basic literacy to high-school graduates.

But before anybody outside Nigeria who might be interested in these works can even start analysing them, publishers need to make them available. And here the textual history of the works, though extending into the extremely recent past only, is almost as precarious as that of the Old English *Beowulf*, where we know that the sole surviving manuscript was nearly burned in a fire in 1731. The praiseworthy Heinemann African Writers series did have a useful anthology of Onitsha market writing, including, of course, some of Ogali’s work – but the book has long been out of print (Obiechina, ed. 1972). If it wasn’t for Reinhard Sander’s and Peter K. Ayers’ editorial efforts, the contemporary Western reader would be able to obtain the works of Ogali A. Ogali only with great difficulty from Nigeria. Sander’s and Ayers’ omnibus of Ogali’s works, *Veronica my Daughter* (1980), weighs in at around 400 pages and contains a wide array of genres: fiction, such as *Caroline the One-Guinea Girl* (1960) or *Eddie, the Coal-City Boy* (1958); non-fiction, such as *History of Item: Past and Present* (1960), written as a school-text in the hope that students living in Ogali’s native Item might “be mentally free, socially balanced, and historically emancipated” (326); drama, such as *Veronica my Daughter* (1956) or – and here we have a direct grassroots link to ‘franco-phone’ Zaire – *Patrice Lumumba* (1958).

Here are some scenes from the last-named play that will give a flavour of Ogali’s dramaturgy. The first is Lumumba reproaching Kasavubu, who has just dismissed him from his post of Prime Minister:

Thou traitor! Thou puppet! Thou enemy of Congo, I now dismiss you from office and you are no more the President of the Republic of Congo! Do thy worst, thou traitor! (226)

In an interpretation which for a long time would have been contested by some Western authorities but which has recently been proved to be factually correct, it is a Belgian officer who shoots Lumumba. Unlike some Western written historiography, the oral tradition has thus preserved a historically correct account of the events. In the dramatization of the event, Lumumba produces the following dying words:

Officer: Now take it, Patrice Lumumba
... Crack!
Lumumba: Africa, Africa, the United Nations has killed us! Africa, Africa, Africa! (238)
Let us now turn back from questions of factual correctness to the issue of literary appreciation. Judged by Western or European standards of literary criticism, these short pieces which run the gamut from the sensational to a somewhat simple moral didacticism are bound to fare badly. Analysed by the light of mainstream work on ‘varieties of English around the world’, they would probably end up as fairly idiosyncratic specimens of the upper middle range on the cline of competence and yield up a good many Nigerianisms to the collector. What work like Blommaert’s has hinted at, however, is a framework in which these texts can be appreciated more fully, and this is a hint which both linguists and literary scholars working on world English might be well advised to take. Mastery of the colonial language is achieved through mastering, adapting or appropriating textual genres and their conventions.

My hope, thus, is that a closer collaboration between linguists and literary scholars interested in the postcolonial spread of English will sharpen our awareness of culture-specific and context-specific sociolinguistic styles, communicative genres and historically evolving discursive practices. What the linguists can contribute to the study of literature is the techniques for, and an appreciation of the importance of, the careful and detailed empirical description of the sociolinguistic economy of signs of a community, which surely must precede any interpretive generalization, if a critic wishes to avoid the risk of facilely projecting eurocentric notions on an alien linguistic reality. Linguists, on the other hand, would be well advised not to see literary works as bad and unreliable data only, but to appreciate the fact that they are often important contributions to discourses which reach beyond the literary sphere and will ultimately help shape the status of English in the life of a community.

Once the different premisses the two disciplines work on are understood, their apparently contradictory views on the validity of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis will find an easy explanation. Clearly, the linguists are right in remaining generally sceptical about assuming too close a link between language and culture, because for them, after all, language is a decontextualized abstraction – *langue*, competence, a system of potential meaning – rather than discursive practice – *parole*, performance, situated communicative acts. And the question of whether English, the colonial language, is an adequate means for postcolonial writers to express themselves in is a vacuous one at this level. The English language, when seen as a system of potential meaning, like any other language is in principle capable of expressing the full range of human experience. However, literary scholars and writers who insist on the link between language and culture are right, too – on the level on which they usually address the question, for after all it was not just English, an abstract linguistic system, which the colonized societies adopted voluntarily, accepted or had forced upon them, but specific varieties, from sailor talk to the orotund stan-
standard accents of higher-level colonial administrators. These types of English come with a historical and cultural baggage, and with associated discursive practices which the colonized would have done well to question and critique.

Against this background, it becomes apparent how two apparently irreconcilable strategies advocated by postcolonial writers are in fact both valid ways of coping with the language politics of the postcolonial situation. Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s rejection of English as a language for African creative writing represents the superficially safe bet, as it were. Don’t use the language, so as to escape the influence of the oppressive discursive practices associated with it:

Men at the top will fume in fury at fellow Africans who mispronounce English but will laugh with pride at their own inability to speak a single correct sentence in their own African languages. In some government departments, the ability to speak the Queen’s English, exactly like an upper-class English gentleman, is the sole criterion for employment and promotion. (Ngugi 1981: 59)

An African writer should write in a language that will allow him to communicate effectively with peasants and workers in Africa – in other words, he should write in an African language. As far as publishing is concerned, I have no doubt that writing in an African language is as commercially viable as writing in any language. Market pressures might even have the added advantage of forcing those who express themselves in African languages to strive for local relevance in their writing because no peasant or worker is going to buy novels, plays, or books of poetry that are totally irrelevant to his situation. Literature published in African languages will have to be meaningful to the masses and therefore much closer to the realities of their situation. (Ngugi 1985: 153)

I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples. In schools and universities our Kenyan languages – that is the languages of the many nationalities which make up Kenya – were associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment. We who went through that school system were meant to graduate with a hatred of the people and the culture and the values of the language of our daily humiliation and punishment. I do not want to see Kenyan children growing up in that imperialist-imposed tradition of contempt for the tools of communication developed by their communities and their history. I want them to transcend colonial alienation. (Ngugi 1986: 32)

The forceful rhetoric notwithstanding, what Ngugi probably underestimates is the risk that the very same oppressive discursive practices might quickly reconstitute themselves in an indigenous language if the over-all power structure of the society remains the same, and that – not only in pidgins and creoles
(which even he accepts as legitimate African languages\(^3\)) – the English language has shown itself able to accommodate African experience.

Chinua Achebe’s espousal of the English language looks like the riskier course at first. Accept the inevitable, and product of an English-language education that you are, try to “write back”:

The real question is not whether Africans could write in English but whether they ought to. Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else’s? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it. I hope, though, that there always will be men, like the late Chief Fagunwa, who will choose to write in their native tongue and insure that our ethnic literature will flourish side by side with the national ones. For those of us who opt for English, there is much work ahead and much excitement.

Writing in the London Observer recently, James Baldwin said:

My quarrel with the English language has been that the language reflected none of my experience. But now I began to see the matter another way.... Perhaps the language was not my own because I had never attempted to use it, had only learned to imitate it. If this were so, then it might be made to bear the burden of my experience if I could find the stamina to challenge it, and me, to such a test.

I recognize, of course, that Baldwin’s problem is not exactly mine, but I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. (Achebe 1993 [1975]: 434)

In spite of reams of material published both on postcolonial literature in English and on varieties of English as a world language, we are still a long way from understanding what precisely the “new English” is which Achebe is here writing about and which he and other postcolonial writers have been working to create for at least half a century.

Literary scholars might bring the full inventory of current theory to bear on the works of Achebe, Ngugi and their colleagues, analyse them as instances of ‘heteroglossia’, as Bakhtinian polyphonies of voices, or palimpsests, or schizo-texts, and so on. Linguists of a more traditional bent will use these works as sources from which to cull instances of lexical borrowings from indigenous African languages, of locally coined idioms and expressions, or of

\(^3\) “Wherever the peasantry and the working class were compelled by necessity and history to adopt the language of the master, they Africanised it without any of the respect for its ancestry shown by Senghor and Achebe, so totally as to have created new African languages, like Krio in Sierra Leone or Pidgin in Nigeria, that owed their identities to the syntax and rhythms of African languages. All these languages were kept alive in the daily speech, in the ceremonies, in political struggles, above all in the rich store of orature – proverbs, stories, poems, and riddles” (Ngugi 1986: 23).
the occasional grammatical construction not found in British and American English. Legitimate as such pursuits may be, it is doubtful whether they capture the essence of the new Englishes which are emerging in postcolonial societies and which, no doubt, are one important factor accounting for the truly astounding literary creativity endemic to them. For underlying both the ‘new variety of English’ abstracted by the linguist and the specific literary text at the centre of the literary scholar’s attention is a community-specific local tradition of using English. This tradition usually started with speakers of English from Britain taking their language abroad. Increasingly, however, and everywhere in the postcolonial world, it has become a tradition of local users shaping the language to meet their own needs.

If linguists taking part in the GNEL & MAVEN conference left Freiburg with a greater appreciation of the importance of the socially and culturally rich contexts of use of the varieties they have made it their object to study, and if literary scholars came away with a realization that enactment of identity through discursive practice, or the heteroglot nature of most literary texts, are phenomena which take a lot of attention to linguistic and sociolinguistic detail to describe, the meeting has fully served its purpose.

As for the arrangement of the essays in this volume, a degree of arbitrariness was unavoidable. Having two major sections, one including the essays with a more linguistic orientation and the other those with a literary one, would have been to defeat the purpose of the meeting in the very proceedings. Arranging the contributions alphabetically according to authors’ names was an admittedly tempting default option that I ultimately decided against. The compromise chosen was to start of with a section on “Resisting (in) English: globalization and its counter-discourses,” which combines the general and programmatic position papers by Alastair Pennycook, Robert Phillipson, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Michael Toolan and Peter Mühlhäusler with thematically related contributions by Richard Alexander, Yvonne and Photis Lysandrou, Susanne Mühleisen, Jenny Price, and Barbara Seidlhofer and Jennifer Jenkins. The remaining essays are grouped along broadly regional lines, starting with the Caribbean (including the African diaspora in North America and Britain), with essays by Hubert Devonish, Hazel Simmons–McDonald, Fiona Darroch, Michael Meyer, and Petra Tournay. Next is Africa, with the contributions by Kembo–Sure, Nkonko Kamwangamalu, Safari Mafu, Eleonora Chiavetta, Dagmar Deuber and Patrick Oloko, Haike Frank, Helga Ramsey–Kurz, and Richard Samin. The Asian subcontinent is represented by the contributions from D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Premila Paul, Rajiva Wijesinha, Vera Alexander, Yvette Tan, and Christine Vogt–William. The remaining six essays are devoted to the politics of English and English-language writing in three countries of the Pacific Rim: New Zealand (with three contributions, by
Peter Marsden, Michelle Keown, and Janet Holmes, Maria Stubbe and Meredith Marra), Canada (with Erika Hasebe–Ludt on métissage and Kerstin Knopf on indigenous film), and the Philippines (Danilo Manarpaac).

It is a pleasant duty in this introduction to mention all those participants who are not represented in the proceedings but who made important contributions to the conference. This is, first of all, the writers reading from and discussing their work with us: Diran Adebayo, Josephine Joyce Benjamin, Bill Manhire, Uma Parameswaran, Patricia Powell, Sarah Quigley, and Hazel Simmons–McDonald (who is in the volume in her academic self). Participants will also remember the talk by documentary photographer Camilo José Vergara on “Truth, Purity, and Beauty: Urban Expression in Ghetto Neighborhoods in Larger Cities in the USA,” which was important both for its content, because it brought the USA back into the postcolonial orbit, and for its method, because it showed that there are aspects of the postcolonial subject matter which are beyond even the combined powers of linguists and literary scholars.

In the preparation of this volume, I owe a great debt to the good offices of Stefanie Rapp, who helped with all aspects of the editing process (except shortening the contributions, which I felt I had to take full responsibility for myself), Tamsin Sanderson, attentive proofreader, and Bianca Kossmann, Silke Scheible and Birgit Waibel, who formatted some of the texts and added the relevant corrections.

WORKS CITED


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RESISTING (IN) ENGLISH:
GLOBALIZATION AND ITS COUNTER-DISCOURSES
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Beyond Homogeny and Heterogeny
English as a Global and Worldly Language

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the globalization and worldliness of the spread of English. Focusing on domains of global popular culture, such as rap and hip-hop, I shall try to show how, at the same time as such forms are spreading, they are also being taken up and used for quite diverse alternative purposes. Rather than the model of language implied by a simple globalization thesis, the homogeny position, or the view of language suggested by a world-englishes framework, the heterogeny position, I shall argue for an understanding of English within a view of language that allows for a critical appraisal of both the globalizing and worldly forces around English. Drawing on Walter Mignolo’s (2000) discussion of globalization as a long historical process of European designs on/for the rest of the world (Christianity, Civilization, Development, Global Market), and mundialización (here translated as worldliness), referring to the ways in which global designs are enacted, resisted, and rearticulated, I will discuss ways in which we can start to look at the complex interactions between global and local forces, English and popular culture.

The acute problem of English as a language of global discommunication

In a recent article in the Barrier Daily Truth (Broken Hill, 5 January 2001) there is the following story under the headline “Doctor couldn’t spell ‘acute’”: “A Hong Kong doctor left the word ‘acute’ out of a dying heart patient’s diagnosis because he didn’t know how to spell it […]”. I assume that this report, which originally appeared in the South China Morning Post, has been picked up by this rather obscure newspaper from this
small outback Australian mining town because of its amusing (a doctor who can’t spell) yet significant (fatal misdiagnosis) details. The story continues: “The patient was treated for a less-serious condition as a result and died in hospital hours after going to Dr Chau Chak-lam with chest pains.” The report goes on to explain that the patient, Chiu Yiu-wah, was admitted only as an “urgent” case, two steps down from the “critical” case, as a result of the referral letter.

At the inquest, the doctor admitted that he “should have put the word ‘acute’” on the instructions to the hospital. He “had acute angina pectoris in mind” but had omitted the word ‘acute’. But here we get to the interesting point that elevates this story from a sad but – with the benefit of distance – also faintly amusing story: “I was not sure about the translation,” Dr Chau explained to the inquest; “I did not know the English spelling.” As the story explains, “asked by the coroner why he did not use Chinese, Chau said he was following the common practice in Hong Kong of using English in referral letters.” Unfortunately, the brief story stops there; we don’t get to hear more about this practice, its history, its possible link to other deaths. All we have is two Hong Kong Chinese names – and I’m assuming these are both Cantonese speaking, as was probably the ambulance driver and the nurses and doctors¹ at the hospital – and an avoidable death. It looks as if highlighting the issue of the doctor not being able to spell ‘acute’ misses the point: It was more that he couldn’t think of the English translation. And why indeed should he, as a Cantonese doctor with a Cantonese patient in a Cantonese city? If we’re looking for examples of English as a killer language, this might be a good candidate.

Let me jump to South Africa. Athalie Crawford’s study of communication between patients, nurses and doctors in Cape Town (RSA) health services highlights “the problem posed by doctors being linguistically unequipped to care for Xhosa-speaking patients, whose numbers continue to grow rapidly as people move to town from the rural areas” (1999: 27). Here we see the complexities of relations lying behind a ‘language barrier’; at issue here are questions of language and power within medical contexts as well as within the whole broader context of South African society. “It is not possible,” suggests Crawford, “to isolate the patient disempowered in terms of the language barrier from the whole biomedical discourse in which patients occupy a disempowered position” (29). Neither is it possible to see issues of language, interpretation and medical discourse as separate from the class, gendered and racial relations of South Africa: “The patients are positioned at the bottom,

¹ Of course, not all doctors would be Cantonese-speaking, being British, Indian, or from elsewhere. But, again, it is the language of the few that dictates the usage for the many.
largely passive bodies whose own version or narrative of their illness is not considered central to the processes of diagnosis and formulation of a realistic treatment strategy. The nurses, often also used as (unpaid) interpreters in South Africa where a wide gulf of social class, race, language, and gender frequently separates doctor from patient, occupy a conflicted and ambivalent position intersecting the space between them” (29).

This gives us, then, a more complex picture than the newspaper sketch of a patient dying because his doctor couldn’t spell ‘acute’. Here we see more clearly how language is embedded in social relations and indeed is part of the system that perpetuates inequality. And, as Crawford argues, change can only be brought about by addressing questions of language as well as other social, economic and political concerns: “To fashion a new integrated social order out of a severely traumatized past, to accept and work with the reality of black suppression and rage at white domination, requires, among other things, a sophisticated grasp of the social meaning of the use of a particular language, and a commitment to overcome the discrimination against and exclusion from power of those who speak languages other than English” (32). While on the one hand, then, we may want to acknowledge the usefulness of English as a language of global communication, we clearly also need to acknowledge it as the language of global miscommunication, or perhaps ‘dis’communication. And I do not mean this in any trivial fashion – I am not merely talking here of misunderstanding, but rather of the role of English as a language that is linked to inequality, injustice, and the prevention of communication.

For my final example of English and medical discommunication, I would like to turn to a ‘fictional’ passage from Han Suyin’s 1956 novel *And the Rain my Drink*, which draws on her own experiences as a doctor in pre-independence Malaya:

> Among the doctors few can speak to all the patients, for in Malaya a university education, by its very insistence upon excellence in English, hampers a doctor from acquiring the vernacular languages of this country.

> And thus at night, when the patients confide in the darkness and in their own tongue what they have withheld from physician and nurse, I begin to understand the terror, the confusion, the essential need to prevaricate of those who are always at someone else’s mercy, because they cannot communicate with those who decide their fate, except through an interpreter.

> In the process, how many deviations, changes, siftings, warplings, and twistings; how many opportunities for blackmail and corruption, before, transformed, sometimes unrecognisable, the stories of the poor who do not speak English reach their rulers, who are hand-picked, among their own peoples, on the basis of their knowledge of English. (1961 [1956]: 31)
These brief stories – a newspaper story about a death in Hong Kong, a study of communication in Cape Town hospitals, a novel set in pre-independence Malaya – are interestingly inter-connected. All speak to the range of contexts into which English has penetrated; all speak to the ways in which English becomes linked to forms of institutionalized power; all speak to the ways in which English functions as a class-based language; all speak to the dichotomization between local, multiple vernacular languages and the monolingualism of the language of power; all speak to the ways in which English is as much a language of global discommunication as it is a language of global communication.

English and globalization

The above examples, drawn from one interconnected domain – language use in medical contexts – but from diverse contexts, point to the many ways in which English has become a language (though not the only language) of global disparity and discommunication. Such a role, of course, needs to be seen in terms of the complex interplay between the local and the global. It does matter that the language in the examples is English, as one of the major players in global relations. It also matters that these contexts are in Hong Kong, South Africa and Malaya, all places that have felt the insidious effects of British colonialism and its socially and ethnically divisive policies. It matters, too, that the domain is medicine, as one that has become based on very particular formations of knowledge and practice, so that its practitioners work with forms of supposedly universal or global, rather than locally derived, knowledge.

There are many domains in which English plays similar roles. The role of English in business and the economy is one of the most salient. As Elmer Ordóñez (1999) put it in a discussion of the role of ‘English for Global Competitiveness’ at a 1995 conference in the Philippines:

> English continues to occupy the place of privilege – it being the language of the ruling system, government, education, business and trade, and diplomacy [...] Now this conference seeks to reinforce the hegemony of English in this country by making it *globally competitive* [...] *English for global competitiveness* fits into the type of education that would conform to the requirements of an export-oriented economy pushed by the IMF-World Bank for the Philippines. (19)

Ordóñez goes on to suggest that

> The role of Philippine education [...] seems to be that of supplying the world market economy with a docile and cheap labor force who are trained in English and the vocational and technical skills required by that economy. As
it is we do have a decided advantage in the export market of domestic helpers and laborers. Cite their knowledge of English as that advantage. (20)

Again we can see here the continued effects of colonialism (the particular effects of the USA after the Spanish), the ways in which English is embedded in local institutional contexts (an education system that continues to favour English), and how these local contexts interrelate with broader global concerns such as IMF/World Bank pressures to develop particular types of economy, and the fact that the continuing poverty of the Philippines means that it exports its own people as cheap labour with a knowledge of English. Domestic helpers from the Philippines are popular in Hong Kong and Singapore in part because they can interact with children in English, something which is seen as a particular advantage in these two former colonies with their English-dominant language policies and dependence on global trade.

So how do we start to make sense of these interrelationships between English and the local and global? Writers from different ends of the political spectrum are often united in their agreement that English and globalization go hand in hand. Where they differ is in terms of the effects of such globalization. Thus, reviewing David Crystal’s (1997) book on the global spread of English, Sir John Hanson, the former Director-General of the British Council, is able to proclaim: “On it still strides: we can argue about what globalisation is till the cows come – but that globalisation exists is beyond question, with English its accompanist. The accompanist is indispensable to the performance” (Hanson 1997: 22). Robert Phillipson (1999), by contrast, in his review of the same book, opts for a critical rather than a triumphalist evaluation:

Crystal’s celebration of the growth of English fits squarely into what the Japanese scholar, Yukio Tsuda, terms the Diffusion of English Paradigm, an uncritical endorsement of capitalism, its science and technology, a modernisation ideology, monolingualism as a norm, ideological globalisation and internationalisation, transnationalisation, the Americanisation and homogenisation of world culture, linguistic, culture and media imperialism. (274)

There is not much point here in considering further the conservative and liberal positions of Hanson and Crystal, since they have very little of use to say about globalization and English (though we should not at the same time be lulled into believing that these popular ideas are insignificant). Clearly Phillipson’s position on the diffusion of English, or ‘linguistic imperialism’ (1992), is more useful if we want an understanding of globalization as an economic, social, cultural and political process. This I will call the homogeny position (an argument that the global spread of English is leading to the “homogenisation of world culture”). And yet, as I have argued elsewhere (eg, 2001), although Phillipson’s framework crucially adds a critical and political
framework within which we can understand the global spread of English in relationship to global forms of inequality, it is also important to understand what it can and cannot do. As he suggests, the issue for him is “structural power” (72) rather than local effects; he is interested in “English linguistic hegemony” which can be understood as “the explicit and implicit beliefs, purposes, and activities which characterize the ELT profession and which contribute to the maintenance of English as a dominant language” (73). Thus, it is the ways in which English is promoted through multiple agencies and to the exclusion of other languages that is the issue. What this lacks, of course, is a view of how English is taken up, how people use English, why people choose to use English. Such a position cannot account for a sense of agency, resistance, or appropriation. What Phillipson shows, therefore, is how and for what purposes English is deliberately promoted and spread, with the underlying assumption that the language is a crucial part of the homogenizing process of globalization. What he does not show is the effects of that spread in terms of what people do with English.

The second position, which I shall call the heterogeny position, is epitomized by Braj Kachru’s notion of world Englishes. Here we get the other side of the coin, Kachru’s interests being in the “implications of pluricentricity […], the new and emerging norms of performance, and the bilingual’s creativity as a manifestation of the contextual and formal hybridity of Englishes” (1997: 66). Thus the world Englishes paradigm has focused on the ways in which English has become locally adapted and institutionalized to create different varieties of English (different Englishes) around the world. But, while the homogeny argument tends to ignore all these local appropriations and adaptations, this heterogeny argument tends to ignore the broader political context of the spread of English. Indeed, there is a constant insistence on the neutrality of English, a position that avoids all the crucial concerns around both the global and local politics of the language. Furthermore, by focusing on the standardization of local versions of English, the world Englishes paradigm shifts the locus of control but not its nature, and by so doing ignores power and struggle in language. As Suresh Canagarajah (1999) points out, while Kachru’s position is a useful counter to the centrist arguments of some linguists, his challenge “does not go far enough, since he is not fully alert to the ideological implications of periphery Englishes. In his attempt to systematize the periphery variants, he has to standardize the language himself, leaving out many eccentric, hybrid forms of local Englishes as too unsystematic. In this, the Kachruvian paradigm follows the logic of the prescriptive and elitist tendencies of the center linguists” (180).

Both the homogeny and heterogeny positions, therefore, miss crucial aspects of the global spread of English. The examples I discussed at the begin-
ning, for example, cannot be easily accounted for in terms of either model. And while a combination of the two might seem a desirable option, it is not clear that such a combination would be possible. So, how can we start to account for the constant reciprocity between globalization and localization? How can we get beyond the one-way homogenizing model of Phillipson and the heterogenous dispersion model of Kachru? How can we account, to take an example from a different domain, for the processes by which beer production became centralized in large breweries in many parts of the world, was then decentralized after beer drinkers protested against homogenized beer, and has now become part of a globalized process of localization, in which heterogeneous beer production is being pursued globally? How can we understand ways in which popular culture in North America emerges as a form of protest against mainstream culture, is coopted by media marketing, is spread around the world, and is appropriated by local groups who are now globally doing local forms of the global?

New Way New Life: Naya Zindagi Naya Jeevan

If we are looking for new Englishes, we could do worse than starting with the Asian Dub Foundation’s CD *Community Music* (2000, London Records 90), even if (or especially since) Jamaican-style rap sung by young British men of South Asian background is not often deemed to be a standard form of new English. As they sing in their song “New Way, New Life”:

> And now we’re walking down de street  
> Wid a brand new pride  
> A spring inna de step  
> Wid our heads held high  
> Young Asian brothers an sisters  
> Moving forward, side by side  
> Naya Zindagi Naya Jeevan  
> New Way New Life

The phrase “Naya Zindagi Naya Jeevan” means “new way, new life” in Hindi and Urdu. It was the title of a BBC programme in the UK in the 1970s aimed at Indian and Pakistani immigrants. Here these second-generation South Asians recall how this programme “Kept our parents alive / Gave them the will to survive / Working inna de factories / Sometimes sweeping de floor”. But now a new generation has arrived:

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2 Bhaskaran Nayar has informed me that it should be “Nayi Zindagi, Naya Jeevan” (since Zindagi is feminine, it has to take the feminine form of the adjective). I am also indebted to Bhaskaran for explaining some of the multiple layers of meaning in this phrase.
And we’re supposed to be cool
Inna de dance our riddims rule
But we knew it all along
Cos our parents made us strong
Never abandoned our culture
Just been moving it along
Technology our tradition
Innovation inna the song
Now de struggle continues
To reverse every wrong
New heroines an heroes
Inna de battle we belong
When we reach de glass ceiling
We will blow it sky high
Naya Zindagi Naya Jeevan
New Way New Life

What is interesting, it seems to me, is the mixtures and ironies here. While their parents kept them strong, never abandoning their culture, they have been moving it along – indeed, not just shifting it along, but rather shifting it into a quite different space, an African-Caribbean rap celebration of the new life of second-generation South Asian youths in London, a space that their factory-working parents who watched Naya Zindagi Naya Jeevan on TV in the 1970s might find it hard to accept as an extension of the cultures they have maintained. This fluid mixture of cultural heritage (a transformed version of South Asian cultures) and popular culture (an appropriated style of London-Caribbean but also global rap), of change and tradition, of border crossing and ethnic affiliation, of global appropriation and local contextualization, is in many ways what the new global order is about. This is neither homogenization nor heterogenization.

Similar contexts can be found in Zadie Smith’s novel White Teeth. As Millat and Majid, the twin sons of Bengali parents, walk down a street, they start ‘taxing’ objects as they pass:

Millat and Majid jumped into action. The practice of ‘taxing’ something, whereby one lays claims, like a newly arrived colonizer, to items in a street that do not belong to you, was well known and beloved to both of them. ‘Cha, man! Believe, I don’t want to tax dat crap,’ said Millat with the Jamaican accent that all kids, whatever their nationality, used to express scorn. (145)

Later, Smith describes Raggastanis who

spoke a strange mix of Jamaican patois, Bengali, Gujarati and English. Their ethos, their manifesto, if it could be called that, was equally a hybrid thing: Allah featured, but more as a collective big brother than a supreme being, a
hard-as-fuck geezer who would fight in their corner if necessary; Kung Fu and
the works of Bruce Lee were also central to the philosophy; added to this was
a smattering of Black Power (as embodied by the album Fear of a Black
Planet, Public Enemy); but mainly their mission was to put the Invincible
back in Indian, the Bad-aaaass back in Bengali, the P-Funk back in Pakistani.

This echoes the work of Ben Rampton’s extensive study of what he calls
‘crossing’, “the use of language varieties associated with social or ethnic
groups that the speaker does not normally ‘belong’ to” (1995: 14). As he
shows, Jamaican creole, Panjabi, Asian English and standard English (and
note that SE is included here as a resource usable for certain effects) were
used by different speakers for different effects and allegiances: “these lingu-
istic enunciations of group identity traversed the boundaries of biological
descent […] crossing involved the active ongoing construction of a new
inheritance from within multiracial interaction itself” (297). And again, as
Rampton shows, one important site for such verbal interaction was around
popular music.

From a cultural-imperialist framework, the global spread of rap and hip-
hop is clearly orchestrated by the major recording companies, even if the
sentiments of rap music may run counter to larger cultural and political
agendas. A closer look at contexts of its spread and use, however, suggests a
more complex picture. As Bent Preisler points out, although it may have been
true in the past, it is no longer the case in many EFL contexts that English is
learned only through formal, classroom contexts. Rather,

informal use of English – especially in the form of code-switching – has
become an inherent, indeed a defining, aspect of the many Anglo-American-
oriented youth subcultures which directly or indirectly influence the language
and other behavioural patterns of young people generally, in Denmark as well
as in other EFL countries. It is impossible to explain the status of English in,
and impact on, Danish society (as this is reflected, for example, in advertising
and other areas of the Danish media) without understanding the informal
function of the English language, and indeed its sociolinguistic significance, in
the Anglo-American-oriented subculture. (1999: 244)

Preisler goes on to argue that there is far less variation in the forms of ‘Eng-
lish from above’ (“the promotion of English by the hegemonic culture for
purposes of ‘international communication’”) than in ‘English from below’
(“the informal – active or passive – use of English as an expression of sub-
cultural identity and style”) (259), and argues that “the social forces of the
subcultural environment are […] generally speaking, more successful than
the classroom at ensuring the learning of active functional variation in
English” (260).
As an example, he lists the vocabulary of a group of Danish hip-hop “street dancers”, which includes techniques and styles of break-dancing (electric boogie, windmills etc.), rap and DJ (ragamuffin, scratch etc.), graffiti (tag, bombing etc.) and hip-hop mythology (battle, biting etc.).

Terms used by the Danish hip-hop group ‘Out of Control’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains of hip-hop</th>
<th>Terminology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Techniques and styles of break-dancing</td>
<td>Boogie, windmills, back spin, head spin, turtle, cracking, waves, isolation, backspreads, locking, skeets etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap and DJ</td>
<td>Ragamuffin, scratch, mixer, cut-backs, cross-fader, break-beat, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti</td>
<td>Tag, bomb, jams, cipher, burn-off, wild-style, straight-letters, piece, throw-up, whole-cars, windows, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip-hop mythology</td>
<td>Battle, biting, wanna-be, dope, pusher, graffiti-trip, hang-out, low-life, riot, stick-up, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Preisler (1999)

Rather strangely, Preisler backs away from the interesting implications of this by arguing that “the form of English taught in an EFL country should be determined only by the degree in which it will enable non-native speakers to cope with the linguistic aspects of internationalisation as it affects their own lives” (263) and that this should therefore be “Standard English in its two main regional forms” (264): ie, Standard British or American English. He goes on to suggest that “If English is learned simply as a lingua franca – ie, if the teaching of EFL is not firmly rooted in the cultural context of native speakers – there is a danger that it will become unidiomatic […] With the evolution of a multiplicity of culturally autonomous Englishes, Standard English maintained as an instrument of cross-cultural communication will only be effective at the level of communicative competence to the extent that it is based on shared cultural assumptions” (265).

But all of this seems to miss the point that hip-hop is a form of globalizing culture that is being appropriated. It is a form of cross-cultural communication. These Danish kids have mastered a domain of international English that indeed puts them in touch with other kids around the world. Global rap/hip-hop language is a form of international English.³ If this is part of a fast-

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³ It also occurs in other languages and in quite similar hybrid ways, as in current French rap with its mixture of French, North African Arabic, and Caribbean creoles.
Beyond Homogeny and Heterogeny

globalizing world in relationship to English, then this is what we need to start to deal with in English classes. If engaging with forms of rap and hip-hop exposes learners to varieties of English, or “active functional variation”, then these are probably far more useful pedagogically than more homogeneous forms of standardized English. Since these are the forms of popular culture in which young people are investing, then it is these that, as educators, we need to start engaging with. And as part of this emerging picture of globalization and English, this is clearly reducible neither to homogenizing effects of globalization nor to heterogenizing forms of adaptation, but, rather, involves complex interaction among global forms and intermixed local forms.

Awad Ibrahim’s (1999) research on the ways in which African students studying in a Franco-Ontarian school in Canada identify with forms of hip-hop adds another dimension to this picture. As he shows, these students, entering the racialized world of North America, ‘become Black’ and start to redefine their identities in terms of the available social and cultural categories on the new continent. In doing so, they increasingly identify with forms of black culture and black language, particularly hip-hop and Black English. Rap and hip-hop, he shows, are “influential sites in African students’ processes of becoming Black, which in turn affected what and how the students learned” (364). The choice of these cultural forms and the position on the margins associated with being black was “simultaneously an act of investment, an expression of desire, and a deliberate counterhegemonic undertaking”. Rap, he goes on to suggest, “must be read as an act of resistance” (365–66).

In terms of a pedagogical and curricular response to these observations, Ibrahim insists that curricula need to engage with rap, hip-hop and other forms of black popular culture: “In the case of African youths, whose language and identity are we as TESOL professionals teaching and assuming in the classroom if we do not engage rap and hip-hop?” (366). There are two sides to this: on the one hand, the need to incorporate ‘minority’ linguistic and cultural forms into the classroom: “To identify rap and hip-hop as curriculum sites in this context is to legitimise otherwise illegitimate forms of knowledge” (366); on the other, the importance of getting those in dominant cultural groups (teachers, other students) to “be able to see multiple ways of speaking, being, and learning” (367). He concludes that “maybe the time has come to close the split between minority students’ identities and the school curriculum and between those identities and classroom pedagogies, subjects and materials” (367).

This, then, takes this argument further: We are dealing once again with the global reach of rap and hip-hop, but in another configuration. Here we are seeing popular multiculturalism, the identification with particular cultural forms as part of a process of changing identities. If we take Ibrahim’s sugges-
tions seriously, our curricula need to engage with forms of popular culture, not, as he points out, as an uncritical adoption, but as a process of critical investigation. And here we also see English intimately tied up with this. As with Preisler’s street dancers, this isn’t a standard international form of English, but a mixture of the global and the local, forms of English that are moving internationally, yet are also taken up as a form of resistance, mixed with other languages, appropriated. Thus, what we see here is that the question is not globalization or localization, homogeneity or heterogeneity, English or mother tongues, but the need to engage with the mixed, hybrid, cultural codes of the street.

Meanwhile back in Australia, MC Trey (Island Rappers, SBS, 4 June 1999), a Fijian-Australian rapper, explains that

I’m into hip-hop because it has all those elements that you can express yourself, you know, like in Fiji, they have, you know, their art and their dancing, and their music, you know, and I feel that hip-hop has that. It’s one of the only modern art forms where you’ve got, you know, your breaking, your DJ-ing, graffiti, your MC-ing, you know, your story-telling.

She goes on:

I feel that MC-ing is definitely an extension of oral tradition, like just in the islands they used to sit around the Kula Bowl, and their story-telling, you know, a lot of it was passed down through word of mouth, they didn’t have much documentation.

It is worth dwelling on the significance of these arguments for a moment. Here we have hip-hop in English being claimed as akin to a form of cultural maintenance or revival. This is a form of hip-hop that reflects the oral traditions of Fiji, the art and carving (via graffiti), the dancing and the music. As with the Asian Dub Foundation, this pride in a cultural heritage is one that may be hard for a previous generation to identify with: South Asian cultures being moved along through Jamaican rap; Fijian cultures being extended through hip-hop. Once again, there is no space here for either a simple homogenizing thesis or a simple heterogenizing thesis. This is a far more complex space.

Global and worldly Englishes

What framework might help us better understand some of these complexities? One useful way forward can be found in the work of Walter Mignolo (2000). Drawing on the distinction (used by the Brazilian sociologist and cultural critic Renato Ortiz and the Martinican philosopher and writer Edouard Glissant) between globalization and mundialización, Mignolo suggests that the
first may be seen as a series of overlapping global designs, as a five-hundred-year history of European designs for the world: the Christian mission to bring enlightenment to the world, the Civilizing attempt to spread European culture, the Development model to promote particular political and economic behaviours, and the Global Market framework for interdependent trade and communication. It is interesting to note that the globalization of English has long been mapped onto these phases:

Ours is the language of the arts and sciences, of trade and commerce, of civilization and religious liberty [...] It is a store-house of the varied knowledge which brings a nation within the pale of civilization and Christianity [...] Already it is the language of the Bible [...] So prevalent is this language already become, as to betoken that it may soon become the language of international communication for the world. (Read 1849, quoted in Bailey 1991: 116)

The second term, which I am here translating as worldliness, may be seen in terms of “local histories in which global histories are enacted or where they have to be adapted, adopted, transformed, and rearticulated” (Mignolo 2000: 278). This, then, is the site of resistance, change, adaptation and reformulation. It is akin to what Canagarajah (1999) describes as a ‘resistance perspective’, highlighting the ways in which people in postcolonial contexts “may find ways to negotiate, alter and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their languages, cultures and identities to their advantage. The intention is not to reject English, but to reconstitute it in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms” (2). And this is not merely a process of appropriation and hybridization (processes commonly associated with the heterogenization position) but rather a “celebration of bi or pluri languaging”, a focus on “the crack in the global process between local histories and global designs, between ‘mundialización’ and globalisation, from languages to social movements” (Mignolo 2000: 250). It is, then, a focus on the constant movement back and forth across languages.

On the one hand, then, we have a way of focusing on the process of globalization that does not merely reduce it to homogenization. This is a far more complex version of the spread of English, its institutionalization, and its role relative to other languages, than some versions of globalization would suggest. But it is also a version that allows for critique of this process: It does highlight the politics, the inequalities, the cultural effects of English. On the

4 Mignolo uses the French, Spanish and Portuguese terms. I have chosen to use the term ‘worldliness’, which I used in earlier attempts (eg, 1994) to deal with these issues, though I then used it to cover both globalization and worldliness. It may be a more effective term in the more limited sense I am trying to give it here.
other hand, we have the worldliness of English, which allows us to understand critically both the ways in which it may operate in medical settings in South Africa, Hong Kong and Malaya, and ways in which it may be taken up, appropriated and changed in the fast, mixing world of popular culture. “How many deviations, changes, siftings, warpings, and twistings; how many opportunities for blackmail and corruption, before, transformed, sometimes unrecognisable, the stories of the poor who do not speak English reach their rulers, who are hand-picked, among their own peoples, on the basis of their knowledge of English?” “MC-ing is definitely an extension of oral tradition [...] Hip hop’s like documentation of your life, what your experiences, what your thoughts, your philosophies, you know, it’s reality-based [...]” “And now we’re walking down de street / Wid a brand new pride / A spring inna de step / Wid our heads held high / Young Asian brothers an sisters / Moving forward, side by side / Naya Zindagi Naya Jeevan / New Way New Life” …

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English for the Globe, or Only for Globe-Trotters?
The World of the EU

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ABSTRACT

There is a case for challenging orthodox presentations of ‘global English’, and for language policy to be studied more widely. The language dimension of europeanization involves major language policy challenges. How language issues are handled in the EU is exemplified in four vignettes, which are commented on. They show a clear need for more explicit language policy formation, so as to challenge language hierarchies and promote equality. Many of the factors contributing to an increased use of English in continental Europe are summarized. A plea is made for more effort to be put into clarifying the criteria that should guide language policy in Europe so that all languages can thrive.

Introduction

Academics with ‘English’ as part of their professional identity have to confront the fact that what English is seen as covering increases constantly, the geographical and cultural range of English textually and contextually, and permissible approaches to it. But to savour the hybridity of English, we need to challenge the essentializing mythologies of English Studies. One such is the racist hierarchization underlying the ranking of the English language as the genuine article in Britain and the neo-Europes, different in kind from the upstart, derivative ‘new Englishes’ of former colonies, and creoles and pidgins. Saliloko Mufwene has shown that these labelling categories do not hold scientific water (1997). They do, though, speak volumes on the dubious epistemological paternity of the hierarchies of
the legitimate and illegitimate offspring of English, to use Mufwene’s brilliant image.

I would also claim that much discourse on ‘global English’ rests on equally unstable scholarly foundations: ‘English as a world language’ tends to be used uncritically, as though English serves all the world’s citizens equally well, as though its postulated ‘universality’ makes it equally relevant everywhere, as though it can function independently of contemporary power balances, global and local (on Crystal 1997 see Phillipson 1999; on English in the new world order, see Phillipson 2000b).

I shall complexify our English identities by suggesting that language policy ought to be central to the study of contemporary English, because of the interlocking of English with the multiple manifestations of globalization. To put it bluntly, as English is a key dimension of globalization and Europeanization, are English departments merely assisting the work of transnational corporations if English is studied without a serious focus on international and national linguistic hierarchies and the forces that determine these? What is English Studies doing about a world that is increasingly polarized between English-speaking haves and non-English-speaking have-nots, whether in America, Asia, Africa or Europe? We academic globe-trotters ought to be in a better position than our counterparts in the financial, political, military, and business worlds to analyse how the dominance of English is maintained, and to contribute to the implementation of policies that ensure rights for speakers of all languages.

The essay addresses such issues by presenting the overall context of ongoing supra-national language policy in the EU, then exemplifying how EU language policies are handled. It identifies a number of reasons for the unchecked contemporary expansion of English, and concludes by stating that language policy issues urgently need to be addressed at many levels and in many ways, if democratic communication in the EU is to be ensured.

George Bernard Shaw’s aphorism that “the British and the Americans are divided by a common language” could perhaps be re-phrased as “Europeans are being united by a language that they do not have in common.” Alternatively, building on Benedict Anderson’s “the nation is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1983), “Europe is an imagined political community – and imagined with inherently limited linguistic competence and a single sovereign language”. Shaw, born in 1856, was in no doubt about what globalization was all about. He observed presciently in 1912: “What has been happening in my lifetime is the Americanization of the world” (cited in Holroyd 1997: 660). English is central to this.
The EU supra-national linguistic mosaic

The European Union is a test case for policies that respect linguistic diversity, and for principles of equality, both for the individual language user and for a range of languages (Delanty 1995, Coulmas 1991, Labrie 1993, European Cultural Foundation 1999, Wright 2000, Loos 2000, Melander 2000, Pym 2000, van Els 2000). In principle the 11 official languages of the 15 member states have equal rights, but with the exception of certain minimal rights to translation (an essential service, as documents emanating from Brussels have the force of law in member states, overriding national legislation) and interpretation (particularly for Members of the European Parliament and senior politicians), there is unofficial acceptance of a linguistic hierarchy with French and English at the top. In most other international fora in Europe (NATO, scientific writing, commerce, youth culture, media, etc.), English is the sole dominant language.

Language policy is such a sensitive political issue that serious analysis of how the present system operates in EU institutions and networking has never been undertaken, nor do we have a very clear idea as to what its real costs are, and whether they are a good investment. Nor have efforts been made to work out how a reformed policy could ensure real equality of communication between speakers of different languages. Language permeates all fields of EU collaboration, and is such an existential identity marker, personally (whether used as a mother tongue or a foreign language) and nationally, that attitudes to language matters are subjective and often deeply rooted in myths and ignorance. As language, like culture and education, is in principle a matter for the member states rather than the Union, most supra-national policies remain implicit and covert. The Nice summit of December 2000 demonstrated that the interface between national interests and supra-national planning is a slippery and treacherous one. The various EU schemes for promoting language learning, and student and researcher mobility (LINGUA, SOCRATES, etc.) probably serve to strengthen English as much as the learning of other national languages.

The ongoing formation of the EU permeates all societal domains. A novel postnational structure is in the making, one that German and French political leaders are articulating. The member states have transferred a fair measure of sovereignty to the supra-national level, where policies are hammered out in partnership. All eleven languages are therefore now being used in new international contexts, hence are expanding their repertoires and contexts of use. But simultaneously there are hierarchization processes at work that favour the dominant languages and the modes of thought associated with them. In EU internal and external relations, English is consolidating the position it has acquired in many domains and networks world-wide.
Glimpses of language policy in action (*vignettes*) and language policy analysis (*comments*)

**Vignette 1.** During the Finnish EU presidency of 1999, there was a clash between Germany and Finland about the number of working languages at informal ministerial meetings. The rule of thumb is the host country’s language, English and French. The political problem was solved by concessions to speakers of the language of a country that is important demographically (German is the mother tongue of a quarter of EU citizens), and economically (Germany foots a large part of the EU bill), leaving speakers of other ‘big’ languages, Spanish and Italian, in limbo, in the company of the ‘small’ languages.

**Comment.** Language problems are fixed pragmatically, without issues of principle, of language rights, or criteria for organizing democratic equality of communication being explored. This ‘solution’ is likely to widen the gap between the “big” member states and the rest, and to confirm fears about EU institutions being undemocratic and unaccountable. *Speakers of some languages have de facto more rights than speakers of other languages. As in George Orwell’s world, some are more equal than others, and language plays a decisive role in upholding inequality* (see Phillipson 2000b).

**Vignette 2.** During the 1995 French presidency of the EU, the French government proposed a restriction on the number of working languages in EU institutions, and a language pact to promote trilingualism in education. This triggered resistance and disagreement, and no action resulted. The French Presidency of 2000 did not push language policy issues, whereas it continued its efforts to strengthen European cultural industries.

**Comment.** Empirical research (Schlossmacher 1996, Quell 1997) and working groups of the European Parliament have shown that MEPs are reluctant to see any change in the existing language services, whereas civil servants in the Commission would favour new regulations. People from different member states look at language policy issues in widely differing ways. The management of supra-national language policy is at present largely being left to the market forces that reinforce official and unofficial linguistic hierarchies. However, challenge may come from transnational corporations that would like the EU to implement an English-only policy. A recent doctoral study in international law in the USA (Feld 1998) concludes that French language protection measures, specifically the Loi Toubon, are in conflict with the Maastricht Treaty and the principles of a common market with the free movement of goods, services, labour, and capital. Corporate lawyers may therefore soon choose to challenge national language legislation on precisely
these grounds. Feld recommends a single language to unify the market and member states. The study reflects the monolingual world-view of americanization, subtly marketed as europeanization, under cover of globalization. A laissez-faire language policy therefore involves major risks for all languages other than English.

**Vignette 3.** Countries applying for admission to the EU have not raised the issue of what rights their languages will have when the EU expands. The Czechs, Estonians, Hungarians, Poles, etc. are presumably assuming that their languages will have the same rights as working languages, in speech and writing, and as official languages as the current eleven. The official position of the Commission and Joint Interpreting and Conference Service is that all eleven languages, as well as the languages of any states that join the EU, are treated equally,¹ but, so far as translation goes, this equality refers to “out-bound” texts, only, as opposed to the in-house languages, which are English and French, and “inbound” texts, which can be in any of the official languages.

**Comment.** The logistics of operating with vastly increased numbers of interpretation pairs make change inevitable. For instance, to expand from eleven to fifteen languages increases the number of possible combinations from 110 to 210. There will probably therefore be restrictions on the use of newly arrived languages, especially in oral communication. The relay system (interpretation in two phases via a linking or pivot language) will limp on, impoverishing the quality of communication both in production (speakers simplify) and reception (listeners switch off), unless more drastic solutions (eg, providing interpretation into few languages) are implemented. Changes in the operation of EU language policy ought to be openly debated, after thorough analysis of the issues, and identification of the strengths and weaknesses of each possible change.

**Vignette 4.** Romano Prodi and Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister, will never be as effective in English or French as in their mother tongues. It is also totally unreasonable to expect them to be so, but hegemonic hierarchization processes lead to an acceptance of unequal communication rights.

**Comment.** The fact that second language users are often unclear reinforces the need for serious scrutiny of the issues. The British and the French have always promoted their languages internationally because they know that this

gives them strategic and commercial advantages. The formation of more egalitarian policies presupposes a clarification of principles of equality between language users (Esperanto being the ideal case, and not merely a utopia but a reality for its speakers) and mechanisms for their implementation.

These vignettes provide a few snapshots of the complicated interface between national and supranational language policy. Relatively little empirical documentation of the problems exists, and the issues are regarded as politically explosive. Inaction is compounded by the absence of any forum in European civil society, or in continental political or professional associations, where language policy is being analysed in depth. More visionary scenarios for future EU language policies, and the elaboration of practical measures for their implementation, are therefore urgently needed.

Factors contributing to the increased use of English

A large number of factors are contributing to the vigorous expansion of English in the EU. They can be briefly summarized.

1. The expansion of English is an integral dimension of ongoing globalization processes. Both western and eastern Europe are currently experiencing linguistic incorporation. The transition from a world of colonial linguistic imperialism to a postmodern, postnational, neoliberal world has required only minor modifications in the structural and ideological legitimation of English as a dominant language. The corporate world, through the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, OECD, NATO, et al, is likely to push for acceptance of English throughout the EU market. There has been some work exploring English as a ‘post-imperial language’ in the sense that corporate interests have taken over from the nation state (Fishman, Conrad & Rubal–Lopez, ed. 1996), and of the interlocking of englishization with globalization (Phillipson & Skutnabb–Kangas 1999).

2. In the entire post-1945 period, the Americans and British have invested heavily in promoting their language (Phillipson 1992). The Americans fought the cultural cold war on a number of ideological fronts (Saunders 1999). As soon as Britain decided to join the EU, funds were made available so that the British Council could strengthen British involvement in English teaching in the EU in Brussels and throughout Europe.

3. Nationalism studies demonstrate that across the EU there have for centuries been major differences in the ideologies underpinning the formation of states, and in the role ascribed to language in these. At one extreme there is jus sanguinis, a Herderian faith in a close bond between ethnolinguistic group and the state (Germany); at the other jus soli,
citizenship, and the language of the republic (France). The legitimation of most states contains elements from each ideology. Such basic terms as language and dialect simply mean different things in France, Germany and the UK (Barbour & Carmichael 2000: 9). These conceptual differences constitute a major hurdle which any common efforts to elaborate a supra-national language strategy must respect. They inevitably complicate political and scholarly discourse about language policy. They are one element in national political socialization that contributes to a lot of the rhetoric of European unity remaining wishful thinking in the everyday life of the Commission and Parliament (Abélès in European Cultural Foundation 1999: 111–18). A further complication is that a vital term like “multilingualism” is used in imprecise and conflicting ways in EU rhetoric. The availability of interpretation services permits individuals to remain monolingual. The obligation to translate documents emanating from Brussels into the eleven official languages means that states can continue to function monolingually in their internal affairs, though competence in French and English is necessary for interaction with Brussels.

4. **Language awareness** ranges widely between and within each EU country. It tends to be high in cultures which are strong on the rhetoric of the intrinsic superiority of their language (France), or formerly colonized countries (Finland, Greece), and lower elsewhere. Such variation affects attitudes to whether a language is perceived as being threatened and needing “defence” (in France, yes; in Denmark, no).

5. **Responsibility for language policy** tends to be shared between ministries of foreign affairs, education, culture, research, and commerce. In some states, responsibility may not be explicitly placed anywhere. There is therefore a lack of infrastructure, or at least a very uneven one, to ensure co-ordinated, well-informed language policy at the national, sub-national, and supra-national levels in each member state. Germany’s federal structure is an additional complicating, or paralysing, factor. This unpreparedness is then repeated at the supra-national level. Recent efforts by the Council of Europe (2000) to strengthen efforts by member states to develop language policy analysis, and formulate realistic plans for increased multilingualism, are likely to founder for the same reason.

6. There is a **poor scholarly infrastructure at European universities and research institutes** for the analysis of language policy, the political sociology of language, bilingual education, and international law in relation to language and human rights. The area is under-funded, postgraduate training is scattered and limited. There is a risk that linguists are under-qualified in the social sciences, and will continue work in a Saussurean tradition that cuts them off from social reality when they focus on a
standard language, and ignore the processes of state formation that have led to “a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language” (Bourdieu 1991: 45).

7. The fact that English is widely used (there are now books and journals on the English languages, and it is referred to by linguists as a poly-centric language), a language also used extensively by non-native speakers, means that there is no simple correlation between use of a given language and the interests of a particular state. This complicates the issue of pinning down whose interests the use of English serves best.

8. There is a popular demand for English. The language is pervasively visible in many domains, personal and professional. Competence in English is increasingly necessary for employment and higher education, it accesses the internet and travel, it facilitates communication in many contexts. Its value, economic and cultural, therefore ensures that competence in English is an attractive goal. The current high instrumental value of English may obscure the fact that competence in other languages is also desirable, and that linguistic capital in several languages may soon be the norm (Grin 2001).

9. Substantial investment in the teaching of English in the education systems of continental European education systems (teacher training, time-table space, etc.) represents a response by these states to the need for citizens to be competent in foreign languages. In recent decades English has been overwhelmingly learned as the first foreign language, which paves the way for its utilization in many forms of international contact (Labrie & Quell 1997).

10. Levels of multilingual competence vary substantially within and across member states. The foreign language competence of citizens of ‘small’ countries (the Netherlands, Sweden, …) is generally higher than that of people from countries that have traditionally regarded themselves as linguistically self-sufficient, like Germany or Spain (Rosen et al. 2000). States also vary in the status and rights accorded to minority languages. These factors influence people’s experience of and attitudes to bilingualism and multilingualism in all domains and types of social interaction, formal and informal. The greater focus on minority rights, devolution, and regional autonomy of recent years demonstrates that states are constantly being re-negotiated, and change over time (Skutnabb–Kangas 2000). Simultaneously states are having to relinquish territory traditionally occupied by the dominant national language to English. The linguistic marketplace is fluid and dynamic.
Concluding comment

The construction of “Europe” involves complex processes of merging national and supra-national interests and policies. A range of overt and covert language policies is in place, some of which give some support to multilingualism and cultural diversity. However, pragmatic considerations, market forces, and a myth of the equality of the official languages ensure that some languages are more equal than others. This represents a continuation of the historical hierarchization processes that have privileged a single language within each state, and languages of conquest and empire internationally.

If language policy is to be put on a surer, more democratic footing, the points identified in relation to each of the vignettes, and each of the factors contributing to the expansion of English, need to be addressed. Concentration on one, and ignoring the rest, is a recipe for failure. We must ensure that belief that a single measure can solve multiple problems in myriad contexts, a linguistic ‘quick fix’ (like the marketing of an ‘early start’ to foreign language learning as a panacea), does not intervene to sidetrack the more fundamental issues. The paralysis in the EU on language policy is symptomatic of the uneasy tension between national and supra-national interests, but enlargement will require policy decisions that will probably restrict the use of official and working languages. We need imaginative and realistic scenarios that, to adapt a phrase used initially by Neville Alexander about Afrikaans, when it was a dominant language, will reduce English to equality.

One practical proposal could be that interpretation should be provided only into a restricted set of languages, for instance English, Esperanto and French, this measure ensuring that everyone can speak in their own official language, but meaning that over a period of time, activities at the supra-national level will presuppose receptive competence in specific languages (see Council of Europe 2000: 129–36).

Clarifying whether and in what sense English functions as a lingua franca is also needed, and if so, whose norms underpin it. If the norms are not Anglo-American, what standards are in force, and what interests do they serve best and worst, granted that linguistic hierarchies dovetail with power of various sorts?

There is an urgent need for a clarification of the criteria that can underpin the management of linguistic diversity in EU institutions and international contacts, as a preliminary step towards the elaboration of scenarios and systems that can ensure equality of communication for speakers of different languages. Constructive dialogue between policy-makers and scholars in the field of language policy is a prerequisite for this. Experience in Australia, South Africa and elsewhere is relevant, combined with research in linguistic imperialism, language rights, the economics of language, multilingual educa-
tion, and critical discourse analysis. These can contribute to clarifying the criteria that can contribute to the formulation of language policies that maintain linguistic diversity and promote equitable communication. At present the risk is that academics are engaged in a linguistic glass bead game which, as in Hermann Hesse’s contemplative intellectual world, is divorced from political realities. In Brussels, language policy is more akin to a game of linguistic poker in which speakers of English, as L1 or L2, increasingly hold all the good cards. My new book, *English-Only Europe? Language Policy Challenges* (2002) attempts to ensure more valid foundations for the analysis of language policy in Europe.

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Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity
The Threat From Killer Languages

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Abstract

The essay is structured as follows. First I sum up a few basics about the state of the world’s languages. Then I discuss one argument for why everybody should be multilingual. I have chosen one of the less well known arguments, the relationship between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity. Next I claim that most indigenous and minority education participates in committing linguistic genocide according to the United Nations definitions of genocide, and examine to what extent human rights instruments can be used to prevent this and to support the maintenance of linguistic diversity. I tie some of the arguments together in a short discussion of self-determination, ‘ethnic conflict’ and linguistic human rights, using Subcommandante Marcos. Finally, I say a few words about one aspect of ecology, namely the prerequisites for ruining the planet beyond repair (from Jared Diamond), which I hope my readers can apply to linguistic and cultural ecologies.

The Okanagan word for ‘our place on the land’ and ‘our language’ is the same. We think of our language as the language of the land. This means that the land has taught us our language. The way we survived is to speak the language that the land offered us as its teachings. To know all the plants, animals, seasons, and geography is to construct language for them.

We also refer to the land and our bodies with the same root syllable. This means that the flesh that is our body is pieces of the land that came to us through the things that this land is. The soil, the water, the air, and all the other life forms contributed parts to be our flesh. We are our land/place. Not to know and to celebrate this is to be without language and without land. It is to be dis-placed [...] I know what it feels like to be an endangered species on my land, to see the land dying with us. It is my body that is
being torn, deforested, and poisoned by ‘development’. Every fish, plant, insect, bird, and animal that disappears is part of me dying. I know all their names, and I touch them with my spirit.¹

Introduction: the state of the world’s languages

The exact numbers of languages or speakers of languages are not known (lack of resources for their study) and cannot be known (the border between languages and other varieties, eg, dialects, is political, not linguistic). The most useful source on number of languages, the Ethnologue, edited by Barbara Grimes at the Summer Institute of Linguistics (a missionary organization) lists almost 6,800 languages in 228 countries.² But it only mentions 114 Sign languages. Still, there are deaf people in all societies, and while hearing people have developed spoken, oral languages, the Deaf have developed Sign languages, full-fledged, complex, abstract languages (see Branson & Miller 1998, 2000, for brilliant analyses of the treatment of Sign languages, and Jokinen 2000 for the [lack of] linguistic human rights of Sign language users). Those who speak about ‘languages’ but in fact mean oral languages only, participate through invisibilizing sign languages in killing half the linguistic diversity on earth.

Most of the world’s languages are spoken by relatively few people: the median number of speakers is probably around 5–6,000 (Posey 1997). Over 95% of the world’s spoken languages have fewer than 1 million native users; some 5,000 have less than 100,000 speakers and more than 3,000 languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers. A quarter of the world’s spoken languages and most of the Sign languages have fewer than 1,000 users, and at least some 500 languages had in 1999 under a hundred speakers (Ethnologue). Some 83–84% of the world’s languages are endemic: they exist in one country only (Harmon 1995).

Linguists are today working with the description of the world’s linguistic diversity in the same way as biologists describe and list the world’s biodiversity. There are red books for threatened languages (see Table 2), in the

¹ Jeannette Armstrong 1996: 465–66, 470. The relationship between language and land is seen as sacred. Most non-indigenous people need a lot of guidance to even start understanding the primacy of land in it. I would like to illustrate this with one example from Australia. None of the Aboriginal people participating in the reclaiming of the Awabakal language were descendants of the Awabakal (the last speakers died before 1900) but came from other areas and peoples. Still, they speak about ‘our language’ and ‘our identity’ in connection with Awabakal. In Rob Amery’s words, “the revival of Awabakal seems to be based primarily on the association of the language with the land, the language of the place in which a group of Aboriginal people of diverse origins now live” (1998: 94).
² See <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/>
Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity: Killer Languages

same way as for threatened animals and plants and other species (Table 1). A language is threatened if it has few users and a weak political status, and, especially, if children are no longer learning it: ie, when the language is no longer transmitted to the next generation. There are detailed definitions of the degree of threat or endangerment:

Table 1. Red lists for threatened animals and plants

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<tr>
<td>Nebraska Asia</td>
<td>These lists are monitored by World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK; email <a href="mailto:info@wcmc.org.uk">info@wcmc.org.uk</a>; more general web-site <a href="http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/data/index.html">http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/data/index.html</a></td>
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Table 2. Red books for threatened languages

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<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/redbook/asiapacific/asia-index.html">http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/redbook/asiapacific/asia-index.html</a></td>
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<td>Africa</td>
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<td>Russia</td>
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<td>South America</td>
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Habitat destruction – for instance, through logging, spread of agriculture, use of pesticides, and the poor economic and political situation of the people who live in the world’s most diverse ecoregions – has been identified as a main cause of the disappearance of biodiversity. What most people do not know is that the disappearance of languages may also be or become a very important cause.

While new trees can be planted and habitats restored, it is much more difficult to restore languages once they have been murdered. Languages are today disappearing at a faster pace than ever before in human history. What happens is linguistic genocide on a massive scale, with formal education and media as the main concrete culprits but with the world’s political, economic and military structures as the more basic causal factors. Big languages turn into killer languages, monsters that gobble up others, when they are learned at the cost of the smaller ones. Instead, they should and could be learned in addition to the various mother tongues.
Even the most ‘optimistic realistic’ linguists now estimate that half of today’s oral languages may have disappeared or at least not be learned by children in a 100 years’ time, whereas the ‘pessimistic but realistic’ researchers estimate that we may only have some 10% of today’s oral languages (or even 5%, some 300 languages) left as vital, non-threatened languages in the year 2100. 90% may be ‘dead’ or ‘on death row’, ‘moribund’ (negative terms that many, including myself, object to). Languages can, of course, also be ‘reborn’ or ‘reclaimed’ – there is a handful of examples of this. Kaurna in Australia is one (see Amery 2000). Those who speak it now say that it was not dead – even if the last speaker died in the late 1920s – it was only sleeping. But so far it has happened seldom, and fairly few new languages arise.

Hearing that languages are disappearing, many people might say: so what? It might be better for world peace if we all speak a few big languages and understand each other – only romantic linguists want to preserve the small ones. Here I present only one of the many counterarguments against linguistic genocide and for support for the maintenance of linguistic diversity (hereafter LD): the relationship between linguistic diversity and biodiversity.

The relationship between linguistic diversity and biodiversity

Maintenance of diversities, in the plural, is one end of a continuum where ecocide and linguistic genocide are at the other end. We start with biodiversity. Monocropping, pesticides, deforestation, genetic engineering and the wrong use of fertilizers and irrigation have led to an unprecedented decrease of all kinds of biodiversity, including agrobiodiversity. People consume at least 7,000 species of plants, but “only 150 species are commercially important and about 103 species account for 90 percent of the world’s food crops. Just three crops – rice, wheat and maize – account for about 60 percent of the calories and 56 percent of the protein people derive from plants” (Thrupp 1999: 318). The remaining crop diversity (already low) is eroding at 1–2% and livestock breeds at 5% per annum (Christie & Moonie 1999: 321). “Almost all farmers’ knowledge of plants and research systems [something that has been built up during the 12,000 years of agriculture, Thrupp 1999: 318] could become extinct within one or two generations” (Christie & Moonie 1999: Table 7.5). Likewise, “almost all local knowledge of medicinal plants and systems as well as the plants themselves could disappear within one generation” (Table 7.5). “Rainforests are coming down at a rate of 0.9 percent per annum and the pace is picking up. Much of the earth’s remaining diversity could be gone within one or two generations” (Table 7.5).
Still, linguistic diversity is disappearing relatively much faster than biodiversity. Table 3 presents a very simple comparison based on numbers and extinction rates:

Table 3. Estimates for ‘dead’ or ‘moribund’ species and languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage estimated to be dead or moribund around the year 2100</th>
<th>ESTIMATES</th>
<th>Biological species</th>
<th>Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Optimistic realistic’</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pessimistic realistic’</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linguistic and cultural diversity on the one hand and biodiversity on the other hand are correlated – where one type is high, often the other one is too, and vice versa. One of the organizations investigating this relationship is Teralingua. The conservationist David Harmon is the General Secretary of Teralingua. He has investigated correlations between biological and linguistic diversity. Harmon has compared endemism of languages and higher vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians) with the top 25 countries for each type (1995: 14) (Table 4). I have **boldfaced** and **CAPITALIZED** those countries which are on both lists. 16 of the 25 countries are on both lists, a coincidence of 64%. According to Harmon (1995: 6), “it is very unlikely that this would only be accidental.” Harmon gets the same results with flowering plants and languages, butterflies and languages, etc. – a high correlation between countries with biological and linguistic megadiversity (see also Harmon 2002).

Table 4. Endemism in languages and higher vertebrates: a comparison of the top 25 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endemic languages</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Endemic higher vertebrates</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PAPUA NEW GUINEA</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>1. AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>1,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. INDONESIA</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>2. MEXICO</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nigeria</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>3. BRAZIL</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. INDIA</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>4. INDONESIA</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>5. Madagascar</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 For connections between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity, see Terralingua’s web-site <http://www.terralingua.org>
New and exciting research shows mounting evidence for the hypothesis that it might not only be a correlational relationship. It may also be causal: the two types of diversities seem to mutually enforce and support each other (see Maffi 2000). UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program), one of the organizers of the world summit on biodiversity in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, published a megavolume called *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity: A Complementary Contribution to the Global Biodiversity Assessment* (Posey, ed. 1999) summarizing much of this evidence. The strong correlation need not indicate a direct causal relationship, in the sense that neither type of diversity
should probably be seen directly as an independent variable in relation to the other. But linguistic and cultural diversity may be decisive mediating variables in sustaining biodiversity itself, and vice versa, as long as humans are on the earth. Of course there was no relationship in pre-human times, but as soon as humans came into existence, they started to influence the rest of nature. Today it is safe to say that there is no ‘wild’ nature left; all landscapes have been and are influenced by human action, even those where untrained observers might not notice it immediately. All landscapes are cultural landscapes. Likewise, local nature and people’s detailed knowledge about it and use of it have influenced the cultures, languages and cosmo-visions of the people who have been dependent on it for their sustenance. This relationship between all kinds of diversities is of course what most indigenous peoples have always known, and they describe their knowledge in several articles in the Posey volume.

The article on linguistic diversity in it is written by Terralingua’s President, Luisa Maffi, and myself (Maffi, Skutnabb-Kangas & Andrianarivo 1999; see also articles in Maffi, ed. 2001). We suggest that if the long-lasting co-evolution which people have had with their environments from time immemorial is abruptly disrupted, without nature (and people) getting enough time to adjust and adapt, we can expect a catastrophe. The adjustment needed takes hundreds of years, not only decades (see Mühlhäusler 1996). Just to take one example: nuances in the knowledge about medicinal plants and their use disappear when indigenous youth in Mexico become bilingual without teaching in and through the medium of their own languages. The knowledge is not transferred to Spanish, which does not have the vocabulary for these nuances (Maffi 1994).

Those of us who discuss these links between biodiversity and linguistic diversity get attacked by some linguists and others who accuse us of Social Darwinism. I will use a representative sample of these attacks. One claims that

relying on biomorphic metaphors implies that dominant languages are fitter than others and that ‘primitive’ languages, unable to adapt to the modern world, deserve their fate.4

Many of the accusations have to do with lack of interdisciplinary knowledge. Most linguists do not know enough about present-day biology to be able to see what the biological metaphors and the claims of a causal relationship stand for. Let’s deconstruct the attacking claim a bit, with arguments from

4 I do not want to disclose the identity of the accuser, since this comes from a private email exchange, and I respect this person’s general views very much.
David Harmon, also from e-mail communication (17 January 2001). On this lack of knowledge, Harmon says:

This [is] the usual misunderstanding of evolution by people in non-biology disciplines who tend to parrot the ‘received view’ of biological phobia and cannot or will not distinguish Social Darwinism (which of course has long since been discredited […] from neo-Darwinism as it is now understood by evolutionary biologists.

Harmon then goes on to explain this present understanding of ‘fitness’:

Evolutionary ‘fitness’ has nothing whatsoever to do with putting anything (including species and languages) into a hierarchy, and equally nothing to do with teleology – which is always the unspoken assumption underlying comments like [this. The comment] implies that evolution (in this misguided view) ‘can’, ‘should’ or ‘could’ produce some kind of prearranged or wished for result. The current consensus biological understanding is that evolution does not, cannot, aim to produce anything – and I would add, in my view that goes for cultural (and, as I would call it, biocultural) evolution too. For example, as soon as one says, or claims that others say, that cultural evolution ‘should’ or ‘ought’ to produce this or that outcome (such as the ‘triumph’ of dominant languages, the implied labelling of others as ‘primitive’), at that very moment it ceases to be evolution: it becomes globalization or some other form of social planning. Evolution is undirected, and must always remain so if it is to go by the name of ‘evolution’.

Darwin’s use of the word ‘fitness’ is unfortunate simply because we cannot shake its mid-Victorian provenience. A biological organism is ‘fit’ simply if it fits into its ecological community and functions therein. If conditions change radically, and it no longer fits into the community, it will probably go extinct (note that there is no hint of ‘should’ or predestination).

Before the weaving together, Harmon has the following to say about ‘primitive’:

You would have to look long and hard to find a biologist of repute who claims that any one species is more ‘primitive’ than others, other than in the obvious morphological sense of cellular complexity, and that therefore one species is worth more than another – which is what [the attacker] wishes to project on biology when [s/he] (invalidly) mixes the political, value-laden language of ‘dominant’ and ‘primitive’ languages into [his/her] argument. The argument is really a kind of backdoor anthropocentrism, whether realized or not.

Then comes the summing-up:

Now the crux of the question as [the attacker] applies it in [his/her] quote above, is: what does it mean to say that ‘primitive’ languages are ‘unable to adapt to the modern world’? We know that it DOES NOT mean that they
couldn’t adapt linguistically; it is the consensus among linguists, is it not, that any language has the internal resources to cope with extralinguistic change and innovation, of whatever scope, IF there were no (extrinsic, non-linguistic) sociopolitical pressures on it. That condition is perfect ‘fitness’ in the strict Darwinian sense. [The attacker], like so many others, is not distinguishing between this un-teleological, evolutionary condition and the radically different, non-evolutionary, volitional processes of socio-political change that are the real causes rendering languages ‘unable to adapt to the modern world’. A giveaway: note the tag phrase ‘deserve their fate’: from fitness we have segued to a declaration of (1) morality, as in just deserts, and (2) fate, as in predestination. An impermissible leap, if the two distinct senses are left undistinguished.

To summarize my own views on the relationship, I use Colin Baker’s review of my latest book:

Ecological diversity is essential for long-term planetary survival. All living organisms, plants, animals, bacteria and humans survive and prosper through a network of complex and delicate relationships. Damaging one of the elements in the ecosystem will result in unforeseen consequences for the whole of the system. Evolution has been aided by genetic diversity, with species genetically adapting in order to survive in different environments. Diversity contains the potential for adaptation. Uniformity can endanger a species by providing inflexibility and unadaptability. Linguistic diversity and biological diversity are [...] inseparable. The range of cross fertilisation becomes less as languages and cultures die and the testimony of human intellectual achievement is lessened.

In the language of ecology, the strongest ecosystems are those that are the most diverse. That is, diversity is directly related to stability; variety is important for long-term survival. Our success on this planet has been due to an ability to adapt to different kinds of environment over thousands of years (atmospheric as well as cultural). Such ability is born out of diversity. Thus language and cultural diversity maximizes chances of human success and adaptability. (Baker 2001: 281)

If, during the next hundred years, we murder 50–90% of the linguistic (and thereby mostly also the cultural) diversity which is our treasury of historically developed knowledge, and includes knowledge about how to maintain and use sustainably some of the most vulnerable and most biologically diverse environments in the world, we are also seriously undermining our chances of life on earth.

Killing linguistic diversity is, then, just like the killing of biodiversity, dangerous reductionism. Monocultures are vulnerable, in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, as we see in increasingly more dramatic ways, when animals, bacteria and crops which are more and more resistant (to
antibiotics, to roundups, etc), are starting to spread. With genetic manipulations the problems are mounting rapidly.

In terms of the new ways of coping that we are going to need, the potential for the new lateral thinking that might save us from ourselves in time lies in having as many and as diverse languages and cultures as possible. We do not know which ones have the right medicine. For maintaining all of them, multilingualism is necessary. Multilingualism should, of course, then be one of the most important goals in education.

Most indigenous and minority education participates in committing linguistic genocide

It is clear from the statistics of number of languages and number of speakers that indigenous peoples and minorities are the main depository of the LD of the world. Therefore, it is decisive what happens to their languages. Many of them have traditionally been multilingual, and they have maintained their own languages. Today, as formal education reaches more and more people, schools can kill in one generation languages which, in situations without Western-type formal schooling, were maintained for hundreds or even thousands of years or more.

The education of indigenous peoples and minorities in large parts of the world is today being organized in direct contradiction of our best scientific knowledge of how it should be organized, and so is the education of both minorities and numerically large but politically dominated groups in most African and many Asian countries (see Skutnabb–Kangas 2000 for details on the claims; see Brock–Utne 1999 and Prah 1995 for Africa). Most of this education participates in committing linguistic and cultural genocide, according to Articles II(e) and (b) of the UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948): Article II(e), “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group”; and Article II(b), “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group”; emphasis added). Likewise, most minority education is guilty of linguistic genocide according to the 1948 special definition (not part of the present Convention): Article III(1) “Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group.”

Pirjo Janulf (1998) shows in a longitudinal study that of those Finnish immigrant minority members in Sweden who had had Swedish-medium education, not one spoke any Finnish to their own children. Even if they themselves might not have forgotten their Finnish completely, their children were certainly forcibly transferred to the majority group, at least linguistically. This is what happens to millions of speakers of threatened languages all over the
world. There are no schools or classes teaching through the medium of the threatened indigenous or minority languages. The transfer to the majority-language speaking group is not voluntary: alternatives do not exist, and parents do not have enough reliable information about the long-term consequences of the various choices. ‘Prohibition’ can be direct or indirect. If there are no minority teachers in the pre-schools/schools and if the minority languages are not used as the main media of education, the use of these languages is indirectly prohibited in daily intercourse/in schools: ie, it is a question of linguistic genocide.

Assimilationist submersion education where minorities are taught through the medium of dominant languages causes mental harm and leads to the students using the dominant language with their own children later on: ie, over a generation or two the children are linguistically and often in other ways too forcibly transferred to a dominant group. My latest book, *Linguistic genocide in education – or worldwide diversity and human rights?* (2000), provides hundreds of examples of the prohibition, the harm it causes, and the forcible transfer (see also, for example, Baugh 2000, Cummins 1996, 2000, Kouritzin 1999, Lowell & Devlin 1998, Williams 1998, Wong Fillmore 1991). Formal education which is subtractive: ie, which teaches children something of a dominant language at the cost of their first language, is genocidal. By comparison, learning new languages, including the dominant languages which most children obviously see it in their best interest to learn, should happen additively, in addition to their own languages.

Educational linguistic human rights which guarantee additive language learning are also what is needed for preventing linguistic genocide and for linguistic diversity to be maintained on earth. And the knowledge about how to organize education that respects linguistic human rights certainly exists (see, for example, Huss 1999, Huss et al. 2002, Skutnabb–Kangas, ed. 1995, just to mention a few).

The human rights system does not prevent linguistic genocide

Mother tongue medium education should be a basic linguistic human right (LHR). But international and European binding Covenants, Conventions and Charters give very little support to linguistic human rights in education (eg, Skutnabb–Kangas & Phillipson 1994). Language gets in them a much poorer treatment than other central human characteristics. Often language disappears completely in binding educational paragraphs, for instance, in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), where the paragraph on education (26) does not refer to language at all. Similarly, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (adopted in 1966 and in force since
1976), having mentioned language on a par with race, colour, sex, religion, etc. in its general Article (2.2), does explicitly refer to “racial, ethnic or religious groups” in its educational Article (13.1). However, here it omits reference to language or linguistic groups:

education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups [my emphasis].

When language is in educational paragraphs of human rights instruments, the Articles dealing with education, especially the right to mother tongue medium education, are more vague and/or contain many more opt-outs and modifications than any other Articles (see, for example, Kontra et al., ed. 1999; Phillipson & Skutnabb–Kangas 1994, 1995, 1996; Skutnabb–Kangas 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2000; Skutnabb–Kangas & Phillipson 1994, 1997, 1998). I will show you just one example of how language in education gets a different treatment from everything else, from the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities from 1992 (adopted by the General Assembly in December 1992). Most of the Articles use the obligating formulation ‘shall’ and have few let-out modifications or alternatives – except where linguistic rights in education are concerned. Compare the unconditional formulation in Article 1 about identity, with the education Article 4.3:

1.1. States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

1.2. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends.

4.3. States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue. (my emphases, ‘obligating’ in italics, ‘opt-outs’ in bold).

The same types of formulation as in Art. 4.3 abound even in the latest HRs instruments. Minority languages and sometimes even their speakers might “as far as possible”, and “within the framework of [the State’s] education systems”, get some vaguely defined rights, “appropriate measures”, or “adequate opportunities”, “if there is sufficient demand” and “substantial numbers” or “pupils who so wish in a number considered sufficient” or “if the number of users of a regional or minority language justifies it”. All these examples come from the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Lan-
Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity: Killer Languages

guages, both in force since 1998. The Articles covering medium of education are so heavily qualified that the minority is completely at the mercy of the state. It is clear that the opt-outs and alternatives in the Convention and the Charter permit a reluctant state to meet the requirements in a minimalist way, which it can legitimate by claiming that a provision was not ‘possible’ or ‘appropriate’, or that numbers were not ‘sufficient’ or did not ‘justify’ a provision, or that it ‘allowed’ the minority to organize teaching of their language as a subject, at their own cost.

Still, the human rights system should protect people in the globalization process rather than giving market forces free range. Human rights, especially economic and social rights, are, according to the human-rights lawyer Katarina Tomaševski, to act as correctives to the free market. The first international human rights treaty abolished slavery. Prohibiting slavery implied that people were not supposed to be treated as market commodities. The ILO (The International Labour Organisation) has added that labour should not be treated as a commodity. But price-tags are to be removed from other areas too. Tomaševski claims:

The purpose of international human rights law is [...] to overrule the law of supply and demand and remove price-tags from people and from necessities for their survival. (1996: 104)

These necessities for survival include not only basic food and housing (which would come under economic and social rights), but also basics for the sustenance of a dignified life, including basic civil, political and cultural rights. It should, therefore, be in accordance with the spirit of human rights to grant people full linguistic human rights.

There are some recent positive developments but no results are in sight yet, and there is little reason to be optimistic. There is a proper condemnation of subtractive submersion education in The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities. These Recommendations, published in 1996 by the OSCE’s (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, represent authoritative guidelines for minority education for the fifty-five member-states (which include Canada and the USA). They are an authoritative interpretation and concretization of the minimum in present HRs standards (see also van der Stoel 1997, Rothenberger 1997). Even if the term used is ‘national minority’, the guidelines also apply to other groups, for instance immigrated minorities, and one does not need to be a citizen in order to be protected by the guidelines (both these observations follow from the UN Human Rights Committee’s General Comment on Article 27). I would like
readers to find out to what extent their country lives up to the Hague Recommendations (<http://www.osce.org/hcnm/>) in minority education.

In the section “The spirit of international instruments”, bilingualism is seen as a right and responsibility for persons belonging to national minorities (Art. 1), and states are reminded not to interpret their obligations in a restrictive manner (Art. 3). In the section on “Minority education at primary and secondary levels”, mother tongue medium education is recommended at all levels, also in secondary education. This includes bilingual teachers in the dominant language as a second language (Articles 11–13). Teacher training is made a duty on the state (Art. 14).

Finally, the Explanatory Note states that “submersion-type approaches whereby the curriculum is taught exclusively through the medium of the State language and minority children are entirely integrated into classes with children of the majority are not in line with international standards” (5). Remember that most of the education offered to indigenous and minority children in Europe and North America is submersion.

But even if some improvements might be on their way, it has to be mentioned that having full legally guaranteed LHRs is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for languages to be maintained. Teresa McCarty and Lucille Watahomigie (1999) discuss the language education of the “nearly two million American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians [who] reside in the USA, representing over 500 tribes and 175 distinct languages” (79). The article starts with a denunciation of subtractive education. One of the important conclusions is that “language rights have not guaranteed language maintenance, which ultimately depends on the home language choices of Native speakers” (91). What this means is that bottom-up initiatives are urgent. There must be incentives for people to transmit their own languages to the next generation, and these incentives need to be both affective and instrumental.

Self-determination, ‘ethnic conflict’, and linguistic human rights

Minorities are up against almost impossible odds when they try to get access to basic human rights that most dominant language speakers take for granted. Educational LHRs, especially the right to learn one’s mother tongue fully and properly, orally – when this is physiologically possible – and in writing, seem to be among the most important rights that minorities and indigenous peoples want. Mother tongue medium education is part of the minorities’ important demands to have the collective right to exist and reproduce themselves as a distinct collectivity both respected and formally legalized. One can see the
importance of the twin demands of self-determination and mother tongue medium education in conflict prevention work in central and eastern Europe, as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has done (eg, van der Stoel 1997: 153). It is equally clear in Africa and Asia, where, for instance, “insurgents in Ethiopia have over the years, placed the use of native languages at the centre of their demands for autonomy and self-determination” (Prah 1995: 7). Or in Latin America, as we see in Subcommandante Marcos’s writings.

If a state does not grant basic linguistic human rights (LHRs), including educational language rights, to minorities and indigenous peoples, this lack of rights is what often leads to and/or can be used for the mobilization of sentiments which can then be labelled ‘ethnic conflicts’, especially in situations where linguistic and ethnic borders or boundaries coincide with economic boundaries or other boundaries where linguistically and ethnically defined groups differ in terms of relative political power. If legitimate demands for some kind of self-determination are not met, be it demands for cultural autonomy or for more regional economic or political autonomy, this may often lead to demands for secession. Thus granting education- and language-based rights to minorities can and should often be part of conflict prevention. The whole problematic is beautifully addressed by Subcommandante Marcos in an interview where, addressing the fear of fragmentation that many states seem to have, he also draws the connections between collective rights, peace or ‘ethnic’ conflict, and globalization:

Our aim is to get the Mexican Congress to recognize the identity of indigenous people as ‘collective subjects’ by right. Mexico’s constitution doesn’t recognize Indians. We want the government to accept that Mexico has a variety of peoples; that our indigenous peoples have their own political, social and economic forms of organisation, and that they have a strong connection to the land, to their communities, their roots and their history.

We are not asking for an autonomy that will exclude others. We are not calling for independence. We don’t want to proclaim the birth of the Maya nation, or fragment the country into lots of small indigenous countries. We are just asking for the recognition of the rights of an important part of Mexican society which has its own forms of organisation that it wants to be legally recognized.

Our aim is peace. A peace based on a dialogue which is not a sham. A dialogue that will lay the groundwork for rebuilding Chiapas and make it possible for the EZNL to enter ordinary political life. Peace can only be had by recognising the autonomy of indigenous peoples. This recognition is an important precondition for the EZNL to end its clandestine existence, give up armed struggle, participate openly in regular politics and also fight the dangers of globalisation. (from Ramonet 2001: 1)
Marcos also emphasized the demand for MTM education as one of the important motivating forces for and demands during the Zapatista march in February–March 2001 from Chiapas to Mexico City, together with local self-determination (reported by Jens Lohmann in *Information*, 13 March 2001).

One could draw a close parallel with the USA, where the constitution does not recognize indigenous peoples or minorities as proper collective subjects either and where minority rights and even indigenous rights are denied in the name of national unity. While the indigenous peoples in the USA are well aware of this, many of the minorities still have a long way to go before they start in earnest using international law to demand basic human rights, including educational LHRs, both individually and as collectives. Even today the denial of collective rights has to do with the (mostly unfounded) fear of the disintegration of the state. An imagined unity of the state through forcibly trying to homogenize the citizens linguistically, culturally and even ethnically is one of the strong motives behind human rights violations where the elites controlling the state are the perpetrators. We can see the same trend all over the world. Just to take a few examples, the homogenizing forces can be seen in Australia’s ‘one literacy’, a “singular, measurable, narrowly defined, English-only literacy” (Lo Bianco 2001), in the “homogenising effect of imposed Hispanization” (Bolivia) or “a deliberate attempt to ‘whiten’ and ‘Chilenise’ Andean populations […] under Pinochet” (Arnold & Yapita 2001), or in the European examples that Peter Trudgill (2000: 58) quotes from Bulgaria (Videnov), Greece (Angelopoulos), Hungary (Deme) and Britain (Stein & Quirk). Trudgill calls these writers’ texts “such abject failures of nerve […] such failures to attempt to defend the rights of linguistic minorities […] such sociolinguistic sophistry.” Unless collective rights are considerably strengthened very soon (but without weakening individual rights), the world’s linguistic diversity will be lost.

To make the issues still more complex, today states are not the only perpetrators of human rights violations, and sometimes they themselves need protection. First, the worldwide globalization has made it necessary to discuss to what extent individuals (and even some states) also need protection from unfettered markets, as part of their HRs proper and how this could be done. We now need to concentrate more on cultural, social and economic rights. Market-capitalism-run-wild oppresses a large majority of the world’s population in ways where even willing states have difficulty in protecting their citizens. It does not make things easier that many (maybe most?) states are not willing – there is an unholy alliance between national and transnational political elites and transnational market forces. Often there are more representatives of various transnational companies (agriculture, food, medicine, biotechnology, etc.) than state representatives sitting around the table when
important international and regional agreements about the environment, consumer protection, TRIPs (World Trade Organization’s Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement), etc. are being negotiated. Ukeje (2001: 11) catches the essence of this unequal relationship, describing the role of Shell in the oil fields in the Nigerian Delta: “Today, very few would doubt that in Nigeria, Shell is the state, and the real State is indeed a shell.”

Secondly, one might even envisage that states themselves, especially non-Western states, but also smaller Western states, especially those in eastern and central Europe, might need protection from the market forces. Otherwise states cannot take back their decision power over economic issues, which they have handed over to transnational companies and finance conglomerates. This is more necessary than ever, also for the implementation of human rights but more generally for the planet to have a future.

It is difficult, though, to envisage the forms that this protection would take. If the transnational techno-military complex together with other market forces were to be made firm duty-holders (they are beneficiaries already, with the WTO agreements and covert Davos agreements), we would run into the same problems as with the state being at the same time both perpetrator of human rights violations and protector of human rights, the situation that we have today. Still, some new system is urgently needed. No present international organizations (eg, the UN) can be envisaged to be strong enough to function as neutral arbitrators and to guarantee these rights as all of them are in the joint pocket of states and market forces.

Our responsibility for linguistic and cultural ecologies

Finally, a few words about linguistic and cultural ecologies and our responsibility for ruining or not ruining them. The impact of the recent positive developments in counteracting linguistic genocide in education and the killing of linguistic diversity is yet to be seen. We might learn from the history of killing biodiversity. Jared Diamond (1992) examines in a chapter titled “The Golden Age that never was”, the evidence for people and cultures before us having completely ruined the prerequisites for their own life. Many communities have destroyed their habitats and/or exterminated large numbers of species. This has happened in many places and it makes the “supposed past Golden Age of environmentalism look increasingly mythical” (Diamond 1992: 335). If we want to learn from it, and not make it happen on a global basis (this is our obvious risk today), we better heed his advice. Diamond claims that

small long-established, egalitarian societies tend to evolve conservationist practices, because they’ve had plenty of time to get to know their local
environment and to perceive their own self-interest. Instead, damage is likely to occur [1] when people suddenly colonize an unfamiliar environment (like the first Maoris and Easter Islanders); or [2] when people advance along a new frontier (like the first Indians to reach America), so that they can just move beyond the frontier when they’ve damaged the region behind; or [3] when people acquire a new technology whose destructive power they haven’t had time to appreciate (like modern New Guineans, now devastating pigeon populations with shotguns). Damage is also likely [4] in centralized states that concentrate wealth in the hands of rulers who are out of touch with their environment. (1995: 335–36)

As we can see, we have the perfect global prerequisites for ruining our planet beyond repair:

– long-established small societies are breaking up, and, with urbanization and migration, people encounter new environments (1);
– new technologies are more destructive than ever and results of biochemical and other experiments (like genetically modified crops) are taken into use before we know anything about the long-term effects on nature or people (3);
– we have growing gaps and alienated elites (4);
– and we do not have new planets to move to when we have damaged this one (2).

In terms of ruining our linguistic and cultural ecologies, we know already that similar processes are at work. There are many similar analyses of destructive paradigms. Some researchers have also started the discussion trying to identify the devastating languages-related processes which are similar to the list of factors that Diamond has identified.

Summing up, then, learning new languages should be additive rather than subtractive. It should add to people’s linguistic repertoires; new languages, including lingua francas, should not be learned at the cost of the diverse mother tongues but in addition to them. In this sense, the Killer Languages (with English the foremost among them) are serious threats to the world’s linguistic diversity (see Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1997, 1999). Linguistic human rights are needed more than ever. So far, human-rights instruments and discussions about both these and educational language rights have not even started addressing these big questions in a coherent way where all types of ecology would be discussed within an integrated politico-economic framework. When speakers of small languages learn other, necessary, languages in addition to their native languages, they become multilingual, and the maintenance of L.D, necessary for the planet, is supported. When
dominant languages, like English, are learned subtractively, at the cost of the mother tongues, they become killer languages.

I would not like to be more dramatic than necessary – but I would still like to remind ourselves: when our great grandchild asks: “why did you not stop this craziness? You could have done it!,” the one answer we cannot give is: “I DID NOT KNOW.” What are you going to do about this? Secondly, if some of you may feel provoked, even furious, please don’t shoot the messenger. Reflect rather on the message. Research into this area is only in its beginning, but it might prove to be research vital for our future. Luisa Maffi starts her 2001 book with a quotation from Diane Ackerman (1997: xviii–xix) that sums up the seriousness with which this new area should be taken:

We are among the rarest of the rare not because of our numbers, but because of the unlikeliness of our being here at all, the pace of our evolution, our powerful grip on the whole planet, and the precariousness of our future. We are evolutionary whiz kids who are better able to transform the world than to understand it. Other animals cannot evolve fast enough to cope with us. It is possible that we may also become extinct, and if we do, we will not be the only species that sabotaged itself, merely the only one that could have prevented it.

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English as the Supranational Language of Human Rights?

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ABSTRACT

Two things are clear about the relations between language and the law: one is that all law is articulated in one language or another, without escape to a language-free condition; the other is that countless key terms of any legal system are profoundly bound up in the language-culture that sponsors it (consider, in English law and language, key terms such as neighbour, appropriation, torture, causation, recklessness, provocation, and many more). Globalization in general, and the international spread of English as one of globalization’s exemplifications, may be regrettable and undesirable in many respects. But out of this spreading nettle, global English, we may pluck a flower, if English becomes (unwittingly, of course) an agent of reform and fairness. Globalization and the pressures of a rights-oriented culture may enable English to become the vehicle for articulation and maintenance of certain worldwide standards of protection.

I WANT TO BEGIN with a number of examples, or straws in the wind; at least they were so until the ship of global society was buffeted by storms late in 2001. The first is an extract from the Christmas/New Year circular letter, December 2000, of German friends of ours, who live close to Tübingen. Writing about their teenage daughters, they report:

In autumn she and Miriam, together with some school friends, spent a week on the Expo 2000 helping to stage an American puppet project on global human rights with enormously big papier-mache puppets. Now they are
capable of rendering complicated statements about the injustice of the world in English.

A second comes in an email message sent by a US-based graduate student on a discussion list concerning Critical Discourse Analysis:

I think the social role(s) of Arab women, whether in the West or in their respective Arab countries, is undergoing some major changes. I am confident that CDA will provide me with the tools necessary to account for those dramatic changes. In this connection, the English language is playing a major role as it’s becoming the language of “freedom-seekers”.

In view of recent terrible events in America and Afghanistan, there is something poignantly premature about that student’s hope, and the optimism that surfaces elsewhere in my essay, concerning the possibility of pursuing global justice and security by means of courts, due process and words (even English words) rather than by means of prejudice, bullets and violence. But, notwithstanding current divisions, the pressures to converge or harmonize, on a global scale, will over the long run reassert themselves. And so I continue with straw no.3. This comes in the May 2001 issue of Scanorama, the in-flight magazine of SAS airline. In that magazine there is a long supplement on Helsinki and this includes interviews with two young German journalists, Julia and Claudius, who have come to live and work there. The local writer meets Julia at a fashionable café, and in part the text runs as follows:

At the table close by us in Mother’s we can hear English being spoken. Shalom, is heard from another table further away.

“Helsinki is a very open city. Most people are happy to speak English when one enters a room. That hardly ever happens in Germany,” says Julia.

What one is to make of Julia’s claim that people in Helsinki, unlike those in Germany, are “open” because they are happy to speak English, is not at all clear; but it is the very emphasis on English that is of first interest. Two final straws, briefly cited: on the noticeboard in Freiburg University’s Law School, a flier advertises the Cornell–Paris Summer Institute of International & Comparative Law, advising that

Classes will be held in English in the Sorbonne and Faculté de Droit buildings, Paris, France.

Or the legal apprentice can take the American Law introductory course at Kaiserslautern: “A very good command of English is necessary, since students will spend five hours a day listening to and participating in classroom discussing (and reading).”

Finally, if in the summer of 2001 you went to the home page of the British Council (www.britcoun.org) you found the Council offering a new feature,
called a Human Rights Network – a highly informative set of pages, described as “A news, information and networking tool for the global human rights community.” For such matters are evidently now felt to be very much the rightful concern of the Council, historically the government’s international booster/promoter of British culture and, especially, British English.

Consider the following futurist scenario: it is election time in one of the leading countries of Europe, and the political power groups are stirring up, or struggling to dampen down, a kind of cultural panic over one issue that really is of secondary importance relative to more important ones: namely, health care and education – ones that are more important in the particularizing, short story sense that they affect the life chances of you and your loved ones. The cultural panic that is bubbling away during the election, sometimes in the background, sometimes in the foreground, concerns the English language, or Global as it now sometimes called. There is a proposal that, for purposes of facilitating and stabilizing the country’s dealings with all its closest partners, in matters of business, education, science, medicine, travel, and labour, the country should adopt Global. Of course, the established languages of the country, to which some citizens are passionately attached, will remain for all sorts of everyday domestic purposes. But alongside those languages, which may come increasingly to feel provincial and even old-fashioned, alongside them or on top of them will run the writ of Global.

Let me make a different kind of beginning by moving back in time to 1 August 2000, and an article written in the London Times, by Julie Mellor, Chair of the UK’s Equality Opportunities Commission. In it she writes in warm support of a report, by a group of Cambridge University legal experts, on possible revisions to Britain’s anti-discrimination legislation. These experts had suggested that Britain’s equality laws, a patchwork of different measures applying to different standards concerning various kinds of potential discrimination to do with race, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, and so on, were outdated, and increasingly likely to be incompatible with developing regional or European standards. In short, Britain’s laws against discrimination (or, to put things in the positive terms now appropriate to the October 2000 enactment of the Human Rights Act, the state’s public protection of people’s entitlement to equal treatment) need a thorough over-haul, simplification, and integration. To quote directly from the Cambridge lawyers’ executive summary of their report:

The report proposes that there should be a single Equality Act in Britain, supplemented by regulations and codes of practice, written in plain language. There should be a Human Rights Commission with responsibility to promote human rights including equality and a single Equality Commission with responsibility for the enforcement of equality legislation.
In relation to the present conference, the desideratum of particular note here is the requirement that an anti-discriminatory rights-protecting Equality Act for twenty-first-century Britain should be “written in plain language.” As usual, these lawyers do not specify any particular language. But it is a safe bet that they have in mind what is known as standard written English as recorded in reputable contemporary dictionaries and reference grammars. And perhaps a further delimitation is implied by the term plain: that the language be comprehensible to the educated layperson, thus of a linguistic complexity that compares with what is found in broadsheet British newspapers.

But how plain and straightforward is statutory language, in practice? By way of an example of the complexities involved, I will refer to the Race Relations Act of 1976, which outlaws various kinds of racial discrimination, in access to schools and jobs particularly. Now, obviously, the Race Relations Act is not a sword to attack every kind of discrimination: if you are discriminated against on grounds of your sex or disability, the race-relations act cannot and will not help you. You have to have been discriminated against on grounds of your race or racial group. So what is a ‘race’ within the meaning of the Act? Are Palestinians a race, or Kurds, or people from Birmingham, or Rastafarians, or Romani gypsies, or Sikhs? What, hopefully “written in plain language”, does the Act define as a race? The key passage is s.3 (1), which characterizes ‘racial group’ as follows:

‘racial group’ means a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins, and references to a person’s racial group refer to any racial group into which he falls.

In practice the most contentious or indeterminate of this cluster of possible criteria has been the one to do with ethnic origins. A racial group, the statute says, can be a group of persons defined by reference to ethnic origins. And over the years, the English courts have struggled to chart a coherent course through a series of cases where it seemed really borderline whether the group that the plaintiff claimed had been discriminated against could be said to be one that was defined by ethnic origins. At first Sikhs were held not to be a racial group on this basis, but at a House of Lords appeal they were held in fact to be so, notwithstanding the fact that a person of any race or ethnicity can convert to Sikhism. Similarly, Romani gypsies have been held to be a group defined by reference to ethnic origins, hence a racial group within the meaning of the Act. On the other hand, Irish travellers, sometimes called ‘tinkers’, were held not to be so; and more recently, too, Rastafarians have been held not to be a racial group, apparently chiefly on the grounds that, though they might be deemed a racial group to the same extent that Sikhs are, nevertheless they have not been such a group for ‘long enough’.
I simply give this as a reminder, perhaps an obvious one, that all law – common or statutory – is directly or indirectly a matter of language, or linguistic articulation. (I want to avoid saying simply that all law is encoded in language, believing this to be a simplifying misrepresentation, as if language were merely an inert container.) I also want to reiterate the point that the law, and the language of the law, is constantly open to revision and change, as old terms are redefined under pressure from new cases and new circumstances. Passing a statute in a particular form no more fixes the law for ever and ever than the labours of the most meticulous lexicographer fixes the form or meaning of a word for ever and ever. What the statute and the lawyers and judges do, like the dictionary and the lexicographer, is to propose or attempt to codify and standardize, to reach after certainty and transparency.

And it is at this point that English, with its entrenched global or international functions, merits mention. Because all interventions aimed at codification and standardization, certainty and transparency, in practice are done in one language or another. Whether we are looking at the UK Human Rights Act, or the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, or the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it seems that all such instruments are stated, encoded, in one public language or another, such as English, German, or Chinese. It might be worth pausing briefly, to imagine a statement of fundamental rights that was not in one of these symbolic languages (in which case the word ‘statement’ might no longer be suitable). In other words (perhaps so as to be yet more culture-neutral, though that is really an independent issue), what might it be like to represent fundamental rights in an iconic and graphic representation, and wouldn’t that be more truly global? Let us not assume too readily that the task would be impossible. After all, all of us will have noticed, at international airports and similar places, the emergence over the past twenty-five years of wordless notifications that direct us to where we may change the baby’s nappy, where the disabled person’s toilet is, where we can stop the car for five minutes, but no longer, to drop a departing traveller, and so on.

What about the following, the version of article 10 of the European Convention that appears in the UK Human Rights Act: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers”? Can this be visually depicted, with something like the clarity and efficiency with which visual depictions show us where we can park our car if we are disabled? Could you bring such a wordless notification to court to contest a breach of that right? I would say yes and no: yes, fundamental rights might be amenable, over time, to clear graphical representation. But these rights are themselves the source of extensive verbal
conversations, academic exegesis, lawsuits, and counter-interpretations. Therefore we cannot get outside or beyond the verbal formulations of these rights, in one recognized language or another (English, Chinese, etc.); there is no possibility of recourse to a neutral, historyless, cultureless language, free of hegemonic or subordinated contaminations. The shortest explanation for all this is that these rights come down to us, today, in and through these public languages, so that it is now too late, and inescapably too late, to attempt to finesse those origins and inheritances out of existence. Unless you want to deny that our histories shape us.

Another fundamental cluster of issues I cannot address here concerns why we should care about, or believe in, global human rights at all. In the late modern world, with the so-called end of ideology, there seem to be plenty of commentators who are inclined both to note and deplore the global spread of Western, consumer-oriented culture while questioning whether it is justifiable to set up global benchmarks concerning individual rights and obligations. The suspicion is that these might be culture-bound Western liberal biases. I take a different view, a broadly internationalist one, which sees rights closely interconnected with needs, such that certain fundamental human rights and needs are the entitlement of every world citizen (and not merely every citizen of a particular nation-state), necessary to their democratic development, in civil, political, and social terms (for an articulation of this position, see Jary 1999). At the very least, the internationalist position has to be something like the following: it may be the case that asserting a right to freedom of expression is positing a right or a good that is not desirable at all times and in all places but is contingent and historicized, but it is posited on the assumption that it should be treated as valid without delimitation of time or place until a contrary case can be made out.

I should now like to mention the ‘G’ word, Globalization. As Susan Marks astutely notes (Marks 2000: 76–77), if Raymond Williams had lived to produce a third edition of his Keywords, between the entries on ‘genius’ and ‘hegemony’ he would surely have added one on ‘globalization’. As we know, the term covers not merely a global internationalizing of trade and finance and the emergence, often by merger, of corporations and cartels much more powerful than individual nation states; it also covers a technological and tele-communicational intensification of connection (and environmental and cultural dependence) of unprecedented depth and seemingly irresistible scope. The consequences for the protection of local distinctiveness, not to mention nation-state sovereignty, are often discussed. Among other things, as Marks puts it, “globalization also puts into question the assumption that democracy can be achieved through the democratization of national politics” (Marks 2000: 77) where decisions about our collective life are made in non-national
settings. We see the truth of this vividly in the Bush administration’s recent reversal on pledges made on environmental matters at Osaka, as well as in the conduct and composition of the World Trade Organization, and in many other instances. In very broad terms, globalization is anti-democratic and has an anti-democratizing effect: some agency based in Cleveland, or Brussels, or indeed nowhere in particular at all, makes decisions which affect the quality of your life – in ways which preclude the individual or even the more organized lobbying group, such as the international non-governmental organizations, from having much influence let alone redress (see discussion in Keane 2001). John Markoff argues to similar effect in relation to the European Union and its institutions: namely, that while the EU supports and requires democracy within its member states, it remains relatively free of effective democratic control (1999: 21–47).

In these circumstances, I submit, it will require global agencies which are empowered to protect democratic principles to contest and curb the anti-democratizing tendencies inherent in globalization. One can certainly hope for a reformed and democratized World Trade Organization, and United Nations Security Council, and at the European level a reduction in the democratic deficit in such EU institutions as the Parliament and the Commission. But quite separately one can look to the establishment of an International Criminal Court and similar courts that might be increasingly vested with powers of overseeing and enforcing fundamental human rights and needs, without fear of or favour from any national government. Those developments, as is well known, are by no means untroubled and inevitable, and one of the most powerful and rights-friendly nations is often cited as a key source of resistance. Thus it is not possible to make complaints against the USA to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, since the USA has not ratified the treaty which would authorize the Committee to receive such complaints. But the present US administration is more protectionist in these respects than others of recent years (during the Carter and Clinton presidencies). And at the level of national and international policy there is, as Susan Wright summarizes, “a growing acceptance of external military intervention in the domestic affairs of the state when it is deemed to be acting against the norms set by the international community – whether this takes the form of aggression towards part of its own population or military threat to outsiders” (Wright 1999: 89).

Of course, there are plenty of voices less upbeat than Wright’s and mine; here I want to make just one main point about protection of linguistic diversity. Thus, writing on language death and globalization in the Times on Thursday, 21 December 2000, Richard Morrison reported that “English has become a juggernaut” (a nice ironic reversal of nomenclature, since until very
recently the generic *Introduction to Language Studies* lecture on exotic borrowings into the English language invariably cited the Hindi word *juggernaut* as having barged into English). Morrison then rehearses the global spread and power of English, citing two books published in 2000 which point out the “dire consequences” of what Morrison calls “this brutal language cull”:

Daniel Nettler and Suzanne Romaine in *Vanishing Languages* (OUP) and David Crystal in *Language Death* (CUP) both argue that (as Crystal puts it) “if diversity is a prerequisite for successful humanity, then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, for language lies at the heart of what it means to be human.”

The difficulty of putting things in that way is that it always seems to reduce to an appeal to the ‘decency’ and liberal openmindedness of those who, otherwise, would get along just fine in a non-diverse world, urging those privileged people to make ‘extra efforts’ to support or protect diversity. But if that is a fair representation, it implies hope in a scheme in which the marginalized are to be helped out by the marginalizers. But, clearly, this expects the latter to do things that run counter to their very defining characteristic, as marginalizers. At any rate, something more compelling than such negative arguments for diversity is surely needed. Nor will everyone accept that diversity, for its own sake as it were, is a compelling argument: would we say that preservation of diversity of religion, in itself, was an inherent and essential good? What about diversity of videorecorder standards, or railway gauges, or traffic codes? There has to be a positive argument for linguistic diversity and indeed there is a quite straightforward one. The positive arguments must be rooted in principles of self-determination, and the right to freedom of expression: where the speakers of any ‘vanishing’ or ‘minority’ language continue to declare a wish to live their lives through that language, it is hard to imagine what compelling considerations or argument from necessity would justify unqualified dismissal of those declarations. (That is not to say that overriding considerations can *never* arise, since they clearly can, from other rights and freedoms that require protection; nor is this a claim that self-determination and freedom of expression must be upheld without regard to cost, however unreasonable. As soon as rights are recognized to be plural, no single right can claim absolute authority.) But it is important to note that these are positive, rights-based arguments for so-called minority-language or minority-culture maintenance and protection, and have nothing to do with the much more intangible plea concerning preservation of diversity. The latter principle is a preference, and certainly open to buffeting from conflicting scientific and practical arguments – whether the issue is preservation of diversity of lan-
guages or preservation of biological diversity. But the rights argument amounts not to a preference but an obligation, only open to qualification when it is confronted with other conflicting rights and obligations.

When books such as *Vanishing Languages* and *Language Death* are taken up by journalists and passionate advocates, they become the basis of jere-miads which trade on key terms such as diversity (diversity as *essential* for survival, as per plant genetic diversity), and homogeneity. But diversity and homogeneity (globalized uniformity) are very much in the eye of the beholder. Take the EU ‘project’: there are plenty of people in Britain, not least the press, who complain that an increasing ‘binding into’ Europe means that a ‘one size fits all’ regime, dictated by that well-known despot, ‘Brussels’, is imposed on everyone in Britain as in all the other member states (a suppressing of difference). On the other hand it is equally arguable that the everyday lived experience of the average Briton, in the thirty years of our membership of the EU, has become sensitized to increased diversity and has become more routinely aware of a larger landscape in which British ways are just one among many, and not the only game or language or judicial system or welfare system in town: it is arguable that the average Briton, is more aware of linguistic diversity (and religious diversity, culinary, ethnic, and so on) than has been the case in the recent past.

Can English be an instrument in the democratization of global governance? Yes, just as easily as it is an instrument in the anti-democratization that characterizes much current globalization. I would not go anything like as far as Susan Wright when, in relation to the development of the EU institutions and the need for scrutiny/review of their decisions by EU citizens from every corner, she supports the emergence of English as the union’s de facto lingua franca by saying “Democracy needs a shared language.” This is only asserted and never demonstrated, and seems to me no more self-evidently true than the nineteenth-century *realpolitische* idea that a distinct nation-state needed a single and distinct national language. In fairness, Wright addresses this paradox (Wright 2000, ch. 6) by noting that a fundamental liberty in a democracy is the right to use one’s language, but at the same time, genuinely democratic processes in the plurilingual EU are obstructed by the lack of total debate and political communication. As is widely recognized, at the heart of these matters lies our divided loyalty, torn between commitment to the nation-state and to democracy. Nation-states increasingly need democracy, or its semblance, to justify their continued if attenuated existence; but democracy does not need nation-states. On the contrary, some would insist, in an increasingly globally connected society, democracy must become nonterritorial; “the nation-state cannot remain democracy’s container” (Marks 2000: 83).
Of course, as Nettle and Romaine remind us in *Vanishing Languages*, we need to divest ourselves of the traditional equation between language, nation and state (although different polities – Western in contrast to developing or recently-independent ones – will be at different stages in this process of divestiture and it may not be at all appropriate for one type of polity to preach or ordain for other types). It is also true that this so-called traditional equation is as much the exception, applying chiefly but not uncoercively to France, Germany, Britain and the USA. At any event it is surely common ground that the mono-logic of one nation, one language, one state, under one God, has to go and in many respects has already gone. That is why in the past I have suggested that England is in a rather special historical position. It has a unique linguistic relation to both the EU and the world community; it is the ancestral home of a global language increasingly used by citizens of the world who are not directly affected by the English language / English nation fictional homology that inevitably subsists in England itself. It light of all this, England is arguably on the way to becoming the first postnational nation. (Other countries are reputedly headed in the same direction: see Rowe 2000.)

Political arrangements within the UK already partly suggest this: the other three nationalities now have a national or regional assembly of some form, and England alone does not. So a country with a national team for football, rugby, cricket, and so on, but not for golf, tennis, or Olympic sports, has no national assembly. At the same time, England and its institutions have no compelling customary authority over the English language (because of the presence of both American English on the one hand and the enormous influence of non-native uses of English globally), and the notional association of language with ethnicity is here much weakened too. So England is becoming a place without a proprietorially unique language, soon to be using a federal European currency, whose highest court is ultimately subject to the federal European court, and so on. Thus, in a number of respects, no longer a nation, any more than California is a nation. Of course, unlike California, it will always carry a history of past nationhood, and I would suggest that, as anxieties ensue concerning how English people will adjust to a postnational reality, a crucial matter is just how it chooses to carry that history (eg, how it cherishes it, without retreating into it).

It may be worth concluding with the theme that however destructive actual globalization (of trade, media, agriculture, etc.) may be at present, it does not have to be so, and can in fact be regulated by equally global restraints and protections. Writing in the *Guardian Weekly* of 18–24 January 2001, Kevin Watkins of Oxfam asserts that the wreckers have been at work since the collapse of the world trade talks in Seattle, 1999. The wreckers, he writes,
are not from the broadening anti-globalisation, anti-WTO protest movement. They are the governments of the world’s richest countries, which continue to use their power to subordinate the WTO to their national interests and to the pursuit of corporate profit, regardless of the cost to poor countries, public health and the environment. (23)

And most pertinently of all, for my purposes, after giving a number of examples of such rich-country wrecking of a genuine level playing field for global trade – wrecking which particularly operates in relation to food and agriculture – Watkins makes the following crucial point:

In reality the WTO is being used to ensure that US commercial interests supersede basic human rights.

I see quite direct parallels between the globalizing spread of English, which can be an oppressive instrument of richer, native-English-speaking countries’ hegemony but need not; and the globalizing reach of a World Trade agreement, which similarly can operate to the partisan benefit of the already prosperous but need not; and other kinds of globalization, including the increasing internationalized acknowledgement and enforcement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These are parallel and distinct developments (language, trade, law, life expectation); but they are also, at key points, interconnected developments. To invoke and apply Whorf: we habitually categorize and evaluate the world largely along lines laid down by our native language. But if new developments in international law transpire, including the ratified establishment of an international criminal court, and if these have their guiding instruments and statutes set out in a particular working language of the court (eg, English) rather than others, then it may come to pass that, for certain major ‘international’ crimes (eg, against humanity), the world of criminal justice will begin to be categorized and evaluated along lines laid down by that particular language, or more precisely in the legal terms made available by that particular language. Or consider how George Fletcher (1996: 5–6) has put things (albeit in terms that I would not subscribe to in their entirety):

Language matters more than most observers realize in shaping the contours of the law. The common law and the English language have a strong affinity for each other. The English common law has flourished in countries where English is the language of legal discourse. Some countries influenced by English law, notably Israel, have endeavoured to translate English terms into the native lexicon, but there seems to be as much lost in the translation of law as in the translation of Shakespeare. There is no way to convey the connotations of ‘due process’, ‘reasonable doubt’, and ‘malice aforethought’ in any language except English. The relationship also runs the other way. No anglo-
phone culture has successfully adopted and nourished any other system of law
[...] Language is hardly a neutral field for legal thought to play itself out [...] The view that language dictates the horizons of thought is clearly wrong, but there is nonetheless some not-fully-understood connection between language and legal thought.

And, at the very least, we can say that if globalizing pressures introduce a kind of convergence of diverse polities with their distinct judicial systems and legal codes, then it is entirely unsurprising that one such judicial system, at the highest appellate level, will tend to consider arguments and cases raised in the highest courts of its closest neighbours. In the case of the English appellate courts, those closest neighbours, in terms of language and legal traditions, include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA; and, increasingly since 1973, the supreme courts of France, Germany and Italy also.

Ultimately everything is connected to everything else. And even as the widening recognition and submission to human rights law, globally, may bring protections for less-widely-used languages, at the same time the articulation of those rights, and their enforcement in courts is quite likely to be in English language law. This will not be English law, but English language law and not, as it might have been, Hopi language law or Mandarin language law. The combined globalization and rights-culture pressures are enabling English to become the vehicle – unwitting and, of course, in no way to the direct credit of English language speakers – for the articulation and maintenance of certain worldwide standards of protection.

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English as an Exotic Language

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ABSTRACT

There is a remarkable absence of commentators calling English an exotic language in the literature I have surveyed. Instead, there is a dominant discourse of English being somehow destined by nature to be a global medium of communication and that the process we are watching today, in which English is developing from a foreign language to a second language to a primary and ultimately the sole language of a growing number of communities, is a natural one governed by natural laws of the survival of the fittest and of rational market forces. The view that English is barbarous in the sense that it is ‘the language of the red-bristled foreign devils’ as the title of the first Pidgin English phrase book published in China suggests, is like the meaning ‘barbarous’ in the Oxford English Dictionary, obsolete, and the fact that it is not acclimatized and hence ill-suited to the needs of others again remains largely undebat ed.

1. Introduction and definitions

When we look up the meaning of ‘exotic’ in the Oxford English Dictionary we find definitions such as

a) alien, introduced from abroad,
b) foreign, outlandish, barbarous,
c) (of plants and animals) foreign and not acclimatized,

as well as several others. The word has experienced considerable semantic amelioration in more recent times and we find exotic cars, exotic holiday destinations and exotic dishes, which suggest adventure, thrill and opulence.
The term *exotic* is, of course, technically a ‘shifter’: ie, its meaning shifts, as it directly reflects the perspective of those who utter it; an Alfa Romeo is not an exotic car in Italy but in Australia it is. By the same token English is not an exotic language in England, no longer in Wales and Ireland, but it certainly is in New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago, where it was introduced after 1914.

In my essay, I shall have little to say about English as an exotic language in the senses a) and b). Instead, I shall concentrate on the issue of what it means for a language not to be acclimatized.

2. Ecolinguistics

My approach in this essay is ecolinguistic. We can contrast ecolinguistics with a number of twentieth-century approaches to language in terms of what it implies about the relationship between language and the world. I have summarized this as follows:

Linguistic theories and the relationship of language to the world:

- independency hypothesis (Chomsky, Cognitive Linguistics);
- language is constructed by the world (Marr);
- the world is constructed by language (structuralism and poststructuralism);
- language is interconnected with the world – it both constructs and is constructed by it (Ecolinguistics).

Ecolinguistics is thus based on a number of hypotheses about language:

- Language(s) is (are) not disconnected from the world as the linguistic independency hypothesis had it, but interlinked with it in numerous complex ways. Edwin Ardener’s (1983: 154) dictum that “all of our languages are inescapably contaminated by the world” has a flip-side; all of our worlds are inescapably contaminated by our language(s).
- I take the ecological view that many interrelationships and inter-dependencies in any ecology are mutually beneficial and that some are exploitative and parasitical. In a healthy balanced ecology about 90% of the interrelationships are mutually beneficial.
- Another ecological hypothesis is that diversity is needed for the long-term sustainability of any ecology.

These hypotheses underpin the questions I would like to address here. They are all variants of the main question: What is the effect of English / global English on the linguistic / cultural and natural ecologies of our world?

To be true, we have accounts of the unsuitability of English as a medium of education in a range of former British colonies summarized by Phillipson
(1992: 124ff) but he is concerned mainly with social consequences rather than the impact of English language imposition on the natural environment. The same can be said of Grillo’s (1989) insightful monograph on dominant languages. Honey (1997), in attacking Phillipson, again focuses on social aspects and is remarkably silent about a concept which he introduces but never develops: namely, “the dogma of instant adaptability” (17), as well as his comment that languages are “unequal with regard to specific functions” and that “the languages of preliterate societies often have much more refined vocabularies for the description of certain natural phenomena (plants, animals …)” (16). Without wishing to comment here on Honey’s views on standard language and power, I feel that the notion of adaptability needs to be examined in greater detail as it is often implied in the arguments of those advocating global English that it presents no problem.

3. Pitcairn Island

The world and its problems, as the reader will be well aware, are fairly big issues and to do them justice in a brief essay would seem to be an impossible task – I shall therefore resort to a strategy that allows one to arrive at conclusions without having to tell you all I know about the world. The beginning of ecological studies in the seventeenth century took place on small often previously uninhabited islands such as St. Helena and Mauritius where the adverse effects of colonization become apparent in a very short period of time (Grove 1995). The attraction of studies of such islands is that one can ignore a large number of parameters without sacrificing insights into general ecological principles. Given the limited amount of time I have, I have opted to address the effects of English on a particularly small island, Pitcairn, a small speck of 3 by 1.5 km in the Pacific Ocean. The story of the mutiny on the Bounty is well known. It has been written about in more than 8,000 books and articles and celebrated in numerous films, novels and plays. At the end of the eighteenth century, this unoccupied island was settled by nine English sailors, twelve Tahitian women and six male Tahitian servants who had to survive in an environment they had never seen or experienced before. That the social side of the experiment was not a success story is evident: Within ten years all Tahitian men and all but one non-Tahitian man had been murdered or died of drink. The sole male survivor, however, converted to fundamentalist Christianity and set up a deeply religious new society which in subsequent years proved vulnerable to the machinations of outside religious cranks (such as the puritan dictator, Hill). In the 1890s the whole island converted to Seventh Day Adventism. A particularly problematic aspect of the social experiment was its pervasive racism, the suppression of the Tahitians, their language and most of their culture. The model for Pitcairn society was an English not a Tahitian
village. One is tempted to argue that in 1790 English was not a language that provided for a democratic, multicultural form of society but one that encouraged discourses of inequality, hierarchical structures and violence and that the choice of English as the language of Pitcairn contributed to many of its social problems. My essay whilst written with the social history of Pitcairn in mind will focus on environmental history. In particular, I want to explore the role of an exotic language in the treatment of the island’s natural resources.

The specific questions addressed here are:

- Did the knowledge that was found in the Pitcairners’ language enable them to manage their new environment?
- Was English a suitable tool which could be readily put to the task of managing this environment?
- Was the disappearance of Tahitian a natural process?
- Were the problems experienced by the settlers the result of the adoption of English?

The story of Pitcairn Island is only one, though perhaps the canonical case of an island utopia. The images that have been created and are being perpetuated are often only loosely based on reality and this includes accounts of language and language use. Laycock (1987), who reviewed a large body of writings on Pacific utopias from a linguistic perspective, came to a surprising conclusion, that the language spoken in the large majority of these utopias was standard English of the Oxford type. The view that one can create a utopian paradise with the help of English is echoed in the claims of some advocates of global English: that a better and more manageable world could be created if everybody spoke global English. But let us return to Pitcairn Island.

4. The languages of Pitcairn Island

To linguists, Pitcairn Island is best known for its ‘unique’ language,¹ called Pitcairnese (Ross & Moverley 1964), Pitcairn English, and now officially Pitkern. What the language is remains a mystery (Mühlhäusler 1998). It has been labelled a Pidgin, a Tahitian-English jargon, a cant (ie, a secret ingroup language) and a creole. In most recent textbooks (eg, Sebba 1997) it is called a prototypical/canonical creole, a new language that developed among the first generation of children from the union between British sailors and Tahitian women. But the story is far more complex. Acrolectal / Standard English has always been the dominant language of the island; while there were families who spoke nothing but English, others followed a diglossic pattern of

¹ The term ‘unique’ as a descriptor of the Pitkern/Norfolk language has become common in travelogues and on websites.
English – Pitkern. No monolingual Pitkern speakers appear ever to have existed and Pitkern remained a supplementary language relying heavily on the resources of English.

Pitkern could have been a different language, a nativized or naturalized English, adapted to the special conditions on the island, but this role was never fully realized. There was a small window of opportunity for Pitkern, between 1800 when the period of murder and anarchy had come to an end and 1820 when contact with the outside world was re-established, but whatever accommodation occurred was reversed in the 1820s when school-teachers from England took over the education, trained the population in Standard English and initiated a long period of suppression of what to them was ‘exotic’ in the second sense: ie, a barbarous and anarchic language. The attitude the education system had towards language can be summarized in the words of Palmer, who was teacher to the Pitcairners on Norfolk Island in 1915: “I like these people but I hate their language because of its limitations and for another reason in which my opinion has been lately corroborated by Professor Adams. He says that a people’s language determines their moral attributes or words to that effect. If the Norfolk Island dialect could be wiped out I am convinced that there would be a moral uplift.” It is interesting to observe that in some households of the descendents of George Hunn Nobbs, who settled on Pitcairn in 1828, it has been a rule to the present that Pitkern is not used. The school system set up by outsiders was designed to replace Pitkern language and culture with those of the islanders’ ‘Motherland’, to instil Christian values, tidiness and an appreciation of English literature. No Tahitian was ever taught in these schools and Tahitian knowledge was not discussed. No attempt was made to cultivate the Pitkern language and today the language is in very serious decline among young people (see Källgård 1998).

5. Environmental management of Pitcairn Island

The first task facing the settlers was to find sustainable food, water and building supplies. What they found were about a hundred plant species (about 50% endemic or unique to Pitcairn), a number of bird species and abundant fish around the island. They recognized a small number of useful plants including coconut, breadfruit, yam, plantains, pandanus and paper mulberry which probably stemmed from earlier Polynesian settlements in Pitcairn, and they brought with them from Tahiti sugar cane, oranges, taro and pumpkin seeds, which continued to be major food plants (see Göthesson 1997 for details).

That Pitcairn was capable of sustaining a population of several hundred people is borne out by the fact that a Polynesian community of this size had lived on Pitcairn for several centuries, long enough to erect stone statues such as those on Easter Island. Suggs points out:
The original settlers of Pitcairn may have been refugees from Easter Island. What caused them to abandon the relative safety of Pitcairn and strike out to sea again is anyone’s guess [...] The fate of its (Pitcairn’s) former inhabitants was one of the great mysteries sealed up in the sea. (1960: 184)

When the mutineers and their entourage settled on Pitcairn, they found ample food, wood and good soils as well as fresh water.

There are two stories about their environmental management. The first one is that the knowledge of the Tahitian women enabled the community to feed itself and indeed live in subsistence affluence (see Christian 1998). What is not said is that the women who were taken to Pitcairn did not have a great depth of knowledge beyond the immediate one of identifying and using major food plants, as Göthesson’s comprehensive book on the flora of Pitcairn (1997) shows. His comprehensive listing of all of Pitcairn’s plants (endemic and introduced) demonstrated that (1) only a small number of potentially useful plants were named, (2) many of the uses that these named plants had in Tahiti and other parts of Polynesia (particularly medicinal ones) remained unknown on Pitcairn Island, and (3) a very large proportion of plants were neither used or named and over time were driven to extinction. More will be said about this below.

The second environmental history of Pitcairn is one of very considerable mismanagement: massive erosion, the destruction of windbreaks, overuse of useful plants, weed invasions and the general absence of management for sustainability. By the 1840s the island had become dependent on food handouts from the outside and it was felt that the population, in order not to starve, had to be resettled on another island. In 1856 the entire population was shipped to Norfolk Island; the two families that returned to Pitcairn after four years continued to deplete the islands’ natural resources. The appendix gives a number of quotations illustrating the environmental degradation of the island.

The most basic principle of environmental management is that you can only manage what you know and you can only manage what you can name. When the mutineers and their entourage set foot on Pitcairn a very small number of plants were known to and named by the Europeans and whatever knowledge the Polynesians had was not necessarily passed on to subsequent generations.
6. Some linguistic evidence

The linguistic evidence can be presented in a number of stages:

1. Only those plants that were recognized as edible or useful for the construction of houses and other artefacts were named in the initial period. Most other plants which may have played an important role in the ecology of the island were never named. For example, the 53 species of lichens and mosses do not have an English or Pitkern name.

2. Contrary to expectations, Tahitian names for flora are not very numerous: Only 56 names have been recorded against 190 English-derived Pitkern names and about a dozen mixed Tahitian-English ones such as bulb-tale, red fautu or pulau-gras.

3. Many plants that were culturally used in Tahiti were never named or used on Pitcairn. Let us consider the 26 fern species of the island. Only nine of them were ever named, three had a Tahitian name, six a Pitkern name such as rockfern, blackfern, old man fern or creepy fern. One of the unnamed ferns is used in 36 Tahitian remedies but none in Pitkern, three other unnamed ferns were also used for medicinal purposes in Polynesia, two were used as a food source but none of them on Pitcairn. Eight of the unnamed ferns are threatened with extinction.

4. When Pitkern has a word borrowed from Tahitian and where use is made of a plant, the range of uses tends to be much narrower than in Polynesia. The tiplant or rauti was used extensively in early years to distil a spirit but it was not used as fodder, eaten or for medicinal purposes. Again, api or giant taro was used as food but not as a remedy. Single use on Pitcairn contrasts with multiple use in Tahiti and elsewhere in Polynesia.

5. A very large number of plants are introduced species. Many of them will not do well on Pitcairn (eg, avocado (alligator), Norfolk Pine, pinus radiata) or they have become pest plants.

6. Plants that have no cultural uses are often grouped together under a single name, for instance:
   - cockscomb – a name given to a variety of species
   - dock – name of various fern species
   - jasmy – a number of plants
   - wildbean – any one of various weed plants of the pea family

   (source: Göthesson 1997).

7. Finally, there are a number of plants that are central to the island’s culture, particularly the coconut and the banana. Both plants were found by the mutineers when they settled, although better new varieties have replaced the earlier ones. About a dozen words refer to parts of the coconut and its fruit and usable parts; the same is true of the banana.
Such data allow a preliminary conclusion: The English speaking community that settled on Pitcairn Island lacked the language to talk about their natural environment, making it difficult for them to manage its vegetation in a sustainable manner.

It would seem unwise, however, to lay the blame for the resulting natural disasters entirely on lexical inadequacies. After all, some plants which the Pitcairners cannot name have English names and most of them have Latin names. What is equally important is to consider the discourses that the English sailors brought with them – discourses that are concerned with the relationship between the people and the land. These discourses reflect first the preoccupations of the sailors and subsequently, following John Adams’ conversion, religious practices and beliefs.

English grammar has a number of properties that distinguishes it from the majority of languages indigenous to the Pacific area. One such difference is the grammar of possession and control. The English possessive pronouns such as my, your etc. are neutral with regard to the following relationships:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a)} & : A \Rightarrow B \\
\text{b)} & : B \Rightarrow A \\
\text{c)} & : A \iff B
\end{align*}
\]

The unmarked reading arguably is a) my dog, my car, my children. The languages of the Pacific typically distinguish two or three possessive pronouns – particularly important is relationship c) which is used to refer to marriage partners, the relationship with one’s land etc.

Land ownership in the sense of c) is not provided for in some languages. On Pitcairn the unmarked reading of the English control possessive my is very much in evidence.

Christian allocated land by means of a lottery, believing it to be the fairest method. But there were only nine names in the draw – those of the mutineers. Those who knew how to cultivate the land – the Polynesian men and women – had none of their own to work. They could only be employed to dig, weed and grow for the Europeans.

Over two centuries, these nine plots had been divided and subdivided as children inherited from their parents. Even if left unused, land was not forfeited but could be passed on down through absent generations. So someone who had left the island fifty years ago could bequeath their land to their children, who would divide the postage-stamp plots of earth before bequeathing the ever smaller patches to their children, none of whom had even been to Pitcairn.

Every piece of the island, whether cultivated or not, was owned by somebody – an ordnance survey of the island would be criss-crossed tightly with lines – and everyone knew who owned which piece of land. And it wasn’t only the patches of land that were name-tagged. Each fruit tree –
jackfruit, orange, mango, fi’i – belonged to someone, even if it appeared to be
growing wild, and every Pitcairner knew which they were allowed to chop
down and which they were not. (Birkett 1997: 121)

There is a marked absence of discourse about the mutual obligations between
humans and nature – the only European who could have provided this,
William Brown the assistant botanist, was murdered in 1793, together with
three other European men, within the first five years of settlement.

The dominant discourse of Pitcairn remains that of sin and redemption – or
the conversion of hell into paradise. Alexander Smith, or Reckless Jack, who
had been a key figure in the original mutiny and anarchy on Pitcairn Island,
when he found himself to be the last remaining male in 1800, converted to
fundamentalist Christianity and assumed the name of John Adams. It was he
who invited the first outsiders to settle on Pitcairn and set up an education
system. Pitcairn became the first English-speaking country to have com-
puslory universal education and literacy, the aim of this being to enable the
population to read the Scriptures and to become a godly people. Part of this
discourse was to sever all links with the ungodly past. The statues erected by
the prehistoric Polynesian occupants of this island were pushed into the sea
and over the years the meaning of the mutiny and the memories of the
Tahitian ancestors were consigned to oblivion. The search for their Poly-
nesian roots is a very recent phenomenon among Pitcairn Islanders and their
Norfolk relatives. At the same time, discourses about a worldly future became
less and less: Birkett comments on “the confusion of tense” and the pre-
dominance of the present tense in Pitcairn discourses:

Dennis was shocked. ‘Dem es fer Elwyn.’

Perhaps the confusion of tenses was no linguistic accident; perhaps there
was no past for Pitcairners. Everything occurred around about now, and every
islander was still here with us. And Dennis could not take the windows
because they belonged to Elwyn, who had died a quarter of a century ago, and
in whose rotting sitting-room we now stood. There was a hint of self-
deception in the Pitcairners’ refusal to demolish the abandoned homes. As
long as they still stood, driving along Main Road was like driving along a real
street, with real homes every fifty or so yards. (1997: 175)

There is the view that God has provided, provides and will provide and one of
its consequences is that the islanders accumulate as much as they can for fear
that this supply would not last. Birkett describes what happens to a bumper
crop of arrowroot:

The piles of arrowroot seemed insurmountable; I could not imagine why we
needed so much. Nola and Reynold had dug ten sacks; although famed for her
orange arrowroot pie, even Nola couldn’t bake that many. Irma told me she
still had some arrowroot flour left from the crop of two years ago, and that, if properly refined, it could keep up to twenty years as it didn’t attract the bugs like ordinary flour. Royal said she ends up throwing half of hers away. But need on Pitcairn was not measured; you could never have an excess of anything. If there was an opportunity to gather yet more wood for carvings, barter more frozen foodstuffs from a chief steward, accept another donation of an electric kettle, then you grasped it, however many you already had or however large your stocks. (1997: 275)

There is no long-term management plan for the island and with a rapid depletion of the population the gardens are becoming overgrown with weeds. At the same time, new technology, in particular video, has reached the island, bringing with it images of America, New Zealand, Australia and Britain, together with religious programs of the Seventh Day Adventists.

7. Borrowing and adaptation

On Pitcairn, we can observe a number of processes which reflect general trends both on other Pacific Islands and in other former English colonies. First, there is a very clear trend to derogate both local languages and nativized Englishes (Pidgins, creoles and languages such as Pitkern).

The English language has been praised by many for its syntactic capacity, its ability to absorb lexical items from the languages of the areas into which it has been transplanted. On closer inspection, Pitkern has shown that in the domain of the discourse about nature only a very small proportion of names were ever borrowed – only a few plant and fish names of Tahiti were found in Pitkern and many of them have become obsolete.

The fact that English, because its linguistic nature is capable of considerable synthesis – unlike other languages as Whinnom (1971) has observed – does not mean that its speakers will avail themselves of this facility. The prevailing view of most English speakers has been that the inhabitants of its colonies were ignorant. A comparison of borrowings from English into the local languages of the Pacific and Australia, for instance, when compared with borrowings from local languages into local English reflects a still growing asymmetry. The information flow has been almost unidirectional – from English to other languages. Very little environmental knowledge, for instance, has been borrowed from Maori into New Zealand English and the 250+ indigenous languages of Australia into Australian English or from Tahiti into Pitcairn English. Borrowing or non-borrowing from local languages thus follows Sapir’s observation (1985: 90): “The physical environment is reflected in a language only insofar as it has been influenced by social factors.”
8. Adaptation versus image-making

I have commented in my introduction on a number of theoretical views on the relationship between language and the world and I would like to relate two of these positions, the constructivist and the ecological one, to the question of linguistic development. Halliday, in his study of the acquisition of functions (1975: 19), observed that language functions like language structures follow a developmental program, with the instrumental functions (using language to get something) and the ‘games of pretend’ function preceding the denotation or cognitive function.

I would like to argue that the presence of late functions implies that of earlier functions but not vice versa and that it is possible to backslide and communicate in terms of earlier functions only or predominantly, both at the level of individuals and in the development of languages generally. Bichakjian (1988) has put forward, on the basis of a very large data base on European languages, a theory of paedomorphosis – that language evolution moves in the direction of ever-earlier acquired features. I would like to suggest that what goes for structure also goes for function – there is a tendency, promoted by urbanization and the increase in disconnection between people and nature, for languages such as English to de-emphasize the informational/cognitive function and to backslide to playing games of pretend – or image creation. The adaptation of language to particular ecological conditions commonly is replaced by language becoming primarily a tool for creating images of the environment.

The story of Pitcairn can be taken as representative of this process – both the suppression of a better adapted Tahitian language and the suppression of a slowly adapting Pitkern by Standard English and the gradual invasion of images of Christian paradise are part of the same story. As I was preparing this essay a story hit the world’s newspapers: The Pitcairners have agreed to the development of a four-star international hotel with airport on nearby Henderson Island and a helicopter pad on Pitcairn. This no doubt will help Pitcairn to reach its final destiny as a Pacific theme park where the images of countless views and books about the island will be made ‘real’ for affluent visitors.

9. Conclusions

My first conclusion is that English in many places has been an exotic language, in the sense of ill-adapted to the new environments to which it was transported. A second conclusion is that those who argue that English can be nativized and adapt to new conditions tend to underestimate the time it takes – and that in the meantime considerable collateral damage can be caused.
In most places where English was introduced it became the language of power, and local languages found themselves at the bottom of the language cline, which takes the form English – English-derived creole – local language. Over time Standard English has come to replace all the other languages, but that other languages were better adapted makes no difference to those who control the education system. My essay would seem to suggest that the principle of instantaneous adaptation or the view that any language can meet the needs of its speakers, is clearly not sustainable. Adaptation may take too long for these needs to be met. The fact that English meets the current wants of those who speak it does not imply that it meets their long-term needs.

David Crystal’s view (1987: 116) that “English is a language which has repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time” needs to be queried. For many Pacific Islands, including Pitcairn, it was not the right place. As regards my specific desert island case study of Pitcairn, English did not have the lexical resources to name the environment, its speakers focussed on a small range of named useful plants which tended to become overexploited and mismanaged, making the island dependent on outside resources from the 1830s. With the islanders getting to know more and more names for the products of the global economy – motorbikes, video players, electricity, fridges etc. – the dependency on the outside world has increased with the island being increasingly incapable of catering for the wants and needs of its inhabitants. Note that the point is not whether the islanders have been able to live on Pitcairn for 175 years, but whether to do so they had to deplete the natural capital, thus reducing its ability to remain habitable for future generations.

The naturalization and adaptation of English, its adaptation to its new environment in the shape of the Pitkern language was slowed down, suppressed and nearly eradicated as a consequence of the constant dominance of metropolitan language models. What lessons are there to be learnt?

The view that language is a neutral medium of intercommunication is a problematic one. English is not a language that can cope equally well with all situations – as an additional language English has clear limitations, as a replacement language it brings with it many dangers. The fact that an increasing number of well-adapted small local languages are being replaced by English is in all likelihood one of the reasons for global environmental deterioration.

Being a student of contact languages and creoles, I have argued for some years and would like to make this point again, that new contact languages should be studied as language adaptation to new situations – as a particularly important example of the naturalization of a species of language and that such a study could have important implications. It would help to understand how lengthy and how difficult the process of an exotic language becoming naturalized actually is.
In this essay I have addressed a number of controversial issues and looked in some depth at one case study; I have looked at similar evidence from Mauritius, St. Helena and Norfolk and I believe generalizations are possible.

The reader may disagree with my conclusions and may forget many of the points I have raised. What I hope will remain is the insight that the question of adaptation is a legitimate one in the context of English becoming a global language and that it is worth asking what makes English an exotic language from time to time and place to place and what the cost of being exotic may be.

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Appendix

Passages on Pitcairn’s ecological decline

Lars-Åke Göthesson (1997), *Plants of the Pitcairn Islands*

The Englishman Walter Brodie, who, with four other passengers from the barque Noble, was marooned on Pitcairn for 19 days in 1850, observed that “the island appears to be covered with wood, but no timber scarcely exceeds 60+cm in diameter. Wood may be had, in case of necessity, at three dollars a boatload; but the islanders would rather not part with it, they themselves requiring a large quantity to boil their salt with.” The 16 islanders returning to Pitcairn in 1859 after spending two years on Norfolk Island noticed that “the plantations, fallow for more than two years, now yielded crops more abundant than ever before in the memory of that generation.” However, in the early part of the 1870s there was an extreme scarcity of water on the island and “the soil, that had formerly been so productive, seemed now to have lost its remarkable fertility. The yam crop, which hitherto had yielded so well, and had been one of the principal food supplies, now failed almost entirely. Nor did the sweet potato escape the general plague, for the very troublesome blight would attack the young plantation, completely preventing its growth, and when the tubers became matured they were often infested by a destructive worm that worked untold mischief among them,” (R.A. Young, 1894). The fast-growing, vigorous rose-apple tree (*Syzygium jambos*), brought from Norfolk Island during the latter part of the nineteenth century, became one of the most troublesome pests on the island. The effects of deforestation were noticed by Rosalind Amelia Young in 1874: “Around the entire island, along the edge of precipice, where once had flourished a thick growth of stunted hardy trees, could now be seen bare, barren soil, free to be washed away by heavy rains.” (8–9)

The earliest reference to the occurrence of weeds on the island seems to be found in *The Pitcairn Island Register Book* which in its summary for 1844 reported that “weeds overrun the island.” When the first group of Pitcairners returning from Norfolk Island landed on Pitcairn in January 1859 they found their abandoned fields choked with weeds. The only weeds said to occur on
The geologist R.M. Carter, who visited the island in 1963, observed that “Recent introduction of lantana (*Lantana camara*) and Alwyn grass (*Sorghum halepense*) resulted in the rapid spread of these common tropical weeds such that much of the central part of the island is now inaccessible.” (13)

According to A.W. Moverley, Education Officer on Pitcairn between 1948 and 1951: “Cultivation is by the adze and the hoe. The spade and other tools seem never used. There is no manuring; in fact there seems a prejudice against it. This is due to its earlier mental association with animals and the strong vegetarian bias of the older generation here. Seaweed was used to some extent in the past (in 1825 according to Beechey), but would hardly be practicable because its small size in these waters, the difficulty of getting a supply and the poor access from beach to gardens. Yet continued green manuring would affect the workability of the soil most beneficially. Shelter is essential from the strong salt-bearing winds.” Moverley continues: “no widespread fungoid diseases on plants have been noticed, though the mangoes are commonly spotted and some oranges seem to be covered with mosaic. Insect pests, however abound; crickets, hoppers resembling the sand flea but smaller and darker and existing in swarms, centipedes and millipedes, ear-
wigs, wood lice, caterpillars of all sizes and various colours, wireworms, beetles of various sizes, fruit flies, aphids and scales. Yellow wasps (*Polistes jadwigae dalla torre*) came in from Mangareva, as did small black ants, now in almost overwhelming numbers ... (rats) attack citrus fruit at all stages; they eat the seeds both before and during germination, they destroy the blossoms, and they eat the fruit on the tree before it ripens. Orange trees are unpruned and grow straight up to a great height in the scrubby jungle, but only a metal collar around the trunk can discourage the rats. Rotations in the fruit supply are natural. As soon as one season shows signs of ending, another begins to get under way. July is the height of the citrus season, but most of the other fruits are at their best from Christmas to early autumn. Because of the range in altitude kumaras (sweet potatoes) can be grown all year round. In summer they are grown ‘up the hill’ in winter down in the settlement” (Moverley 1950). (14)

Captain Waldegrave observed in 1830 that the islanders appeared to be careless about other fruits or vegetables than yams, sweet potatoes, coconuts, plantains and bananas. (14)

On the night between April 15–16, 1845, the island was hit by a typhonic storm accompanied by torrents of rain causing a great landslide at the Hollow in which “about 300 coconut trees were torn up by the roots and swept into the sea. So tenacious was the heterogeneous stream that some of the coconut trees from 40–50 feet in height, after being displaced from their original situation, remained in an upright position some minutes, and when they fell it was many yards from the spot in which they had come to maturity” (G.H. Nobbs). In May 1939 another large-scale landslide with similar consequences occurred after heavy rain in Deep Valley and Water Valley on the western side of the island. […] A decline in the island’s growth of coconuts was noticed already in 1915 by S. Routledge, who reported that the trees were dying. During a visit in 1937, J. S. Neill observed that the coconut trees were limited in number and of poor type. Further evidence of the poor condition of the local coconuts appeared in 1956 and 1962 when, according to Roy Clark, they were far from healthy and affected by blight. (112)

Although not reported from Pitcairn until 1829, the species was almost certainly part of the original indigenous forest found on the island when the *Bounty* mutineers arrived in 1790. The timber was probably used for canoe building at Tedside (the north-west coast) by earlier Polynesian population. Because of its very hard resistant wood, standing exposure to sun, wind and rain for many years without showing any signs of decay, the tree was
primarily used for house building by the Anglo-Polynesian settlers in the 1790s. After the unfortunate emigration to Tahiti in 1831, a new type of house construction became popular on Pitcairn: the outside walls of these new, one-storied long houses were horizontally clapboarded in MIRO and other hard woods, and left unpainted. The foundation was made of solid MIRO logs, about 25 x 25cm, placed on large stones. Slabs of the same wood were then placed between uprights to form the walls, above which were sliding shutters. A shortage of local wood suitable for house building soon became evident and is reflected in ‘Law No. 6: Miscellaneous’ of 1838 which stated that any person who cut more wood that he needed to build a house was to give the surplus timber to the next person intending to build one. […] “the two most valuable trees on the island, of which they built their houses, the Tafano or flower wood and the Aruni or Mero” were scarce. “The latter wood, Mero, is in principal use; it is very dark, like rose-wood, very durable, standing exposure to sun, wind, and rain for many years without showing any symptoms of decay. The first settlers’ houses were made entirely of it, and are so sound now as the day they were erected, though without paint or covering of any kind: Indeed, Mr. Nobbs’ house and the school are the only two that have been painted or whitewashed even in part.” (254)

Dea Birkett (1997) *Serpent in Paradise*

Pitcairn had been severely deforested by the islanders’ thirst for fuel and carving material, but on Henderson, an uninhabited island one hundred and ten nautical miles to the east-north east, there was still a plentiful supply of tau and the fiery red miro, which the carvers preferred to the grey-grained miro which was all that was left on Pitcairn. (77)

The fierce weather continued through Sunday and we were trapped inside with only Royal brave enough to visit us. On Monday, the wind tore a branch off the big mango tree at the back of the house. Irma’s corn crop was destroyed. *El Niño* was causing havoc, slashing away at tiny Pitcairn. […] We drove through a scene of destruction; the wind had snapped the banana trees in two as if match sticks, and the severed trunks seeped pungent sap. The rain had washed down the roads forming deep ridges, making driving easy. All Dennis had to do was lodge the front wheel of his bike into a ridge and we rode along like a tram on its lines. We passed abandoned homes, where branches had fallen against the weathered walls, blocking windows and bringing down water pipes. We passed Ben’s wild beans, the neat rows indiscernible, the plants all blown over, and the pods scorched and scattered like seed by the wind. It struck me how volatile the Pitcairn landscape was, and how much a victim of the elements. On the day after my arrival, just one
week ago, Pitcairn had been a sultry sub-tropical island, with ordered gardens and stiff, heavily laden banana trees. Now the storm had gouged the earth and ravaged the vegetation. The island I was travelling through was blighted land. (112–13)

Once the islanders, nearly three hundred strong, controlled the vegetation There were large areas of cleared land, well-defined gardens, sharp-edged roads, where the red clay met the green vegetation. But now, with the population down to under fifty, the vegetation was in control. Leaves, twine, stems and branches grew over roads, almost obscuring them. Hibiscus and lantana rapidly claimed buildings not continually shorn; the lower walls of the Court House were smothered in it.

Rose-apple trees which grew like weeds had dammed Brown’s Water. Gardens were continually encroached upon, so that corn would lose the light and beans be choked. If the vegetation wanted something – an islander’s food, an islander’s home – it could take it. (155)

I crossed a damp, shallow ditch where it seemed water had run just a few days before, which must be Brown’s Water, the island’s only natural spring. Once it flowed freely, and it provided the first few generations of Pitcairners with all the fresh water they needed. But now it was reduced to little more than a trickle and often dried up altogether, although along its narrow banks the leaves still shone an even more vibrant green than along the edge of the paths. One valley was studded with tall plantain trees, heavy with fruit. I wondered whose they were. (179)

When we went, the lantana had reclaimed part of his path, but it was still easy to follow. Across a small valley, he had rolled a boulder as a bridge. We had eaten juicy oranges and Reynold showed me how to peel a twig from a burea tree, plentiful in Water Valley, scrape the wood underneath, and apply it to a bleeding would stop the flow. He peeled me a guava, so unpromising outside, so pink, fleshy and sweet inside. We foraged for candlenuts and found one that the rats hadn’t hollowed out and eaten. Reynold cracked it, and inside was a cream-coloured waxy substance. He said that he used the unbroken ones under his copper to keep it burning well. At Irma’s, we used diesel-soaked sawdust. No one except Reynold, I imagined, continued to collect candlenuts. (209)

But need on Pitcairn was not measured; you could never have an excess of anything. If there was an opportunity to gather yet another donation of an electric kettle, then you grasped it, however many you already had or however
large your stocks […] The motivation wasn’t greed, it was fear. Whatever you had now, might have to last forever. There was no guarantee that any supply line would continue. (275)

A.S.C. Ross and A.W. Moverley (1964), *The Pitcairnese Language*

After supplying timber for housing, boat-building and firewood for over hundred and seventy years, the supply of indigenous timbers is almost nil today. An introduced plant, Eugenia jambos, commonly known as rose-apple, covers much of the unused parts of the Island and, though generally considered a pest, it supplies nearly all the Island’s wood; indeed, its presence is the only guarantee of a sufficient supply of firewood. (28)

*The Times*, 23 October 1852, based on information from the vessel *Portland*

Of fruits and edible roots they have at present abundance which they exchange with the whalers for clothing, oil, medicine, and other necessaries; but the crops on the tillage ground begin to deteriorate, landslips occur with each succeeding storm and the declivities of the hills when denuded, are laid bare by the periodical rains.

J.A. Moerenhout (1837), *Travels to the Islands of the Pacific Ocean* [reprint, London: UP of America, 1993]

As for coconut trees, they had considerably increased their number in all parts of the island. An unusual tree, under whose shade we were sitting and which I had only encountered at Pitcairn, is the famous fig tree of the Banyans (*Ficus Indica*), whose branches fell in festoons down to the earth, where, taking root at their ends, they enlarge to the point of themselves forming fine trunks from which new branches come out, which, binding down in turn, plant themselves in the same way from one point to another, and, joined at their top, all stemming from one trunk and going off in every direction, form charming groves, so much the cooler since the sun cannot penetrate; but this tree is not without inconvenience on a little island like Pitcairn because, very difficult to destroy, it itself destroys all other vegetation. They showed me the summit of a mountain entirely covered with a single one of these trees which would end by covering the entire island if they hadn’t taken the precaution of stopping its progress.” (26–27)
Global languages oppress but are liberating, too
The Dialectics of English

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ABSTRACT

Institutional consequences of ‘englishization’ include threats to bio- and linguistic diversity. Analysis of the ‘corporatization’ of the international order must counter the Panglossian exhortation of English as the best of all possible worlds. Much cash is expended by corporations to underpin this process. Academic scholarship is seduced to acclaim the self-evident necessity of English or its naive redefinition as just a lingua franca. Englishization is clearly not one of the proximate causes of global inequality. But its correlation with real-world socioeconomic processes is undeniable. Take business and management studies, where language or, rather, English is centre-stage. International opposition to this state of affairs is hard to coordinate. Ironically, knowledge of English will play a role in the formulation of alternatives. This is one of the dialectical features of the global reach English has achieved.

1. Some precautionary, explanatory remarks

Obviously, languages do neither. Only speakers of languages oppress other humans. The connexions between language and oppression are too vast to enumerate. Ever since homo loquens evolved language, shibboleths have affected human societies.

The title of this essay might sound bizarre to English teachers from the former ‘Eastern Bloc’ such as those mentioned by Medgyes (1999: 100).
They listened to Western English-language radio ‘over the jamming’. They perceived learning English as enlarging their experience and education. As someone who has ‘employed’ radio to learn foreign languages, the author has much sympathy with this view.

Nonetheless, the essay addresses ‘objective’ and institutional consequences of the spread of English as an International Language (EIL). ‘Englishization’ may well have its instrumental uses, but as concerned practitioners and human beings fearful of loss of bio- and linguistic diversity we may well feel that it is time for the cultural overlapping to stop.

2. English: handmaiden or hanger-on of globalization?

Observations of the rocketing demand for English-for-business courses (Alexander 1999a) force a political-economic vantage-point upon one. This highlights the phenomenon of corporatization of the world, as embodied in current globalization processes, specifically the dominance of finance capitalism over industrial capitalism and the accumulation of wealth at the centre at the expense of the periphery. No amount of ‘free access’ by the citizens of the world to the Internet is going to re-balance this one-way accumulation (see Chomsky 2000a: 98 for Latin American data).

Internet ‘freedoms’ serve as an ideal figleaf for many spokespersons to assert how ‘liberating’ the dominance of one language is on the net. After all, how many people use non-English-language-based browsers to access information? As a practitioner in the area of English for business and economics, one’s attention almost invariably is drawn to the close interlocking between language: that is, the spread of EIL, and current corporatization. Not only is inequality dramatically increasing. The whole development is also making life on earth ecologically unsustainable (Alexander 1996, 1999b, 2000 and Mühlhäusler, this volume).

This essay argues that there is considerable personal, human cost entailed by English dominating the globe. It is channeling energies away from other meaning potentials and discourse systems. This is not only true for students. How do teachers cope with knowing that their teaching of a global language objectively and patently subordinates learners and users to a global framework of order with which they hold little sympathy (Alexander 1999a)?

3. The ‘new’ international order

Arguably, there are many possible ways of viewing the global nature of English. Any that ignore the current neo-liberal, corporatized Anglo-American politico-economic set-up are unlikely to gain much credence, however. We do not merely need to think of organizations like the IMF and the World Bank
which were created at Bretton Woods in July 1944, significant though they are. These represented the culmination of wartime discussions between the USA and the UK on the shape of the post-World War II international economic order. What is called the “corporatization” of the global order (Chomsky 2000a: 207–14) has had a long history – in its Anglo form perhaps 250 years! Certainly, the connection with language is of major interest to us. But without some analysis of the socio-economic structure accompanying it any discussion of global English is destined to be incorporated into the discourse of the modern-day Dr Panglosses exhorting us all to accept that this is the best of all possible worlds.

As Chomsky says of ‘power intellectuals’ and politicians generally, they can be guaranteed to join in the “the chorus of self-adulation” in this connexion (Chomsky 2000a: 60–61). Many such writers have few, if any, problems with the arrangement which has recently given the world such obscene concepts and terms as so-called ‘rogue states’, ‘humanitarian intervention’, ‘surgical strikes’, and ‘collateral damage’ (Chomsky 2000a and 2000b). However, not all intellectuals are ‘power intellectuals’, such as those described by Herman and Peterson (2001), who can be relied upon to say what the establishment wants to hear on the civilizing mission of the USA and the West. Since the 1960s, Chomsky (1994) himself has radically and analytically questioned the legitimacy of the Washington consensus and Pentagon system to structure the world in their image.

4. How to counter-balance Panglossian and Pollyanna views?

The fact that the corporate community spends immense amounts financing a PR business to “convince Americans that this is best of all possible worlds” (McChesney in his introduction to Chomsky 1999a: 15) is worth noting. Yet the powerful cannot be sure that their hegemony will hold, since corporate marketing swallows up a sixth of the US gross domestic product, according to Chomsky (1999a).

A further voice speaking out against the modern-day Dr Panglosses, the power intellectuals and their (not so) naive hangers-on is Johan Galtung. He notes how even ‘academic’ subjects have clear propagandist functions. Galtung mentions mainstream economics as one of the effective propaganda instruments used in PR, characterizing it mainly “as cultural violence, concealing and mystifying what happens when people produce, distribute and consume” (1996: viii).

Comparable mystifications abound in the humanities. Consider the way English-based communication is talked about in glowing terms, as a contribution to world peace, to cooperation between nations, as a vehicle of educa-
tional resources. This discourse distracts from what happens when national resources in many countries are diverted towards learning a foreign language and away from self-development, both linguistic and cultural. A precept underlying such discourse is the ‘Pollyanna Principle’. One feature of this rhetorical technique is “that participants in a conversation will prefer pleasant topics of conversation to unpleasant ones” (Leech 1983: 147). An accompanying property is the use of euphemism, masking unpalatable topics by employing disarming expressions, such as ‘downsizing’ instead of ‘sacking workers’.

Euphemisms and mystifications are elements in the toolkit of much academic propaganda passing for ‘education’ and ‘science’ today. English too has a facilitating role to play. ‘Education’ aims to attune each generation to those patterns of discourse suitable for survival in the social formations for which they are being fitted out. English is self-evidently deemed ‘vital’ (Business Week 2001).

5. Englishization and the pseudo-debate on global English

The extent of Anglo-American influence on European languages (‘englishization’) is evident (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1999). Under the guise of English as an auxiliary international language to ‘ease’ commerce, trade, and even academic and educational ‘mobility’, millions of individuals are being ‘channelled’ into the process of ‘englishization’.

For some, English is ‘just’ the informal ‘official’ language of the European Union (House 2000: 1–3). It smoothes over political, economic, business and academic language differences. House claims: “English as a lingua franca is nothing more than a useful tool: it is a ‘language for communication’.” She sees no need for lingua franca speakers to identify with English. House admits that sociolinguists may rightly mourn the loss of linguistic diversity. Yet she claims that the dominance of English in the world “simply reflects unequal power resulting from differences in social, economic, political or scientific conditions” (2001: 3).

This perspective may well appeal to the naive. But it demonstrates an extremely disingenuous standpoint on the ways of the world in general. It also ignores the manifold facts, not just from the research studies of linguists, but from a whole range of social-scientific evidence. This shows that English is not a solution to the unravelling of the “unequal power” relations in the world but an integral part of the problem. Any discussion of English as global language and its implications that ignores this will be running round and round in circles. Naturally, this is precisely what the proponents of the Washington consensus and the new framework of world order (analysed by Herman & Peterson 2001 and Chomsky, passim) wish to happen!
6. The tendency of the centre to monopolize the periphery

Obviously, the argument of this essay is not that Englishization is one of the proximate causes of global inequality. But a correlation with real-world socio-economic processes and structures is undeniable.

As *Business Week* notes: “English is becoming the binding agent of a continent” (2001). In the educational systems of Europe, as Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) and Phillipson (this volume) make clear, there is much evidence that English is ‘crowding out’ national languages in school curricula and higher education. This is said to be forced upon ‘countries’ by the needs of national and international trade.

Arguably this is a confusion of two facets of English. First, we have the ‘merely’ instrumental and utilitarian development of EIL. Secondly, we have the accompanying epiphenomenal status of American (and British) English as the cultural and commercial discourse of the post-1989 World Corporate Order. In this role English is not, and cannot be, a purely ‘neutral’ vehicle of communication. ‘Countries’ are not responding. Trade interests are shaping ‘their’ countries’ responses.

A common counter-argument from the purely linguistic perspective claims that the development of new varieties of English demonstrates the opposite. Hypostasizing language the claim is that the periphery is ‘striking back’. No group of English speakers has a monopoly of any kind over others, as model speakers, as native speakers even, as users of a standard norm to which all others must adhere.

Unfortunately, this position ignores the hegemonic tendencies of more than language. Language is an epiphenomenon where political and economic power is concerned. Areas of life beyond language proper are affected. The centre reduces ‘competing centres’ to part of the periphery. The tendency of the centre to monopolize the periphery is seen in education, ‘culture’, mass media, consumer ‘values’, enterprise culture, etc.

The professional field of business and management studies is perhaps a paradigm case. Here the one-time independent non-English-speaking national traditions are succumbing to the Anglo-Saxon centre. All around the world management ‘education’ is being ‘reduced’ to a peripheral status, as copy-cat MBAs and management training in European business schools ‘ape’ the North American and British models as “temples and votaries” (Kidron & Segal 1991: 74–75, 144–45).

7. The role of English in the process of global ‘governance’
What role does English play in the process of global ‘governance’? We could say it provides the ‘nuts and bolts’ of US and UK cultural policy. There is much evidence to support this view. Phillipson (1992: 152) draws attention to the symbiotic interlocking of foreign cultural policy and foreign policy goals quoting Chomsky (1982). Further incontrovertible evidence of this link with British foreign policy since 1945 is provided by Curtis (1995). Phillipson touches upon the relegation of Britain to a junior partner of the USA since World War II, including the legitimization rhetoric that the Americans employed to justify their policies. Language promotion is a part of the US global strategy together with the Fulbright programme. Phillipson details the role played by the United States Information Agency (USIA) in this process in a parallel role to that of the British Council. The close connection between USIA’s agenda and shifts in targeting of countries following corporate interests is excellently documented in Snow (1998), documenting the transformation of the USIA into a corporate lobby operation.

Snow tellingly quotes Henry Catto, the USIA Director under Bush (1998: 42–43): “Other government agencies are hard at work drafting the grand architecture of the New World Order; we’re out there providing the nuts and bolts. What is private property? What is profit? How do I start a business? How do I learn English? How can your voice be heard in local affairs? These are the kinds of questions that ordinary people increasingly are asking around the world. And increasingly, USIA is providing the answers.”

Given the explicit role of cultural policy in flanking both foreign and trade policies of Britain and especially the USA how can we possibly ignore asking questions such as the following? Are the sociocultural practices accompanying the spread of English issues which teachers and academic researchers need to address? Is English today still acting as a potentially colonizing discourse? Is the ‘crowding out’ of other, even European, languages in language planning decisions leading to linguisicide in extreme cases and penetration, marginalization, fragmentation otherwise?

8. Militarization and englishization

Nor is the thrust of English merely ‘commercial’. The military-industrial complex, the US Pentagon System, has penetrated many European states. English is the language of NATO and now K-FOR in Kosovo. Austrian policemen wishing to earn higher salaries serving there must have a “good knowledge of English” before applying, according to the Austrian Broadcasting Service. Policing the world goes hand in hand with policing in the language of the world.

English is arguably now the International Language of War and Peace (EILOWAP). The British Council is playing a central role in the ‘militariza-
tion’ component of English. It provides ‘aid’ to NATO and Eastern European countries through government, military, defence ‘assistance’ programmes. At the 2001 IATEFL conference in Brighton Mark Crossey of the British Council, Poland, reported on “setting standards in testing and teacher development” in the context of “peace-keeping English projects”.

9. An optimistic conclusion

What are the professional implications for ELT practice? Firstly, can one fully understand the use of English as an international language without an awareness of the framework of order that accompanies it? Pennycook (1994: 6) maintains these cultural and political implications of the spread of English cannot be ignored by rational and self-reflexive ELT specialists. Our educational and vocational situations do not exist in a vacuum after all. Pennycook (1998: 68) refers explicitly to the need to comprehend particular material (economic, political, social) conditions of education. This is a task we must individually and collectively undertake.

Secondly, how far does the spread of English constitute an unambiguous ‘good’? Certainly this is what the propagandists would have us believe. If the underlying direction of this essay concerning the welding of personnel to the international business system by means of English and the creation of a deferential, neocolonial discourse is, only partially, correct, then the prospects for the future would appear to be dismal. ‘TINA’, there is no alternative, is the PR-cry. However, there are hopeful signs from outside the élite circles of Europe and North America that this perception is not shared. ‘Benefits’ from global corporatization accrue to a narrow band of society. The costs, as always, are socialized to the majority of the world’s population.

More and more people are dissatisfied with the way things are proceeding. The recent anti-WTO, G8 and World Bank protests in Seattle, Prague, Quebec and Genoa are the tip of an iceberg. That the destabilizing effects of Anglo-American and European financial capitalism in its globalized form are sustained and supported by the englishization process is obvious. English as the language of protest banners held up for the world’s media is also no novelty.

But opposition to the system is hard to orchestrate. Both to find out how the framework of world order functions and for organizational purposes knowledge of English plays a role in global resistance. This cannot be denied. That the formulation of alternatives can and, perhaps in view of the increasing internationalization of the opposition to global institutions, must proceed in part through English is one of the ironies, or, if you prefer it, a dialectical aspect, of the global reach English has achieved.
WORKS CITED


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ABSTRACT

This essay applies a ‘two-space’ theoretic perspective to shed light on the impact of English as a general language of communication. It is argued that while English has a positive role in physical space where it promotes development, it has a negative role in price space where it facilitates dispossession. A conjunction of these two roles means that English helps to reinforce a condition of ‘proregression’, or dynamic stasis, resulting from the simultaneous but antithetical processes of progression and regression. The fact that certain postcolonial literary texts problematizing English language make extensive use of the ‘circle’ and ‘spiral’ motifs to convey the ambiguity and sense of confusion arising from this embrace is traced to this underlying condition of proregression.

1. Introduction

There is a general consensus that the current rush on the part of communities the world over to embrace the English language is bound up with the pressures of globalization. Nevertheless, there is within this accepted framework disagreement as to whether technical considerations (English as a ‘neutral’ language of communication) or broader issues of power (English as a non-neutral language of domination) play the
more significant part in English language spread, and as to whether, therefore, this process is a benign or pernicious one.

In presenting our own position on the subject, we should point out that it did not develop out of any desire to cross swords with language theorists. Rather, it arose out of a concern to contest prevailing critical interpretations of postcolonial literary texts that problematize the relation between the English language and native identity. It is no exaggeration to say that the dominant tenor of these interpretations is one of optimism, a fact attributable to an underlying conviction that, whatever the original circumstances behind English-language adoption by a colonized people, the latter can, under the new postcolonial conditions, successfully commandeer that language and make it bear the burden of a quite different experience.

Now while some postcolonial texts can be interpreted from this particular angle without inviting too much controversy, others cannot. In some of these texts, the pessimism is so stark as to suggest no possibility of reconciling the English language with native interests and priorities. Although some critics do confront these negative expressions, the tendency is to trace their source to deficiencies in the temperament or technique of the author rather than to deficiencies inherent in the postcolonial situation itself. Yet it is this latter interpretation that would appear to us to make more sense given that the texts in question invariably portray the failure of making the English language fully one’s own as occurring despite the exercise of resolve rather than because of its absence, an outcome that points to the presence of ontologically rooted and therefore insurmountable constraints on the ability to establish full possession.

It was with the intention of uncovering the nature of those constraints that we developed a two-space perspective on the world and applied it to an understanding of the role played by English as a language of international communication. In the course of that application we found that, contrary to ‘power’ views of English, this can take the form of a neutral language structure with no direct impact on native identity, but, contrary to ‘functionalist’ views, the neutrality of English is of a more insidious than innocent quality. Any community embracing English is likely to experience a deep sense of frustration and anger owing to the futility of a situation where any gains from that embrace always seem to be offset by the losses. It is, in other words, likely to experience those feelings that are among the hallmarks of postcolonial texts problematizing the English language, and with which critics appear to have the most difficulty.

alternative version that locates power in ‘discourse’ relations rather than in socio-economic structures is put by Pennycook (1994).

3 Brian Friel’s Translations and Wole Soyinka’s The Road are two examples we have in mind.
In the latter part of this essay we shall return to this relation between English’s ambivalent impact on postcolonial societies and the artistic reflection of that ambivalence. Our first preoccupation, however, must be to specify what is meant by a two-space perspective and to show how it generates certain insights into the role of English in the world today.

2. Two-Space Theory and proregression

We begin with the simple observation that all countries are money-using economies based on a developed intra- and inter-national division of labour. This fact of universal specialization can be interpreted to mean that all agents engage in two parallel sets of activities: a physical set where they engage in, or contribute to, the provision of different goods or services, and a price set where they assign monetary exponents to the realized or expected outcomes of production, and sanction those exponents, through the functions of money as measure of value and medium of exchange. By further reworking this latter premise it can be contended that all agents simultaneously inhabit two social spaces: a physical space where agents relate to each other in particular locations and places of work as possessors of particular skills, attributes or capabilities, and a price space where agents relate to each other as possessors of commensurate entities, commodities. This distinction between spaces is given added weight by allowing for the fact that physical space includes a diverse array of political, social and cultural institutions and practices which support, overlap with or envelop the economic practices whose outcomes are mapped into price space. Figure 1 provides a simplified way of illustrating our two-space perspective on social reality.4

The use of a modern-day political map of the world in Figure 1 to give schematic representation to physical space can be justified by the fact that the bulk of the activities of the majority of people are exercised within given areas separated by state-controlled borders. Where countries in physical space appear as containers of people, in world price space they appear as containers of commodities. The rationale behind using two images to depict countries as commodity agglomerations comes down to the fact that the outcomes of human activities mapped into price space basically divide into two types, realized outcomes of past actions, and expected outcomes of future actions. World GNP data for 1996 are used to show respective country magnitudes in terms of annualized output flows, or annualized income flows, the realization of claims on output. World capital market data for 31 December 1996 are used to show country magnitudes in terms of the total stock of bonds and shares outstanding at that moment. The superimposition of capital market-

4 Data for the maps are taken from Dermine & Hillion (1999).
based images of countries on GNP-based images is in line with the circumstance that debt and equity securities are really nothing other than second-order claims, claims on the claims on the real commodity base.

Figure 1
a. Physical Space

![Physical Space Map]

b. Price Space: Country size in capital market terms
c. Country size in proportion to GNP

Where physical space can be broadly identified with a process of progression, a continual if chequered improvement in the position of the majority of the world’s population, price space can be identified with the opposite process of regression, a continual decrease in the relative position of the world’s majority. A contemporary political map of the world usefully encapsulates the idea of progression as central to it is the establishment of relations of formal
equality between independent nation states. General progression in physical space includes economic and technological development insofar as there is a continual expansion in the quantity and quality of the human and non-human inputs available for production on one hand, and of the material use-values available for consumption on the other. World price space, on the other hand, is synonymous with a regressive process of dispossession and loss insofar as the majority of the world’s population are increasingly excluded from entitlement to their own output. The degree of exclusion which has now been reached can be seen by focusing on the ownership of the securities piled on top of the world’s output/income base. From recent world wealth reports one can obtain an approximate idea of the extent to which the concentration of ownership of financial assets has reached phenomenal, not to say horrific, proportions. The report for 1999, for example, showed that the world’s six million millionaires had a combined wealth, measured primarily although not exclusively in terms of ownership of financial assets, of approximately $21.6 trillion.\footnote{The World Wealth Report, produced by Merrill Lynch and Gemini Consulting, was reviewed in the \textit{Financial Times} (17 May 1999) in an article headed “Richest 6m in world keep getting richer.”} Considering that world GNP was then in the region of $24 trillion, it follows that these six million people, or one-tenth of one per cent of the world’s population of six billion, concentrated in their hands a volume of potential claims against output that was almost equal in weight to the aggregate amount of claims generated by the rest of the world’s population over that year.

The neologism ‘proregression’ has been constructed to capture the simultaneity of the antithetical processes of progression and regression experienced by the world’s majority and, by so doing, to define its inescapable outcome. Proregression signifies no real change of position as gains on one hand, and losses on the other, cancel each other out. There is stasis, but it is stasis of a special type or quality, one that involves action rather than inaction. Put simply, proregression portends ‘dynamic stasis’ as opposed to ‘static stasis’, motion that leads nowhere. The frustrating effects of dynamic stasis are palpable in all corners of the world today, as evidenced by the fact that one hears everywhere complaints that people are working harder and harder, only to stand still. There is, nevertheless, a crucial sense in which the proregressive condition of societies that have gone through colonial subjugation is different from that of others when evaluating it from a broader historical standpoint. For these societies, regression in price space over time has effectively countered progression in physical space not only regarding technological or scientific development, the advances in human knowledge and prowess in general, but also with respect to political, social and cultural development, the
advance out of relations of subordination and repression towards national independence and equality. Thus, if proregression and dynamic stasis are to be especially identified with former colonized societies, it is because it is in relation to the latter that these features assume their most intensified, and therefore purest, form.

3. The English language and proregression

If the heterogeneity of physical space immediately implies a corresponding diversity of historically shaped languages that house specific identities and cultures, it also includes the need for language homogeny, insofar as the development of any extensive linkages across places must presuppose a medium for mutual understanding. The solution to the requirement for language homogeny at the planetary level can in fact take one of two forms: the ‘plural’ form in the sense that a few major languages which are readily inter-translatable are endowed with the status of world language, or the ‘singular’ form, insofar as one language is differentiated from all others as the common means of communication. The plural option was clearly the preferred choice right up to the closing stages of the last century, for although English was important as an international language it nevertheless shared that role with several other languages. Today, however, it is the ‘singular’ option that has clearly prevailed as the range and depth of English language usage has expanded to the point where it now has the powerful advantage of critical mass.

Economic forces are generally acknowledged to be the prime movers behind English language spread in the current era. This primacy can be seen most clearly from a price space perspective. In contrast to physical space, which will always give scope both to language heterogeneity and to language homogeny, price space only has room for the latter. This is because people only relate to each other in this space as commodity holders, possessors of things, which means that the only significant issue here are the standards against which these things are priced and traded. Where pricing standards merely hold good for a particular community, the language of that community will suffice for purposes of negotiating prices around those standards. But when pricing standards extend across communities, a higher level of language homogeny is required, and certain languages originally belonging to particular communities have to be deployed by other communities as a medium facilitating price formation. There is, of course, a reverse impact in that any expansion in the range of language homogeny is in its turn bound to help promote the unification of different pricing standards. Globalization of price space, interpreted in the sense that standards covering the majority of entities traded have now unified at the world level, presupposes a matching culmination in the level of language homogeny.
In our view, a critical reason for the recent substitution of the singular form of language homogeny for the plural form has to do with the seismic shift in the internal composition of world price space. As long as real commodities, goods and services, constituted its dominant matter, the need to use English as a language of commodity transactions was by no means universal in scope. This is borne out by the fact that during the decades between 1950 and 1980, high-growth eras for countries like Germany and Japan, one did not witness in the latter the same binding imperative to adopt English as an additional language that one sees today. Obviously, the ability to participate in the GNP-dominated price space of the time, to the extent of being able to share in the setting of world standards for the provision of several lines of goods, was not hampered by the use of indigenous languages. However, as financial commodities, tradable shares and bonds, begin to comprise the predominant matter in price space from the 1980s onwards – commodities for which pricing standards are set in the USA in particular – so to that same extent does it become incumbent on all countries, including those of first rank in GNP terms, to embrace English to a greater extent than hitherto. A reliance on the translatability of English words into German or Japanese no longer suffices as it did in the era of GNP-dominated world price space: the sheer velocity, as well as the volume, of transactions in the global financial markets is such that agents need a command of English to participate effectively in those markets.

The basic point here is that the ascendance of English to a position of absolute supremacy is really nothing other than a reflection of the emergence of ‘stock-market’ capitalism as the globally dominant form of capitalism, the form that is eclipsing ‘welfare’ capitalism in all its regional varieties (‘Rhineland’, ‘Asian’ etc.).

In turning to the subject of the impact of English we need, first, to distinguish English as a local language of community from English as a global language of communication and, second, to distinguish the global role of English in physical space from that same role in price space. English in its local role can be said to be always benign in its impact, insofar as its linguistic features (rules of grammar, range of vocabulary, pronunciation etc.) can be reworked and shaped to fit in with a particular community’s own experience and priorities. This possibility of control is now possessed not only by those communities where English is the native language, but also by those that have come to adopt English either as a substitute local language or as a second lan-

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6 Note that, as regards Japan, English only became a compulsory school subject at secondary-education level in 1996. This policy initiative was certainly linked to the fact that it was from this period that Japanese higher educational institutions began to expand finance-related courses (accounting, corporate finance, corporate law), for which most of the relevant journals are in English.
language. On the other hand, English in its global role as a language of communication may appear to be potentially harmful, given that the format it must have to fulfil that role is beyond local control. However, since this loss of control is not confined to any one community but applies equally to all communities – as indeed it must be if the mutual-intelligibility criterion is to be adequately satisfied on a world scale – there is, in effect, no loss of control. Control, rather, has been dispersed, universalized; one can even say: democratized. Going by this logic, it follows that the impact of global English on those deploying it must be neutral: ie, it can have no positive or negative effect on a community’s interests and well-being in any immediate sense. The impact of global English can only be realized in an indirect, roundabout way, through the contribution it makes to the processes, events and circumstances that themselves influence or condition the life of a given community.

How this contribution is assessed depends on the perspective on the world that one adopts. From a purely physical-space perspective, one would have to accept that the impact of global English, as the chief language of technology and trade, is benign, insofar as it adds to the ability of different countries to increase outputs of use values. From a two-space perspective, however, the picture is very different. English is not only a language of trade contributing to the universalization of production standards, but also the language of the financial markets contributing to the universalization of governance and disclosure standards used for the pricing and sale of securities. If in the former capacity English facilitates the increase in the flows of goods mapped into price space, in the latter capacity it facilitates the massive expansion in the stocks of financial claims piled up against these output flows. What this means, to take the point a step further, is that while English can certainly assist communities to register material development, it just as certainly assists the process of dispossession that takes place co-extensively with and on the back of that development. The impact of the English language in its global format and function is, therefore, profoundly ambiguous. It enables but it also disables; it delivers, but it takes away at the same time as it delivers. It is, in short, nothing other than the linguistic counterpart to proregression.
4. The literary reflection of proregression and dynamic stasis

As the postcolonial literary texts portraying the English language/local identity nexus are products of the creative imagination, works of art rather than scientific tracts, it has to be explained how any signs of pessimism and despair in the latter can be said to manifest the proregressive condition as defined above. This we can do by looking at the way these texts deploy the circle and spiral motifs. Figure 2 helps to clarify the point.

![Figure 2](image)

Proregression is the unity of the antithetical processes of progression and regression that take place in two distinct social spaces. However, since individuals are only conscious of inhabiting a single space of interactions, those who are alert to this predicament are likely to describe it as circular motion, motion without result. This argument is illustrated in figure 2(a), which posits both physical and price spaces in the same frame of reference. Assuming the horizontal lines at the base of the figure to represent the trajectories of progression and regression that occur in these spaces respectively, the combined effect of these processes is depicted as a circular pattern described around a fixed point; for example, a constant move away from point y is counteracted by the constant return towards the same point. Where this circle around point y represents proregression in one period of time, the spiral-like trajectory, consisting of a series of overlapping circles, represents proregression across different periods of time. With the passage of time there is an accumulation of...
knowledge, which is to say that progression in physical space occurs in an upward as well as in a forward direction. But as this same increase of knowledge also allows for more sophisticated forms of dispossession and loss, regression itself shifts onto an ever higher plane. The spiral, therefore, shows that change over time also brings no change, an idea that comes across more clearly in Figure 2(b) where spiral development is viewed from a different angle. Looking down from point x at point y, one senses height, development, an increase of experience or understanding; but one also senses that there is no fundamental improvement in position or status. Time appears frozen, forever trapped in the present with the past as nothing other than ‘present-minus’ and the future as nothing other than ‘present-plus’.

We believe that if the circle and spiral motifs are central to certain literary works problematizing English language usage, it is to accentuate this sense of dynamic stasis, this theme of blocked development and entrapment. What these works are saying, in our opinion, is that any attempts to fully reconcile that embrace with local interests and priorities are ultimately futile as the English language always seems to bring with it as many new constraints and problems as it does new openings and opportunities. One can keep trying to separate the good from the bad, the benign from the pernicious, but the more one tries the greater the ensuing frustration and anguish as one sees no tangible result.

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Towards Global Diglossia?
English in the Sciences and the Humanities

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ABSTRACT

The rise of English as a global language goes hand in hand with its increasing importance as the language of academic discourse and publishing. This essay examines different forms of exclusivity in the production and reception of scientific language: a) register choice, with its specific norms and strategies, and b) choice of language. With regard to the latter, the essay considers possible consequences of an almost exclusive use of English in the sciences and humanities for different types of speech communities. After discussing examples of the development of scientific language from two different types of linguistic situations, German and Jamaican creole, this essay argues for the democratization of access to scientific resources via translation.

1. Introduction

The globalization of English is a relatively old phenomenon which had its beginning in the spread of English through British colonial expansion some five hundred years ago. The use of English as the single and foremost language in academia is a comparatively recent phenomenon, just some fifty years old, as a glance at pre-World War II academic literature will confirm. The contemporary reader of a German academic publication such as Norbert Elias’s Über den Prozess der Zivilisation, written in the 1930s, might notice with some bewilderment the many untranslated quotations in Latin and French. A scholar working in the humanities then, so the assumption behind the uncommented use of these languages, had to be familiar with at least Latin and French if not classical Greek, German
and, possibly, also English. In today’s German publications in sociology – or any other discipline – the use of Latin would be considered eccentric whereas English is expected to be read and understood by the non-native speaker across all academic fields.

This example illustrates that language use in the international scientific community is not ‘given’ but is likely to change over time as it is linked to political and economic power relationships. Today’s unrivalled status of English as the academic language is closely connected with the emergence of the USA as the political and economic super-power in the twentieth century. But the example also shows that academic language is and has always been exclusive. This exclusivity comes in different forms, with different consequences as to who has access to scientific resources and production.

In this essay, I will first discuss the aspect of exclusivity in its different forms and then move on to the consequences of the politics of English as a global language in the sciences and the humanities for different types of speech communities.

2. Forms of linguistic exclusion in academic texts

2.1 Scientific antilanguage

Anyone who wants to participate in a particular scientific discourse community has to learn the codes which hold it together, first of all, specialized vocabulary and technical terms. Many examples can be found in linguistics as well as in literary studies: as Robert Virchow once famously remarked, it is “the first mark of a scientist that he knows how to speak the language of science” (my translation).\(^1\) To those outside this discourse community, the meaning of the codes often remains obscure. This obscurity is achieved by a number of strategies, for instance partial relexicalization, semantic expansion of already existing terms or the use of formulaic patterns. It thus in many ways resembles the strategies of ‘antilanguages’, a term M.A.K. Halliday (1978: 164ff) first used to describe in-group languages which deliberately try to exclude others from understanding them such as, for instance, the cant that was used by criminals in Elizabethan times.

The register of scientific language thus has to be learned, in one’s mother tongue as well as in a second or third language. Academic texts are likely to show high lexical density and a preference for nominalizations where verbal structures would be found in a non-academic text. Thus, successful text production in this register depends not only on the choice of vocabulary and the knowledge of technical terms but goes well into the area of syntactic choices

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\(^1\) “Ist es nicht das erste Zeichen eines wissenschaftlichen Mannes, daß er die Sprache der Wissenschaft versteht?” – as quoted in Weinrich 1995: 3.
Towards Global Diglossia?

(Kretzenbacher 1991) and strategies which Kretzenbacher (1994) calls “the ego taboo, the narrative taboo and the metaphor taboo”: ie,

– the avoidance of first and second person – it was found that 90% of all finite verbs used in written scientific texts are in the 3rd person (Kretzenbacher 1995: 27);

– the avoidance of narrative signals, including “narrative tense forms” other than the preferred present tense;

– and the avoidance of metaphors as part of a scientific argument.

Thus, the form may be just as important for the scientific character of a text as the argument itself, if not more so. Sigmund Freud, for instance, always complained that the narrative character of his case studies made them seem less scientific, “that the case studies which I write read like novellas and that they lack, so to speak, the serious character of science.”

It has to be noted, however, that the norms of a scientific register are not exactly the same across languages and disciplines; in fact, differences in conventions may cause misunderstandings between ‘hard facts sciences’ and the humanities, not least between the two disciplines engaging in a discourse in this volume: linguistics and literature.

One example of a deliberate violation of academic register conventions is the “Concrete” version of Parakrama’s abstract to his work *De-Hegemonizing Language Standards* (1995; see next page).

Strategies in the “Concrete” version:

– vocabulary and register: ‘vulgarisms’ – smug-arse, fucked over, shitload; ‘colloquialisms’: cool registers, mixing and jamming;

– non-standard grammatical constructions: *I done shown, ain’t, had became, studied them* (post)colonial Englishes;

– information is more often encoded in verbal structures and clauses than in nominal structures (compare “Abstract” nominalization such as *formulation, examination, standardization, reproduction, selectivity, neutrality*, etc.);

2 The “metaphor taboo” is perhaps the least convincing or, at least, the most difficult one to demonstrate. As Kretzenbacher also admits, scientific language is full of metaphors which tend to conventionalize very easily (eg, “linguistic genocide”, “linguistic human rights” are part of the structural metaphor “language, like a human being, is a fragile organism which needs protection”). Thus, the borderline between a metaphor used as part of an argument and the use of a conventionalized metaphor is often blurred.

3 “[...] daß die Krankengeschichten, die ich schreibe, wie Novellen zu lesen sind, und daß sie sozusagen des ernsten Gepräges der Wissenschaftlichkeit entbehren” (Freud 1999 [1892–1899]: I, 227); my tr.
the ‘ego taboo’ (Kretzenbacher 1994, 1995): *I done shown, we went, I say, I be mixing*;

the ‘narrative taboo’ (Kretzenbacher 1994, 1995): use of narrative past tense, use of (colloquial) narrative markers like ‘say’.


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<th>CONCRETE</th>
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<td><em>I done shown</em> Standard spoken English, as standing up only for them smug-arise social elites. And it ain’t really no different for no written English neither. The tired ways in which the standardized languages steady fucked over the users of other forms had become clear when we went and studied them (post)colonial Englishes. Them ‘other’ Englishes came and made it impossible to buy into sacred cows like native speaker authority because there from the getgo there are only habichole users, not natives! I say why is it that, say ‘She say I is not good people’ and ‘She telling I no good fello, no!’ are murder to the ‘educated’ except in the ghetto of ‘creative’ contexts, whereas something like ‘In the conversations that have transpired during our acquaintance, she has intimated to me personally that she cannot bring herself to consider myself to be admirably suitable with respect to my individual character’ is only deemed ‘wordy’, but clearly shows a ‘command’ of the language? The hegemony of hep standard languages and cool registers which hide where they are coming from, by a shitload of ‘arbitrary’ rules and ‘other-people-in-power-require’-isms is read for points by these non-standard varieties like and unlike the ones I be mixing and jamming here.</td>
<td>Champions of the so-called Other [or (post)colonial] Englishes have operated on the basis of the special status of these varieties, thereby justifying the formulation of different criteria for their analysis. A careful examination of the processes of standardization as they affect these ‘Others’ (particularly ‘South Asian English’) strips the camouflage from standardization which can be seen as the hegemony of the ‘educated’ elites, hence the unquestioned paradigm of the ‘educated standard’. These standards are kept in place in ‘first world’ contexts by technology of reproduction which dissimulates this hegemony through the self-represented neutrality of prestige and precedent whose selectivity is a function of the politics of publication. In these ‘other’ situations, the openly conflictual nature of the language context makes such strategy impossible. The non-standard is one of the most accessible means of ‘natural’ resistance, and, therefore, one of the most sensitive indices of de-hegemonization.</td>
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The author employs this mixture of vulgarisms, colloquial vocabulary, non-standard grammar with Black American English and South Asian English features, along with the violation of text norms (‘ego taboo’, ‘narrative taboo’) to get his point across: the same argument is made in the ‘concrete’ version as in the ‘abstract’ one, yet only one version would be taken seriously
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as an academic text. A text like Parakrama’s ‘concrete’ is certainly less commonly found published by a serious press than the other extreme, academic texts where the lack of argument is concealed by a wealth of elaborate in-group jargon, as was infamously demonstrated in the “Sokal Hoax.” 4 It is therefore not surprising that Parakrama’s didactic exercise is restricted to this initial summary, whereas the main part of the book succumbs to the established conventions of academic writing. As the author explains in his preface,

I had wanted to write the whole of this book in form(s) of non-standard English, but it became too difficult because I am very much a product of these standards I wish to problematize. This task to change the way we have looked at language, in concrete as opposed to abstract terms, is hard – really hard because it has much less to do with individual ability than structural and discursive hegemony. (1995: vi)

2.2 Latter-day Latin?

Access to English in the sciences and the humanities

The above form of exclusion – caused by register choice – should not be confused with that which is caused by choice of language. A specialization of function between a language used for high-prestige functions (such as academic writing, so-called “H-varieties”, Ferguson 1959) and one for low-prestige functions (so-called “L-varieties”) is not new. After all, such a diglossia existed in Europe until the national languages began to replace Latin in this role between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. Does the present dominance of English in the academic world then result in a language situation that resembles the hegemony of Latin in medieval Europe?

The situation is, of course, very different from the hegemony of Latin – not least because Latin was nobody’s native language (then), leaving medieval scholars of all tongues at an equal disadvantage or advantage. While the

4 Alan Sokal, a professor in quantum physics, wrote a nonsense article (1996a), “Transgressing the boundaries: toward a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity,” which parodied the style and vocabulary of French criticism and was published as a serious text in the spring/summer 1996 issue of the cultural-studies journal Social Text. In a subsequent statement he explains some of his strategies for imitating the genre, for example “appeals to authority in lieu of logic; speculative theories passed off as established science; strained and even absurd analogies; rhetoric that sounds good but whose meaning is ambiguous; and confusion between the technical and everyday senses of English words (for example: linear, nonlinear, local, global, multidimensional, relative, frame of reference, field, anomaly, chaos, catastrophe, logic, irrational, imaginary, complex, real, equality, choice)” (Sokal 1996b: 338–39). It should be noted, however, that the idea of unambiguous meaning in language is equally absurd; the Sokal Hoax may thus be taken as a very good example of divergent conceptions of ‘scientific language’ in ‘hard-facts science’ and the humanities.
world’s proportion of native speakers of English is on the decline in comparison to an increasing number of L2 English speakers, there is no need to worry that the former are a dying species. Today’s global scientific English meets with a number of different conditions in different speech communities which may broadly be characterized as follows:

a) communities where English is the native language of the majority of speakers (eg, Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia);
b) communities where an English vs. mother tongue diglossia already exists, often in a postcolonial situation (eg, the anglophone Caribbean);
c) communities where diglossia had existed before with a different H-variety, eg, Russian or French, which is now gradually being replaced by English (eg, Russian in Latvia, French in Tunisia); and
d) those where English is gradually replacing the national language in the area of science (eg, Germany, France, Russia, Spain).

The rise of English as a global scientific language will have the least impact on the function of mother tongues in diglossic situations. For situations such as b) in which tertiary education is likely to be in English, the increased international importance will merely strengthen the position of English against possible national or regional competitors (eg, Hindi in India) and work against an elaboration (what Kloss 1952 termed “Ausbau”) of regional languages. For c) the situation is a similar one with regard to the function of the mother tongue. The substitution of English for former H-varieties is likely to be age-graded but will not affect the position of the L-varieties.

For a) and d), the changes will be more drastic: In situations where English is the mother tongue, the academic is clearly at an advantage both in the reception and production of scholarly work which is not filtered through a second language. A number of studies (eg, Schiewe 1995) have shown that comprehension of complex scientific issues is best achieved in the mother tongue and in a non-specialized register. The disadvantage is that the English mother tongue scholar now has far less motivation to learn a second language, as can be seen in the declining numbers of L2 learners at British and American universities.
3. Consequences of global scientific English

3.1 The decline of scientific Babel?

Those speech communities in which English is gradually replacing the national language as the language of science (situation d)) are the ones where the steady rise of English has had the greatest impact in the last few decades. This will therefore be the focus of some more detailed discussion, especially with regard to German. As Ulrich Ammon (1998) documents in a recent publication, languages like Russian, Japanese, French and German are steadily on the decline as languages of publication both in the natural sciences and the humanities, with a somewhat weaker effect on the humanities than the natural sciences.

Table 1: Percentage of languages used in natural science publications, 1980 to 1996 (Ammon 1998: 152)

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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>90.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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The drastic impact in the natural sciences is furthermore illustrated in Ammon’s elaborate account of particular fields like chemistry, where 12.3% of all publications were in German at the beginning of the 1960s, which was reduced to under 2% by 1996 (1998: 148). A field like history, on the other hand, has experienced a slower decrease in German language publications, from 9.2% in 1974 to 5.3% in 1995. The dichotomy between an ‘English-only’ policy in the natural sciences and an effort to maintain publishing in one’s native language is also noticed by Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) in their survey of academic language use in Denmark. One reason for this dichotomy may lie in a different use of language as part of the argument: natural sciences often have a meta-language at hand which is unambiguous, logographic and, in its written form, not tied to an individual language. Simple examples of such systems are, for instance, numerals; likewise, for
chemistry, chemical formulas: whereas ‘water’ may be Wasser, agua, eau, vant or maji in different languages, it may be expressed as \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) in chemistry regardless of the language of the writer/reader. In the humanities, more emphasis is placed on discussions where subtleties and ambiguities of meaning play a large role. The fact remains, however, that there is an overall decrease in scientific use of languages other than English across all disciplines. What are the possible consequences for these languages?

Just as their “Ausbau”, their elaboration for academic registers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, resulted in an increase in prestige, their abandonment will result in a prestige loss. New word creations in the areas of science, modern technology as well as business are almost exclusively either phonologically non-integrated borrowings from English or new creations which sound English but are in fact German coinages. Examples of the latter type abound, with handy (‘mobile phone’) and – almost macabre – body bag (a type of rucksack) among the most notable ones. Politicians have long lamented such use of anglicized vocabulary in Germany, albeit with little effect. There is no national institution for the preservation of the German language\(^5\) like the French Académie Française. But even if there were, the linguistic effectiveness of such a prescriptive language policy must be doubted.

Another consequence could be a strengthening of local and regional varieties where they still exist. In a recent article, Jürgen Trabant (2000: 116) notes with regard to the situation in Switzerland that High German, used for writing, might be gradually replaced by English, while Swiss German would continue to be used for oral communication. “This might mean Switzerland’s departure from the German speech community,” Trabant concludes.\(^6\)

### 3.2 Low-prestige languages and modernization

One of the situations least affected by the increased importance of scientific English, as pointed out above, is that of an already existing diglossia with English as the H-variety, which can be found in many postcolonial situations. Despite, or perhaps exactly because of this stability, I would like to explore

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\(^5\) However, a self-appointed Verein Deutsche Sprache – ‘German Language Association’ – was founded in 1997 to document and denounce the excessive use of English vocabulary in the media and advertising. Its activities include the annual proclamation of “language meddler of the year,” a title which the vice-chancellor of the university of Munich, Prof. Dr. jur. Andreas Heldrich, shares with fashion designer Jil Sander.

\(^6\) “Die Standardsprache wird gleichsam zwischen dem Englischen und den Dialekten aufgerieben. Wenn wir etwa das Varietätengefüge der Schweiz betrachten, so ist gut denkbar, daß dort, wo die Schweizer jetzt noch das sogenannte Schriftdeutsch verwenden, Englisch erscheint und der schriftdeutsche Standard einfach verschwindet. Dies wäre der Abschied der Schweiz aus der deutschen Sprachgemeinschaft” (Trabant 2000: 116); my tr.
the chances missed for an elaboration of traditional L-varieties in such a
diglossic situation. It is one of the most persistent myths about languages
which are used in the sciences and the humanities that they are somehow
more “logical” or more “appropriate” for this purpose than others, which, in
turn, are deemed “incapable of expressing the complexities of scientific
thought.” This is precisely what the medieval scholar writing in Latin would
have thought about English or German.

It is clear that every language is capable of being used for academic writ-
ing. However, it will also most certainly require some innovation with regard
to register formation. This can be seen in an example of an academic text
written in Jamaican creole and a standard English version (see Ex. 2, next
page). The language situation in Jamaica has a long history of functional
specialization between standard English and Jamaican creole. Writing is
traditionally the sphere where standard English would be used; Jamaican
creole is conventionally used in oral contexts but has also been used in crea-
tive writing (poetry, prose, drama) for a long time. Hubert Devonish, linguist
at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus, Jamaica, has experi-
mented with academic writing in Jamaican creole and is the author of at least

How does Devonish shape Jamaican creole to work in this type of
academic text? Paradoxically, the task is made especially difficult by the fact
that most of the lexical stock of Jamaican is derived from English. The most
easy way out would therefore be to simply borrow the technical jargon and
the specialized vocabulary from English and give it a slightly different spell-
ing. This strategy, however, would do little to create a genuinely Jamaican
creole academic register. Devonish’s approach, in contrast, tries to create new
word forms by using the spoken Jamaican lexical stock and expressions in
new and more specialized meanings. Essential characteristics of an academic
article, ‘macro-structures’ like the division into different sections (“intro-
duction” – *fo staat aaf*) are transferred into Jamaican and so establish a pattern
in that variety without reverting to the H-language English as a source.

Some examples of lexical innovation in the article include

– compounds: *nyuu taim sapii* (1) for ‘technology’, *langgwij paat-aaf* (3) for
‘diglossia’, *langgwij sheed-aaf* (7) for ‘continuum’, *langgwij stodii piipl*
(9) for ‘linguists’;

– semantic extension: *neeshan parabl* (5) for ‘national motto’, *pik-out* (8) for
‘selection’;

7 For a detailed discussion of gradual functional changes of creole within and
outside the Caribbean, see Mühleisen (forthcoming).
– circumlocution: *wen yu taakin frii insaid* (9) for ‘private informal interaction’, *we dem bilin sentens laik / hou di word-dem yuuz fo bil sentens* (9) for ‘syntax’.

Ex. 2. Jamaican creole: Devonish (1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kyaribiiyan Ruuts Langgwij, Nyuu Taim Sapii an Fiilinz fo Neeshan</th>
<th>Caribbean Vernacular Languages, Technology and National Consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fo Staat Aaf</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...] Hou piipl taak iz wan ting doz prapa mek dem fiil se dem biilaangs togeda. Huu taak laik matii doz fiil se dem iz matii. An huu doz doon taak laik dem, no dem matii. Nof taim, wan set a piipl doz mek op dem main se hou dem taak speshal. An den, dem doz staat biiliv se a no jos di taak wa speshal bot di piipl wa taakin, to. An az fo huu no taak speshal taak, dem no speshal niida. (Devonish 1994: 1)</td>
<td>[...] Shared speech is a very important means of creating common identity. The absence of shared speech, on the other hand, serves to exclude those who do not belong within the common identity. It is very often the case that a group of people come to regard their speech as in some way special. They begin to transfer this feeling of specialness from their language to themselves, its speakers. As for those who are not perceived as sharing the special common speech, they come to be regarded as the very opposite of special. (Devonish 1994: 1–2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is notable that many nominalizations, concepts which are expressed in SE as modified nouns or compound nouns, are often expressed by a clause (*hou piipl taak* (1) versus ‘shared speech’, *fiil se dem iz matii* (1) versus ‘common identity’). Many of the formulaic expressions and conjunctions which make up the conventions of an academic text in Standard English are not given in the creole text. Where they are given, the creole expressions are shorter and less formulaic (*From wa hii se* for ‘according to his analysis’, 4-5, *plos* for ‘in addition’, 4–5). Cleft constructions, a typical syntactic feature of creole languages, feature prominently in the Jamaican text: *Iz main doz mek wan langgwij* (2), *An iz di raitin fo Inglish, di hai-langgwij doz rait dong* (6).

The existence of a small number of academic articles certainly does not turn Jamaican creole into a full-fledged international language of science. The increased global importance of English, in fact, makes it highly unlikely that such a step will ever be taken. What this didactic experiment shows, however, is that the linguistic strategies necessary for the creation of an academic register are quite transparent.
4. Conclusion

The consequences of the Goliath ‘global scientific English’ and some Davidian forces working against it are difficult to assess. At the moment, there is no doubt that the development is working in favour of ‘global diglossia’, with English as the almost exclusive language used in the sciences and the humanities. The possible negative effects are drastic and include the loss of ever more languages as well as the loss of knowledge encoded in those languages. The possible positive effects sound rather mundane in comparison. They include an increase in international exchange of ideas: after all, scientific work has to go public – and not only to further the career of the individual scholar but because, as a general principle, all science is useless if it is not accessible to other members of the discipline. This is easier with only one language as a scientific lingua franca than with a dozen or even hundreds of languages used by an international scientific community.

Two questions seem to be crucial here: firstly, how can non-mother-tongue speakers gain equal access to resources dominated by English? Secondly, how can science continue to be conducted in other languages so that their cognitive potential and cultural traditions are not lost? The key to both of these questions, I would argue, lies in translation. Professional translators and editors at universities and international publishing houses should ensure that non-native speakers are not at a disadvantage in publishing their scientific work. Therefore, in the absence of a realistic solution to the desirable goal of a democratization of languages in international publishing and academic exchange, my call is a mere pragmatic one, for a democratization of access to the production (and reception) of scientific English across all disciplines.

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The Recording of Vocabulary from the Major Varieties of English in the Oxford English Dictionary

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ABSTRACT

The approach to recording vocabulary from the major varieties of English in the Oxford English Dictionary is described, from the First Edition (the New English Dictionary, or N.E.D.) through the Supplements of 1933 and 1972–86 and the Additions Series, to the latest revisions and additions: the Third Edition, currently being published in electronic format as OED Online (New Edition). The methods used by and sources available to the different editorial teams are discussed, in the context of a developing awareness of the importance of the regional Englishes to a major historical dictionary of the language, and the evolution of English into a global lingua franca.

AS EDMUND WEINER, joint editor of the Second Edition and Principal Philologist for the Third Edition notes (1986: 263), the type and extent of the OED’s coverage of regional English arose in an “ad hoc” way; it should not be evaluated as if it had been an articulated (and arguably flawed) policy from the start. Indeed, the idea of there being, at the time of the preparation and publication of the N.E.D., regional standard varieties of English had not really been conceived. Vocabulary from English overseas was regarded as outside the core of James Murray’s famous ‘circle’1 of English, hovering somewhere between dialect and colloquial use. Murray, the principal editor of the N.E.D., himself a Scot, was certainly aware of regional differences, however, as he is reported as replying to the question ‘How many words are there in the language of Englishmen?’ with

1 See Murray’s ‘General Explanations’ in the preface to the N.E.D.
Of *some* Englishmen? or of *all* Englishmen? Is it *all* that *all* Englishmen speak, or *some* of what *some* Englishmen speak? Does it include the English of Scotland and of Ireland, the speech of British Englishmen, and American Englishmen, of Australian Englishmen, South African Englishmen, and of the Englishmen in India? (from unpublished papers in the possession of K.M. Elizabeth Murray, quoted in Murray 1977: 193)

The preparation of the *N.E.D.* began in earnest in 1859, when the Philological Society published *A proposal for the publication of a New English Dictionary*. This text included an appeal to the British and American public for readers, who were asked to submit quotations from a number of works considered by the Society as likely to provide a full picture of the development of the English language. There was no recognition at this time of potential developments in the language overseas. Twenty years later, however, a second appeal included the plea:

> In order that [the Dictionary’s] progress may be certain, and that it may have that complete and representative character which has been its aim from the beginning, and be a lasting monument of our language, the Committee want help from readers in Great Britain, America, and the British Colonies, to finish the volunteer work so enthusiastically commenced twenty years ago, by reading and extracting the books which still remain unexamined [...] American and Colonial readers we ask, besides sharing the general work, to read for us those recent books which show the additions made to English in their respective countries, as received names for physical features, productions, &c."^{2}

This was reinforced by a separate appeal made in the American press, in which readers are informed that:

> For American readers American books are left. Hardly any have been touched [...] Early books of travel, law, or records are to be sought, in which the names of American objects, acts, habits, relations are likely to have made their first appearance [...] The Dictionary will be one of the great books of the world, a standard work for many generations. American authors should be fully represented in it."^{3}

The *N.E.D.* shows that these appeals were not entirely unfruitful. The alphabetical range MARCIATION–MASSYMORE^{4} cites a variety of American

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^{4} This is the fourth quarterly batch of entries in the *New Edition*, published in December 2000 in *OED Online*; therefore a comparison can be made with the latest
sources including travel writing, memoirs, and journals, such as the diary used in illustrating maroon n. 2:

2. Southern U.S. In full maroon frolic, party: A pleasure party, esp. a hunting or fishing excursion of the nature of a picnic but of longer duration.

1779 I. ANGELL Diary (1899) 59 Lt. Cook..Come from the Meroon frolick last night. [Editor’s note: A hunting or fishing trip, or excursion, in Southern United States, to camp out after the manner of the West Indian Maroons.]

Even less ‘literary’ sources were also consulted, such as Browne’s American Poultry Yard (1849), which illustrates marquee coop; this is despite the fact that the Delegates to the Oxford University Press, as part of their ongoing battle to conserve resources and control the Dictionary’s size, had ordered that “Americanisms were acceptable [for inclusion] only if found in American and English writers of note.” Murray and his fellow editors also made judicious use of the recently published large American dictionaries, in particular the Century Dictionary (1889–1901), whose editors offered advice to their counterparts on the N.E.D. as well as providing definitions and quotations for a number of American uses such as marshall v. 5 c, ‘to arrange (the cars of a freight-train) in proper station order’ and the plant marsh tea, Ledum palustre.

The majority of this American vocabulary included in the N.E.D. records, as the Appeal requests, “objects, acts, habits, [and] relations” unfamiliar to British readers. A new development was to take place with the publication of the Supplement in 1933. The Preface to this volume states that characteristics of the vocabulary within it include “the varied development of colloquial idiom and slang, to which the United States of America have made a large contribution, but in which the British dominions and dependencies also have a conspicuous share.” Thus, the MARCIATION–MASSYMORE range in the 1933 Supplement includes the new additions a soft or easy mark at mark, n.1 and a new sense of marrow-fat n., both labelled U.S. slang.

Another area in which the Supplement sought to improve on the earlier volumes of the N.E.D. was in the updating of quotation paragraphs. Particularly, the Preface notes, “account would be taken of earlier evidence for

updates and additions. It was originally published in 1905, as part of the 27th fascicle of the N.E.D., and is more representative of that work as a whole than some of the earlier parts of the alphabet, in which the editors’ style had not fully evolved.


6 There is relatively little in the N.E.D. from other regional Englishes. The range MARCIATION–MASSYMORE contains a couple of Australian uses at martin n.1 and Mary n. 2 and a sense of marrow-pudding labelled West Indian; the rest of the non-British entries are from the USA.
American uses, which Sir William Craigie was in a position to supply.\textsuperscript{7} Not only earlier but also in many cases later American evidence was supplied by the Supplement, including American quotations for market-house to complement the British evidence of the N.E.D., and a later example of maroon, in the sense previously discussed. The Supplement also gave the range its first South African example, at market master.

The next major milestone in the OED’s history came in 1957, when Robert Burchfield was appointed to edit the second Supplement, published in four volumes between 1972 and 1986. Burchfield, himself a New Zealander, was particularly keen to increase the OED’s coverage of what, by that time, were recognized as distinguishable varieties of English. He instigated a new Reading Programme, which – among other aims such as increasing the amount of technical and scientific material read – concentrated on systematically surveying these varieties. Burchfield’s Preface to the first volume of this Supplement (1972) remarks:

We have made bold forays into the written English of regions outside the British Isles, particularly that of North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, and Pakistan [...] They have been accorded the kind of treatment that lexicographers of a former generation might have reserved for the English of Britain alone.

The range MARCIATION–MASSYMORE reflects this in including among its new additions senses of mark (noun and verb) specific to Australian Rules Football (complementing the N.E.D.’s Rugby Football sense); a sense of mark (verb) from the lexicon of Australian and New Zealand sheep-farming; and the Australian slang phrase a good (or bad) mark.

The work of this Supplement, however, could not hope to complete the picture of English overseas. Its primary purpose was to concentrate on vocabulary which had been added to the language relatively recently; to carry on, as it were, where the N.E.D. left off. Hence, there were still gaps in the historical records to be filled. After the publication of the Second Edition of the OED in 1989 (which combined the text of the N.E.D. with that of the 1972–86 Supplement), plans began to be made for a completely updated Third Edition, with a fully revised text and thousands of new additions. One of the two “major questions of policy” identified by Weiner as confronting the editors of the Third Edition was the “coverage of the vocabulary of varieties of English other than St BrE” (Weiner 1986: 260). This important dimension to the project was duly addressed, and the collection of evidence from these varieties

\textsuperscript{7} Craigie, co-editor of the Supplement, was also working on the historical Dictionary of American English (published 1936–44) and had taken a post as Professor of English at the University of Chicago.
was made a priority of the Reading Programme. As work progressed, the *OED Additions Series* supplements – three A–Z volumes of 3,000 new entries each – were published in 1993 and 1997. This series contains examples from most varieties of English, with many from the major ones, detailing, for example, politics (*Francization* in Quebec), clothing (*Ugh* boots in Australia and New Zealand), sport (the American colloquialism *peg* in baseball), and slang (the Irish English *gobdaw*) from around the English-speaking world.

The current editorial team working on the Third Edition is particularly aware of the importance of regional varieties of English, as the Preface to the *OED Online* (2000) shows:

> From its base in Britain, the English language has expanded over the centuries to become a world language [...] The English of the British Isles now becomes one (or indeed several) of these varieties, whereas previously standard British English may have been regarded as the dominant form of English [...] The dating of terms from these varieties illustrates not only the spread of the vocabulary but also the social and cultural changes which necessarily precede or accompany this.

A thorough revision of all existing entries is taking place, and these are published online in quarterly batches. An important part of this revision process has been to ‘internationalize’ the Dictionary itself, which in the past – inevitably, given its historical context – has been open to charges of ‘Brito-centrism’. It is inevitable that any major dictionary of the English language will have some regional bias, whether explicit (“A Dictionary of American English”) or implicit in its definitions and style. The Third Edition has taken major steps to eradicate much of that bias. British English is no longer considered the ‘default’, and terms which appear only, chiefly, or originally in British English are labelled as such, as they would be if another variety were concerned. The same is true in specific subject areas: for example *British Law* (where appropriate) replaces the simple *Law* and *British History* replaces *History*. The formerly unqualified label *dialect* is replaced by *British regional*. Editors are careful to replace and not to introduce such potentially confusing definitions as ‘potato chips’ for *French fried potatoes* (noted in Algeo 1990: 147), which has a different meaning in British English from that which it has in the American variety.

Perhaps the most instantly noticeable change made to the style of the entries in the Third Edition is the introduction of an American pronunciation for every entry, which follows the British one. As well as this, entries labelled as being (chiefly) of another major variety are given the current standard pronunciation in that variety. ‘Double’ headword forms are provided where the standard American spelling differs from the standard British (for example *marvellous* | *marvelous*, *a.*, *adv.*, and *n*). Formerly, the American variant
would often (as at neighbour, n.) have been noted only in the list of variant forms. These practices reflect the importance of American English not only as spoken in the USA, but as an international variety of English, used more frequently than British English among learners of English as a second language.

The amount of new quotation evidence collected from the various Reading Programmes (discussed more fully below), from contributors, and from external databases of electronic texts has enabled the editors of the Third Edition to update substantially the examples illustrating its entries. As well as the obvious and important antedatings and postdatings, fuller pictures of the history of each entry can be given. Words once labelled (to give a common example) U.S. often become ‘originally’ or ‘chiefly U.S.’ in the Third Edition. Conversely, a term might now be labelled as current only in a certain variety, where previously it was more widespread; and one with no label to distinguish its variety provided with one where appropriate. Returning to the entry for maroon n. 2, this updating process has resulted in a further regional label (Caribbean) being added along with a later quotation from this variety:

2. Chiefly Southern U.S. and Caribbean. In full maroon party (also †maroon frolic). An extended camping, hunting, or fishing trip in the country. Also more generally: a picnic, outing, or other communal gathering. Cf. MAROONING n.

1779 I. ANGELL Diary (1899) 59 Lt. Cook..Come from the Meroon frolick last night. [Editor’s note: A hunting or fishing trip, or excursion, in Southern United States, to camp out after the manner of the West Indian Maroons.]

1785 in S. Carolina Hist. & Geneal. Mag. (1912) 13 188 On Monday we form a maroon party to visit some saw mills.

1838 C. GILMAN Recoll. Southern Matron xxxii. 223 Feeling the necessity of refreshment, we alighted for a while beneath a tree by the roadside, for a maroon.

1852 C. W. DAY Five Years Resid. W. Indies I. 207, I joined a maroon party down to the Carenage, about seven miles below Port of Spain.

1996 Dict. Caribbean Eng. Usage 372/1 Maroon... (Cru, Grns) An annual communal village feast with religious purpose... (Bdos) (Obs) An outing and picnic with friends.

Further examples of the revision process are illustrated in Appendix 1.

As far as new entries are concerned, the methods of selection used by the current editorial team are designed to increase the coverage of different Englishes even further. Two of the major tools with which potential new entries are selected are the Reading Programme and the electronic databases deriving from it, and the major regional dictionaries of English. The current Reading Programme is more structured than that of the N.E.D., employing 50 readers

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8 See, for example, main line n. 2 (previously 1 b).
9 See, for example, machine n.
10 See, for example, mahogany n. 2 b.
world-wide (not to mention the many volunteer contributors who send quotations to the editors on a regular or occasional basis). Novel reading makes up a significant part of the readers’ work, and included in the programme is a comprehensive selection of contemporary literature from around the English-speaking world, as well as subject-specific works – for example, texts on world music or regional cuisine. The current North American Reading Programme generates approximately 8–10,000 quotations a month, and is aiming to fill the gaps left by earlier programmes by concentrating for example on pre-1800 and early twentieth-century sources, and non-literary English such as film scripts, journals, and song lyrics. Separate reading programmes are also run by the *Australian National Dictionary*, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, and the *Dictionary of South African English*; the Canadian project, for example, has been concentrating on Canadian interests such as ice hockey, logging, and canoeing, as well as Canadian regionalisms. The Oxford team also runs an ongoing project in which colleagues in many overseas branches of the Oxford University Press send copies of English-language newspapers and periodicals published in their home nations, which allows vocabulary from various new Englishes to be captured, as well as that from the major varieties spoken as a first language. Recently read examples are: *Indiaweekly*, the *Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), and *Business Day* (Cape Town, South Africa). Quotations deriving from these programmes are placed on an electronic database, which is consulted when selecting potential new entries, and vocabulary items with a significant number of quotations (usually five or six) are considered for inclusion. This database is also used to supplement quotations from the dictionaries discussed below, and, as mentioned above, in the revision of existing entries: for example in postdating, or amending a regional label.

A number of regional dictionaries are also consulted. These include the *Australian National Dictionary* (1988), the *Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997), the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (1985-), the *Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (1996), and the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996). These are invaluable resources for the editors of the Third Edition, which were not available to their predecessors. Many enable their varieties of English to be surveyed from a historical perspective, allowing gaps to be filled in the *OED*’s coverage. In using these to select new entries it is important to take into account the fact that they are necessarily more inclusive than *OED* could hope to be, and to apply certain criteria to ensure the most important of these vocabulary items are dealt with. Broadly speaking, editors are guided here by the weight of quotation evidence given in those dictionaries which provide it, and the existence of supplementary quotations on in-house and external databases. These
databases also give a wider picture of how a particular variety was or is spoken and ensure that editors for whom it may not be their native variety can be confident of capturing the way in which these words are used, and which of them might be most worthy of inclusion. Other sources of information used in selecting new entries include regular and occasional contributions from members of the public around the world, and numerous Internet sources including archives of local and national newspapers and databases of literature. Specialists in each variety are also consulted on matters of inclusion, pronunciation, definition, and etymology. Etymologies often require a great deal of specialist work, and provide a historical and cultural picture in themselves, with some regional terms being derived from an indigenous language, some from that of a particular immigrant community, and some displaying a local adaptation of a Standard English word.

Some examples of regional uses in MARCIATION–MASSYMORE new to the Third Edition are: from Australia and New Zealand *margin*, ‘an increment or payment made in addition to a basic wage, esp. in recognition of particular expertise or extra responsibility’; from North America *marine hospital*, ‘a hospital established for the use of sailors’; and from Irish English *mass*, ‘regard, appreciation’. Further examples can be seen in Appendix 2.

In conclusion, it is clear that the approach to the recording of vocabulary from the major varieties of English in the *Oxford English Dictionary* has developed over time as these Englishes themselves have become more prominent, influential, and distinct. The number of such items included has increased dramatically since *N.E.D.*, but this is balanced by a judicious use of the materials available and the introduction of various selection criteria. The type of such vocabulary included is much more varied than it once was; originally being largely a collection of names for unfamiliar objects, it now encompasses a wide array of subject areas from occupational terms to sport, as well as providing a picture of the slang and colloquialisms of particular regions. Care is taken to give a historical picture of the development of each entry’s use, showing where it originated, where it spread to, and how long it took to spread there. In particular, the current practice of providing American headword forms and pronunciations acknowledges the influence of American English on the English taught and learnt as a second language, and helps ensure that the *Oxford English Dictionary* documents not only the history of British English but of its closest cousins, and, ultimately, of English as a language of global communication.
WORKS CITED


Appendix 1

Entry revisions from the Third Edition

The entry for magsman, n. shows an Australian addition from the Burchfield Supplement to an existing OED entry. The updated version from the Third Edition shows antedatings and postdatings, as well as the addition of labelling to show the history in different varieties of the original sense. The entry for mate, n. shows the importance of the quotation paragraph to the entry as a whole: while neither sense quite merits the label ‘Austral’ or ‘chiefly Austral.’, people’s perception of the term as a marker of Australian speech is reflected in the Supplement’s addition of several Australian uses and the aim of the Third Edition to show that recent usage is not only Australian. (Ideally, a more recent British example could be added to 1c; an invaluable feature of the way that OED Online is published is that it allows editors to make amendments such as this as new material becomes available.) An ‘exclusive’ label is used at 1c (formerly 1b), to show that the term is current in most varieties of English apart from those of North America. Regional labelling is added to sense 1d as further research allows the varieties to be identified with confidence. The entry for mail boat n. shows how the identification of uses specific to particular varieties of English was instrumental in its upgrading from an undefined subentry to a headword.

magsman, n. (OED, Second Edition)

1. A street swindler, ‘confidence man’.
   1838 The Town 27 Jan. 276 A magsman must of necessity be a great actor and a most studious observer of human nature. 1866 DICKENS Reprinted Pieces, Detective Police (1868) 241 Tally-ho Thompson was a famous horse-stealer, couper, and magsman. 1897 M. DAVITT in Westm. Gaz. 30 Sept. 2/1 Almost every possible kind of convict, from the sneak-thief..to professional magsmen.

   1944 W. E. HARNEY Taboo (ed. 3) 56 We were discussing dreams... It was the Doc’s subject and he was..‘giving it hell’. I let him go - with his complexes and repressions, but I was itching to have my say, for I too am a good ‘magsman’. 1963 — To Ayers Rock & Beyond v. 45 We would sit around the camp-fire to sing songs
or recite our favourite poems... I am pretty sure that this bush school of oral teaching was the starting point with many a bush-poet and magsman, such as I, who kept up the yarning into later days. 1967 Telegraph (Brisbane) 8 Apr. 4/1 Hardy..became the official yarn-spinning champion of Australia today. He won the magsman’s championship in Darwin.

**magsman, n.** *(OED, Third Edition)*

1. **orig. Brit.** (In recent use chiefly Austral. and N.Z. exc. arch.) A street swindler, a confidence trickster.

1822 *Bell’s Life* 9 June 119/3 A few - very few, gipsies, jockeys, mace coves, magsmen, and prigs, to make up the assortment. 1838 *Town* 27 Jan. 276 A magsman must of necessity be a great actor and a most studious observer of human nature. 1850 DICKENS *Detective Police Party in Househ. Words* 27 July 411/1 Tally-ho Thompson was a famous horse-stealer, couper, and magsman. 1897 M. DAVITT in *Westm. Gaz.* 30 Sept. 2/1 Almost every possible kind of convict, from the sneak-thief..to professional magsmen. 1936 F. CLUNE *Roaming round Darling* xxii. 219 Andrew Hume, a magsman confidence-man (half-way through a ten-year stretch for forgery). 1972 N. MARSH *Tied up in Tinsel* iii. 66 A bunch of smashers and grabbers or joy-buyers or magsmen or any of that lot.

2. **Austral.** A storyteller, a raconteur.

1924 *Truth* (Sydney) 27 Apr. 6 Magsman, a talkative person. 1935 K. TENNANT *Tiburon* 182 He became very anti-strikers when he discovered that the Magsman was the same Dennis Kelly. 1944 W. E. HARNEY *Taboo* (ed. 3) 56 We were discussing dreams... It was the Doc’s subject and he was..‘giving it hell’. I let him go - with his complexes and repressions, but I was itching to have my say, for I too am a good ‘magsman’. 1967 *Telegraph* (Brisbane) 8 Apr. 4/1 Hardy..became the official yarn-spinning champion of Australia today. He won the magsman’s championship in Darwin.

**mate, n.** *(OED, Second Edition)*

1. **a.** A habitual companion, an associate, fellow, comrade; a fellow-worker or partner. Now only colloq. See also MESSMATE, PLAYMATE, SCHOOLMATE.

1380 *Sir Fervumb.* 1372 Florippe..sayde: ‘Maumecet my mate y-blessed mot thou be For ailed thou hast muche debate to-ward thy barnee’. 1440 *Promp. Parv.* 329/2 Mate, *idem quod* Felaw. 1513 DOUGLAS *Æneis* II. xi. 83 Alkyne sterge affrayit and causit grow, Baith for my byrding and my litle mait. 1515 BARCLAY *Egloges* i. (1570) Aiij, When the good is gone (my mate this is the case) Seldom the better reentreh in the place. 1521 MS. *Acc. St. John’s Hosp., Canterb.* To John Kenet & hys mate, carpenters, for ij dayes. 1568 GRAFTON *Chron.* II. 633 The Duke of Yorke and his mates were lodged within the Citie.
Andróis 316 He sought ane vther, Ane devill..Exceeding Circes in conceattis, For chaungene of Wlisses meatis. c1614 MURE Dido & Æneas I. 508 Parte at the ports, as sentinells abide, Vnloade their mat’s and drowsie dron’s do kill. 1655 FULLER Ch. Hist. I. i. 4 Aristobulus, though no Apostle, yet an Apostles Mate,,by Grecian Writers made Bishop of Britain. 1725 POPE Odys. II. 365 Each in jovial mood his mate addrest. 1821 BYRON Sardan. II. i. 48 The she-king, That less than woman, is even now upon The waters with his female mates. 1845 C. GRIFFITH Present State of Port Philip 79 Two [bushworkers] generally travel together, who are called mates; they are partners, and divide all their earnings. 1866 MRS. GASKELL Wives & Dau. xxii. (1867) 223 He was inferior in education to those who should have been his mates. 1878 JEVONS Prim. Pol. Econ. 32 Each man usually takes one part of the work, and leaves other parts of the work to his mates. 1885 MRS. C. PRAED Head Station 64 I’ve sent my mate to prospect for a new claim. 1890 ‘R. BOLDREWOOD’ Miner’s Right 136 We have been firm friends and true mates all this time. 1900 M. FRANKLIN My Brilliant Career i. 3 Daddy’s little mate isn’t going to turn Turk like that, is she? 1908 E. J. BANFIELD Confessions of Beachcomber I. v. 174 With a mate he had been for many months, bêche-de-mer fishing, their station.. a lonely islet in Whitsunday Passage. 1911 C. E. W. BEAN ‘Dreadnought’ of Darling xxxv. 311 Perhaps the strongest article in the out-back code is that of loyalty to a mate. 1942 C. BARRETT On Wallaby iv. 75, I told my mates some of these facts on returning. 1966 Observer 17 Apr. 30/1 A 17-year-old boy...said, ‘I haven’t got a real mate. That’s what I need.’ 1968 K. WEATHERLY Roo Shooter 109 Old Sam, born and reared in the bush, a good mate and bushman. 1973 Parade (Melbourne) Sept. 34/1 An obelisk in the Jewish section of the Melbourne General Cemetery records the names of those who fought for Australia in the 1914 War. Many of them trained in the Faraday Street School cadets. They assimilated the lessons of patriotism and were great mates. 1669 transf. and fig. 1669 LYBOURN (title) A Platform for Purchasers, a Guide for Builders, and a Mate for Measurers. 1671 MILTON Samson 173 Thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate Might have subdu’d the Earth.

b. Used as a form of address by sailors, labourers, etc.
hereabouts, mate? ’ 1974 Sydney Morning Herald 14 Feb. 7, I asked a station attendant (attired in a dirty open-necked shirt and trousers, recognizable only by a dirty cap) if the train was the North-West Mail. ‘I wouldn’t have a clue, mate,’ was the reply.

†c. A fellow, ‘chap’; often used contemptuously. Obs.
a1380 St. Bernard in Horstm. Altenogl. Leg. (1878) 56/2 He [sc. the fend] made a mouwe, that foule mate, And seide [etc.]. 1573 TUSSER Husb. (1878) 113 As for such mates, as vertue hates. 1577 G. HARVEY Letter-bk. (Camden) 57 Thou art a merry mate. 1584 R. SCOT Discov. Witchcr. VI. ii. (1886) 91 These witches are but lieng mates and couseners. 1612 T. JAMES Jesuits’ Downf. 13 These Jesuits are cogging mates.

d. to go mates with: to be an associate or partner of. Also to be mates with.
1880 SUTHERLAND Tales of Goldfields 59 Brown lost no time in making a contract to ‘go mates’ with another digger. 1880 H. LAPHAM in D. M. Davin N.Z. Short Stories (1953) 57 At this time I was mates with a young fellow called Jim Smith, a good enough lad as a mate, and would do just as big a day’s labour as any man. 1890 Gd. Words Mar. 211/1, I will accept his proposal to go mates with him.

mate, n.2 (OED Third Edition)
I. An associate, and related senses.
I. a. Now chiefly colloq. A companion, fellow, comrade, friend; a fellow worker or business partner. Also fig. Freq. as the second element in compounds, as bed-, flat-mate, etc. (in which it is generally less colloq. than when standing alone). For more established compounds see the first element.
c1380 Sir Firumbras 1372 Maumecet, my mate, y-blessed mot thou be, For aled thow hast muche debate. 1440 Promp. Parv. (Harl. 221) 329 Mate, idem quod Felaw. 1515 A. BARCLAY Egloges I. sig. Cij3. When the good is gone, my mate this is the case Seldom the better reentreth in the place. 1521 MS. Accts. St. John’s Hosp., Canterb., To John Kenet & hys mate, carpenters, for ij dayes. a1522 G. DOUGLAS tr. Virgil Æneid (1957) II. xi. 83 Alkyne sterage affrayit and causit grow, Baith for my byrding and my litle mait. 1569 R. GRAFTON Chron. II. 633 The Duke of Yorke and his mates were lodged within the Citie. 1583 Leg. Bp. St. Androis 316 He sought ane vther, Ane devill..Exceeding Circes in conceattis, For chaungene of Wlisses meatis. c1614 W. MURE Dido & Æneas I. 508 in Wks. (1898) I. 78 Parte at the ports, as sentinells abide, Vnloade their mat’s and drowsie dron’s do kill. 1655 T. FULLER Church-hist. Brit. I. i. 4 Aristobulus, though no Apostle, yet an Apostles Mate,.by Grecian Writers made Bishop of Britain. 1668 W. LEYBOURN (title) A Platform for Purchasers, a Guide for Builders, and a Mate for Measurers. 1671 MILTON Samson Agonistes 173 Thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate, Might have subdu’d the Earth. 1725 W. BROOME in Pope et al. tr. Homer Odyssey I. II. 365 Each in jovial mood his mate addrest. 1748 Anson’s Voy. II. ix. 226 One of the sail-makers mates was fishing from the end of the gib-
boom. 1821 BYRON *Sardanapalus* II. i. 48 The she-king, That less than woman, is even now upon The waters with his female mates. 1845 C. GRIFFITH *Present State Port Philip* 79 Two [bushworkers] generally travel together, who are called mates; they are partners, and divide all their earnings. a1865 E. C. GASKELL *Wives & Daughters* (1866) I. xxii. 251 He was inferior in education to those who should have been his mates. 1908 E. J. BANFIELD *Confessions of Beachcomber* I. v. 174 With a mate he had been for many months, bêche-de-mer fishing, their station.. a lonely islet in Whitsunday Passage. 1966 *Observer* 17 Apr. 30/1 A 17-year-old boy..said, ‘I haven’t got a real mate. That’s what I need.’ 1988 *Patches* 1 Apr. 20/1 If he doesn’t want to be seen with you at discos, why don’t you just go with your mates?

†b. Freq. contempt. A fellow, a creature. Obs.

C1390 St. Bernard 915 in C. Horstmann *Sammlung Altengl. Legenden* (1878) 56 the fend..made a mouwe, that foule mate. 1573 T. TUSSER *Five Hundred Points Good Husb.* (new ed.) (1878) 113 As for such mates, as vertue hates. 1577 G. HARVEY *Letter-bk.* (Camden) 57 Thou art a merry mate. 1584 R. SCOT *Discouerie Witcher.* (1886) VI. ii. 91 These witches are but lieng mates and couseners. 1612 T. JAMES *Jesuits Downefall* 13 These Iesuits are cogging mates.

c. colloq. Used as a form of address to a person, esp. a man, regarded as an equal. Not used in *N. Amer.*

c1500 Pilgrims Sea-voyage 14 in *Stations of Rome* 37 ‘What, howe! mate, thow stondyst to ny, Thy felow may nat hale the by;’ Thus they begyn to crake. c1550 *Complaynt Scotl.* (1979) vi. 32 The master cryit on the rudir man, mait keip ful and by, a luf. 1582 R. STANYHURST tr. Virgil *Æneis* (Arb.) III. 79 My maats skum the sea froth there in oars strong cherelye dipping. 1612 B. JONSON *Alchemist* II. vi. How now! What mates? What Baiards ha’wee here? 1637 T. HEYWOOD *Dial.* I, in *Wks.* (1874) VI. 96 My Mate (It is a word That Sailors interchangeably afford To one another) speake. 1852 R. CECIL *Diary* 31 Mar. (1935) 36 When the diggers address a policeman in uniform they always call him ‘Sir’, but they always address a fellow in a blue shirt with a carbine as ‘Mate’. 1862 A. POLEHAMPTON *Kangaroo Land* 99 A man, who greeted me after the fashion of the Bush, with a ‘Good day, mate’. 1880 M. E. BRADDON *Just as I Am* i, ‘Who’s the magistrate hereabouts, mate?’ 1943 D. WELCH *Maiden Voy.* xxiv. 200 Lighting a cigarette, he ambled over to me and said, ‘Hullo, mate.’ 1981 P. CAREY *Bliss* ii. 95 ‘Come and sit here, old mate.’ She patted the chair beside her.

d. Chiefly Austral. and N.Z. *to go* (also *be*) mates: to work as an equal partner (*with someone*).  

Quot. 1842 is an isolated use in *sing.* *with to.*

1842 *S. Austral. Mag.* (Adelaide) 286, I think I went a shepherding. Oh yes, I went mate to Donald.., to herd sixteen hundred sheep at Glenelg. 1876 E. THORNE *Queen of Colonies* 119 They [sc. the Chinese] appear to have no quarrels among themselves when working in partnerships, or as the digging phrase is, ‘going mates’. 1880 H. LAPHAM in D. M. Davin *N.Z. Short Stories* (1953) 57 At this time I was mates with a young fellow called Jim Smith, a good enough lad as a mate, and
would do just as big a day’s labour as any man. 1890 Good Words Mar. 211/1, I will accept his proposal to go mates with him. 1940 I. L. IDRIESS Lightning Ridge 188 None of us liked going mates with a man unless we could pay our own way.

mail, n. (OED, Second Edition)

b. (sense 2) simple attrib., eg, in the names of vehicles employed to carry the mail, as mail boat, carriage, diligence, gig, -hack, packet, -plane, schooner, ship, steamer, -van, wagon;

1786 R. HUNTER Jrnl. 11 June in Quebec to Carolina (1943) (modernized text) 269 We thought it better to run the risk of hiring a cart to drive there than to wait till Tuesday morning for the mail boat. 1855 H. CLARKE New Dict. Eng. Lang., Mailboat. 1895 A. H. NORWAY P.-O. Packet Service i. 3 The Post-Office selected Falmouth in 1688 as the point of embarkation for the mail boats. 1933 L. A. G. STRONG Sea Wall 1 He did not even heed the mailboat, as she glided gracefully in to the harbour.

mailboat, n. (OED, Third Edition)

A boat used for the conveyance or transport of mail.

Specialized uses: (a) S. Afr. hist., a weekly passenger ship linking the South African ports with Southampton, and contracted to the South African government to carry mail; (b) Caribbean, a boat owned or commissioned by a government as a mail-carrying ferry, usu. one also serving as a general passenger and cargo vessel.

1786 R. HUNTER Jrnl. 11 June in Quebec to Carolina (1943) (modernized text) 269 We thought it better to run the risk of hiring a cart to drive there than to wait till Tuesday morning for the mail boat. 1855 H. CLARKE New Dict. Eng. Lang., Mailboat. 1895 A. H. NORWAY P.-O. Packet Service i. 3 The Post-Office selected Falmouth in 1688 as the point of embarkation for the mail boats. 1897 F. R. STATHAM S. Afr. Life as it Is 8 Late on the evening of the 18th of April, 1877, the steamer Caldera, which had been temporarily chartered by the Castle Packets Company as a mailboat, dropped anchor in Table Bay. 1923 B. RONAN Forty S. Afr. Years 79, I boarded the mail-boat and disembarked again at East London, then little more than a waste of sandhills. 1933 L. A. G. STRONG Sea Wall 1 He did not even heed the mailboat, as she glided gracefully in to the harbour. 1947 J. J. REDGRAVE Port Elizabeth in Bygone Days 432 On one occasion the incoming mail boat made a record voyage for those early days by covering the distance from England to Table Bay in thirty-one days. 1976 C. A. FRANK Hist. Begos 11 The main link between St Vincent and the Grenadine dependencies is by the ‘mail boat’ which transports passengers, food supplies, building materials and the ‘mail’ from the mainland. 1985 R. HUNT福德 Shackleton xiii. 119 On 12 June...Shackleton landed in England. He came unremarked by mailboat. 1992 Caribbean Week Apr. 16/1 There are more than twenty government-subsidised mailboats, which leave port in Nassau every week, and travel the length and breadth of The Bahamas.
Appendix 2

New entries from the Third Edition

The entry for **mampoer**, *n.* is a representative example of an entry deriving from one of the major historical dictionaries of regional English, in this case the *Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (1996). The entry has a substantial quotation paragraph with a relatively wide date range which validates its inclusion in the *OED*; indeed the *OED* editors have been able to postdate the *DSAЕ*’s quotation evidence from a British source. The existence of compounds also adds weight to the argument for its inclusion. The Third Edition’s method of illustrating pronunciation as discussed above can be seen. The entry for **matrimonial**, *a.* and *n.* has an addition from Indian English and one specific to Canadian English, two varieties not previously exemplified in this essay. That for **Manchester department** s.v. **Manchester**, *n.* is of interest as it shows an overseas development of a British use now rare or obsolete in its ‘native’ variety: compare **Manchester cotton**, ~ **goods**, and ~ **wares** in the same entry.

**mampoer** *Brit. /mam’pʊə/, U.S. /mæm’pʊər/, S. Afr. /mɑm’pʊər/, /mɛm’pʊər/, *n.* Forms: 19- **mampoer, mapoer.** [\< Afrikaans *mampoer*, of uncertain origin.
Perh. < *Mampuru*, the name of a Pedi chief (born c1827 and executed for rebellion in the Transvaal in 1883); there were several chiefs of this name in a region where an abundance of marulas led to much distilling of spirits.]

I. Simple uses.

1. A raw brandy originating in the former Transvaal and distilled (often illicitly) from fruits such as peaches, karee-berries, and marulas; = WITBLITS *n.*

1934 *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg) 13 May (Swart), Mampoer, as this home-distilled brandy is commonly called, has been very popular. 1947 H. C. BOSMAN *Mafeking Rd.* (1969) 122 It was good mampoer, made from karee-berries that were plucked when they were still green and full of thick sap. 1968 W. KEMPEN in D.J. Opperman *Spirit of Vine* 284 *Mapoer*, fiery brandy illicitly distilled on farms. 1976
S. Afr. Panorama May 24 What is moonshine white, has the kick of a pack of crazed mules and is in essence liquid folk-lore? Mampoer, my friend, mampoer. 1983 A. SPARKS in J. Crwys-Williams S. Afr. Despatches (1989) 446 Mampoer, after all, is a piece of Afrikaner culture. 1998 Economist 23 May 123/1 For a sharper kick, a spirit called mampoer is recommended. The fruit of the marula tree, from which it is usually made, is best known for fermenting inside elephants’ stomachs, causing the great pachyderms to blunder drunkenly into trees.

II. Compounds.


1983 Frontline May 18 Down the road, there is another gate with a small sign saying ‘*mampoer fees*’. 1988 Weekly Mail (Johannesburg) 27 May 3 (caption) About the only stall at the annual Mampoerfees in Pretoria last week to offer wares to rival the sharpness of the infamous throat-blistering brew was this selection of cutlery, perfect for the serious biltong-gnawer. 1988 Sunday Star (Johannesburg) 5 June 2 In the above right picture *mampoer stokers* distill their precious brew of distilled juice and alcohol. 1990 Motorist 1st Quarter 16 There are [sic] a plentiful supply of mampoer-stokers in our north-western Transvaal, most operate with a licence, some brew the clear liquid under cover of the bushes in the backyard, all their booze has the kick of a mule.

**matrimonial** a. and n.

A adj.

II. Compounds. 4.

**matrimonial cake** Canad., a rectangular cake or biscuit with a date filling and a crumble topping.

1944 Canad. Favourites Cook Bk. 192 *Matrimonial Cake... Spread one half the crumbs in greased shallow pan about 8 × 14 inches... Cover with cooled date filling. 1996 Hamilton (Ontario) Spectator 13 Mar. B9 Most people simply call them date squares, but I grew up in Saskatchewan where they were called matrimonial cake.
I. b.

Chiefly *Indian English*. Advertisements placed in a newspaper with the aim of finding a marriageable partner.

1989 *Los Angeles Times* (Nexis) 2 July 10/1 The Hindustan Times was the first newspaper in north India to begin carrying matrimonials in the early 1970s. 1999 *Statesman* (Calcutta) 10 Feb. (Midweek section) 4/3 When I have a job I’ll have to begin a whole new search for my better half... Back to the newspaper matrimonials on Sundays.

**Manchester n.**

I. Compounds.

1. **a. attrib.** Designating or relating to various cotton goods formerly produced in Manchester, as *Manchester cotton*, etc. Now rare.

   1552 *Act 5 & 6 Edw. VI*, c. 6 §1 All and everie Cottonnes called Manchester Lancashire and Chesshire Cottonnes... And..all Clothes called Manchester Rugges otherwise named Frices. 1580 R. HITCHCOCK *Polit. Plat* Fij, At Rone in Fraunce..be solde our Englishe wares, as Welche and Manchester Cottons [etc.]. 1736 *S. Carolina Gaz.* 7-14 Aug. 3/1 Just imported in the *Anna Maria*, and to be sold by John Beswicke in Broad street, viz. Silver and Gold Buttons..white and colour’d *Manchester Tapes*. 1759 *Newport* (Rhode Island) *Mercury* 22 May 4/1 Superfine Manchester Velvet of different Colours, Cotton and Linen Handkerchiefs, 3-4 and 7-8 Checks, Dimity, London Quality. 1779 G. W. BEEKMAN *Let.* 26 July in P. L. White *Beekman Mercantile Papers* (1956) III. 1331, I Shall Send you 2 1/2 Manchester Valet Olive Coller and 4 Quires Paper if to be had. 1794 W. FELTON *Treat. Carriages* I. 41 A strong Manchester tape, called web. 1795 J. AIKIN *Descr. Country round Manchester* 183 When the Manchester trade began to extend. 1897 M. KINGSLEY *Trav. W. Afr.* i. 16 Manchester cottons and shawls. 1899 *Daily News* 9 Jan. 2/4 Unlawfully applying a certain false trade description to ‘Manchester linen’. 1949 C. BULLOCK *Rina* 70 Most of the stuff I had to present was cheap kaffir truck - Manchester blankets, lembo and suchlike.

b. **Manchester goods**, cotton goods of the kind manufactured in Manchester. Similarly *Manchester wares* (now *hist.*).

   1705 *Orig. Jrnls. House of Commons* 27 Jan. 112 526 Linnen and Woollen Cloth’s and other Goods called Manchester Wares. *1711 Boston News-let.* 15-22 Oct. 2/2 (Advt.), These are to give Notice. That the following Merchandize, lately come from England are to be Sold on reasonable Terms..viz. Broad-Cloths,.Checks, Plush, Manchester Goods, Pins, Cutlery Ware, Habberdashery [etc.]. 1787 *Despatches from Paris* I. 224 No less than twenty-five thousand workmen are depriv’d of employment by the great importation of Manchester Goods. 1860 ‘F. G. TRAFFORD’ *Too much Alone* II. ii. 42 Rag merchant..does not refer to a marine-
store dealer, but simply to a dealer in Manchester goods, who is frequently thus
designated in the city. 1922 S. WEYMAN Ovington’s Bank xvi. 177 Huge wains
laden with Manchester goods and driven by teamsters. 1984 N.Y. Times 26 Aug. VII.
8/1 England, having done well enough in literature and having conquered a large
part of the earth with Birmingham guns in order to make it accept Manchester
goods, needed a great composer.

tc. Manchester-man, a dealer in cotton goods of the kind manufactured in
Manchester. Obs.
1755 T. TURNER Diary 2 Oct. (1841) 15 My brother Moses came and called me to
go to Lewes to meet the Manchester-man. 1851 H. MAYHEW London Labour
(1864) I. 419/1 The packmen are sometimes called Manchester-men. These are the
men whom I have described as the sellers of shirtings, sheetings, &c.

d. Manchester warehouse, a warehouse in which cotton goods are stocked
and sold; so Manchester warehouseman.
1788 Morning Herald 21 Feb. 4/3 Manchester Warehousemen, Woollen-drappers,
Linen-drappers, Mercers, &c. Cash to any amount ready for the purchase of Goods in
the above branches…at No. 2, Earl’s Court, Cranbourn-alley, Leicestercields. 1854
Census 1851 Population Tables. Occupations p. cxxiv/2 Manchester warehouseman.
1858 P. L. SIMMONDS Dict. Trade Products, Manchester and Glasgow Ware-
house, a sale depository for all kinds of cotton goods. 1932 Punch 23 Nov. 561/1 He
spent years trying to sell calico to grey-faced loons in Manchester warehouses. 1988
D. VERNON Tiller’s Girls (BNC) 11 While Mary relegated him to ‘Manchester
Warehouseman’, John preferred the more optimistic ‘Cotton Manufacturer’!

e. Chiefly Austral., N.Z., and S. Afr. Manchester department, a department
(in a shop) where household linen and other cotton goods are sold.
1905 Evening Post (Wellington) 5 Jan. 7 (heading) Manchester Department White,
pure linen Table Damask. Ready made Table Cloths..Unbleached Twill Sheeting.
1907 Anthony Hordern Catal. 1 Manchester Department. So called from the major-
ity of the goods included within its scope being of what is popularly known as
Manchester manufacture. 1924 Anthony Hordern Catal. 60 Household Linen
Department. Also known as the Manchester Department, where will be found every
description of household and family linen. 1983 Bulletin (Sydney) 29 Nov. 90/2
Only Australian shoppers buy their sheets and pillow cases from a manchester
department.
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English as a Lingua Franca and the Politics of Property

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ABSTRACT

The politics of EWL has, at long last, become a vibrant field of research with a strong theoretical base. However, most of this research is being conducted on the meta-level alone, and not explicitly addressed to empirical questions about the nature of EWL itself and what traditional assumptions it challenges. As a result, there has been little explicit basis for the evaluation of conflicting claims that have arisen for language pedagogy. So far it has been left to practitioners to work out for themselves the implications of current theoretical developments for their daily practices. Unsurprisingly, therefore, little has changed in the last twenty years or so in the conceptualization of the ‘English’ that is taught around the world. In our essay, we report on the work we have been doing on the phonology (Jenkins) and lexico-grammar (Seidlhofer) of English as a lingua franca, one important manifestation of EWL. In both our cases, the theoretical proposals for a conceptual framework of ELF are backed up by empirical data drawn from ELF settings. Availability and analysis of such data, we believe, is crucial if calls in principle for ‘resistance’ and ‘transformation’ are to be effectively put into practice. There is a need to investigate what ELF users actually do when they communicate with each other – rather than what has traditionally been assumed they need or (should) do. Otherwise we are as guilty of sociocultural imposition as those we accuse.
The 2001 MAVEN Conference bore testimony to the growth of interest in EWL\(^1\) over the past few decades. In the years between the first major academic gathering on this subject, the seminal conference on cross-cultural communication held at the University of Illinois in 1978 (subsequently published as Kachru 1992), and MAVEN 2001, much has been written and spoken about the spread of English around the world, the diverse ways in which the language has developed in this process, especially in the Outer Circle,\(^2\) and about the wider implications of this unique socio-linguistic development. Among these implications, the issue of the ownership of English and its passing from native to non-native speakers has received considerable comment. Graddol typically points out that “native speakers may feel the language ‘belongs’ to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future” (1997: 10). In this essay, we will pick up some of the ideas which have originated in the Outer Circle and investigate what their significance may be for the Expanding Circle of foreign language users – which is, indeed, expanding rapidly.

The global spread of English has provoked a broad spectrum of responses over the last decade or so. For example, we find the following in a British Council conference prospectus:

> The incredible success of the English language is Britain’s greatest asset. It enhances Britain’s image as a modern, dynamic country and brings widespread political, economic and cultural advantages, both to Britain and to our partners. (The British Council, Conference prospectus, ELT conference 1998)

The front page of the Observer newspaper reveals that

> This week the Government will announce that the number of people with English as a second language has overtaken the number who speak it as their native tongue. […] Insiders say the drive to make English the global *lingua franca* comes directly from Tony Blair. (*The Observer*, 29 October 2000: 1)

In this article, we also learn that [the then British Education and Employment Secretary] “David Blunkett […] will tell a meeting of business leaders on Tuesday to capitalize on their advantage as native speakers.” The same native

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\(^1\) The following widely-used abbreviations are employed here: EWL = English as a world language; ELT = English language teaching; EFL = English as a foreign language; ENL = English as a native language; EAP = English for academic purposes; NS = native speaker; NNS = non-native speaker. The acronym ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) is much newer, but its use has been spreading steadily in recent years.

\(^2\) The terms used throughout this paper for the roles of English in different contexts are those coined and popularized by Kachru (eg, 1992): Inner Circle (as a first language), Outer Circle (as an additional language), and Expanding Circle (as a foreign language).
speaker “advantage” enables materials based on the Cobuild Bank of English to “help learners with real English” (front cover of the Collins COBUILD English Dictionary). At the other end of the spectrum, English is accused of being a “killer language” guilty of “linguistic genocide” (Skutnabb–Kangas 2000, this volume). With regard to language pedagogy, Swales (1997: 373) in an article entitled ‘English as Tyrannosaurus rex’ asks “whether English has become too successful” and argues that “resistance to the ‘triumphalism’ of English is also a responsibility of EAP teachers,” and Canagarajah 1999 details options for “resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching.”

However, the question which is not addressed in all these deliberations is what exactly the ‘English’ in EWL actually is. In this respect, different though they are in ideological perspective, the above quotations are all alike in failing to problematize the notion of the linguistic entity ‘English’. The difference between the various perspectives is thus only a partial one: it does not reside in the way English is defined, but only in the way its global spread is viewed. This can be illustrated in the following way:

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE LANGUAGE:
“English is English is English”

RESPONSE TO ITS SPREAD:
“This is wonderful!”   “This is appalling!”

British Council     Skutnabb–Kangas
COBUILD/Bank of English     Swales
etc.                etc.

But inevitably, the politics of English as a World Language will depend very much on what happens in the top part of the diagram: ie, how ‘English’ is conceptualized.

Despite all the (necessary and welcome) theorizing, one might be forgiven for calling the state of the art in this area a “hubbub without a hub,” for curiously little thought has so far gone into what surely must be the very heart of the matter: the nature of the language itself as an international means of communication in the Expanding Circle, and in what respects English as a lingua franca (ELF) may differ from ‘English as a native language’ (ENL).

In most Outer Circle contexts, of course, the long and vigorous struggle for the acknowledgement of their very own sociopolitical identities has been largely successful (see, for example, Bamgeboe, Banjo & Thomas 1995,

3 With apologies to Gatwick Airport for rewording a slogan used in its North Terminal: “the hub without the hubbub.”
Kachru 1992, Smith & Forman 1997, and the present volume). The naive notion of a monolithic, uniform, unadaptable linguistic medium owned by its original speakers and forever linked to their rule(s) has been recognized as simply contrary to the facts, and has therefore given way to the realization that indigenized varieties of English are legitimate Englishes in their own right, accordingly emancipating themselves vis-à-vis British and American Standard English. Codification has been recognized as a crucial prerequisite for the emergence of endonormative standards in indigenized varieties (see Bamgeboe 1998), and important research programmes are under way in order to provide language descriptions as a basis for dictionaries and grammars (notably the International Corpus of English; see Greenbaum 1996). Outer Circle linguistic independence has, on the whole, been given the linguistic seal of approval.

In the Expanding Circle, however, a totally different situation presents itself. Despite the all-pervasive use of English throughout what many like to term the ‘international community’ and despite countless anecdotes about emerging varieties such as ‘Euro-English’, professional linguists have so far shown only limited interest in describing ‘lingua franca’ English as a legitimate language variety. The received wisdom seems to be that only when English is a majority first language or an official additional language does it warrant description. So, while the Outer Circle has at long last successfully asserted its right to appropriate the language for the expression of its diverse cultures and identities, while postcolonial literatures flourish and language use by writers such as Achebe, Okara, Rushdie, Saro–Wiwa and many others constitutes a prolific area of research, Expanding Circle English is not deemed worthy of such attention: users of English who have learned the language as a foreign language are expected to conform to Inner Circle norms, even if using English constitutes an important part of their lived experience and personal identity. No right to ‘rotten English’ for them, then. Quite the contrary: for Expanding Circle consumption, the main effort remains, as it has always been, to describe English as it is used among its British and American native speakers and then to “distribute” (Widdowson 1997: 139) the resulting descriptions to those who speak English in non-native contexts around the world.

This is probably why, when it comes to practicalities, those who have had so much to say at the theoretical level tend to fall silent. Alastair Pennycook, for example, in an article entitled “Pedagogical implications of different frameworks for understanding the global spread of English,” argues as follows:

Drawing on notions of postcolonialism and resistance, it [the postcolonial performative response] suggests that English can be appropriated and used for
A language teacher in search of suggestions as to how to “challenge central norms of language” within his or her classroom practice, however, would be sorely disappointed. Nothing of a practical nature is suggested in this article, despite its title and the fact that the challenge is presented in the article as “crucial.”

In another area of activity, efforts are being made to ‘empower’ non-native speaker teachers through direct access to large corpora, as the authors of the BNC Handbook point out:

In language teaching increasing access to corpora may modify the traditional role of the teacher as authority about the use of the language to be learned, and reduce the sense of inferiority felt by many non-native speaker teachers. More generally, there is much to be said about the way in which thinking about language, particularly the English language, is politicized, and hence about the political implications of changing the basis on which assessments of correctness or appropriateness of usage are made. (Aston & Burnard 1998: 43, our emphasis)

But again, the corpora that are being referred to contain only native-speaker English. The confidence of non-native speaker teachers is expected to be strengthened by better, more direct, access to the way native speakers use the language. But an option not on offer so far (and, of course, a task impossible for a corpus called the British National Corpus) is to give these non-native speaker teachers access to a corpus capturing the successful use of English among non-native speakers, as a lingua franca, thus offering supremely relevant models for many learners wishing to use the language for similar purposes. So when Aston and Burnard refer to “the political implications of changing the basis on which assessments of correctness or appropriateness of usage are made” what has changed about the “basis” is how it can be accessed, not how it is defined.

There is also another problem that operates at a deeper and unrecognized level: the language attitudes of those who, paradoxically, are themselves recommending the challenge to native-speaker norms. This is evident in the contradictory statements made by those such as van Els, who, in the same essay, claims on the one hand that the ownership of a lingua franca passes to
its non-native speakers and on the other that the Dutch should not be com-
placent about their English because “only very few are able to achieve a level 
of proficiency that approximates the native or native-like level” (2000: 29).
Similarly, Hoffman (2000: 19) describes the English of European learners as 
spanning “the whole range from non-fluent to native-like,” as though fluency 
in English were not a possibility for those whose speech does not mimic that 
of a native speaker. In other words, non-native speakers own the English 
which they speak, but unless it conforms to native speaker norms, it is un-
acceptable. English as a world language is to be judged as if it were English 
as a native language. No change there, then.

The abstract nature of the proposals put forward by Pennycook (above), for 
example, has done little to allay the sense of insecurity and unease among 
English language teachers about what is for them the most critical issue: that 
of the language norm which they teach – the main basis of their professional 
qualification, the hub around which their daily practices revolve. Widespread 
politically correct rhetoric is no effective antidote for this unsatisfactory situa-
tion, and so the familiar chip-on-the-shoulder syndrome among non-native 
teachers of English persists. In a volume which addresses topics of linguistic 
as well as literary interest, it seems apposite – though admittedly unconven-
tional – to point out parallels between the writings of two well-known authors 
in language teacher education and postcolonial literature:

We suffer from an inferiority complex caused by glaring defects in our knowledge of English. We are in constant distress as we realize how little we know about the language we are supposed to teach.
(Medgyes 1999: 40, our emphases)

The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, [...] in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people’s languages rather than their own.
(Ngugi 1981: 3, our emphases)

In an essay whose main point is the renegotiation of the customary distinction 
between the Outer and Expanding Circles, it is interesting to note that 
Medgyes comes from the latter and Ngugi from the former. Both, however, 
share the assumption of the uniformity of English and seem to deny the inherent flexibility of the language, its adaptability to change: English is Eng-
lish is English. The distress expressed in Medgyes’ book, whose objective,
after all, is to foreground the particular strengths of non-native language teachers, indicates that (in Ngugi’s words) these teachers’ “belief […] in themselves” has been “annihilated”, and we think it is not an exaggeration to say that the “inferiority complex” ascribed to these teachers on the basis of the “glaring defects” in their “knowledge of English” causes them to “see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement.”

We would argue that what is most likely to arrest this negative spiral is not giving non-native teachers pep-talks about their linguistic human rights, nor access to ever-larger native-speaker corpora. Rather, what is required is a reconceptualization and concomitant description of “the language they are supposed to teach” in terms of what it predominantly is in the world at large, namely English as a lingua franca, not English as a native language (see Seidlhofer 2001).

As long as no empirically-based description exists of how English is actually used as a global lingua franca, the only, hence default, descriptive reality available when talking about ‘English’ is ENL. In the remainder of this essay, we will therefore argue that it is necessary and feasible to conduct a conceptual and empirical enquiry into the actual nature of ELF. We will summarize relevant work already undertaken, offer suggestions for further enquiry and point to some socio-psychological and pedagogical implications.

Of course, no empirical investigation starts from scratch; there are always preconceptions and predecessors. Notions of how characteristics of English as an international language may be captured and how the language may be modified or simplified have some history which it would be foolish to ignore. There are points of reference in the past which will help us in our enquiry: important work, along conceptual as well as empirical dimensions, directed at identifying salient features of ELF use has already been achieved.

A first tradition of research started from the early decades of the twentieth century but is now all but forgotten: notably Ogden’s Basic English (eg, 1930), Palmer & Hornby’s Thousand-Word English (1937) as well as West’s empirically derived Service List (1953). These anticipate, and offer many profound insights into, many of the EWL issues that we are confronted with today. In addition, many theoretical and methodological problems discussed in reference to varieties captured in the ICE corpus are also highly relevant for the description of ELF (see, for example, Mair 1992).

In recent years, a small number of descriptions and analyses of selected aspects of ELF use have been conducted, in particular in the area of the (intercultural) pragmatics of ‘non-native – non-native’ communication in

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4 See Seidlhofer (2002) for a discussion of the current relevance of Basic English for lingua franca communication.

Last (but not least, we think) is our own work, focusing on ELF phonology (Jenkins 1998, 2000, 2002) and lexico-grammar (Seidlhofer 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c). The work on phonology, culminating in the ‘Lingua Franca Core’, takes as its starting-point the need for empirical data drawn from interactions between L2 speakers of English in order to assess which phonological features are (and which are not) essential for intelligible pronunciation when English is spoken in lingua franca contexts. This data, then, replaces NS intuition and data drawn from NS–NS (or NS–NNS) interactions, both of which up to now have formed the basis of pedagogic pronunciation decisions (Benrabah’s 1997 study of word stress is one of very many such studies). If the concern is with intelligibility among NNSs of English, which is by definition the case in ELF, however, it makes no sense whatsoever to look to non-ELF contexts for evidence of such intelligibility.

The data on which the phonological Lingua Franca Core (LFC) was based were collected from speakers with a wide range of L1s over several years and by a number of different means: field observation, in which the focus was on instances of miscommunication and communication breakdown in mixed-L1 classrooms and social settings; recordings of different-L1 pairs and groups of students engaged in communication tasks such as information gap activities; and an investigation into the production and reception of nuclear (tonic) stress of a group of different-L1 users. In all cases, the speakers were of upper-intermediate or low-advanced proficiency levels as defined by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The analysis of the data was carried out with the purpose of identifying which pronunciation ‘errors’ led to intelligibility problems for a different-L1 interlocutor and which did not. Instances in which missing the target caused such problems were then incorporated into the LFC while those in which it did not were considered to be instances of (L2) regional variation, different from NS production, but not for that reason ‘wrong’. The core areas thus identified are as follows:

1. The consonant inventory with the exception of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, and of dark ‘l’ [l], none of which caused any intelligibility problems in the lingua franca data.
2. Additional phonetic requirements: aspiration of word-initial voiceless stops /p/, /t/, and /k/, which were otherwise frequently heard as their lenis
counterparts /b/, /d/, and /g/; and shortening of vowel sounds before fortis consonants, and the maintenance of length before lenis consonants, eg, the shorter /æ/ in the word sat as contrasted with the phonetically longer /æ/ in the word sad.

3. Consonant clusters: no omission of sounds in word-initial clusters, eg, in proper and strap; omission of sounds in word-medial and word-final clusters only permissible according to L1 English rules of syllable structure so that, for example, the word friendship can become /frenʃip/ but not /frendip/ or /fredʃip/.

4. Vowel sounds: maintenance of the contrast between long and short vowels, such as the /i/ and /i:/ in the words live and leave; L2 regional vowel qualities otherwise intelligible provided they are used consistently, with the exception of the substitution of the sound /ɛ:/ especially with /aː:/.

5. Production and placement of nuclear (tonic) stress, especially when used contrastively (eg, He came by TRAIN vs. He CAME by train).

It follows that the features which did not cause intelligibility problems are designated ‘non-core’. Divergences in these areas from native-speaker realizations according to LFC policy are regarded as instances of acceptable L2 regional variation. Thus, the following features are not crucial for lingua franca use:

- the consonant sounds /θ/ and /ð/, and the allophone dark ‘l’ [l]
- vowel quality
- weak forms
- other features of connected speech such as assimilation
- pitch direction to signal attitude or grammatical meaning
- word stress placement
- stress-timing

(for full details of both core and non-core features, see Jenkins 2000: ch. 6).

The work on lexico-grammar in ELF interactions is not as far advanced as Jenkins’ phonology core, though a few initial hypotheses can already be formulated. The main point to stress, however, is that there is now (to our knowledge, for the first time) a research initiative which aims at the compilation of a sizeable corpus exclusively dedicated to capturing the use of English as a lingua franca. The compilation of this corpus is now in progress at the University of Vienna under Seidlhofer’s direction.5

In the initial phase, the objective is to cast the net very wide, and to this end, a corpus of spoken ELF is being collected. There are two advantages to

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5 This project is currently supported by Oxford University Press, hence the name of the corpus is the Vienna–Oxford International Corpus of English, VOICE for short.
this: the language is at one remove from the stabilizing and standardizing influence of writing, and spoken interactions are overtly reciprocal, allowing not just production but also reception to be captured, thus facilitating observations regarding the mutual intelligibility of what interlocutors say. For the time being, the focus is on unscripted, though partly pre-structured, largely face-to-face communication among fairly fluent speakers from a wide range of first language backgrounds whose primary and secondary education and socialization did not take place in English. The speech events being captured include private and public dialogues, private and public group discussions and casual conversations, and one-to-one interviews. The size aimed for at the first stage is approximately half a million words, transcribed and annotated in a number of ways.\footnote{The texts are being transcribed orthographically and marked for speaker turns, pauses and overlaps, and provided with contextual notes and notes about paralinguistic features such as laughter. A fairly basic system for marking prosody is being worked out and piloted. It is currently not planned to provide a phonetic transcription of these texts, but it is hoped that sound files can be made available eventually.}

It is hoped that this corpus will make it possible to take stock of how the speakers providing the data actually communicate through ELF, and to attempt a characterization of how they use, or rather co-construct, ‘English’ to do so. Essentially, the research questions Kennedy (1998) regards as central to corpus-based descriptive studies of ENL could also be addressed through the ELF corpus:

What are the linguistic units, patterns, systems or processes in the language, genre or text and how often, when, where, why and with whom are they used? (Kennedy 1998: 276)

As a first research focus, it seems desirable to investigate what, notwithstanding all the diversity, emerge as common features of ELF use, irrespective of speakers’ first languages and levels of proficiency. Questions investigated will include the following: What are the most relied-upon and successfully employed grammatical constructions and lexical choices? Are there aspects which contribute especially to smooth communication? What are the factors which tend to lead to problems, misunderstandings or even communication breakdown? Is the degree of approximation to a variety of L1 English always proportional to communicative success? Or are there commonly used constructions, lexical items and sound patterns which are ungrammatical in Standard L1 English but generally unproblematic in ELF communication? If so, can hypotheses be set up and tested concerning simplifications of L1 English which could constitute systematic features of ELF? The objective here, then, would be to establish something like an index of communicative
redundancy, in the sense that many of the niceties of social behaviour associated with native-speaker models and identities might not be operable and certain native-speaker norms might be seen to be in suspense. Indeed, it may well be that mutual accommodation is found to be of greater importance for communicative effectiveness than approximation to a norm of ‘correctness’ or idiomaticity in ENL terms.\(^7\)

Of course, it is early days yet and no reliable findings based on quantitative investigations can be reported at this stage. But even a quick analysis of a few dialogues suggests some hypotheses. For instance, there seems to be a tendency for particularly idiomatic speech by one participant – a kind of ‘unilateral idiomaticity’ characterized by metaphorical language use, idioms, phrasal verbs and fixed ENL expressions such as *this drink is on the house* or *can we give you a hand* – to cause misunderstandings. On the other hand, typical learners’ ‘errors’ which most English teachers would consider in urgent need of correction and remediation, and which are consequently allotted a great deal of time and effort in EFL lessons, appear to be generally unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success. Such ‘errors’ include ‘dropping’ the third-person present-tense –s, ‘confusing’ the relative pronouns *who* and *which*, and ‘omitting’ definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in native speakers’ language use.

In order to make the above observations more concrete, here is an example from Jenkins’ data, a dialogue between L1 speakers of German and French respectively, conducted with the purpose of choosing one picture out of several for a charity campaign. We will use this example to demonstrate characteristic phonological, lexico-grammatical and pragmatic features of this type of ELF interaction:

Reto (L1 German) & Stephanie (L1 French)

1 R: I think on the front xx on the front page should be a picture
   who-which only makes p–
   people to er spend money, to the charity
2 S: yes
3 R: and I think er yeah maybe
4 S: I think a picture with child
5 R: Yeah, child are always good to

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\(^7\) Cf Widdowson (1997). Accommodation (in the sense of Giles & Coupland 1991) seems to play a crucial role in such ELF research as is available to date (see below): accommodation was found to be an important factor in Jenkins’ (2000) study, and lack of it may have contributed to the impression of “mutual dis-attention” among ELF speakers which House (1999: 82) gathered in the analysis of her data.
To start on a general pragmatic level, it is obvious that the interactants are satisfied with their discussion. They agree on their criteria and negotiate a consensus, so in that sense we can regard this exchange as successful communication. The conversation also has a constructive, collaborative feel to it. There is ample evidence of the interactants acting as responsive recipients as well as initiators, with abundant *yes’s* and *yeah’s* functioning as genuine expressions of agreement. Backchannelling is provided in the form of *Hm hm* and *Uh huh*, and there is even one instance of one speaker completing an utterance for her interlocutor (lines 26–27).

This communicative success comes about despite the fact that there is hardly a turn which is ‘correct’ or idiomatic by ENL standards. We find a large number of idiosyncrasies which traditionally would be called ‘deviations’ from ENL: the unintentionally comical phrase *a picture with child* in
line 5 (though of course only comical for someone familiar with the ENL meaning of *with child*), expressions such as *makes people to spend money* (line 2), *to trap people spend money* (line 8) and *make a smile on a child’s face* (line 24) and what would traditionally be called ‘serious grammatical mistakes’, such as missing third-person *-s* in *He look very sad* (line 16), ‘wrong’ relative pronoun in *a picture who gives the impression* (line 10), ‘missing’ indefinite article and unwarranted comparative in *he has to carry heavier vase* (line 16) as well as ‘wrong’ preposition (or ‘wrong’ verb) in *to spend money to the charity* (line 2).

As for Reto’s and Stephanie’s pronunciation, a number of non-core phonological ‘errors’ occur but, like the lexico-grammatical features discussed above, do not impede intelligibility for the listener. The three main areas of divergence from NS phonological norms or, to put it another way, the emergence of NNS phonological norms, are the consonants /θ/ and /ð/, vowel quality, and weak forms. Specific instances are represented here:

the consonants /θ/ and /ð/: line 12: *sink* for *think*, *den* for *then*, *dat’s* for *that’s*, *dis* for *this*

vowel quality substitutions: line 1 *front* pronounced [frɔnt]; line 21 *charity* pronounced [tʃərɪti],

weak forms with full vowel quality: line 6 *are* pronounced [ə:] line 16 *to* pronounced [tu:], line 18 *for* pronounced [fɔ:].

These items are typical of those occurring time and again in the different types of phonological data collected by Jenkins and they did not affect intelligibility for a NNS listener regardless of the L1s of the interlocutors.

Of course this interaction relies heavily on a shared context, which limits the potential for misunderstanding and conflict, and in many situations in which ELF is used such favourable conditions will not apply. But this caveat does not invalidate the observation that, for the purpose at hand, the kind of English that is employed works and it serves the participants quite adequately for doing the job they have to do. The investigations we have carried out so far have confirmed that a great deal of ELF communication is conducted at comparable levels of proficiency, and that quite often it is features which are regarded as ‘the most typically English’, such as third-person *-s*, tags, phrasal verbs and idioms, as well as the sounds /θ/ and /ð/ and weak forms, which turn out to be non-essential for mutual intelligibility.

Given the extent of such occurrences in lingua franca contexts, we might well ask whether we should not stop regarding them as ‘errors’, but this is a pedagogical question which cannot be dealt with by reference to linguistic observations alone, however fascinating they may be.
The point we hope to have made in the present essay is that it is high time that the legitimacy which has already been accorded to Outer Circle Englishes should be extended to the Expanding Circle. At a time when English is the de facto global lingua franca, it is anachronistic to deny that widespread developments in these contexts of use also constitute legitimate change which needs to be described and taken into pedagogic account.

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The Caribbean and the African diaspora in North America and Britain
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Language Advocacy and ‘Conquest’ Diglossia in the ‘Anglophone’ Caribbean

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ABSTRACT

The linguist in the role of language rights advocate can rarely function simply as a technician or as a detached and objective expert. Yet, when invited to participate in discussions about language-related policy by institutions of the state, linguists are being brought in for precisely what is perceived as detached technical expertise. At least, that is usually the official stated position of those appealing to the linguist’s help. This essay represents an attempt at retrospective reflection on the two pieces of language advocacy involving Caribbean English-lexicon creole languages that I have been involved in. It tries to cover the theoretical perspective that informed the interventions, the political and social issues at stake and the way in which the desire for a particular outcome fashioned the nature of these interventions.

1. The language situation in the ‘anglophone’ Caribbean

1.1 Defining conquest diglossia

DIGLOSSIA is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language, [...] there is a very divergent, highly codified [...] superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, [...], which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (Ferguson 1959: 336)
A **N ESSENTIAL FEATURE** of the definition of diglossia offered by Ferguson is that the two varieties involved are similar enough to each other that members of the speech community could consider them forms of the same language.

Ferguson grouped a series of historically rather different types of situation under the same umbrella term. Of the four defining situations two: ie, Greek and Arabic, involve classical/literary varieties of an ‘internal’ language as the High or H language variety. The other two are German-speaking Switzerland and Haiti, which are cases where the H language variety is an ‘external’ language, an import from another country. The Swiss German and Haitian cases are, however, represent two quite distinct sub-types among those diglossic situations in which the H is an ‘external’ language. In the former case, a historically pragmatic decision was taken by the German-speaking Swiss themselves to employ an external norm, that used in Germany, as the language of writing and formal interaction (Walter Haas, personal communication. By contrast, French in Haiti owes its status and functions to colonial imposition, a history that French shares with other European languages used in the Caribbean. Haiti as a defining situation for diglossia is representative of one of the possible sub-types of the diglossia involving an ‘external’ H. It is one which I here term ‘conquest diglossia’. This is the form of diglossia that has typically operated in the Caribbean.

The outcome of the difference in history between a Swiss German type of diglossia and Caribbean conquest diglossia is seen in the politics of language as it is played out in the Commonwealth Caribbean and specifically Jamaica. The ‘conquest’ element of Caribbean diglossia manifests itself in the ongoing language debate and language conflict across the Caribbean and specifically within the Jamaica.

In Caribbean countries in which English is the official language, there are diglossic-type relations between the main language varieties in use. In most of the countries concerned, what exists may be viewed as straightforwardly diglossic. It involves the interaction between English, as the official and public formal language, and English-lexicon creoles, as languages of private and informal interaction. In some countries, however, notably St. Lucia and Dominica, where a French-lexicon creole language is in general use alongside English as the official language, the situation may not be strictly diglossic in Ferguson’s terms. These situations would fall under the umbrella of what Ferguson (1959: 325) refers to as “the analogous situation where two distinct (related or unrelated) languages are used side by side throughout a speech community, each with a clearly defined role.”
1.2 Language varieties and their use

Let us consider those countries in which the language varieties used in popular domains share in large measure a vocabulary with English. Here, we find an absence of clear lines of demarcation between language varieties. Thus, there is no clear distinction between those varieties which may be considered English, on the one hand, and those which might be considered creole on the other. There is, rather, a gradual shading off from the most English varieties towards those which are most deviant from English. A considerable amount of research has taken place into characterizing what has come to be called the (post-)creole continuum (DeCamp 1971, Bickerton 1975, Rickford 1987).

Against this background, the argument presented by Devonish (1998) is that the interaction between English and creole is rule-governed. A language variety can only be proposed to exist at the level of the clause. Beyond the clause, speakers are free to shift language varieties as their linguistic repertoires allow and as social factors require. Within the clause, only a very restricted number of the theoretically possible combinations of creole and English features are possible. The intermediate varieties, as a consequence, are restricted in number and very stable. This contrasts with the observations of Ferguson (1959: 332) that, in classic diglossic situations, the intermediate varieties are relatively unstable.

Speakers have repertoires that span varying ranges on the continuum. However, for any speaker, the more formal social situations would be likely to produce the use of varieties more approximating English, and for informal situations, those more approximating creole. What I suggest is that this is simply a manifestation of the kind of linguistic convergence which Ferguson (1959: 332) notes to occur in diglossic situations. This convergence produces varieties intermediate between H and L, the H here being English and the L being creole.

1.3 Problems of postcolonial official language ideology: the invisible language

English came to the Caribbean as a language of conquest. The conquerors who brought it came from the British Isles, setting up permanent colonies in the Caribbean, from the third decade of the seventeenth century onwards. Up until the latter half of the twentieth century, almost all of the countries that currently have English as their official language were possessions of English-speaking colonial powers, in the main Britain. English has had a relatively long presence in the Caribbean, stretching back some four hundred years. It has nevertheless survived in a form that is mutually intelligible with British and North American varieties of English.
Until the period of independence beginning in the 1960s, the unquestioned target for English language usage in the Caribbean were models associated with Standard British English. Standard Caribbean English, the language of the new political class about to inherit political power was historically a trapped language variety. This situation has been described as follows:

As home-made, the Caribbean linguistic product has always been shame-faced, inhibited both by the dour authority of colonial administrators and their written examinations on the one hand, and by the persistence of the stigmatised Creole languages of the labouring populace on the other. (Allsopp 1996: xvii)

The struggle to free it began in earnest during the period in which many of the countries concerned achieved political independence. Between 1962 and 1983, twelve of the political entities in the Commonwealth Caribbean gained political independence from Britain. In every case, they retained English as the sole official language. Yet, Allsopp describes them as “twelve independent nations [...] each with a linguistic entitlement to a national standard language [...]” (Allsopp 1996: xix). To even suggest that the mass-based vernacular creole languages were rejected as possible contenders for the role of national and official language would be a gross overstatement of the facts. These languages remained invisible in the discourse on the question of national standard language. They were not even deemed to exist as languages. In these circumstances, using Caribbean varieties of English to express the newly developing national identities was the only option thought to be available.

The Caribbean Lexicography Project (CLP) was set up in response to the perceived need for Caribbean varieties of English, as distinct from English-lexicon creole, to be used in this role. The CLP was established in 1971 in the aftermath of the first four ‘anglophone’ countries gaining their political independence. This was a project based at and to a significant extent financed by the University of the West Indies, an institution owned and funded by all the territories of the Commonwealth Caribbean with the exception of Guyana. In addition to university support, the project received direct financial support from the governments of Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. This was as close as one could get to an official transnational enterprise for codifying an officially recognized variety of Caribbean English so that it could function in the role of official language in the respective countries.

The major objective of the project was to produce the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage (DCEU)* (Allsopp 1996) to function as a reference point for Standard Caribbean English.
The emergence of the obligatory self-reliance and nationhood of many English-speaking territories made its organized documentation a necessity. (Allsopp 1996: xvii)

The dictionary had as its main aim to describe Standard Caribbean English and make prescriptions for it. The expectation was that this Standard Caribbean variety of English would function as national language in each of the twelve independent states of the Commonwealth Caribbean. The dictionary, however, struggled with a major underlying contradiction. This involved the features that made Standard Caribbean English distinctive from metropolitan varieties of Internationally Acceptable English (IAE). The distinguishing features were mostly manifestations of linguistic influences from the creole languages widely spoken in these countries. The problem was one of how to codify Standard Caribbean English. This codification had to include a limited number of creole features for purposes of local ‘colour’ and identification, while retaining its overall coherence as a form of English that was ‘internationally acceptable’.

The dictionary approached this problem by claiming to cover all of what it refers to as ‘Caribbean English’. It establishes a hierarchy of ‘Formalness’ “using four descending levels – Formal, Informal, Anti-formal, Erroneous” (Allsopp 1996: lvi, italics in original). This was used as a basis for both describing forms and prescribing how they should be used. The Formal was defined as that which was “accepted as educated: belonging or assignable to IAE; also any regionalism which is not replaceable by any other designation” (Allsopp 1996: lvi). In the case of the Informal, this was defined as “accepted as familiar; chosen as part of usually well-structured, casual, relaxed speech, but sometimes characterized by morphological and syntactic reductions of English structure and other remainder features of decreolization” (Allsopp 1996: lvi). As for the Anti-Formal, this was “deliberately rejecting Formalness; consciously familiar and intimate, part of a wide range from close and friendly through jocular to coarse and vulgar; any Creolized or creole form or structure surviving or conveniently borrowed to suit context or situation” (Allsopp 1996: lvii). Erroneous was that which was “not permissible as IAE (Internationally Acceptable English), although evidently considered to be so by the user” (Allsopp 1996: lvii).

Speech varieties of Caribbean English were divided into three main categories, the Formal, the Informal and the Anti-formal. The actual identification of the forms associated with each variety was done by assessing their appropriateness in situations involving different levels of intimacy among interlocutors. Language forms associated with the Formal were unmarked in the dictionary. Such forms can be presumed to have been described as part of Standard Caribbean English and to have been prescribed for it. The linguistic
forms associated with the remaining two levels of Formalness were marked as such in the dictionary and reflect, according to Allsopp’s definition, increasing degrees of creole influence. This suggested the incorporating of increasing numbers of creole features into what was otherwise Standard Caribbean English allowed the latter to acquire some level of informality. This would support the conclusion that English features performed H functions in this diglossic situation and creole features L functions.

The aim of the DCEU was to codify an H variety, Standard Caribbean English or, in Allsopp’s terms, ‘Caribbean Standard English’, out of that range of varieties closest to Internationally Acceptable English. But what of those other language forms variously described in the DCEU as ‘basilectal’ creole, creolized language or just plain creole and treated as outside the pale of Caribbean English? The DCEU handled these language varieties from a perspective rooted in Standard Caribbean English. These varieties were viewed as creole ‘remainder features’ or creole ‘borrowings’ and ‘survivals’. According to the dictionary, these, when employed in Caribbean English, produced the less Formal language varieties, with their heaviest presence at the anti-Formal level. Signalling reduced formality, while on the periphery of the functions of Standard Caribbean English, is at the core of the functions of creole.

The above explains why the items regarded as Formal in the dictionary are left unmarked whilst those regarded as Informal and Anti-formal are marked. The last two are marked to indicate their inappropriateness for use in situations requiring the Formal variety. This is consistent with the position of the editor, Allsopp, that the dictionary is aimed at describing and prescribing for what he refers to as ‘Caribbean Standard English’: ie, the H language in the diglossia. The diglossic official ideological framework within which Allsopp is working is clearly shown when he states, “in omitting the mass of Caribbean basilectal vocabulary and idiom in favour of the mesolectal and acrolectal, and using a hierarchy of formalness in status-labelling the entries throughout, the work is being prescriptive. This is in keeping with expressed needs, and with the mandate agreed and supported by successive regional resolutions” (Allsopp 1996: xxvi).

This diglossic ideology is further expressed by the Allsopp (1996: vi) definition of Standard Caribbean English/‘Caribbean Standard English’ as “the literate English of educated nationals of Caribbean territories and their spoken English such as is considered natural in formal social contexts.” By defining it as a written language: ie, ‘literate English’, and one which is spoken naturally “in formal social contexts,” Allsopp conveys to us the reality that this language variety has very restricted functions. The other domains, varying only in relation to their degrees of Formalness, belong to an unnamed
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Language variety or set of language varieties which he describes elsewhere in his work as consisting of creole ‘remainder features’, creole ‘borrowings’ or creole ‘survivals’ (Allsopp 1996: vi-vii). The notion of English-lexicon creole as a complete and coherent linguistic system is absent from this representation. We have here the essence of the language ideology prevalent in diglossic situations in which, as Ferguson (1959: 330) states, “H alone is regarded as real and L is reported ‘not to exist’.”

English-lexicon creole languages in the Caribbean are present in public consciousness hidden amongst ‘dialects’ of English. Thus, Louise Bennett, noted as a pioneer ‘dialect’ poet in Jamaican, writes a poem defending Jamaican creole, in which she associates Jamaican creole with British regional/non-standard dialects such as Scots, Yorkshire and Cockney. She asks the opponents of Jamaican creole, who have vowed to destroy it, whether

Yuh gwine kill all English dialect
Or jus Jamaica one?’
[Are you going to kill all the English dialects
Or just Jamaica’s?] (Bennett 1966: 218)

The dominant language ideology views standard varieties of English, including Standard Caribbean English, as clear and distinct entities. This is assisted by the status and prestige of Internationally Acceptable English along with its idealizing agents such as dictionaries and grammar books. The prevailing language ideology simultaneously does two things. It emphasizes the internal coherence of those language forms in use in the society that are regarded as closest to Internationally Acceptable English. At the same time, it minimizes any such coherence in those forms of speech regarded as deviant from Internationally Acceptable English. This perception shows itself even in the academic work on these language situations. Thus, DeCamp (1971: 35) criticizes the work of Beryl Bailey (1966) on grounds that it “is an abstract ideal type, a composite of all non-standard features, a combination which is actually spoken by few if any Jamaicans.” In the approach of DeCamp (1971), Jamaican creole has ceased to exist, watered down to increasing degrees along the ‘post-creole continuum’ by influence from Standard Jamaican English. Despite her difference in approach, this is a characterization with which Bailey (1971: 342) seems to be in agreement when she states that the “speakers of unadulterated JC [Jamaican creole] are rare indeed.”

The interesting point, however, is that none of these positions takes into account the fact that Internationally Acceptable English or its local approximations, Standard Caribbean English or Standard Jamaican English, is also an abstraction, and is equally a composite, this time of all ‘standard’ features. Beryl Bailey’s concept of a composite of all non-standard features for an
abstract ideal of Jamaican creole is only possible against the background of a “composite of all standard features”, the abstract ideal of Standard Jamaican English. Speakers of unadulterated Standard Caribbean English or any of its localized variants such as Jamaican Standard English are as rare as are speakers of ‘unadulterated creole’. The ability to use varieties approximating Standard Caribbean English is, in the main, developed through exposure to the formal education system. However, even a highly educated speaker cannot be expected to use Standard Caribbean/Jamaican English to the total exclusion of creole.

Given the description of the language situation provided in the DCEU, it is clear that no speaker can be expected to use Standard Caribbean English consistently in all situations. There are, after all, a series of domains, notably the Informal and the Anti-formal, in which other language varieties are the norm. With reference to the Jamaican situation, in the face of two abstractions, Standard Jamaican English and ‘basilectal’ Jamaican creole, the first is accepted by Bailey, DeCamp and the society at large as real. The deliberate normalization efforts of Allsopp’s DCEU aim at making the reality of this abstraction even more ‘real’. By contrast, the no more abstract language variety, ‘basilectal’ Jamaican creole, is perceived, by virtue of being an abstraction, as unreal.

The benign ignoring of creole makes perfect sense for the educated sectors of the population. They, by contrast with most of the rest of the society, have high levels of competence in English, the language used for formal discourse. Recognizing the abstraction of English increases the value of the language which they, but not others, control. They also know and are able to use and understand English-lexicon creole in informal discourse. This, however, is a language which they share with all other sectors of the society. Recognizing the abstraction of creole would give no advantage to the educated sectors of the population. The linguistic status quo and the ideology that accompanies it give educated bilinguals in these societies the best of all possible linguistic worlds.

2. Language rights advocacy
2.1 The external consequences of the invisible L

The State Education Department of the State of New York in the USA has a directory of languages aimed at “school districts that provide services to pupils whose native language is other than English. It is intended to assist districts in identifying the languages spoken by limited English proficient students in New York State” (University of the State of New York 1997: iii). The document goes on (fn., iii) to state, with reference to the languages it
covers, that “only those whose speakers number over 250,000 and/or those that were reported by New York State school districts have been included in this directory.” There are roughly twenty Caribbean English-lexicon creoles spoken in Caribbean countries where English is the official language, which could have qualified for mention in the directory on grounds that they are used by populations in New York State. Of these, there are three which could have been included on the grounds that they are spoken by more than 250,000 people. As it turns out, only one of these, Jamaican creole, the variety with by far the largest number of speakers, actually makes it into the directory. Given language attitudes which exist within the Jamaican creole-speaking community, it is likely that Jamaican creole has been included not because persons living in the state declared it to be their native language but because the number of its speakers exceeds the minimum at least ten times over.

For every pupil entering its school system for the first time, the State of New York is required by the Regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education to arrange diagnostic screening. The purpose of this screening is to identify pupils who are possibly gifted, who have a possible handicapping condition and/or who possibly are Limited English Proficient (Regulations 1999: 117.1). One element of this screening is to make “a determination that the pupil is of foreign birth or ancestry and comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken as determined by the results of a home language questionnaire and an informal interview in English” (117.3.c.4). The home language questionnaire is administered to the parent or guardian of the pupil. It takes the form of seven questions which ask, among other things, about the language(s) spoken in the pupil’s home, the language(s) understood by the pupil, and the languages spoken, read and written by the pupil, and how well the pupil understands, speaks, reads and writes English (Guidelines 1997: 57).

We need to think back to what we already know about the invisibility of creole in Caribbean countries in which English as the official language co-exists with an English-lexicon creole. The only language likely to be declared as known and used by pupils who are native English-lexicon creole speakers coming from such countries is the official language, English. The conclusion an outsider is likely to arrive at based on the answers received, both from the questionnaire and the informal interview in English, therefore, is that the pupil is monolingual in English.

The other step in the screening process, “a determination of receptive and expressive language development, motor development, articulation skills and cognitive development” (Regulations 1999: 117.3.c.3) would then be taken. There is provision in the Regulations (117.3.2) for this screening to take place “in the pupil’s native language if the language of the home is other than
English.” The Regulations (152.a.2) require an English language assessment instrument approved by the New York State Commissioner of Education to be administered to all pupils new to the school system. Under this same regulation, “pupils with limited English proficiency shall mean pupils who by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak a language other than English, and [...] score at or below the 40th percentile, or its equivalent as determined by the commission, on an English language assessment instrument approved by the commissioner.” Such pupils would become entitled to either (a) a bilingual education programme, inclusive of content subjects taught in both English and the native language, if there are 20 or more Limited English Proficient pupils of the same grade level assigned to a building, all of whom have the same native language or, otherwise (b) a Free-Standing English as a Second Language Programme (Regulations 1999: 154.2.g.3, 154.4.c).

However, a pupil from English-lexicon creole-speaking countries under consideration who scores at or below the 40th percentile on such a test would be ineligible for such a programme. Such pupils would fail to satisfy the “speak a language other than English” provision. They, in the absence of establishing that they “speak a language other than English” cannot be treated as Limited English Proficient. The only category available to screeners in such a case would be that of a “pupil who may have a handicapping condition” (1999: 117.3.3). Pupils who are thought to fall into this category have to be referred to the committee on special education. This seems to be the path by which a disproportionate number of children of Caribbean origin end up in special education in the New York State school system. Karl Folkes (2000: 3-4) comments on this state of affairs when he indicates that in the New York State school system, “it is unfortunate that far too many students from Commonwealth Caribbean creole countries are referred to special education classes, speech, or remedial reading courses.”

Elaborate regulatory, financial and resource provisions exist within the New York State education system for pupils identified as Limited English Proficient. Some of these provisions are covered in Part 154 of the Regulations (1999), which is entitled “Apportionment and services for pupils with limited English proficiency.” To be classified as such, a pupil has to be identified to “speak a language other than English.” Any appreciation of the language situation from which they come would indicate that pupils with low English language scores from the English-lexicon creole-speaking Caribbean are prime candidates for this provision. Unfortunately, the internal socio-linguistic set-up of the communities from which these pupils come does not predispose them or their caregivers to make the relevant home language declaration which would make them eligible for benefits under Part 154 of the Regulations (1999).
There are on average 20,000 children a year entering the New York State school system from countries of the English-lexicon creole-speaking Caribbean with English as the official language. The problem, therefore, affects a significant number of children. In response to agitation from activists within sections of the Caribbean community, a hearing by the Board of Regents was arranged to consider this matter. The meeting was formally set up in this letter by James A. Kadamus, Deputy Commissioner:

At the September Regents meeting, you asked that we provide presenters who are experts on the education of students from Caribbean countries where English is the official language in order to provide information on this group of students. The following have agreed to make presentations on this topic.

The letter went on to identify one of the presenters, Hubert Devonish, as a “recognised expert in the languages of the Caribbean.” It identified the other presenter as Karl Folkes, a research analyst in the Division of High Schools and Office of Bilingual Education of the New York City Public Schools. Folkes also happened to be a linguist and to be of Jamaican origin.

The two ‘experts’ were being invited to make a presentation to the Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education Committee of the Board on the issue of “students from Caribbean countries where English is the official language in order to provide information on this group of students.” The formulation “Caribbean countries where English is the official language” was carefully crafted to get around the problem of a term such as ‘English-speaking Caribbean’, which would prejudge the very issue which the ‘experts’ were being invited to address. Nevertheless, the identity of English as a language was not questioned. It was mentioned by name, its existence unquestioned by quotation marks or any other questioning device. Interestingly enough, however, the other language varieties: ie, English-lexicon creole languages, whose widespread use made the normal term ‘English-speaking Caribbean’ inappropriate, remained unmentioned in this formulation.

Of the five questions these experts were required to answer, one was central to the entire exercise. It asked:

Are the ‘English Creole languages’ spoken in the Caribbean countries where English is the official language considered languages other than English?

From a linguistic perspective, what are the criteria used to make such a determination? (Kadamus 2000: 2)

With reference to the role of English in these societies, a wording was arrived at which did not to prejudice the question. However, in the case of ‘English creole languages’, the very use of quotation marks questioned the existence of these languages. Viewed another way, however, the use of the quotation
marks could be seen as the means by which language varieties hitherto invisible in the Caribbean and in New York could be brought into the discourse of the New York State Education Department. The very presence of the ‘experts’ was to allow for the presentation of information that might justify dropping the quotation marks for these L language varieties. These language varieties could then become legitimate objects of official policy.

What was at stake was whether members of this large group of children within the New York State school system were eligible to be covered under Part 154 of the Regulations (1999). These regulations opened access to English as a Second Language programmes and, where numbers justified this, to bilingual education in the home language and English for up to three years from entry into the New York school system.

2.2 The internal consequences of the invisible L

The invisibility of the L outside the society is, of course, a mere reflection of the invisibility of L internal to the society. However, the invisibility of English-lexicon Caribbean creoles in Caribbean countries where English is the sole official language, is an issue which is becoming the subject of some official discussion. Thus, in Jamaica, during 2001, a Joint Select Committee of the Jamaican House of Parliament discussed a Draft Charter of Rights for the Jamaican constitution. This charter is intended to cover the activities of all agencies of the state and designated public entities. At one meeting of the committee, Senator Trevor Munroe raised the issue of the Charter guaranteeing freedom from discrimination on grounds of language:

I would wish to propose to you that if it does not substantially abuse the timetable of our Joint Select Committee that we may wish to hear from the Specialist at the University on this issue, ‘A’ to the extent that research may have been done on the examples you just asked me for where citizens are in effect discriminated against because of their monolingual capacity in Jamaican Creole and their disconnection from English, and ‘B’ whether if it were so, would not (this) justify a case for inserting language as one area in which we would wish the constitution to protect persons from discrimination. (Draft Minutes, Joint Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament, on Charter of Rights: 15.3.01, 4:05-4:25)

The senator went on, later in the discussion, to make the following statement with regard to the invisibility of Jamaican as a language:

I am suggesting that were we to recognize the reality of the status of Jamaican Creole it may well contribute to reducing the extent to which so many of our people feel that they lack self-worth, that they [are] not real people because somehow they cannot communicate in the language which is solely recognize[d] as the official means of discourse. (Draft Minutes, Select Committee
This has to be understood in a context where the courts have the ultimate responsibility for enforcing constitutional provisions. Obviously, therefore, for speakers of Jamaican creole to have constitutional protection from discrimination on grounds of language, Jamaican creole would have to be recognized by the courts as a language distinct from the official language, English. It was this concern which prompted the following intervention from Mrs Miller, one of the legal advisors to the Select Committee.

It is being suggested that the University experts should be the ones. Because there has been a lot of talks on this question of language and whether patois [patois] is a language and some say yes and some say no. (Draft Minutes, Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament, Jamaica, on Charter of Rights: 15.3.01, 4:05-4:25)

The question posed by Mrs Miller was merely a more loosely worded version of the question asked in the Kadamus letter to the Board of Regents of the Education Department, New York State. The Miller quotation did not specifically ask whether ‘patois’, Jamaican or Jamaican creole, was a language other than English. This, however, was implied. From her perspective, freedom from discrimination by organs of the state on grounds of language could not apply to speakers of a form of English in a society where English was the sole official language. The justification for the insertion of this provision was the need to protect the rights of monolingual speakers of Jamaican creole. The issue of whether it was indeed a language distinct from English became a relevant one. As in the case of the New York State Education Department, a Caribbean English-lexicon creole language variety could only become visible to official discourse if its identity as a language was certified. The certification of this identity could lead to a series of rights coming to speakers, rights which they would not otherwise have access to.

The constitution conferred on independent Jamaica by the outgoing British colonial power does not grant the individual the right to freedom from discrimination on grounds of language. Thirty-nine years after independence, the provisions of this inherited constitution are being reviewed. The Draft Charter of Rights to amend the Jamaican constitution, being considered in 2001 by a Joint Select Committee of the Jamaican Parliament, would create a series of individual rights which would be enforceable through the courts. Can Parliament be persuaded, in a diglossic situation such as that of Jamaica, to include the right to freedom from discrimination on grounds of language, with the intent to grant language rights to speakers of an English-lexicon creole?
This matter is being dealt with against the background of official language ideology outlined previously and the legal and constitutional traditions within which countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean have operated. As is normal in countries of Anglo-Saxon legal traditions, the issue of the role of English as the official language is never stated in law except when there is a clear challenge from another language. In England, as Heath and Mandabach (1983: 92) point out, apart from a statute that requires Crown writs and incidental papers to be in English and another requiring sailors on British ships to have knowledge of English, no statute exists granting official status to English. This contrasts with the situation in Wales, where there has been a great deal of legislation on the role of English versus that of Welsh in official domains.

This tradition has extended to the Commonwealth Caribbean. In countries such as Jamaica, where English coexists with an English-lexicon creole, a benign inclusiveness allows language differences to be treated as equivalent to dialect differences in England. English is not perceived to have a competitor in these situations. No statement in the constitution, therefore, is made or thought necessary on the issue of official language. That which is obvious: ie, that English is the official language, is left unstated.

This contrasts with the situation in two Commonwealth Caribbean countries, St. Lucia and Dominica. In Ferguson’s terms, these two countries would constitute language situations analogous to diglossia. In St. Lucia and Dominica, in addition to English, which is used for official purposes, French-lexicon creole languages are widely spoken. In the constitutions of these two countries, explicit statements about the official status of English are made. For example, there is a requirement that, for someone to be eligible to be elected to the House of Representatives, they must be “able to speak and [...] to read the English Language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable him to take an active part in the proceedings of the house” (St Lucian Constitution Order, 1978, ch. III; Commonwealth of Dominica Constitution Order, 1978, ch. III). The very visibility of the other language, French-lexicon creole, marks it off for overt discrimination by way of a constitutional statement about the role of English. No such statement appears in constitutions of countries such as Jamaica where the relationship between languages corresponds more closely to orthodox diglossia. The L variety in the latter set of situations is doubly disadvantaged since its existence is not even recognized to a point where it can become the object of constitutional discrimination.

It is against this background that a presentation was made to the Joint Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament of Jamaica on the issue of language rights in the Jamaican constitution. The broad outline of the case made is as follows. The state and other public entities serve their clientele largely
through use of language. In Jamaica, public health services, public information, government administrative services, etc. are provided almost exclusively in English, the sole official language. This means that large numbers of persons with limited English language competence find themselves at a severe disadvantage. Their ability to access the services is limited by their lack of competence in the language in which the information is provided. This is in spite of the fact that the language they do use, Jamaican creole, is not a minority language but one in general and popular use across the society. It is also the native language of the vast majority of the population of the country. Based on the notion that “citizens are in effect discriminated against because of their monolingual capacity in Jamaican creole” (Draft Minutes: 15.3.01, 4:05–4:25), the proposal is being made to halt this by providing citizens with constitutional protection from discrimination on grounds of language. This would have the effect of forcing state agencies and public entities covered by the constitutional provision to provide services in Jamaican creole as well as English.

To achieve a favourable outcome, the legislators had to be reassured that discrimination on grounds of language was relevant to the Jamaican situation. There was, however, one other crucial point. The legislators had to be brought around to the view that a society which they had lived in all their lives and which they had hitherto considered to be a monolingual English-speaking one, was in fact bilingual.

The standard way in which constitutions guarantee language rights is to grant these rights not to people but to particular languages. Favoured languages have official status conferred on them and then equality is guaranteed for speakers of these languages. Thus, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982, Article 16.1) states that “English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.” The South African Constitution follows the same pattern, declaring particular languages to be official languages and then granting speakers of these languages equality of status. In spite of these precedents, however, the parliamentary supporters of the language rights provision in Jamaica feel that, given the invisibility of L in the society, the jump from denying its existence to declaring it an official language is too big for the legislature or the country to make at a single go. The constitutional reform route outlawing discrimination on grounds of language allows for an intermediate step. This step allows the previously invisible L language variety to remain unnamed in the legislation, while yet making it visible in official discourse and concerns. This visibility is produced when practical measures are documented which the state
would have to put in to guarantee that it does not discriminate against speakers of Jamaican creole.

2.3 Loading the dice: selecting the ‘expert’

In academic disciplines, there is seldom unanimity, particularly when it comes to the implications of academic research for social policy. The ‘experts’, therefore, have to be selected from a pool containing many experts, each with their own views on the subject. As an example, my own position as a linguist is totally opposed to the views of the distinguished Caribbean linguist and editor of the *DCEU*, Richard Allsopp, outlined in a previous section.

The Board of Regents of the New York State Board of Education ended up having chosen for them experts who favoured a particular outcome. This was probably due to the influence of the Caribbean community activists in New York who had pressured for the Board to hold the hearing in the first place. Of the experts selected, one, Karl Folkes, was New York based and known to have views that favoured recognizing Caribbean English-lexicon creole languages as languages other than English. The other, myself, based in the Caribbean, would have had a reputation for being somewhat of a creole-language activist. The Board had a wide choice of quite distinguished linguists who had paid specific attention to language education issues in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The eventual selection raises the possibility that community activists pressed for experts whom they considered most likely to deal with the questions asked in a manner which corresponded to what they perceived to be in their community’s best interests.

In the case of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, too, the selection of the expert was not random. I had been in discussion with Senator Prof. Trevor Munroe for several months on the issue of moving the discussion of the language rights issue into the parliament of Jamaica.

The linguist advocate enters both such situations with somewhat of a burden. The kinds of answers expected are clear. The beneficial outcomes if the ‘right’ answers are given are equally clear. Yet, the very value of the linguist advocate as an expert lies in being able to maintain professional credibility. This requires a delicate balancing act.

2.4 The linguist advocate’s solution: switching between ‘expert’ and personal opinion

The two specific documents involving linguistic advocacy which will be discussed here are (i) “Answers to questions for the New York State Board of Regents” (Devonish 2000) presented in December 2000, Albany, New York, and (ii) “Language rights in the Draft Charter of Rights in the Jamaican Constitution: A proposal” (Devonish 2001), presented in May 2001.
The call for the linguist or language expert to proclaim on the languagehood of Caribbean English-lexicon creole language varieties relative to English is problematic. The persons seeking answers make a commonsense assumption. They think that the distance between two language varieties and their relative degree of distinctness would be the basis for a decision on whether two varieties belong to the same language or to different languages. The linguist expert, however, knows otherwise. The dialects of Chinese include varieties that may be as different from each other as English is from German. By contrast, very similar pairs or groups of language varieties with relatively high levels of mutual intelligibility, eg, Hindi and Urdu, Spanish and Portuguese, or the Scandinavian languages, are considered by their speakers to be separate languages. Of course, the linguist could venture a personal opinion on whether Jamaican creole is a language distinct from or other than English. However, the persons asking want a professional and a technical opinion. For example, the letter which sets up the presentation to the Board of Regents of the New York State Education Department does not simply seek the experts’ opinions on whether Caribbean English-lexicon creole varieties are languages other than English. It goes on to ask: “From a linguistic perspective, what are the criteria used to make such a determination?” (Kadamus 2000: 2) The appropriate answer for the linguist functioning as a dispassionate expert is that a language variety is a language, separate and distinct from any other language, whenever its speakers think it so.

The linguist-expert cannot, based on linguistic criteria, declare that a particular language variety is a separate language from another. In the New York State case, my presentation began with the disclaimer presented in the preceding paragraph, illustrated with references to the Chinese, Hindi–Urdu and Spanish–Portuguese cases. The presentation could not, however, end there since a great deal hung on a positive response to the question of whether a Caribbean English-lexicon creole language was a language separate from English.

The solution was, having made a professional disclaimer, to appear to answer in the affirmative. This was done, in the New York case, by, first, emphasizing how commonplace it is for languages considered by speakers as distinct to be linked by dialect continua. Reference was made to dialect continua linking German and Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese, and to the existence of varying levels of mutual intelligibility between the standard languages at the extreme ends of these continua. This was by way of ensuring that, in the minds of the listeners, the existence of linguistic continua between English-lexicon creoles and English did not present a barrier to the former being considered as languages distinct from the latter.
The next step was to address the issue of linguistic difference, another issue which might colour the listeners’ judgement about whether these creole languages were languages other than English. This was done by making an estimate of the linguistic distance between creole and English in a manner which related this distance to distances between language varieties which are, in varying measures, linguistically similar but yet are considered to be distinct languages. Below is the distance measurement used in both the cases of language advocacy:

(i) *for the lexicon/vocabulary*, about the distance between the lexicon of Spanish and Portuguese,
(ii) *for phonology/pronunciation patterns*, at least the same distance as that between the phonology of French and Spanish,
(iii) *for morphology/word construction patterns*, about the same distance as between the morphology of English and German,
(iv) *for syntax/grammatical structure*, depending on the creole in question, ranging from about the distance between the syntax of French and Spanish to the distance between the syntax of English and German (Devonish 2000: 4; 2001: 1).

In the New York case, I then proceeded to assert that, based on these estimates of linguistic distance, I was prepared to utter the magic formula required for the occasion: ie, that Caribbean English-lexicon creoles are ‘languages other than English’. However, the ‘I’ here is not, on careful reading, the ‘expert I’ since the expert had earlier declared that it was not possible, on linguistic grounds, to assign languagehood to any language variety. The expert had, in addition, clearly stated that linguistic difference was not the basis on which forms of speech are assigned to separate languages. In this context, any ‘I’ which could assert that linguistic distance is indeed the basis for forms of speech to be treated as belonging to separate languages must be the personal ‘I’. In the context where officialdom required the utterance of a magic formula from an expert, the advocate had attempted to preserve the integrity of the expert while venturing a personal opinion. The advocate knew, however, that in the context of an expert discourse, such an opinion would be likely to be interpreted as an ‘expert’ opinion despite previous ‘expert’ disclaimers.

In the Jamaican case, the task was easier. No explicit question had been asked. The linguist-advocate could, therefore, allow the statement on linguistic differences to be taken as an answer to the implied question of whether Jamaican creole was a language other than English.
3. Interpreting the will of the people in ‘conquest’ diglossia

I, in the guise of an expert, have presumed to make presentations on language which potentially have great impact on the lives of large numbers of people. Yet, the pronouncements I make are not those within my professional competence to make. They are statements about my personal attitudes to the languages concerned. I consider my actions justified on grounds that I see myself as interpreting ‘the will of the people’.

What in this context is the ‘will of the people’? To determine this, we need to return to the original notion of diglossia as it applies to the group of situations in which the H is an ‘external’ variety. Within this group, there is the distinction between ‘non-conquest’ diglossia and ‘conquest’ diglossia. If we take Swiss German as an example of the former, we have a pragmatic community decision to accept an external norm for H purposes whilst preserving L for functions of internal identity. The nature of this decision is reflected in the fact that the distribution of functions of Standard German and Swiss German in German-speaking Switzerland has remained relatively unchanged ever since Ferguson (1959) first developed the concept of diglossia and used the Swiss German case as a defining example.

In the case of ‘conquest’ diglossia, as in the case of ‘non-conquest’ diglossia, the community concerned accepts the fact that the ‘external’ language exclusively performs the H functions. This acceptance is, however, not the outcome of a historical decision by the community but a product of military conquest. Changes in the functional distribution of language varieties will come about as there are changes in the power relations between the contending social groups. ‘Conquest’ diglossia has, for the dominant groups, the desired outcome of the external norm invading the private and informal domains of the local L, replacing it with some locally flavoured version of H. It has been argued that this is what has happened in an originally diglossic English vs. English creole-speaking community such as Barbados.

From the perspective of the dominated groups, the desired end point of ‘conquest’ diglossia is the replacement of H by L in all public formal functions. This is what has occurred in one of Ferguson’s defining situations, Haiti, where since the late 1980s, Haitian creole has had official status alongside French. The current constitution declares creole and French to be the official languages of the republic (La Constitution de la République d’Haiti, Ch. 1, Article 5). Even though many features of the pre-existing diglossia remain, it is clear that Haitian creole has invaded many if not all of the domains previously the preserve of French. As has been seen from the discussion on language rights in the Jamaican constitution, Jamaica itself may be moving in the direction of the L invading the domains of the H.
The linguist, in making a value judgement such as was required in the two situations outlined in this essay, did not have access to a historical consensus position on the issue. What was available was a historically imposed diglossia in the process of being challenged by practice and the processes of evolution. The linguist-advocate, in this situation, was free to choose the position which seemed to accord (i) with justice, (ii) with the direction in which the society or societies seemed to be moving.

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Decolonizing English
The Caribbean Counter-Thrust

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ABSTRACT
Starting from the observation that English is the language in which dominant discourses are formulated in most parts of the world today, the essay explores which implications this may have for the Caribbean, a region in which several varieties of English coexist and in which there are political and educational debates about the place of these varieties and their functions in the development of Caribbean peoples. Using both literary and socio-linguistic evidence, changing attitudes to varieties of English are explored, and perspectives for a critical language pedagogy for the region are developed.

1. Introduction

TAKE AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE Alastair Pennycook’s assertion that one of the chief roles of English teachers is to help the formulation of counter-discourses in English. He threw out the following challenge to applied linguists and teachers:

As applied linguists and English language teachers we should become political actors engaged in a critical pedagogical project to use English to oppose the dominant discourses of the West and to help the articulation of counter discourses in English [...] At the very least, intimately involved as we are with the spread of English, we should be acutely aware of the implications of this spread for the reproduction and production of global inequalities. (2001: 87)
I was intrigued by this call, particularly because it raised several issues with which applied linguists and teachers in the Caribbean are concerned. As an applied linguist and teacher I propose to take up the challenge partly, by giving some preliminary consideration to these issues in this essay.

First I want to discuss the notion of English as the language in which dominant discourses are formulated in most parts of the world and the implication this has for the Caribbean, a region with a complex sociolinguistic situation in which several varieties of English coexist and in which there are political and educational debates about the place of these varieties and their functions in the development of Caribbean peoples. This issue is related to the sociohistorical realities of colonization and the expansion of English as a dominant language in multilingual contexts such as the Caribbean.

The second point, which is directly related to the first, has to do with a consideration of what variety of English we are referring to for the formulation of counter-discourses. The assertion that “English” should be used to oppose the dominant discourses of the West seems to overlook the reality that English is itself one of the dominant discourses. In making the suggestion that teachers use “English” to create counter-discourses in English, Pennycook was not specific about the variety of English he was referring to. I am therefore assuming that he meant any variety of Standard English. However, it is useful to clarify some of the distinctions that are used with reference to English. Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (1989: 8) makes a distinction between “standard” British English inherited from the empire and the “english” “which the language has become in post-colonial countries.” They use a lower-case e for the latter and appear to include in this category the Standard varieties of English in countries other than Britain. They argue:

> Though British imperialism resulted in the spread of a language, English, across the globe, the english of Jamaicans is not the english of Canadians, Maoris, or Kenyans. We need to distinguish between what is proposed as a standard code, English (the language of the erstwhile imperial centre), and the linguistic code, english, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world. (1998: 8)

While we can accept this, it is nevertheless necessary to make a further distinction between standard varieties of English on the one hand, and other varieties (referred to in some sources as “other” Engishes or “new” Engishes). The standard varieties would include those mutually intelligible varieties that are used across the globe such as Canadian English, Caribbean Standard English and Australian English. I understand these standard varieties to be the ones referred to when we speak of acquiring English or developing proficiency in school language. I will use the term ‘creoles’ to refer specifically to the varieties that have emerged as a result of contact between Euro-
peans, the colonizers and the slaves who came to the Caribbean speaking African languages, and I will use the term ‘alternative [English] varieties’ to refer to those varieties of “English” that have emerged in the postcolonial period. An example would be vernaculars such as St. Lucian English vernacular which emerged under pressure from English, the official language, in a situation where a French-lexicon creole had been the dominant popular language.

I would include in the ‘alternative varieties’ of English those vernacular varieties that have emerged more recently as a result of casual contact between speakers of English and creole speakers or by learners who were attempting to learn English as a second language or dialect. I propose to discuss specifically the ways in which these varieties have been used by writers to formulate counter discourses. This relates to the notion of decolonizing English in the title of this essay. It is in this respect that I am likely to incur the wrath of the group that Stalker refers to as “the death of language writers”: namely, those who, according to Stalker, “express the opinion that the English language is dying” (1985: 65). However, I will argue that the emergence and spread of varieties within the Caribbean have less to do with Newman’s explanation (1974, cited in Stalker 1985) that the decline in language stems from the fact that minorities have won “a greater voice” in determining the course of society than with the processes that are set in motion naturally when languages come into contact.

The third issue I will consider relates to two points mentioned by Pennycook – the notion of teachers becoming political actors engaged in a critical pedagogical project to use English for counter-discourses, and the awareness that the spread of English leads to the “reproduction and production of global inequalities” (2001: 87). I will also consider the social inequalities that are manifested intra-nationally when English, the standard variety, is ascribed a higher status and is given greater prestige than local varieties. This point is central to the issue of the development of a people, an issue to which I referred earlier and which is also relevant to the wider context of global inequality to which Pennycook refers.

Finally, there is the related consideration of what might constitute a “critical pedagogical project” within the Caribbean context. In this regard I will present some preliminary thoughts from an applied linguistics perspective of the kind of pedagogy that is needed within the Caribbean to level the playing field and reduce the margins of inequality while at the same time providing the framework for the use of a wider range of varieties in the articulation of counter discourses.
2. Colonization and language in the Caribbean

Linguistic diversity in the Caribbean is an outcome of colonization which began around the end of the sixteenth century and which continued for more than three hundred years (Leith 1996: 181). The slave trade, which provided the scaffolding for the success of colonization, influenced the course of language development in the region. Leith (1996: 206) comments: “It [the slave trade] gave rise not only to Black English in the USA and the Caribbean, which has been an important influence on the speech of young English speakers world wide, but also provided the extraordinary context of language contact which led to the formation of English pidgins and Creoles.” In those territories in which the creole derived its lexicon from English and coexisted with a standard form of English there was progressive decreolization which resulted in the formation of a post-creole continuum with a range of varieties between the creole and the standard. Jamaica and Guyana exemplify this course of development. In these territories many speakers exhibit linguistic multi-competence in the sense that they know several lects or varieties along the continuum and can switch codes with ease as the communicative context demands. I want to refer to St. Lucia as a special case, since it has had a different course of development from Anglophone territories like Jamaica and the contact situation there has given rise to a very interesting sociolinguistic situation.

Although it is now considered an anglophone territory, St. Lucia’s language development differed from some of the other English-speaking territories. The island was only ceded to the British during the first decade of the nineteenth century and prior to that it had been colonized by the French, who engaged in fourteen fierce battles with the British for ownership of the island. The original contact situation was between the Africans who had been brought as slaves in the Trade and French colonists. The language variety that developed out of that contact was a French-lexicon creole now commonly called Kwéyòl. The imposition of a monolingual English policy for purposes of conducting affairs in public institutions and for education resulted in the creation of a bilingual society in which there has been a gradual decrease in the number of exclusive Kwéyòl or English speakers and a significant increase in the number of bilinguals. The census figures for 1911–46 are presented here (Table 1 below), since more recent census data exclude specific information about language use.
Table 1: Census figures for St. Lucia between 1911 and 1946

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exclusive Kwéyòl %</th>
<th>Exclusive English %</th>
<th>Other language %</th>
<th>Bilingual English/ Kwéyòl %</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>58.58</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.04%</td>
<td>30.91%</td>
<td>48,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>56.53</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>33.45</td>
<td>51,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>43.32</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>54.16</td>
<td>70,113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[% calculated from the figures presented in Carrington 1984]

Surveys conducted for language studies in more recent times have indicated that the situation has shifted in favour of English. Frank (1993) reported a gradual decrease in the number of exclusive Kwéyòl speakers and an increase in the number of bilinguals and exclusive English speakers. If one can accept the figures for school enrollment as a rough indication of the situation that exists in the wider society then, based on a survey of language distribution among schoolchildren carried out in 1984 (Simmons–McDonald), the figures for English speakers far exceed those for Kwéyòl. Only 2% and 3% exclusive Kwéyòl speakers were recorded in urban and rural settings respectively compared with 20% and 12% English speakers in these same settings. The trend of a higher concentration of Kwéyòl speakers in rural than urban settings was still evident in the 1984 survey.

The interesting phenomenon in the St. Lucian situation is that the continued contact between the French creole and English has resulted in the emergence of a ‘new’ English which Alleyne (1961) calls a vernacular and to which I will refer as St. Lucian Vernacular (SLV). This variety is widely spoken in both urban and rural settings but more so in the urban areas and it is now being acquired by children as their first language. Le Page and Tabouret–Keller (1985: 147) report that SLV has features that are common to other English-lexicon creoles in the Caribbean. Alleyne (1961: 5–6) describes it as being “strongly influenced by Creole phonetic, semantic and syntactic patterns.” I refer briefly to the discussion in the literature about the origins of this variety since this gives some insight into how a “new english” may come into being. Le Page and Tabouret–Keller (1985: 155) suggest that it might have arisen from the attempts of Kwéyòl speakers to learn English in school. They describe the situation as representing “a gradual shift of a population from a French-Patois like vernacular to a creolized English as their native language, via an intermediate stage of standard English as a second language in the classroom.” Another explanation which has been given for the emergence of SLV is that it developed from the attempts of native speakers of Kwéyòl to communicate with English speakers in casual situations (Garrett, in press).
Although this explanation is plausible, an examination of the developmental trends supports the hypothesis of emergence originating partially in the school setting. Simmons–McDonald (in press) suggests that if one considers the language distribution patterns in the 1940s when there were no records of SLV, and when one also considers that roughly 43% of the population were exclusive Kwéyòl speakers and that there was some social distance between speakers of English and Kwéyòl, it is hardly likely that the vernacular would have developed and spread primarily through casual contact. She offers as a more likely explanation that language learning attempts in the formal setting “acted as a catalyst for its emergence and that further contact in the community by those who had learned it led to its more widespread use.” I will discuss this “new english” variety in the section dealing with a critical pedagogy subsequently. I now turn to consider briefly the status of the varieties and the attitudes towards them.

3. Attitudes to language in the Caribbean

In most contexts in which the creole coexists with a standard variety, the creole is usually ascribed a lower status than the standard language and the view of it is one of self-deprecation. In the past, colonials expressed negative views of creoles in the strongest disparaging terms. For example, in a 1966 article Leo Spitzer quotes a comment made by one Leopold who was an educator in Sierra Leone during the early 1900s. He is reported to have made the following remarks about the creole:

The Sierra Leone patois is a kind of invertebrate omnium gatherum of all sorts, a veritable ola podrida collected from many different languages without regard to harmony or precision: it is largely defective and sadly wanting in many of the essentials and details that make up and dignify a language. It is a standing menace and a disgrace hindering not only educational development but also the growth of civilization in the colony. (1966: 41)

H.H. Breen made similar remarks about the French creole in St. Lucia. The following is probably the most often quoted remark about that variety:

It is a jargon formed from the French, and composed of words, or rather sounds, adapted to the organs of speech in the black population. [...] It is, in short, the French language, stripped of its manly and dignified ornaments, and travestied for the accommodation of children and toothless old women. (1844: 185)

Creole speakers themselves have been known to be ambivalent about the language. While acknowledging preference for using it for personal communication, for telling jokes and stories, they reject the notion that the language can
be of any use in education and express a preference for English as the medium of instruction.

Such a reaction is understandable when one considers that in colonial times and even today, for that matter, English was the language which opened doors to opportunities in education, which was one of the ways by which colonized people in the territories could achieve economic advancement and upward social mobility. And many of the descendants did achieve economic and social success through mastery of English as a second language. However, education was considered a privilege in those days and the number who could aspire to advanced education was limited.

Emancipation brought freedom to the slaves and their descendants, but the period of colonization extended into the 1960s for many territories. The quest for freedom from a colonial mentality would continue well into the post-colonial era. Chamberlin describes a major objective of colonization as follows:

In the West Indies after emancipation, colonial experience and imperial ambition converged in a determination to turn blacks into whites, or Africans into Europeans. To many European listeners, the absence of articulate language – or more precisely the pressure of what was construed as the inarticulate babble of African languages (with the transfer of some of their intonations into West Indian speech) – was inevitably associated with the absence of coherent thought and civilized feeling. Even enlightened nineteenth-century reformers believed that racial and political equality would only come about when blacks started behaving like whites. (1993: 73)

Ironically, many blacks in the colonial period also espoused this view. Olive Senior captures those nuances in the story “The Two Grandmothers” in presenting the attitudes of one grandmother who lives in rural Jamaica and those of another, who is a socialite from Kingston. The grandmothers are seen through the eyes of their granddaughter.

Mummy, you know Grandma Elaine is so funny she says I’m not to call her Grandma any more, I’m to call her Towser like everybody else for I’m growing so fast nobody would believe that she could have such a big young lady for a granddaughter [...] I said to her, “Grandmother, I mean Towser, Grandma Del introduces me to everyone as her granddaughter she calls me her ‘little gran’.” And Grandma Elaine says “Darling, the way your grandmother Del looks and conducts herself she couldn’t be anything but a grandmother and honey she and I are of entirely different generations.” [...] She’s really mad that you allow me to spend time with Grandma Del. She says “Honey, I really don’t know what your mother thinks she is doing making you spend so much time down there in deepest darkest country. I really must take you in hand. It’s embarrassing to hear some of the things you come out with
This excerpt suggests several of the conflicts that exist within the psychology of the colonized – conflicts that manifest themselves as dichotomies in the work of Caribbean writers. Let us highlight three dominant ones. First there is the black/white dichotomy, the racial divide that has as one of its manifestations the kind of schizophrenia embodied in Towser. Second, there is the dichotomy between cultural values, those of Europe symbolized by the Charm schools, gyms and spas to which Towser refers and the traditional values of Del, the Grandmother who lives in rural Jamaica and for whom castor oil in the hair, church on Sundays in proper dresses and making pimento liqueur and jams from guava and other fruits are the essence of what it means to be Jamaican. Third there is the language dichotomy, standard English as spoken by Towser and the language Towser thinks Del speaks and passes on to her granddaughter, presumably, the creole. “It is embarrassing to hear the things you come out with sometimes.” The granddaughter herself makes specific reference to this later in the text. She imitates the speech of the people in Del’s village. ‘‘WAT – A – WAY – YU – GROW’’ and ‘‘HOW – IS – YU – DAADIE?’’ and ‘‘HOW – IS – YU – MAAMIE?’’ Till I was tired. Mummy, that is the way they talk, you know, just like Richie and the gardener next door. ‘‘WAT – A – WAY – YU – GROW.’’ They don’t speak properly the way we do, you know.” These tensions have been, and are constantly being, explored in the work of Caribbean writers, as when Derek Walcott writes, in “A Far Cry From Africa”:

Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love? (Walcott 1962: 17–18)

Chamberlin suggests that the “most radical division for West Indian poets is that which separates their African and European inheritances.” He explains: “One inheritance, the European language and its literary tradition, is an inheritance of power. And it is held responsible for the powerlessness, which, during slavery and since, has impaired the other inheritance of local imaginative expression in a local language” (1993: 124–25).

Although some Caribbean writers began to use English-lexicon creole and vernacular in their work during the colonial period, Standard (Caribbean)
English was the variety more frequently used in most of the work then. It was as though success as a writer would be determined by the mastery of standard English and the English literary form. Even at the secular level there was an expectation that if one had been educated or had traveled to a foreign country for even the briefest of visits this mastery should be reflected in the language or the “twang” as Louise Bennett calls it in her humorous poem on this subject. She writes, in Jamaican creole:

Me glad de se’s you come back bwoy,
But lawd yuh let me dung,
Me shame o’ yuh soh till all o’
Me proudness drop a grung.

Yuh mean yuh goh dah ‘Merica
An spen six whole mont’ deh,
An come back not a piece betta
Dan how yuh did goh wey

Bwoy yuh noh shame? Is soh you come?
Afta yuh tan soh lang!
Not even licke language bwoy?
Not even little twang?

[...]

Noh back-ansa me bwoy yuh talk
Too bad; shet up yuh mout,
Ah doan know how yuh an yuh puppa
Gwine to meck it out.

Ef yuh want please him meck him tink
Yuh bring back something new.
You always call him “Pa” dis evenin’
Wen him come sey “Poo”. (‘Noh lickle twang,’ Bennett 1966: 209)

In a sense, pieces such as this constitute the beginning of a counter-discourse in English creole. Bennet ridicules the then prevailing belief and expectation that a “new” English (a twang which could be simply accent) could be adopted after a short visit to a foreign country. Through the use of the mother’s voice and the expression of her dismay, Bennett satirizes the notion that the enhancement of language comes easily and superficially. In the next section I examine the ways in which different language varieties in the Caribbean can articulate counter discourses.
4. Decolonization and the validation of alternative varieties

Decolonization is defined simply in *Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus* (1986 edition) as “the granting of independence to a former colony.” The signing of the Independence documents was symbolic of freedom from a relationship which had imposed linguistic and cultural dominance on people of African descent in the Caribbean. The actual process of decolonization, however, is a much longer process involving psychological liberation from external judgements or perceptions about the colonized peoples themselves and their languages. These perceptions are primarily that the languages of the former colonies are in a power relationship with the standard language and that greater currency is given to the language of the former colonizers. Maryse Condé (1998: 102) observes that this relationship has imposed a burden on African and Caribbean writers. She comments that the writers understand that “the control of language is one of the primary aspects of colonial oppression – the dependency of the periphery upon the centre”. She elaborates this view with the comment that “Language is a site of power: who names controls. The politically and economically alienated colonized are first colonized linguistically. In their attempt to gain freedom and self-determination the colonized must put an end to the pre-eminence of the colonial language.”

Putting an end to the pre-eminence of the colonial language means – for many writers in the Caribbean – including creole as one of the languages of narration as well as asserting the idea of creolization or *creolité* as it is referred to in the francophone territories. Ernest Pépin and Raphaël Confiant (1998: 97) explain this process of creolization as “a matter of reclaiming and decolonizing our imaginary; and of assuming our rich bilingual heritage.” Assuming a rich linguistic heritage in the context of the Caribbean would mean an adoption of “an identity of co-existence” but this would first require liberation from the notion that one language is superior and the only medium through which African and Caribbean writers can express the imaginary. A comment by Sartre addresses this notion:

> Black writers have no language common to them all; to incite the oppressed to unite they must have recourse to the words of the oppressor. [...] Like the scholars of the 16th century who understood each other only in Latin, the blacks rediscover themselves only on the terrain full of traps which white men have set for them. (quoted in Chamberlin 1993: 51)

The idea of being trapped or made powerless is taken up later by Chamberlin:

> One inheritance, the European language and its literary tradition, is an inheritance of power. And it is held responsible for the powerlessness which, during slavery and since, has impaired the other inheritance of local imagi-
native expression in a local language. Prestige and power belong on one side, in this scheme; the other seems powerless or picturesque or pathetic.

I would like to examine two of the issues emerging from these comments. The first is the idea in the Sartre statement that Black (writers) can rediscover themselves only on a terrain of traps that the white men have set for them, that terrain being, in the case of the anglophone Caribbean, English. The second issue has to do with the notion of the inheritance of English as one of power and the suggestion that it has impaired the inheritance of the local language.

The first comment speaks directly to the issue of liberation, which is more a political than a linguistic issue. The political aspect is that one language, in this case English, is the best or most appropriate vehicle for expressing a message or articulating the complexity of African or Caribbean imaginary. As long as the colonized continue to buy into this perspective, Sartre’s “traps” can exert their effects and the powerlessness of which Chamberlin writes sets in. The process of decolonization has to initiate the process of psychological and linguistic liberation – a setting free of the imaginary. Liberation can then only come from a shift in perspective from a focus on language to a focus on message. In this perspective, the linguistic perspective, the message is pre-eminent and any language can convey it. For African and Caribbean writers this would mean, in the words of Chinua Achebe, finding “a possible alternative to the European cultural tradition which has been imposed on us and which we have more or less absorbed, for obvious historical reasons, as the only way of doing our business.”

The African writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o sees the mission of education and that of the writer as extending beyond the limitations of “reproducing and preserving a national literature.” He thinks that a choice has to be made between two opposing aesthetics, “the aesthetic of oppression and exploitation and acquiescence with imperialism”; and the “aesthetic of liberation,” which, one infers, would require the use of ways of expression alternative to English, which is associated with oppression and exploitation (1981: 83). Graddol suggests that English has two main functions in the world:

It provides a vehicular language for international communication and it forms the basis for constructing cultural identities. The former function requires mutual intelligibility and common standards. The latter encourages the development of local forms and hybrid varieties. (2001: 27)

It is not just that English forms the basis for constructing cultural identities because these identities already existed and were expressed via indigenous varieties. The contact of English with these varieties does, in fact, create hybrid varieties, but this involves a reconstruction of English forms within a framework of existing linguistic competences that generate alternative lects.
which are themselves creative media of expression. In short, they are media for constructing counter discourses.

This is essentially the concept expressed by Ashcroft et al. (1989): namely, of the empire writing back, of inverting the relationships between centre (represented by English) and periphery (represented by creole) so that the periphery becomes the locus of an interesting enterprise. In Brathwaite’s terms (1971), this creolization involves the “interaction between diverse cultural manifestations and languages.” The centre depends on these manifestations to clarify its own reality. Pennycook (2001: 84) cites Kachru’s reference (1986) to Achebe’s argument (1975) that he does not think it “necessary nor desirable for an African writer to be able to use English like a native speaker.” Achebe asserts that “English will be able to carry the weight of (his) African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.” Pennycook asks the question: “What do we mean when we talk about a new English?” He goes on to suggest that the question is more complex than “a case of new words, new syntax or new phonology” and that Achebe “is concerned not so much with the structural diversity of English as with the cultural politics of new meanings, the struggle to claim and to create meanings in the political arenas of language and discourse” (84). Here we return to the notion of the pre-eminence of message, the message that asserts the cultural identities of the former colonized. Is it a “new” English that Achebe has suggested? It may simply be a morsel of English that is reconstructed to become an alternative variety, another tentacle lopped off from the octopus that is English at the Centre and surviving in its own right.

Caribbean writers have explored – even during the period of colonization – alternative ways of “doing their business” and have succeeded in reaching audiences internationally as these alternative ways of expression have been exported in the literature and the lyrics of reggae and calypso. The vehicles for doing so have been primarily the creoles and the vernaculars that have become stable within Caribbean societies and which have been used to express the cultural realities of the people so that they have become more prized by their speakers than they once were.

Louise Bennett expresses such a sentiment in “Bans o’ Killing”

So yuh a de man, her hear bout!
Ah yuh dem sey dah-teck
Whole heap o’ English oat sey dat
Yuh gwine kill dialect!

Meck me get it straight Mass Charlie
For me noh quite undastan,
Yuh gwine kill all English dialect
Or jus Jamaica one?

Ef yuh dah-equal up wid English
Language, den wha meck
Yuh gwine go feel inferior, wen
It come to dialect?

[...]

Dah language wen yuh proud o’,
Weh yuh honour and respeck,
Po’ Mass Charlie! Yuh noh know sey
Dat it spring from dialect!

Dat dem start fe try tun language,
From de fourteen century,
Five hundred years gwan an dem got
More dialect dan we!

Yuh wi haffe kill de Lancashire
De Yorkshire, de Cockney
De broad Scotch and de Irish brogue
Before yuh start kill me!

Yuh we haffe get de Oxford book
O’ English verse, an tear
Out Chaucer, Burns, Lady Grizelle
An plenty o’ Shakespeare!

Wen yuh done kill “wit” an “humour”
Wen yuh kill “Variety”
Yuh wi haffe fine a way fe kill
Originality!
(Bennett 1966: 218)

So who is the “you”, “de man” in Bennett’s poem? It is the Centre and it is also all the naysayers on the periphery who reject the dialect as language. Bennett makes the point forcefully; that to try to kill the dialect is to kill originality. Notice the repetition of “kill” in the poem. The overt notion of violence perpetrated against language and by extension against its speakers. This same notion is even more graphically conveyed by John Agard in a poem, “Listen Mr Oxford Don,” which uses yet another alternative variety:

Me not no Oxford don
me a simple immigrant
I didn’t graduate
I immigrate

[...]
I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but mugging de Queen’s English
is the story of my life

I dont need no axe
to split/ up yu syntax
I dont need no hammer
to mash up yu grammar

[...]
Dem accuse me of assault
on de Oxford dictionary/
imagin a concise peaceful man like me/
dem want me serve time
for inciting rhyme to riot
but I tekking it quiet
down here in Clapham Common

I’m not a violent man Mr Oxford don
I only armed wit mih human breath
but human breath
is a dangerous weapon

So mek dem send one big word after me
I ent serving no jail sentence
I slashing suffix in self-defence
I bashing future wit present tense
and if necessary

I making de Queen’s English accessory/to my offence
(Brown et al. 1989: 109–10)

This poem picks up a theme originally explored in Bennett’s poem “Colonisation in reverse.” Bennett’s poem suggests that by migrating to England, Jamaicans will “populate de seat o’ Empire” and in effect “tun history upside dung!” (Bennett 1966: 179–80). Agard’s poem examines what happens to the “Queen’s English” in this process of reverse colonization. The irony here is that the periphery exports a language variety (which is itself the product of a
colonizing experience) to the Centre and sets in motion there a process which carries the possibility of creating a “new english”. So the empire writes back in a rich body of literature that constitutes a counter-discourse, which uses, in addition to English, alternative “english” varieties to articulate the reality of the liberation of decolonization.

Ashcroft et al. invoke the creole-continuum theory to present a powerful argument for the independent nature of creoles. It is worth presenting their comment in full.

The theory of the Creole continuum, undermining, as it does, the static models of language formation, overturns ‘concentric’ notions of language which regard ‘Standard’ English as a ‘core’. Creole need no longer be seen as a peripheral variation of English. Those rules which develop as approximations of English rules are by no means random or unprincipled, and the concept of what actually constitutes ‘English’ consequently opens itself to the possibility of radical transformation. It is indisputable that english literature extends itself to include all texts written in language communicable to an english-speaker. Elements of a very wide range of different lects contribute to this, and the only criterion for their membership of english literature is whether they are used or not. (1989: 47)

If creole could be viewed by its native speakers and by those who denigrate it not as an inferior variety of English but as a dynamic, independent rule-governed system which has the potential power for “transforming” the structures which generated it, then it can be given broader scope to be used as an authentic vehicle which can help its users to realize the liberation promised by decolonization.

Richard Terdiman (1985), who discusses the dichotomy of discourse/counter-discourse in a text of the same name, presents this explanation of counter-discourse:

Counter-discourses function in their form. Their object is to represent the world differently. But their projection of difference goes beyond simply contradicting the dominant, beyond simply negating its assertions. The power of a dominant discourse lies in the codes by which it regulates understanding of the social world. Counter-discourses seek to detect and map such naturalized protocols and to project their subversion. (1985: 149)

Ashcroft et al. (1989) distinguish between the types of linguistic groups that exist within postcolonial discourse. They identify “monoglossic, diglossic and polyglossic” groups. Monoglossic groups are described as “single-language societies”, diglossic are bilingual and polyglossic are “polydialectal” such as exist within the Caribbean and where “the world language called english is a continuum of ‘intersections’ in which the speaking habits in various commu-
nities have intervened to reconstruct the language” (39). The authors go on to explain that the reconstruction occurs in two ways:

On the one hand, regional english varieties may introduce words which become familiar to all english-speakers, and on the other, the varieties, themselves produce national and regional peculiarities which distinguish them from other forms of english. (40)

Their identification simply presents the different types of post-colonial linguistic groups but it does not explain how the linguistic codes of the groups are constructed as counter-discourses. I will attempt an explanation.

There are those codes which use the actual words and meaning constructs of Centre language “English” as a means of subverting what Terdiman refers to as “the codes and naturalized protocols of the dominant discourse.” This type is exemplified by the example used in Pennycook (2001: 85) that is supposed to represent what Ali Mazrui (1975, quoted in Pennycook) calls the “anti-commonwealth tendencies” which are part of the English language. Pennycook narrates an anecdote about the Kenyan political leader Tom Mboya, who recited Rudyard Kipling’s poem “If” before a vast crowd on the eve of an election in Nairobi. He asks the question: “What are we to make of the use of a poem by one of the great apologists of imperialism in a political speech by a vehement opponent of imperialism and colonialism?” He gives Mazrui’s explanation, which is as follows:

The cultural penetration of the English language was manifesting its comprehensiveness. That was in part a form of colonization of the African mind. But when Rudyard Kipling is being called upon to serve the purposes of the Africans themselves, the phenomenon we are witnessing may also amount to a decolonizing of Rudyard Kipling. (quoted in Pennycook 2001: 85)

The message that Mazrui may have intended to convey in the first two sentences of his statement is that the cultural penetration which was essential to the colonization of the African (and Caribbean) mind was the ability to recite a wide and varied selection of literature from the Centre with expression and “by heart” as we say in the Caribbean, which simply means to memorize it in its entirety. Mboya’s recitation of “If” therefore serves as both an assertion of that ability of the colonized to absorb and regurgitate the messages and, as Mazrui suggests, using that message to “serve the purposes of the Africans.” But the point must be stressed that using the language of Centre to “write back” constitutes just one type of counter-discourse and here the selection of the piece for content and the context of its use becomes an important factor with respect to the message that is intended. So while it is interesting to consider Mboya’s recitation as an instance of decolonizing Kipling, it would be critical to examine the content of the poem for its message. “If” is such an
interesting example in this regard that the deconstruction of its meaning would require another essay. However, such deconstruction would necessarily involve the counter-thrust of creating alternative constructions of the semantics of decolonization itself.

A second type is exemplified by the use of one of the heritage codes which emerged from an early contact situation. In this category I would also consider the English-lexicon creoles, pidgins such as Tok Pisin and Hawaiian. Louise Bennett’s poem “Bans o’ Killing” is an excellent example of the use of creole to address directly the dichotomous attitudes towards the differences between varieties. The persona takes issue with the idea that one can ‘kill’ a dialect on the basis of judgements about its value as a language. The content of the message and its medium merge to create a powerful counter discourse. Within this category the types of counter-discourses would include a range of text types, including the lyrics of reggae protest tunes and so on. They constitute a set of genres that contextualize and explore the meanings and experiences of the self in relation to the ‘Other’ and also assert the independence of the self.

The third type would include those so-called “new englishes” or what I prefer to call alternative English varieties that have emerged out of more recent and ongoing contact situations. These would include varieties that are closer to the acrolect on a post-creole continuum and would represent further stages of decreolization (in the linguistic sense). What I refer to as the St. Lucian vernacular may well fall into this category but I would like to reserve judgement on this until closer analysis of this variety has been undertaken. John Agard’s “Listen Mr Oxford Don” constitutes an example of a variety that can be included in this category.

The use of the various lects by Caribbean writers asserts the cultural realities of the region while contributing to the liberation and transformation of a colonized mentality. Ashcroft et al. (1989: 38) use the terms “abrogation” and “appropriation” for the processes by which postcolonial writing can define itself as a “medium of power”. They suggest that this can be done by “seizing the language of the Centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.” Abrogation is defined as being the “denial of the privilege of English” which involves a “rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication.” The second process involves the “appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the Centre.” The process of “capturing and remoulding the language to new usages marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege.”

The creation of successful counter-discourses stems from the expert manipulation of the range of varieties which results from multidialectal (/multilingual) competence. This competence also involves the communicative
dimension of an understanding of the cultural contexts or place in which these varieties are used.

In the following section I turn to the issue of the type of critical pedagogy that is likely to diminish the inequalities that exist in the Caribbean context.

5. Creating a critical pedagogy for liberation

It may be worth mentioning the obvious: namely, that unless the inequalities that exist intra-nationally are diminished there can be no reduction of global inequalities particularly as these relate to language differences. In the Caribbean, some children who speak a creole or alternative variety as a first language have difficulty acquiring English as a second language in school. This is not the result of the effects of the first language as is too often mistakenly believed, but it stems more from the lack of an effective pedagogy that can help learners to develop proficiency in the varieties that are available in their communities and to use them appropriately for a range of purposes. The creation of critical pedagogies at the national level is necessary so that speakers of alternative lects can be empowered through language and not be hampered because of the lack of competence in a particular variety.

The question is, what kind of critical pedagogy can realize this? First, pedagogies should be tailored for different situations and contexts, but there must be an understanding of what the objectives of these pedagogies are. Quirk (1990, cited in Swann 1989) argues against the notion that what he refers to as non-native Englishes can be used as models for teaching and learning. Swann (1989) summarizes these arguments and refers to the views of Kachru (1992), who expresses the opinion that English must function as an international language and that those who “make policy decisions about English language teaching need to take account of the ‘realities’ of how English is used and how its speakers feel about it” (27). He also points out that the intentions of non-native speakers will “be linked to the particular social and cultural contexts in which the language is used.” It is important to add that the purposes for which people want to use English must also be considered.

The examples that Quirk presents in his lecture reflect a learning situation of English as a foreign language in which the teacher queries the necessity of correcting expressions like “several informations” and “catched a cold”. From an applied linguistics perspective these are errors that students may make in the process of learning English as a second or foreign language. Quirk reports that the teacher who gave these examples “claimed that he could not bring himself to correct a Spanish pupil for using a form that had currency in an English dialect – any English dialect.” The point is this; if English language teachers, particularly those who teach English as a second language, adopt the
attitude of this teacher, then what is called English will eventually remain within the competence of a few who know the idiom of the language. Can one be said to have acquired a language or a lect, any language or any lect, if one is unfamiliar with its idiom? I think not. It is the responsibility of English language teachers to find ways of helping learners to use the language for the purposes for which they need it. The idiomatic expressions are difficult to learn because there are no fixed rules to guide one in figuring out the meanings. The words in idiomatic expressions are not usually used for their denotative meanings. The question is, does someone who is learning English for the purpose of being able to understand technical documents need to know the full range of idiomatic expressions in English?

If the idiosyncratic expressions that emerge during the learning process become fossilized and if these fossilizations are realized in the speech of a large enough number so that they use it for communication, then one can concede that an alternative variety has possibly been created and that it has some currency for that group of speakers. However, this should not affect the goal of English language teaching, which would be to teach a standard variety. The mistake would be to teach an alternative variety ostensibly for a standard variety. This would subvert the goal and process of English language teaching.

What, then, do we make of situations in the Caribbean in which there are heated debates over what to teach and how to teach? A newspaper in Barbados recently reported on the ongoing debate in Jamaica about the usefulness of using Jamaican creole in education. The paper reported that since many Jamaicans have difficulty understanding English it is shameful to conduct the business of official Jamaica, like Parliament, in a foreign tongue. In St. Lucia a similar argument led to the introduction of the French creole in Parliament. The extension of the function of the creole in this way has given it wider currency and is an official acknowledgement of the bilingual nature of the country. The discussion gets heated in relation to education. Hubert Devonish has made a case for using creole in education. He is quoted in the article as saying “What good is it to teach a child an alphabet for a language he doesn’t speak, that his teacher probably doesn’t speak and then make him read books in that foreign language?” His proposal is to use patois to teach English.

The scepticism of others regarding such a proposition is that the children may end up learning just patois. A mother is quoted as saying “These kids are going to end up learning only Patois. Then what? My kids are going to apply to school in America and write their application essays in Patois?” Because of the emphasis placed on English in the Anglophone Caribbean territories and because of its importance for school purposes, teachers are faced with a real
challenge as they attempt to teach English to creole speakers. The approaches that have been used in the past have not worked well. In most instances an immersion approach has been used but this has not worked partly because of the lack of the proper scaffolding which the approach requires. Research reports have shown subtractive bilingualism to be prevalent – at least in the St. Lucian case – and the functional illiteracy rate is higher than is acceptable or good for the country. When approaches continue to fail and nothing is done to address the causes of failure, the education system becomes directly responsible for perpetrating inequalities. It is therefore important that we be clear about what is required in such contexts.

The need in the Caribbean is for the development of proficiency in the school language, English, for the purposes of writing examinations using the technology to access information, and for getting information from other subjects and so on. This language for school purposes is different from the language that we use for interpersonal communication. Cummins makes a distinction between Basic Interpersonal Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The latter requires the English that is needed for successful functioning in academic work. While BICS in English or alternative varieties will do reasonably well for casual communication, it is not appropriate for academic purposes. CALP therefore has to be a primary purpose for teaching English for academic purposes.

Studies have shown that learners approach “native like levels of conversational skills within two years of exposure to English, whereas they require a period of five to seven years of school exposure for them to achieve as well as native speakers in academic aspects of English” (Cummins 1994: 39). In most Caribbean contexts even that number of years of schooling is not sufficient. One important research finding that has not received attention in the Caribbean is that “the better developed children’s first language conceptual foundation, the more likely they are to develop similarly high levels of conceptual abilities in their second language” (Cummins 1994: 38). In the Caribbean, this means the use of the alternative variety in a way that will be beneficial to learners. Cummins makes the additional point that “the positive results of programs that continue to promote literacy in L1 throughout elementary school can be attributed to the combined efforts of reinforcing students’ cultural identity and their conceptual growth” (1994: 39). The results of an ongoing study being conducted in St. Lucia with French creole speakers support these findings (Simmons–McDonald, in press). However, there are complexities that have to be considered in the case of creoles with the same lexical base as the standard language. The work currently being done with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers by Rickford as well as with SLV speakers in St. Lucia (Simmons–McDonald) also shows that
development of proficiency in CALP in English is vastly improved when attention is given to the conceptual development of the first language (in this case, the alternative variety). The use of literature that makes use of alternative varieties is useful for that very purpose. It heightens learner awareness of the contrasts between English and “English”, and results in multi-literacy and higher levels of proficiency in the English that is needed for success in school.

A critical pedagogy, therefore, is one that is tailored in specific ways to realize the objectives of multidialectalism and multi-literacy, which is precisely what speakers of alternative varieties need in order to break the cycle of inequality. One way of doing this is to include the first language in the learning process. How this can be done will involve a lengthy discussion that cannot be taken up in this essay. It suffices to say that serious consideration of alternative ways of instruction that take into account the cultural realities of the learners and different ways of learning is necessary if the process of decolonization is to be taken to its ultimate conclusion, namely, the complete intellectual liberation of the people of the Caribbean region and their empowerment through utilization as counter-discourses of the range of lects that are available within their communities.

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Re-Reading the Religious Bodies of Postcolonial Literature

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ABSTRACT

English, as the dominant world language, defines the Western construction of the term ‘religion’. Realizing the assumptions being carried by the Western, English-speaking imagination – ie, that religion or, more specifically, religious bodies, are devoid of power – how can characters such as Ella out of Erna Brodber’s novel Myal (1988) or Beloved from Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved (1987) be understood and read? I will propose a redefinition of the category religion using a postcolonial agenda. This agenda embraces religious bodies as powerful, albeit filled with an ambiguous power, which can be understood more successfully through heteronymous readings that transcend Western doctrine and ideology.

BEING INVOLVED IN INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES across English and Religious Studies led me to an interesting area of research within postcolonial theory. A debate currently circulating in religious studies is the problematic of the term ‘religion’ itself. As a genealogically Western, or specifically English spoken category, ‘religion’ needs to be challenged. It has been constructed and dominated by the ‘English’ narratives of Christianity,¹ which have restricted the diverse religious

¹ I am here, and throughout the essay, referring to the English translations of the Bible, which have often been used to perpetuate colonial violence. It is these Christian narratives, and the impact the European division between church and state had on social and academic perceptions, that has dominated the English-imagined assumptions of what religion is.
identities of the world, and is therefore contradictory to the motivations of postcolonial theory. However, I will show that it is still an important category that can transcend the English spoken and imagined assumptions of what religion is.

‘Religion’ in the sense it is discussed here is a Western construction and therefore loaded with Western assumptions. These assumptions strip the religious body of power and construct religion as primitive, superstitious and irrational. By using the term ‘religion’ to describe and explain the actions, behaviour and beliefs of millions of people world-wide, these Western assumptions are being used to understand the actions of the ‘other’. This therefore becomes an essential area for the postcolonial theorist to address. I will firstly examine the genealogy of the term ‘religion’ and how it became so distorted. I will then address several questions: Should we discard the term altogether, as some suggest? How can characters such as Ella out of Erna Brodber’s novel Myal (1988), and Beloved from Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved (1987) be understood if we either discard the category or use the English-speaking imagination to understand them? They won’t be understood. My argument is to propose a re-reading of the category ‘religion’ using a postcolonial agenda while confronting the postcolonialist’s fear of using such a term. This agenda embraces religious bodies as powerful, albeit filled with an ambiguous power, which can be understood more successfully through heteronomous readings that transcend Western doctrine and ideology.

For a very brief genealogy of the category religion we should start with the etymology of the word. It goes back to Latin religio, ‘bond’ or ‘reverence’, and is therefore rooted in Western semiotics. In the third century the term became ‘christianized’. Those who worshipped the ‘one true God’, the God of Christianity, were religious.

The Enlightenment is also an essential period in the development of Western conceptions of ‘religion’. The Enlightenment, which took place within the eighteenth-century, had a major impact on Western intellectual thought. As it spread across Europe, church and state divided; rationality and reason emerged as the new faith. Religion was increasingly labelled as irrational and set up in opposition to intellect and science. And, as Richard King states,

We should be aware, therefore, that the central explanatory category of religious studies, namely the notion of ‘religion’ itself, is a Christian theological category. Like the terms ‘mystical’ and ‘mysticism’, ‘religion’ is a culturally specific social construction with a particular genealogy of its own. In applying this category to the study of non-Western cultures, one should therefore be aware of the theological origins of the term. (1999: 40)

It has been established that ‘religion’ is a Western term, rooted in Western history and developed in conjunction with the English language. Religion is a
part of the politics of the English language. Where do we go from here? How do we approach non-Western cultures with a predominantly Western term?

The response by Tim Fitzgerald, which is echoed by many, is to “delete the word ‘religion’” altogether (2000: 4). As the researcher becomes more aware of “the theological domination of ‘religion’ the more irrelevant the concept of religion will become, except as an ideological construct of western and western-dominated societies” (Fitzgerald 2000: 8). All the term appeals to, as it stands, is Western imperialism. Do postcolonial theorists therefore have an obligation to cease using the term ‘religion’ because of the loaded assumptions it carries?

If we do this, how do we interpret recurring scenes like the one I am about to quote from Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*?\(^2\) *Beloved* is the story of Sethe, a woman brought up in slavery. The physical scarring on her back, which is shaped like a tree, is a daily reminder of the inner torment that scratches the depths of her soul. To prevent her children having to live through the same nightmare, Sethe kills her newborn baby. The only word she can afford to put on the gravestone is *Beloved*. Sethe becomes an outcast of the community, taking her other daughter, Denver, with her. But Beloved returns to claim the affection and love from her mother that she was denied at birth. The point at which we pick up the story is when Beloved, whose jealous and vicious love is cutting into Sethe like a knife, has drained Sethe of life.

When the women assembled outside 124, Sethe was breaking a lump of ice into chunks. She dropped the ice pick into her apron pocket to scoop the pieces into a basin of water. When the music entered the window she was wringing a cool cloth to put on Beloved’s forehead […] Both women heard it at the same time and both lifted their heads […] They saw Denver sitting on the steps and beyond her, where the yard met the road, they saw the rapt faces of thirty neighbourhood women […] For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and trembled like the baptized in its wash. The singing women recognised Sethe at once and surprised themselves by their absence of fear when they saw what stood next to her. The devil-child was clever, they thought. And beautiful. It had taken the shape of a pregnant woman, naked and smiling in the heat of the afternoon sun. Thunderblack and

\(^2\) In the oral presentation of the paper, the same scene was shown from the film adaptation of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (Touchstone Home Videos). It is an extremely powerful and visual clip, and this should be taken into account when reading the quotation.
glistening, she stood on long straight legs, her belly big and tight. Vines of her hair twisted all over her head. Jesus. Her smile was dazzling. (Morrison 1987: 261)

In this scene, and many others in postcolonial literature, ‘religion’ best describes what is taking place; as, for Sethe, the sound of the singing made one tremble ‘like the baptized in its wash’ (Morrison 1987: 261). Religion encompasses so much more than suggested replacement words such as ‘spiritual’, ‘transcendental’, and ‘ritual’ including its Western and Christian legacy. In order to historically, politically and sociologically understand and interpret scenes such as that in Beloved, which expose the fragmented identities caused by slavery and colonization, it is important to use the word ‘religion’. For example, the community forgive Sethe and come together as a religious body to heal her and help her move on from her tragic past. Also, the presence of the white colonial man (who appears in the next paragraph riding his horse, and who sends Sethe into a trance of re-living her tragic past) confronts the Western image of what religion is and how religious bodies should behave. Its baggage (ie, white Christianity’s colonial legacy and its involvement in slavery) is part of the process. Instead of hiding away from it, we should confront it.

The identity of the African – or any other – diaspora is about living on the boundaries and relocating, or re-reading borders and territory. Religion is an essential part of this process as a result of the extent of its involvement in colonization and slavery. Religion and postcolonialism, as disciplines, meet on an awkward threshold; one is confronting its own Western ideologies, while the other is deconstructing Western ideologies. Catherine Albanese discusses religion as an essential yet slippery category that both takes place on borders and sets up boundaries.

Religion cannot be defined very easily because it thrives both within and outside of boundaries. It crosses and crisscrosses the boundaries that definitions want to set because paradoxically, it too concerns boundaries. The boundaries of religion, however, are different from the logical boundaries of good definitions. In the end, religion is a feature that encompasses all of human life. It exists in organised and informal versions, among rich and poor, with thisworldly and otherworldly orientations, and so forth. So it is difficult if not impossible to define religion. (Albanese 1999: 3)

This poststructuralist interpretation of the category of ‘religion’ allows it to transcend the strict homogeneous definition that dominates the English-speaking imagination and makes space for a more heteronomous framework that embraces the powerful religious bodies throughout the diaspora.
A perfect example of an ambiguously powerful religious body in postcolonial literature is Erna Brodber’s character Ella from her novel *Myal* (1988). Written in stylized Caribbean dialect, this novel challenges the anglophone imagination through the very idiom it is written in. It allows no space for assumptions. It escapes definitions and boundaries. And it is steeped in what has to be understood as religiosity: It is a hybrid of (non-Western) Christianity, African traditions, Rastafarianism and voodoo. ‘Myal’ is the community’s reaction to obeah, or spirit-thievery: returning souls to their rightful owners. This myal team includes a Baptist minister and a Methodist minister’s wife. Ella herself is neither black nor white; she is an “alabaster baby” (Brodber 1988: 7) and is suspended from the three axes of power: race, class and gender. After Ella has married the American, Selwyn, who swiftly steals her spirit to create a “coon show”; she “trips out indeed” and only the community (and myal) can save her:

– I have been bad from the beginning. I had better pray that the Lord Jesus enter in and cleanse me. – But she wouldn’t let him enter in the right form and through the right door. He could only come as the baby Jesus, into her uterus, fully nine months, curled up fetal fashion and ready to be delivered at any time.

Only then did she speak to her husband:

– Mammy Mary’s mulatto mule must have maternity wear. – she said it fast:
– Mammy Mary’s mulatto mule must have maternity wear – she said it slow:
– Mammy Mary’s mulatto mule must have maternity wear. –

She sang it. She said it in paragraphs. She said it forever. Ella had tripped out indeed. Selwyn was scared stiff. (Brodber 1988: 84)

Is the postcolonial theorist ironically echoing the colonizer, represented in both the clip from the film adaptation of *Beloved* and by Selwyn in *Myal*, by refusing to discuss characters like Ella as religious, by being “scared stiff” of postcolonial religious bodies? Is there a fear of exoticizing or othering if the term ‘religious’ is used? This is a dependency on the Western construction of religion, from the Enlightenment, which labels it as an irrational, backward and primitive way of dealing with life. We must abandon these ‘hang-ups’ and re-orientate our approach to an understanding of religion, so that the power-relations being exchanged through Ella’s, and others’, religious bodies can be fully appreciated, and the diasporic identity can be understood in its entirety.

Other postcolonial literature which has powerful religious imagery includes Wilson Harris’s novel *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), which takes the form of a Christian religious journey or pilgrimage that includes a meeting with Christ as a carpenter, Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*, and Pauline Melville’s collection of short stories, *Shape Shifter* (1990). The list could
easily be extended. Those works are full of complex yet powerful experiences that are rooted in hybridity and migration. It is here that we should echo Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, who celebrate heterogeneity and diversity as part of postcolonial and diasporic identity. Religiosity should be understood as diverse and changing: its colonial legacy should be confronted so that it can be understood and applied to the diverse and changing identities of the diaspora. As David Chidester says, “the academic study of religion might actually be well positioned to rise to the challenge of the postcolonial through sustained attention to the strategic locations and dislocations of the human in the new contact zones” (Chidester 2000: 435).

If we confront our fears of exoticizing and othering, and use the category ‘religion’, not through the homogeneous English-speaking imagination, but through the heterogeneous dialects of the diaspora, the creativity and power of the postcolonial identity is realized.

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An African’s Trouble with His Masters’ Voices

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Abstract

The Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw appropriates Evangelical discourse in order to establish Gronniosaw’s moral authority, which is derived from Gronniosaw’s submission to God, has to be authenticated by clerical authorities and allows him to criticize his corrupt masters. Gronniosaw exposes discrepancies between his masters’ religious and economic discourses and practices less by direct argument than by the negating force of conspicuous silence, by repetitions of scenes of abuse and abject poverty and by the ironic emplotment of his life. Being a good Christian alienates him from Western society and endangers his very survival in a commercial culture, which undermines the language of the spirit and compares unfavourably to the African subsistence economy.

Why has the flood of criticism of slave narratives almost bypassed Ukawsaw Gronniosaw’s autobiography of 1770? It seems that his decision to write a spiritual autobiography does not allow any space for individuality and African culture, so that the text does not respond to interests in the emancipation of Africans. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. asks how an African can make a white text speak with a black voice (1988: 55). According to Gates, Gronniosaw overcomes the Bible’s initial silence for the illiterate African by mastering reading and writing, which enables him to construct a self according to the Western tradition at the cost of his African culture and identity (1988: 62–63, 65). Gates argues that the act of writing repudiates the white Great Chain of Being, which places the
African at the level of animals, but insists that the black voice is absent in a language that posits “the irreducible element of cultural difference” (1988: 70) between white and black. Gates suggests, but does not perform, a dialogic reading of the text. Helen Thomas is much more aware of the dialogic potential of the slave narrative, which appropriates rather than assimilates Evangelical discourse, in which the dispossessed are empowered by the spirit and give voice to protest like Dissenters (2000: 167, 183, 188). Gronniosaw’s narrative neither excludes a black perspective according to Gates nor “articulates an uninterrupted continuum of preslavery cultural identity and [...] ancestral spirits” according to Thomas (2000: 197). Instead, the black voice is not simply absent but asserted as a negative and negating presence that presents assimilation as alienation from African and Anglo-American cultures.

I would like to put forward three arguments concerning Gronniosaw’s position in and between English discourses:

1. Gronniosaw reveals discrepancies between the voice of God and the voices of his masters. Foucault maintains that a discursive system determines who is entitled to speak with authority in which ways about what to whom (1991: 22–30). Authority is a thorny issue in Evangelicalism. Sacvan Bercovitch points out that the Bible is the sole authority for the individual Puritan, who becomes his own exegete, a fact which sparked intrasectarian conflicts about the correct reading of the text (1975: 28). Authority is subject to negotiation in Gronniosaw’s communication with God and his Christian masters.

2. None of the critics I am aware of takes full account of Gronniosaw’s “digression” on African life, which juxtaposes the African subsistence economy and the Western capitalist economy.

3. Gronniosaw exposes discrepancies between his masters’ religious and economic discourses. His marginal voice negotiates the conflict between religion and commerce, a core problem of British identity and international position in the eighteenth century (see Dabydeen 1985: 45).

According to his autobiography, Gronniosaw was a Prince of Borno in what is today Northern Nigeria. The boy came with an ivory merchant to the Gold Coast, where he was sold into slavery. He was educated and converted by one of his masters, a Dutch Minister, in New York, who set him free upon his death. After doing several odd jobs in the American colonies, he enlisted with the British army, fought in Martinique and Cuba, and finally arrived in England in 1762–63. He married a poor English woman, who shared his struggle for survival. In about 1770, the aged immigrant published the story of his life. Gronniosaw came to the West at the time of the Great Awakening in North America in the first half of the eighteenth century (Ferguson 1994: 395) and the Evangelical Revival in England in the second half (Porter 1990: 308).
These movements share an antagonism towards moral corruption and materialism in a capitalist society, which threatens to displace God by money. Nobody seems better qualified to discuss the difficult relationship between God and Mammon than the Puritan businessman and bankrupt, Daniel Defoe. In 1707, Defoe praises, albeit with tongue in cheek, the power of money with allusions to Christ’s miracles:

Well art thou called the god of this world [...] Thou makest homely things fair, old things young, crooked things straight; thou hast the great remedy of love, thou can’st give the blind an eye, the lame a leg, the froward a temper, and the scandalous a character. (1951: 131–32)

Defoe wavers between the definition of money as “the vehicle of Providence” (1951: 131) and as an agent of its own. He calls money a “necessary evil” that even its critics strive for – its legal possession, he maintains, “is the true foundation of order in the world”; money is “the mighty center of human action, the great rudder the world steers by, the vast hinge the globe turns on” (1951: 133). Gronniosaw, by contrast, forms a contrast between religion and money, but has to realize that he can hardly escape the rule of commerce.

In order to understand how Gronniosaw speaks about religion and the economy we have to discuss the question of authority and authorization. An instance of misappropriated authority in the story serves as a mise en abîme for Gronniosaw’s autobiography. Gronniosaw, like Caliban, first learns to curse in the other language but contains his swearing after this experience: an old black slave warns him not to swear or he will be taken by the devil to burn in hell. Gronniosaw repeats this lesson to his swearing mistress, expressing his concern for her welfare. The old slave is severely punished and excluded from the company of the domestic slaves. Gronniosaw is left unharmed but decides to refrain from swearing in the future; whether from fear of punishment in this world or the next he does not say (2000 [1772]: 12–13). The black slave is not authorized to employ God’s discourse in a way that gives him moral superiority over his secular master, but his masters violate Christian ethics by cursing and by punishing the moral agent. Gronniosaw tries not to antagonize his masters. He learns his lesson and refrains from commenting on his masters’ behaviour, but the acute reader will perceive the implied value judgement on his masters. If Gates complains about Gronniosaw’s acculturation, he ignores the strategic silence we have to pay close attention to. The scarcity of explicit interpretation draws our attention to repetitions, gaps, contradictions and arguments by emplotment. Gronniosaw has a penchant for repetition with a difference. Thus, the scene discussed above is preceded by a similar situation in which he decides as a young boy to no longer openly question his tribe’s faith because his father threatens to beat him. The Christian
masters teach the slaves not to turn their discourse against them as his father teaches him not to question the basic tenets of his culture. Since the impoverished African tells his story to a white amanuensis and addresses white readers who are steeped in Christianity and capitalism, we can hardly expect explicit criticism of their basic assumptions but have to look for implicit value judgements. The arbitrary or hostile reactions of masters towards the subaltern’s questioning or appropriation of authority demand a reading for multiple meanings, which the authorizing preface attempts to contain.

In the preface to the slave narrative, the Methodist clergyman Walter Shirley suggests a strictly Evangelical interpretation of the text (see Thomas 2000: 193). Shirley stresses the providential design in Gronniosaw’s life, and particularly his “saving Heart-Acquaintance and Union with the triune God in Christ reconciling the World unto himself; and not imputing their Trespasses” (2000 [1772]: 4). He characterizes the African as a patient Christian, who does not judge evil but endures it patiently: “he would rather embrace the Dung-hill, having Christ in his Heart, than give up his spiritual Possessions and Enjoyment, to fill the Throne of Princes” (4). The Methodist presents Gronniosaw as an object in a moral economy, in which Gronniosaw was purchased by the cross, is given a good character by “creditable Persons,” and is therefore entitled to the Christian reader’s “charitable Regard” (4).

The heathen Africans pray to their gods in silence, which suggests that these gods do not “signify.” The heathen boy, who has an inkling of one superior Being, is addressed by God in an inarticulate voice of thunder that paralyses the boy with fear. When Gronniosaw’s first white master reads prayers from the Bible, he is amazed to see the book talk to the white man, and is very disappointed that the book does not speak to him when he puts his ears to it. Instead of attributing the silence to his ignorance of the other language, the boy thinks that the book despises his race. The young slave gradually acquires Dutch and English, improving his understanding of his white masters and the Bible, but he feels too wicked to follow Christ’s call (11–16). The silent service under a palm tree in Africa is displaced by Gronniosaw’s prayer to God under an oak tree in America. Richard Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted prepares him for God’s answers to his prayers and his conversion experience: “I was so drawn out of myself, and so fill’d and awed by the Presence of God that I saw (or thought I saw) light inexpressible dart from heaven upon me” (17). The awesome spiritual displacement of the self by God reminds us of the displacement of the slave’s legal and social person by the master who possesses him. But Gronniosaw puts himself implicitly above his worldly masters, echoing Baxter: “I blest God for my poverty, that I had no worldly riches or grandeur to draw my heart from Him” (18; cf Baxter 1995 [1657]: 14, 104). In accord with Baxter, Gronniosaw would like to turn
away from this world, but secular concerns force him to return to worldly affairs in order to survive. In spite of his covenant with the ultimate authority, Gronniosaw is aware of the fact that his illumination “will not gain credit with many” because the mystical experience “cannot be expressed and only conceived by those who have experienced the like” (17). Gronniosaw qualifies as a member of the elect but knows that worldly masters have to authorize the spiritual elevation of the African. After his master’s death and his manumission, Gronniosaw follows his late master’s voice, travels to the Netherlands, and is accredited by Dutch Calvinist ministers, to whom he successfully relates his experience, being inspired by God’s words: “they were all very well satisfied, and persuaded I was what I pretended to be” (26). His credit as a Christian, however, does not bring him worldly credit or money. On the contrary, Gronniosaw’s appropriation of Baxter’s Puritan discourse and its deprecation of the pursuit of wealth increases his alienation from worldly society. It would be wrong, however, merely to relate Gronniosaw’s attitude towards money to his assimilation into Puritanism because it goes back to the subsistence economy of his home country.

In Africa, the author maintains, the palm tree provides food, drink and clothing to the people (6). John Locke would have compared these Africans to early human beings, who “contented themselves with what un-assisted Nature offered to their Necessities” (1988 [1690]: 299); everyone had a right to take as much as he could use (298). Locke distinguishes the truly useful but perishable things men need for the support of their lives from gold, which “has its value only from the consent of Men” (301). The difference between the African subsistence economy and the Western capitalist economy is crucial to an understanding of Gronniosaw’s attitude towards money and Western slavery. His path into slavery is quite unusual. The boy leaves home on a spiritual quest prompted by his discontent with the heathen faith in order to become acquainted with white people. The king of the Gold Coast mistakes him for a spy, sentences him to death, but then pardons him on condition that he be sold into slavery. Gronniosaw becomes desperate to exchange his social death as a slave for his real death because nobody wants to buy the boy who is too small. It is not his value as a slave that makes a Dutch captain buy him “for two yards of check” (2000 [1772]: 11). He appeals in his own language to a Dutch captain, “father, save me” (11), which, of course, the Dutchman cannot understand but God must have heard. Gronniosaw takes recourse to God’s intervention to explain the bargain in one line, but explains in seven lines how “large [a] quantity of gold” (11) he had in rings and chains, which he gladly parted with. Henry Louis Gates maintains that Gronniosaw betrays his African heritage by willingly exchanging his chain of gold for a set of Western clothes (1988: 61). But Gronniosaw symbolically exchanges the gold, which
was of no use to him, for his life, which seems to have been of no use to the trader. By expressing his disregard for the gold, which enriched the slaver, he points out the difference between the heathen and the “serious” (11) Christian, who profits from the slave trade. In view of the narrator’s Puritan aversion to wealth, the adjective “serious” for the Christian takes on an ironic hue. If the value of gold or money, according to Locke, depends upon the consent of men, Gronniosaw clearly refuses to acknowledge its value. Gold had been the fundamental value of the Anglo-American economies since the mercantile nations used it to guarantee their currency and based the estimate of their power on bullion. We can read Gronniosaw’s belittlement of gold as an implicit subversion of what Defoe calls “the true foundation of order in the world” (1951: 133). However, the scene shows that Gronniosaw cannot have access to Christianity without being submitted to the rules of commerce. As a slave, Gronniosaw suffers from spiritual setbacks, but as a free man, he tends to suffer from worldly needs. But Gronniosaw insists how important freedom is to him: he repeats three times in four lines that his master left him his freedom on his deathbed (18). His silence on the evils of slavery and his interpretation of his abuse and mistreatment as a free African as divine tribulations must not be misunderstood as a plea for benevolent patriarchal slavery but should be seen as a concession to his former masters and to Christian readers. The emplotment of his story suggests an ironic reversal of situations: Africa is marked by spiritual poverty and economic welfare; North America and England are rich but driven by spiritual and economic “warfare.” Gronniosaw is well-off but discontented in Africa, poor and full of spiritual doubts in America, and destitute but firm in faith in England.

Disappointed with the spiritual wilderness in North America, Gronniosaw embarks for England in order to be among Christians and escape “cruelty or ingratitude” (22). However, his chosen land turns out to be the dung-hill mentioned in the preface, a place of sin that is “worse than Sodom (considering the great advantages they have)” (23). His life in England becomes an alternating series of destitution and relief reaching him through Evangelical worthies, thanks to God’s intervention.

The African and his family are threatened with eviction, and are forced to pawn their clothes and sell their bed for want of money to buy food. Gronniosaw dwells extensively on a situation where the starving family was glad to survive upon one raw carrot (29) a day. Their lack of shelter, clothing and food is explained as a test of his faith, but also compares unfavourably with the ease of natural subsistence in Africa. Gronniosaw does not need to tell us explicitly that the misery he suffers gives the lie to the superiority of a capitalist economy over a subsistence economy. Gronniosaw and his wife appear to be willing and able to work hard, but nevertheless are victims of unemploy-
ment and cutthroat competition among workers. However, Gronniosaw refrains from joining the labourers in their struggle for higher wages because he leaves justice up to God and does not belong to the English. Time and again, the family depends on the private charity of Christians, because Gronniosaw as an immigrant is not entitled to charity from a parish. The moral economy of charity makes up for the deficiency of the moneyed economy. The English moral economy, however, not only complements capitalism but is based upon capitalism, which generates profits that to some extent are redistributed by charity and maintains the worldly hierarchy between haves and have-nots. Gronniosaw himself donates all the money he does not need for his bare survival to those in need. Again, he does not act according to capitalist rules or even those of prudence, but follows Baxter’s strict appeal not to pursue worldly wealth as well as the rules of subsistence economy. Giving alms without regard to himself, Gronniosaw time and again is in need of charity himself and never rises above others: his Christian selflessness leads to financial ruin, which in turn forces him to pay more attention to worldly concerns in order to survive.

Nevertheless, he seems to be content with his lot: “I am willing, and even desirous to be counted as nothing, a stranger in the world, and a pilgrim here” (25–26). He became a non-person as a slave and was treated as a nobody in England and America due to his race and his poverty: he is nothing and he has “nothing” (33). The Christian nothing, however, is completed by God. Gronniosaw hopes, in agreement with Baxter, that his worldly losses will be made up by God: “I am not without hope that they [the trials and troubles] have been all sanctified to me” (26): ie, rendered spiritually profitable to him. The writer follows Baxter in his credit of God’s word instead of credit in this world (Baxter 1995 [1657]: 60, 140). He hopes for a good return on his investment and the maximum profit of eternal salvation for temporal humiliation. Barely able to survive in England, the African immigrant desires his release from the diaspora:

As Pilgrims, and very poor Pilgrims, we are travelling through many difficulties towards our HEAVENLY HOME, and waiting patiently for his gracious call, when the Lord shall deliver us out of the evils of this present world and bring us to the EVERLASTING GLORIES of the world to come. (2000 [1772]: 33–34)

If we consider that he came to England as his chosen land, this final sentence of his autobiography expresses his utter disillusionment with the country. Gronniosaw would be a prime example of Paul Gilroy’s Black Atlantic culture as an everlasting journey in diaspora.
In the end, the moral and the monetary economies meet: Gronniosaw’s ethics pay in this world, because he can sell his autobiography. The spiritual autobiography can be read as an investment that pays moral interest by edifying readers, or as paper-credit in a moral economy in which, for once, morals raise money, and the donors may pay for their ‘credit’ in the world beyond. The fact that Gronniosaw sells best as “nothing” recalls Defoe’s glorification of credit as a “substantial non-entity” that transforms nothing into something, paper into money (1951: 116–18). In an economic era that depended heavily on growing credit transactions and in which “all forms of credit-worthy paper – even lottery tickets – tended to become negotiable and pass into circulation” (Porter 1990: 188), a creditable spiritual autobiography was a “good” investment.

Gronniosaw’s deprecation of wealth and his charitable dispensation of surplus can be traced back to Puritanism as well as to an African subsistence economy. Gronniosaw is doubly inscribed as nothing, because he yields his self in Christian terms and owns nothing in economic terms. By embracing nothing as his identity, the African refuses to follow the rules of Western society and capitalism and is entitled to charity, an exchange of something for nothing. The politics of Puritan discourse makes him trust in divine rather than worldly justice and enable him to raise his voice in protest against wealth and capitalism. Thus, the African is not simply absent from his text, as Gates maintains, but voices his conspicuous silent protest by gaps, contradictions and emplotment against hypocritical Christian capitalists who retrieve gold and slaves from the colonies in the service of Mammon. Gronniosaw’s discourse of negation prefigures Friday’s more radical resistance to interaction and involvement with the English in Coetzee’s Foe. At the end of the novel, Friday, who seems to be autistic, puts on Foe’s robe and wig and writes “rows and rows of the letter o” (1986: 152).

WORKS CITED


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ABSTRACT

Homi Bhabha defines the concept of hybridity as that moment when colonial discourse exhibits traces of the language of the Other, thus enabling the critic to trace complex movements of disarming alterity in the colonial text. I will argue that the same process applies the other way round: the post-colonial text exhibits traces of the language of the Other, that is traces of colonial rhetorical strategies. As a direct consequence of ‘psychological’ or ‘cultural’ colonization, this interaction of discourses seems to be most notoriously foregrounded in the so-called narratives of return. Building on various theories surrounding the notions of ‘home’ and ‘hybridity’ this essay will explore the particular discursive strategies employed in an exemplary narrative of return. Caryl Phillips’s novel *A State of Independence* (1986) is presented from the perspective of an African-Caribbean homecomer – equipped with ‘imperial eyes’ (Pratt) – whose nostalgic dream of home reifies into an extremely problematic experience. In my essay I will attempt to show that the particular narrative and discursive strategies employed in the text are prime indicators of the hybrid nature both of the migrant or diasporic subject and his discourse.

How far he had traveled both in miles and time

(*A State of Independence*)

OMI BHABHA DEFINES the concept of hybridity as that moment when colonial discourse exhibits traces of the language of the Other, thus enabling the critic to trace complex movements of
disarming alterity in the colonial text (Young 1995: 22). I would like to argue that the same process applies the other way round: the postcolonial text exhibits traces of the language of the Other – traces of colonial rhetorical strategies. As a direct consequence of what I would term ‘psychological’ or ‘cultural’ colonization, this interaction of discourses seems to be most notoriously foregrounded in narratives of return. In this sense, the narrative discussed in this essay constitutes a representative example of these particular discursive strategies.  

Caryl Phillips’s novel *A State of Independence* (1986) presents the return of an African-Caribbean homecomer whose nostalgic dream of home reifies into an extremely problematic experience. As a returned exile from England – the former colonial power – the main character, Bertram Francis, comes home equipped with *imperial eyes*, to quote the title of Mary Louise Pratt’s influential study. 

In this essay, I will show that the specific discourse of homecoming is nurtured by the interplay of belonging and difference and gives expression to what Stuart Hall refers to as a “process of identification and otherness” (1996: 445). This “doubling” (445) – as Hall also calls this process – operates within the exiled individual resulting in his split or hybrid identity, which determines his perception and representation of the people and the place he returns to or explores. In this context the American anthropologist Jeannette Mageo’s idea of “competing systems of self” (1995: 283) may be useful in describing the returnee’s experience. According to Mageo, part of this experience is that “the self can be the site for the play of discourses” (291). From this it follows that a person may possess distinct discourses to manoeuvre his patchwork self. The returnee could consequently be described as bilingual, not in the sense of speaking two different languages, but in possessing two frequently conflicting cultural discourses. In other words, repatriates could be said to have that ‘Other’ – the lingual Other – within the self. 

It is precisely manifestations of this discursive Otherness within the self that I will discuss with reference to *A State of Independence* as a representative narrative of return. As I will argue, this alternative discursive Other manifests itself in traces of rhetorical conventions commonly associated with colonial discourse as an immediate result of the homecomer’s ‘positioning’ in-between cultures. As Stuart Hall reminds us, the return to the homeland is therefore never a “simple ‘return’ to the past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present” (1996: 448). There is no simple ‘reco-

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1 The discursive similarities between returnee literature and colonial literature also stem from the fact that narratives of return may be viewed as a sub-genre of travel and exploration writing and thus almost inevitably follow conventional discursive modes typical of the genre.
very’ that is not “transformed by the identit[y] of the present” (1996: 448). Bertram and other returnees thus fall into the category of those individuals whom David Spurr, in his discussion of Michel Leiris’ famous essay on ethnography and colonialism, calls “the most culturally compromised members of [post]colonial society, the native-born but European-educated evolués” (1993: 139; my insertion).

At this stage it should be clarified that in this study the term colonial discourse is used in the widest sense of the word and is not limited to a specific historical period. In her extensive study on travel writing, Mary Louise Pratt points out that certain standard colonial tropes “get repeated in contemporary travel accounts written deep in the post-colonial era of ‘underdevelopment’ and decolonization” (1992: 217). Following David Spurr, I will more specifically treat colonial discourse as a series of rhetorical principles which “survive beyond the classic colonial era and which continue to color perceptions of the non-Western world” (1993: 8).

Apart from the meta-historical nature of colonial discourse and its relevance beyond a circumscribed historical time and space, the idea of investigating instances of colonial discourse in narratives of return was suggested by an additional recurrent theme in these texts. The returnee’s experience of disorientation is frequently complicated by rejection by the natives. Swift Dickinson has aptly summarized the predicament of the homecomer as follows: “The exile-intruder is dis-placed into a colonialist by the local, who recognizes [in him] a shadow of the oppressor” (1993: 121). For the purpose of my essay and following from all of the above, I therefore propose to understand this shadow as the shadow of the colonial within the homecomer that has manifest repercussions on the discursive practices in returnee literature.

Other critics have not failed to notice the split in Bertram’s character. Referring to the standard insider/outside division, Jesús Varela Zapata, for example, describes him as an “ambivalent character […] whose vision [is] at the same time that of the insider and of the foreigner” (1999: 397). This critic even makes reference to Mary Louise Pratt’s Imperial Eyes and travel accounts of the so-called Third World, without, however, further pursuing this train of thought by applying Pratt’s model to the novel. In this study I will, therefore, take a systematic look at any evidence of colonial discourse, basing my analysis in particular on the categories provided in Imperial Eyes (1992) and Spurr’s The Rhetoric of Empire (1993).

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2 Pratt distinguishes the accounts by early colonial writers from those of European postcolonial metropolitan writers in that the former were still driven by engaging in a civilizing mission whereas the latter “condemn what they see, trivialize it and disassociate themselves utterly from it” (1992: 217).
Throughout *A State of Independence* we encounter renderings of one of the standard tropes in colonial writing: the depiction of the ‘other’ surroundings – landscape and people – as motionless, lethargic and static. Bertram observes children “standing impassively” (17) outside their houses; cane-cutters are compared to “dusty statues” and “When they moved it was like watching the birth of stone” (122).

Upon his arrival on his native island, the first person Bertram meets is an immigration officer who “seemed uninterested in anything […] the young man’s face [was] seemingly vacant and uncluttered with thought.” This leads Bertram to wonder if the officer was “the victim of some form of lethargy-inducing sickness” (12). Not only is the immigration officer perceived as slow-witted, possibly retarded, he is even diagnosed as suffering from an illness. When the immigration officer doesn’t catch on to Bertram’s attempt at irony: “You planning on working here to support yourself?” / “I look like a millionaire?”, he is described as staring “blankly” at Bertram, “who now realized he would have to elaborate” (12). At first glance this passage evokes laughter, but it is precisely the benevolent humour and the obvious irony that reveal the arrogant stance adopted by the Westerner passing judgement from a position of superiority so frequently found in colonial writing. A similar portrayal of the customs officer follows: “like his colleague at immigration he too seemed tired and indifferent. He enquired half-heartedly whether Bertram had something to declare” (13). Not only humans but also the landscape appear phlegmatic to Bertram – for example: “On the near side of the road the slack sea, the waves *too sluggish* to break” (17; my emphasis).

These perceptions of a general lethargy may be contrasted with a recollection of Bertram’s past: “Bertram remembered that one of the things he had found most appealing about Patsy was her tranquillity. People had always stared at her because she walked so slowly, so calmly, even in the teeming rain” (90). Bertram remembers that there is a different interpretation of slowness that can indeed be very appealing. It comes as no surprise that it is through the woman he once loved (still loves?) that this realization occurs, promising the possibility of excavating a part of Bertram’s hidden ‘other’ self.

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3 The page numbers of all further references to the novel are given in the text.
4 The cultural gap between Bertram and the locals is furthermore clearly captured in the contrast of the quick Western pace of life with the slower pace of the Caribbean. In answer to his impatient question “Well, you going to stand there all day?” Bertram receives the taxi-driver’s retort that “we don’t rush things here” (16). The man further reminds him that it is not the locals who “must adjust to [the homecomer’s] pace” but, rather, the returnees who “must remember just who it is they dealing with” (17). See also Swift Dickinson’s discussion of this passage (1993: 121).
According to David Spurr, colonial discourse bears a “constant uncertainty” and shows an “inherent confusion of identity and difference” (1993: 7). As Ulla Rahbek has pointed out, this state of uncertainty and confusion in Bertram is conveyed “through the overuse […] of expressions such as: ‘don’t know’, ‘seemed’, ‘maybe’, wondered’, ‘no idea’, ‘uncertain’, ‘confused’, ‘unsure’, ‘assumed’, ‘supposed’, ‘unclear’, ‘mystified’, ‘think’” (2000: 3). In some passages, however, this vocabulary of uncertainty is contrasted with claims of utter certainty – for example: “He knew full well” (10) or “I know who it is I’m dealing with” (17). This discursive ambivalence is indicative of the returnee’s confusion in trying hard to negotiate a state of uncertainty and insecurity with the need for security and self-affirmation.

The rhetorical gesture of describing a scene from a higher vantage point is a further recurrent feature of much travel and exploration writing. Although a convention in nineteenth-century fiction, in travel accounts ‘promontory descriptions’ affirm the power of the colonial or imperial gaze. Mary Louise Pratt calls this trope the *monarch-of-all-I-survey scene* (1992: 201) as it emphasizes the writer’s privileged point of view based on the visual authority of his panoramic vista. This *commanding view* – as David Spurr calls the gesture – “conveys a sense of mastery over the unknown and over what is often perceived by the Western writer as strange and bizarre” (1993: 15). Both Pratt (1992: 216) and Spurr (1993: 18) give examples of how the controlling view has survived in descriptions of the postcolonial world, still reflecting the superior viewpoint of the observer, with the difference that he now frequently expresses his disappointment and disillusionment with the scene he gazes upon.

In *A State of Independence*, Bertram is taken up a hill by Livingstone – his illegitimate son, as the reader later comes to realize – and two of his work-mates at the Royal Hotel (note the imperial implications of the name) for Bertram to “see everything” (126). The following passage of the arduous ‘ascent to the mount’ features standard terminology frequently found in promontory descriptions, such as “aerial view”, “view”, “from this height”, “gaze down”, “vantage point” (127). When Livingstone tells Bertram that the boys sometimes take tourists up to the hill-top – thus likening him to a tourist – he at the same time stresses Bertram’s privileged position: “Not many people get this vantage point” (127). From the summit Bertram surveys the following scene:

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5 Similarly, James Clifford talks about the “cavalier’s perspective […] a distance both aesthetic and political from which to engage the other” (1994: 153).
Bertram gazed down at the hotel, which from this height looked like a large greenhouse surrounded by the two blue squares of the pools, and the six green squares of the tennis-court complex. (127)

Bertram’s description, however reduced and rudimentary, is nevertheless an example of the conventional promontory scene. Directly before climbing up the hill, Bertram had paid a visit to the hotel, a “tropical Hilton” (124) in which only American currency is accepted and he and the staff had been the only black people in the place. He had furthermore remembered how, in his childhood, the grounds had lain deeply hidden in the bush and had been virtually inaccessible (124). Keeping in mind his experience during the visit, he is now able to assess, quantify, name and thus deal with the scene he witnesses because of his newly distanced and privileged vantage point. From his newly acquired position of power the hotel is comfortably reduced to a greenhouse. The pools and the tennis courts are neatly summarized in blue and green squares. Bertram’s evaluation therefore closely follows David Spurr’s definition of the commanding prospect: “An analytic arrangement of space from a position of visual advantage […], an organization and classification of things takes place” (1993: 16). Bertram’s assessment of the hotel as a greenhouse suggests furthermore the notion of a cultivated, artificial versus a natural state. Despite the latent parody involved and an accompanying sense of empowerment, the passage nevertheless conveys a strong impression of loss, as much in the sense of lamenting a pure paradise lost as in the sense of an irreversible intrusion of a space entirely out-of-place.

The entire opening section of *A State of Independence* with Bertram’s arrival by airplane – like a modern God descending from the heavens – reads like another instance of the *monarch-of-all-I-survey* gesture:

> Below him lay the dense carpet of green forest […] and in the distance, beyond the village, Bertram saw the capital. He knew full well that from this height what appeared to be a neat and tropical Versailles would seem little more than a sprawling mess when on the ground. (10; my emphasis)

The observation’s bird’s-eye view focuses on the anticipated disappointment at the squalor to be found in the capital once on the ground. In keeping with another standard convention of colonial stylistics which explicitly links the panorama taken in to the viewer’s home culture – “sprinkling it with little bits of England” (Pratt 1992: 204) – a key material referent can be identified in the passage. With the comparison to a “neat and tropical Versailles”, an imaginary ideal against the expected “sprawling mess,” the narrator takes recourse to a prime element of colonial discourse in that he relies on an analogy familiar to the Western imagination, only to increase the distancing effect when anticipating the reality “on the ground.” Similarly, Bertram later notices the
following discrepancy: “The road was called Whitehall, but a thoroughfare less like London’s Whitehall would be hard to imagine” (20). In another twist to the trope of connecting the unfamiliar surroundings to the observer’s home culture, scenes of poverty are frequently compared unfavourably to familiar images of squalor in Western society. This occurs when Bertram first enters his mother’s plot and the kitchen in the yard reminds him of an “English toolshed” (24).

Another component of colonial rhetoric is the depiction of an unfamiliar and potentially absurd reality in theatrical terms. Indeed, according to David Spurr, much reporting on revolutions or political events in the Third World is viewed in histrionic terms (1993: 55). With reference to Pierre Bourdieu, Spurr reminds us that “this point of view is generally available only to persons of privilege, from whose position the social world at large appears as a representation […] in the sense offered by […] a theatrical performance” (1993: 26). In A State of Independence this trope appears in an even more exaggerated fashion in the representation of the independence celebrations. Not only does the new design of the flags look “absurd” (130) and “comically colorful” (130) to Bertram, but he captures the entire atmosphere of the celebrations in carnivalesque terms: He was “absorbed by the carnival atmosphere” (104; my emphasis) and we even learn that “the only other time the makeshift village was functional was at carnival” (58). With the identification of an important political event with the carnival, an assessment takes place according to the observer’s own system of values assuming interpretative authority from a position of superiority which denies any serious consideration of the events. The inherent irony can ultimately be seen as an attempt at undermining the reality of one’s surroundings.

Bakhtin describes the essence of the carnivalesque world-view as one of change and transformation representing the relativity of any established order, and further defines the carnival as an incomplete transitional period and a time of crisis (1996: 70). In view of these notions, the employment of the carnival metaphor adequately captures both the uncertainty of the political changes accompanying independence and the uncertainty – even crisis – in Bertram. At the same time, “the carnival is the celebration of an all-destroying and all-regenerating time” (Bakhtin 1996: 50; my translation) and thus offers in this ambivalence a glimmer of hope for couching political and personal renewal or metamorphosis.

Apart from the practice of treating political events in theatrical terms, there is a marked tendency in colonial tropology to convey a general sense of chaos

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6 See also the passage in which Bertram, shortly after his arrival, compares the status of a Ford Corsair in England to that on the island (15).
and disorder in the presentation of the surroundings that is indicative of the observer’s own disorientation or indeed of a process in which “the writer’s subjective disintegration is projected onto the outer scene” (Spurr 1993: 155). In this vein, a description of the slums of Baytown features images such as “there existed a hellish and labyrinth-like entanglement of slums”; the buildings were “broken down” under their “rusty iron roofs”; the streets were “loosely-defined” and followed each other “at random”; “Awkward boys played cricket with no discipline” (58; my emphases). Finally, the entire scene is summed up as follows: “This area, which resembled the country in its poverty, had always impressed Bertram as the unassembled, peopled, animaled heart of Baytown” (58; my emphasis). In addition to invoking conventional, almost archetypal (European) metaphors of threat and uncanniness in the images of hell and the labyrinth, the passage closes with one of the prime colonial clichés when summarizing the entire scene in animalistic terms to reveal the essentially animal nature of the surroundings.

In another passage, images of darkness and threat figure even more intensely: “it was dark outside, a night of hidden eyes and strange noises” (86); “a firefly […] was cruelly swallowed up for ever by the blackness of the night” (87; my emphasis). Such images impressively capture the primordial fear of the unknown lurking ‘out there’ in the unfamiliar environment so typical of exploration writing.

Among the most common tropes in colonial writing is the debasing of the Other through representation in zoological terms. As early as 1965, Frantz Fanon drew attention to the constant references to the bestiary in colonial writing and described their use as an attempt at dehumanizing the native (1990: 32). Both David Spurr and Mary Louise Pratt relate this practice to the rhetorical mode of naturalization. In Spurr’s view, “the concept of nature and its relation to ‘less developed’ peoples is so deeply imbedded in our language that it transcends ideology and is […] pervasive in the system of representations” (1993: 157). Underlying this principle is the assumption that primitive or native peoples form a part of nature and are thus placed in opposition to culture.

We can locate two further uses of the trope. On his way to his former girlfriend Patsy, Bertram encounters “raw-boned children who ran wildly up and down […] screaming like their parents’ poultry” (89; my emphases) and later, during the independence celebrations, he meets a man whom he describes as “mongrel-faced” (116). Significantly, both times Bertram finds himself in a disorientating environment suggesting disorder, uncontrolled noise and degeneration.

In many instances, Bertram painfully experiences his estrangement when he detects in himself traces of his English self or when he is identified by the
locals as a foreigner or a tourist. In an influential essay, Stuart Hall talks about the “shock of ‘doubleness’ of similarity and difference” (1994: 396). In other words: a displacement occurs in which, as James Clifford writes, “the self has become exotic […] It is the opening of a fissure in the subject […] a passage in time” (1994: 161). It is precisely this rupture or displacement caused by the passage of time that most accurately reflects the hybrid identity and thus the predicament of the homecomer: he is indeed being exiled a second time, this time involuntarily by his former countrymen, friends and relatives. We see Bertram struggling with his own realization of having adopted English character traits when he is wondering if “he was suffering from those same feelings of liberal guilt that he had always despised in some English people” (19). Before meeting Patsy he muses that “too much had happened between the two of them for him to get English on her now” (89) and is afraid of annoying the neighbours with his “imported manners” (89). Bertram is in fact desperately trying to reconcile two different sets of cultural practices when, at a later stage, in the truly indignant attitude of the metropolitan European (Englishman), he is “outraged by [the] lack of courtesy” (105) he finds in the guard at Government House, lamenting nothing other than the lack of one of colonialism’s fundamental values: Western or British civility. According to Spurr, “insistence on European standards of civility becomes an act of self-preservation” (1993: 80). Bertram’s insecurity in negotiating different sets of behaviour becomes most apparent in his first meeting with Lonnie, the barkeeper. In the course of the conversation Bertram admits twice that he is “unsure as to how to respond” (61, 63) and once “assumed he was supposed to laugh” (61).

When Bertram is mistaken for a foreigner, the speakers frequently resort to the ‘us/you’ dichotomy, emphasizing the distance between them and displacing Bertram even further. In an inversion of its use in imperial writing, the standard distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is here employed from the perspective of the natives. This reversal can be viewed as a marker of empowerment, with the formerly oppressed appropriating the same rhetorical mode of the master-narrative in a kind of reversed rhetoric. At the same time, this trope has always served as a sign of the fear of a hidden threat and expresses a strong need for self-affirmation. David Spurr has noted that the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is part of a rhetoric that affirms the distinction between “a collective subject united by a shared ideology and those who threaten the institutions of order and unity” (1993: 122). It is therefore not surprising that it is especially Bertram’s former childhood friend Jackson Clayton, who in the new country has acquired a high ministerial post, who takes frequent recourse to the ‘us/you’ binarism. He identifies Bertram with the former colonial rulers and assigns himself the role of speaking for the
whole people of the island. When he explains to Bertram that people are living “State-side now” (112), he says that Miami is the closest major city, not “your precious London” (112; my emphasis) and goes on to accuse Bertram of the damages inflicted by colonial rule: “Your England never do us a damn thing except take, take, take” (112; my emphases). The final stigmatization of Bertram as an intruder occurs when Clayton tells him that “you should go back where you come from […] England is where you belong now” (136; my emphases).

This underscoring of Bertram’s ‘difference’ rests as much on cultural difference – Clayton states accusingly that “the Englishman fuck up your head” (136) – as on linguistic difference. The young barkeeper Lonnie immediately recognizes the Englishman and makes fun of his accent, “mimicking his voice” (132). The English accent, once a sign of education and high culture, has now become a source of mirth. In this instance, however, we witness yet another reversal of the ‘us/you’ dichotomy in Bertram’s strong rejection of his identification with the English:

‘You think I sound English, then?’
‘Rather, old chap. Isn’t that what you say?’
‘That’s what they say’ (132; my emphases).

Even though Bertram is trying to liberate himself from the ‘shadow of the oppressor’, he still appears as a tragic figure who has lost his power and has been decentred from a position of previous authority. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the derision that his rather vague wish to establish ‘a business’ provokes in his interlocutors: “I don’t know as yet what kind of business, but something that don’t make me dependent upon the white man” (50). When his mother laughs at him, Bertram, in an immediate act of self-defence, arrogantly belittles this laughter as “the cackle of ignorance”; in a truly superior gesture, “he felt obliged to educate her” (151). Patsy humours him and in fact exposes and deconstructs “every expat’s dream” (141), while Jackson Clayton cruelly reminds Bertram of his long absence and his ensuing total misconception of and alienation from the place he has returned to: “you wanting to invest in the place you remember, not the place that is” (112).

It is, however, not only Bertram’s vague ideas about his business that make others mock him but yet again the ‘shadow of the oppressor’ they recognize in him. One should bear in mind that the wish to dominate through commercial influence – in other words, to take possession – was always at the heart of the colonizing mission. Even though it is not so much the “industrial reverie” of the early colonists that Mary Louise Pratt refers to (1992: 150) as the “mercantile or business reverie” of the postcolonial Westerner, this intention is nevertheless driven by the same urge to engage in a civilizing mission.
Bertram’s business aspirations conjure up the spectre of the colonial’s construction of an uncivilized space whose backwardness legitimates the economic intervention of the rational European (Pratt 1992: 152). Bertram, indeed, naively repeats what Edward Said has termed the “advanced/backswards binarism” (1995: 207) advocated by colonial powers when he declares: “I must seize the opportunity to help the new nation” (50). His insistence on running his business independently of the white man adds extra piquancy, as he is paradoxically reproducing the white man’s imperial gesture. Ultimately, it is this repetition of the relationship of power and dominance that is not only resisted but even ridiculed, a fact that is simultaneously indicative of the loss of power of the former colonial rulers and of the newly acquired confidence of the locals.7

Adverse weather, especially the oppressive heat that had to be endured, has always been a topic in colonial exploration writing as well as in more recent postcolonial travel accounts. In A State of Independence, the sun and the heat emanating from it acquire the function of a leitmotif. Descriptions encoding the sun as violent and unbearable, highlighting the vulnerability of the observer, abound.8 The unaccustomed heat and its unpleasant effects on Bertram are captured in references to perspiration and smell.9 Right from the beginning, Bertram suffers from the “claustrophobia of the heat” (11), which also metaphorically alludes to psychological claustrophobia and the anxieties regarding his return. He sweats profusely (11; 87) and notices his own bodily odours with embarrassment (82). Apart from underwriting his unfamiliarity with the tropical climate, for the Westerner sweat and smell are clear markers of impurity, lack of hygiene and ultimately absence of civilization, which have to be eliminated. This defilement of the self’s clean body is abhorrent to the Westerner and constitutes a transgression of a crucial boundary between inside and out. It may thus be understood as an invasion, even a penetration, that must be fought. Bertram therefore complains: “he could not bear the thought of enduring another day in damp discomfort. His deodorant was useless […] he decided to carry with him a small bottle of aftershave to kill off any bad odours” (88; my emphasis). Equipped with the modern Western traveller’s chemical weapons – deodorant and aftershave – Bertram goes on a
virtual crusade to “kill off” his bad smell. However, the imported devices of Western civilization fail him in his new surroundings and thus only serve as a further sign of his foreignness and powerlessness.

Worth noting is also the semiosis of architecture in the novel. Bertram frequently describes decayed and crumbling buildings and even talks about “architectural death” with reference to an old wooden colonial building. The collapse of the Empire is symbolically captured in the literal collapse of its architectural legacy. At other points Bertram regrets that the former colonial architecture has been abandoned and replaced by modern, neocolonial concrete constructions, a regret that attests to his nostalgia for the colonial past as he remembers it. There is an additional element of snobbery in this assessment, as he clearly mocks the efforts of the new postcolonial nation at shedding its colonial heritage in favour of clumsy and poorly executed attempts at imitating the modern West: “The courtyard was dominated by an ornamental pool […] open to the sky so that if it rained too much it would inevitably flood the ground-floor offices” (107). Significantly, however, the following observation is made almost at the end of the novel: “Bertram rambled past these historical ruins, and then he pressed on purposefully” (157; my emphasis), expressing Bertram’s determination to leave the past behind and move on with his life on his home island.

In a recent review of Caryl Phillips’s latest book The Atlantic Sound – which is largely a travel narrative – in the New York Review of Books, the critic Pankaj Mishra goes so far as to apply the following statement by Derek Walcott about the colonial’s predicament to Caryl Phillips himself: “he lapses into the ‘postures of metropolitan cynicism [that] must be assumed by the colonial in exile if he is not to feel lost’” (2001: 51). Written some fourteen years prior to the Atlantic Sound, A State of Independence seems already to contain in fictional form what Caryl Phillips has described, according to Mishra, “inadvertently, without [his] own quickening self-awareness” (51) in his own personal narrative of return.

In conclusion, the question remains how deliberately a writer takes recourse to the conventions of colonial discourse. In answer to this question, one might want to agree with David Spurr, who maintains that “there is nothing conscious in their use; they are part of the landscape in which relations of power manifest themselves” (1993: 6). However, the fact that Caryl Phillips has very deliberately re-written and contested colonial master-narrative

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10 See, for example: “And in a clearing he saw the crumbling stones […] of a distant sugar mill and broken down Great House” (10).
11 Compare: “He climbed the open concrete staircase and wondered why the engineers and architects of the Caribbean had abandoned the cooler wooden buildings of his youth” (107).
tives (the personal journal and an official account) in the novel *Cambridge* (as I have shown elsewhere\textsuperscript{12}) gives reason to doubt David Spurr’s contention. This hesitation is even more justified if one takes into account the fact that the protagonist’s first name is Bertram, which intertextually evokes the character of Sir Thomas Bertram – the owner of large colonial possessions in Antigua – from Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*.\textsuperscript{13} This intertextual relation may be viewed as additional evidence that Caryl Phillips has consciously integrated elements of colonial discourse into the text precisely to capture the returnee’s contaminated identity and the associated complexities of the notions of home, hybridity and (post)colonial discourse.

**Works Cited**


\textsuperscript{12} For a more detailed analysis, see my forthcoming “Re-telling the Past: Meta-fiction in Caryl Phillips’s Diasporic Narratives” (University of Liège).

\textsuperscript{13} For this observation I am indebted to Bénédicte Ledent.


ENGLISH AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE WRITING IN AFRICA
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This essay reflects on South Africa’s new language policy and efforts currently being made to implement it. It notes that there is a mismatch between the language policy and the language practices in most of the country’s institutions. The policy promotes additive multilingualism; but the practices show a steady trend towards unilingualism in English at the expense of the other official languages including Afrikaans and nine African languages. The essay argues that this mismatch derives from a number of factors, some of them internal and others external to the policy, which interact in complex ways to impede policy implementation. The essay discusses some of these factors, with a focus on the ambivalent language-related clauses in the policy on the one hand, and the legacy of apartheid-based Bantu education on the other. As a way forward, it is suggested that, for the new language policy to achieve its primary goal to promote the status of the official indigenous languages, the whole enterprise of language policy and planning should be viewed as a marketing problem, one that can only be solved if the ‘product’ to be marketed, language, is “backed by the right promotion and put in the right place at the right price” (Cooper 1989: 72).

1. Introduction

Language has played a central role in South Africa’s transition from colonialism to apartheid to democracy. In 1994 South Africa adopted a new language policy giving official recognition to eleven languages including English and Afrikaans, formerly the only two official languages of the state, and nine African languages; Zulu, Xhosa,
Pedi, Tsonga, Venda, Sotho, Ndebele, Swati and Tswana, all of them newcomers on South Africa’s official language map. One of the main objectives of the new language policy has been to promote the status of the nine African languages by, among other things, using them as media of learning. Seven years after the policy was enshrined in the country’s constitution, it seems that not much progress has been made yet in attempts to implement the policy. Rather, and as I will show in this essay, there is a clear mismatch between the new language policy and language practices in most of the country’s institutions, such as the media, education, government and administration. This essay attempts to explain this state of affairs. It argues that a number of factors interact in complex ways to impede policy implementation. Chief among these, and which will be the focus of this essay, are the legacy of apartheid Bantu education on the one hand, and the loopholes within the new language policy on the other. The discussion of these factors and attending language practices will be organized as follows. Section 2 presents past language-in-education policies in South Africa to provide the background against which current language practices can be understood better. Section 3 examines the new language policy and its implications for current language practices in some of the country’s institutions, especially the media, the administration and education. Section 4 offers the way forward for the new language policy, drawing on theories of the economics of language planning (eg, Coulmas 1992, Cooper 1989, Bourdieu 1991) as well as on recent studies of language shift from African languages into English especially in African urban communities. The main argument of the essay is that if the new language policy is to achieve its intended goal to promote African languages, language-policy makers must, on the one hand, view the whole language-planning enterprise as a marketing problem. That is, they must associate African languages with at least some of the prerequisites that are currently associated with English and Afrikaans. This, I argue, will counter the stigma that African languages have been carrying as a result of the legacy of discriminatory apartheid language policies. Second, and most important, policy-makers must raise people’s awareness about the process of language shift that is currently in progress in urban African communities, where English is increasingly becoming the language of the family; a domain traditionally reserved for indigenous African languages. Raising people’s awareness about language shift from African languages to English will bring to the fore the threat of linguistic genocide that African languages are facing. Such an awareness, I argue, might spur the communities to initiate or become more involved in language maintenance activities intended to counter the threat of linguistic genocide.
2. South Africa’s past language policies

Kaplan & Baldauf (1997: 3) define language planning as a body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change, rules, beliefs and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in language use in one or more communities. It is, in the words of Fishman (1987: 49), the authoritative allocation of resources to the attainment of language status and language corpus goals, whether in connection with new functions that are aspired to, or in connection with old functions that need to be discharged more adequately. In South Africa language planning has historically been what Tollefson (1991: 13) calls an arena for struggle, where the white segment of the country’s population has sought to exercise power over other ethnic groups through control of language. It has been more so because, as Terence Wiley observes (1996: 104), decisions about language often lead to benefits for some and loss of privilege, status and rights for others.

Not much is known about language policy and planning in South Africa prior to the arrival in the Cape in 1652 of white settlers led by the Dutch colonist Jan van Riebeeck to erect a half-way resupply station for the ships of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company) which, at the time, plied the trade route between Europe and Southeast Asia. From this time onwards the history of language policy and planning in South Africa can be described in terms of the following four important eras: *dutchification* (1652–1795, 1803–1806), *anglicization* (1806–1948), *afrikanerization* (1948–94) and *language democratization* (1994–present). Dutchification refers to the official promotion and use of the Dutch language in all the higher domains such as administration, education and trade by the Dutch officials of the Dutch East India Company who settled in South Africa from 1652. During the almost one and a half centuries (1652–1795) of the Dutch occupation of the Cape, only knowledge of Dutch served as a catalyst for access to resources and employment in the civil service. Anyone who wanted to do business with the Dutch authority had to display knowledge of Dutch. The Dutchification of the Cape came to an end in 1795, when Britain first took control of the then Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town) to prevent the territory from falling into the hands of the French, who had already laid claim to Holland during the Napoleonic wars (Watermeyer 1996: 101). The British returned the Cape to the Dutch in 1803 but took control of the territory again in 1806. It is at this point that the seeds for the policy of anglicization were planted, with English gradually replacing Dutch as the language of rule in the Cape Colony. Accordingly, access to resources and employment in the civil service became associated with the knowledge of English rather than of Dutch. By 1814 English was firmly established as the official language of the Cape Colony.
Dutch and later its offspring, Afrikaans, were suppressed by the British government for ideological reasons. The Afrikaans-speaking whites, the Afrikaners, resented anglicization, for they saw it as a threat to their language, culture and identity. Also, it was felt in some sections of the Afrikaans-speaking white community that Afrikaans was a gift from God to its white speakers, and that God had not allowed them (the Afrikaners) to become anglicized (Watermeyer 1996). The policy of anglicization lasted, in theory, until 1910, when the Union of South Africa was formed, thus giving English and Dutch equal status as the co-official languages of the Union. In practice, however, the British never accepted parity/equality between Dutch and English (Malherbe 1977, Hartshorne 1992, Lanham 1996). Thus, English remained more hegemonic than Afrikaans until 1948, when the Afrikaner elite took the reins of government.

With the power now in their hands, the Afrikaners expectedly replaced anglicization with afrikanerization. The Afrikaans language took centre-stage in the administration of the state and the use and power of Afrikaans increased dramatically. Knowledge of Afrikaans became a requirement for entry into the civil service. The state invested heavily both politically and financially in the development of Afrikaans. Efforts to promote Afrikaans led the apartheid government to enact drastic policies, such as the Bantu Education Act. Briefly, at the heart of this legislation was the dire determination by the apartheid government (a) to promote Afrikaans and to reduce the influence of English in black schools; (b) to impose in these schools the use of both Afrikaans and English on an equal basis as media of instruction; and (c) to extend mother tongue education from grade 4 to grade 8. The Bantu Education Act had serious implications for languages of learning and teaching in black schools. Black children had to receive education through three languages, Afrikaans, English and the mother tongue; while for their White, Colored and Indian counterparts education was dispensed exclusively in Afrikaans or in English depending on whether one was Afrikaans- or English-speaking.

The black pupils resisted mother tongue education, which the Bantu Education Act promoted, because they recognized it for what it was: one of the strategies used by the apartheid government to deny the blacks access to higher education and thus restrict their social and economic mobility (Kamwangamalu 1997: 243). The black pupils saw education in their own mother tongue as a dead-end, a barrier to more advanced learning, a lure to self-destruction and a trap designed by the apartheid government to ensure that the black pupils did not acquire sufficient command of the high-status languages (English and Afrikaans) for them to be able to compete with their white counterparts for well-paying jobs and prestigious career options (Alexander (Lanham 1978)).
The resistance to mother tongue education was a resistance to Verwoerdian instruments of repression, of limiting access to the mainstream of political and economic life (Nomvete 1994). The resistance to Afrikaans was a symbolic resistance to what was perceived as a language of oppression, as well as a desire for greater access to English. The black pupils’ resistance to the Bantu Education Act and the apartheid government’s determination to impose it led to the bloody Soweto uprisings of 16 June 1976, in which several pupils lost their lives. These uprisings had the following outcomes: (a) they put an end to the use of Afrikaans as medium of learning and teaching in black schools; (b) they boosted the status of an already powerful language, English, over both Afrikaans and African languages in black schools and in black communities at large; (c) they led the Africans to equate education in their own language, hence mother tongue education, with inferior education and this literally made the indigenous languages valueless instrumentally. With the events of June 1976 mother tongue education became stigmatized in South Africa, and that stigma lingers on to this day. It is against this background that, when apartheid died and a new South Africa was born in 1994, the new government wasted no time in adopting a new language policy aimed at promoting the status of the indigenous languages. It is to this new policy that I now turn.

3. South Africa’s new, multilingual, language policy

The new language policy accords official status to eleven languages including English and Afrikaans and nine African languages. The policy itself is stipulated as follows in South Africa’s 1996 Constitution:

The official languages of the Republic [of South Africa] are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. (The Constitution, 1996, Chapter 1, Section 6(1))

One of the main objectives of the new, multilingual, language policy has been to promote the status of the nine official African languages against the backdrop of past discriminatory language policies. In this respect, the Constitution states that

recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. (The Constitution, 1996, Chapter 1, section 6 (2))

One area in which the government has sought to promote the indigenous languages is education. Concerning language use in this area, the new Constitution stipulates that
matters such as the medium in which a pupil’s instruction takes place and the number of languages that are to be compulsory school subjects may not conflict with the language clause in the Constitution (Section 3) nor with Section 32, which provides that every person shall be entitled to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable. (The Constitution, 1996, Section 32(c))

The Constitution also makes provision for the establishment of a Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) with the responsibility to, inter alia, “promote and create conditions for the development and use of these [African] and other languages” (The Constitution, 1996, Chapter 1, section 6 (5a)). Other language-related constitutional principles include the following:

all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably. (The Constitution, 1996, Section 6(2))

Thus far these constitutional principles do not seem to have made any progress towards promoting the status of the African languages. This is not at all surprising, especially if one considers ambivalent language-related clauses in the country’s Constitution. For instance, in chapter 1, section (3), the Constitution (1996) stipulates that

the national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages [my emphases].

Since the Constitution does not specify which official languages should be used in which province or by the national government, both provincial and national governments have tacitly opted for the status quo and use English and Afrikaans as the languages of administration, much as was the case in the apartheid era. Below I provide examples of language practices in some of the country’s institutions, with a focus on the government and administration, the media and education.

In education, English and Afrikaans remain the chief media of teaching and learning. African languages are used as media of learning only in black schools for the first four years of primary education, much as was the case before and after the Soweto uprisings of June 1976 against the imposition of Afrikaans. Thereafter English takes over as the medium of instruction. Afrikaans-medium schools and universities are increasingly becoming dual-medium institutions, offering tuition not only in Afrikaans but also in English to accommodate black students who, because of the country’s past language-in-education policies, prefer English over Afrikaans as the medium of instruc-
tion. The demand for English-medium education, and not for education in an African language (or what is often called mother tongue education), has to be understood against the background of the socio-economic power and international status of English on the one hand, and of the legacy of the policy of Bantu education on the other. The legacy of this policy has rendered African languages instrumentally valueless. Education in an African language is viewed by speakers of these languages as a lure to self-destruction and an attempt by policy makers to deny them access to English. Consequently, parents who can afford it send their children to former white or Indian schools to ensure that they have early exposure to English. Also, in South Africa there is no sustained demand for multilingual skills for sociocultural, academic and administrative purposes. Consequently, as Verhoef (1998) remarks, for African pupils there is no alternative to English-medium education. The demand for English-medium education is exacerbated by the fact that black pupils are only too well aware of the power of English to ask for education in any other language, and of the fact that their own languages have no economic cachet either locally or internationally.

As far as the communications media are concerned, English has the lion’s share of airtime on South African television. In a survey of language use on South African television, Kamwangamalu (1998) notes that all the eleven official languages had 378 hours to share per week. The survey shows that English took up 348 hours or 91% of the total airtime, followed by Afrikaans with 21 hours or 5.66%, and all the nine African languages with only nine hours, or an average of one hour per language per week. In a more recent survey conducted for the months of April and May 2001, Kamwangamalu (2001) has found that some of the African languages, especially the smaller ones such as siSwati, Tsonga and Venda, are no longer allotted a specific time slot on South African Television. As far as English is concerned, not only does the language have an entire TV channel to itself but it also takes the lion’s share of the airtime on the other state TV channels. For April 2001, English has a total air time of 88%, followed by Afrikaans with 6.58%, and all the nine African languages with 6.2%, or an average of 0.69% per language.

In parliament, language practices are not any different. English reigns supreme over other official languages including Afrikaans, and this is despite the fact that the majority of members of parliament are Africans and so are proficient in at least two African languages. In spite of this, Pandor (1995) reports that in 1994, for instance, 87% of the speeches made in Parliament were in English, less than 5% were in Afrikaans and of the rest, 8% were in the nine African languages, that is, less than 1% in each of the languages. Besides being prevalent in the majority of the speeches made in Parliament,
English has become the sole language of *Hansard*, the Parliament’s historical record of proceedings, formerly published in both English and Afrikaans. This, it has been explained, was to cut down on the prohibitive cost of producing *Hansard* in all the 11 languages.

These practices flout the principle of language equity enshrined in the Constitution. They support the Language Task Group (LANGTAG)’s research findings that “despite the constitutional commitment to multilingualism, [...] there seems to be a drift towards unilingualism (in English) in public services (including education)” (LANGTAG 1996:31); and that “all other languages are being marginalized” (LANGTAG 1996: 47). It is against this background that this essay is titled “when 2+9=1” to highlight the current trend towards unplanned unilingualism in the country.

4. Language policy and planning: the way forward

It is clear from the language practices in various state institutions that English is economically more viable than any of the other official languages, especially the indigenous languages. Besides the status of English as international language, the economic viability of English needs to be understood from the perspective of the theories of the economics of language planning (eg, Cooper 1989, Strauss 1996, Coulmas 1992). In the main, these theories say that linguistic products, and this includes language, are goods or commodities to which the market assigns a value. On a given linguistic market, some products are valued more highly than others. The market value of a linguistic product such as the mother tongue is determined in relation to other languages in the planetary economy (Coulmas 1992: 77–85). It is, as Gideon Strauss notes (1996: 9), an index of the functional appreciation of the language by the relevant community. In this regard, African communities find former colonial languages, particularly English (and to some extent Afrikaans), materially more appealing than the indigenous languages because of the value with which the former are associated in the linguistic market place. Assigning an economic value to the mother tongue in the linguistic market place means vesting it with some of the privileges and power associated with English or Afrikaans. The underlying assumption here is that the mother tongue is a commodity and as such, the consumers especially in African communities will buy this commodity depending on its value in the linguistic market place.

In this essay I argue that, for status planning for the African languages to succeed, it must be treated as a marketing problem. Viewing status planning as a marketing problem entails, as Cooper puts it, “developing the right *product* backed by the right *promotion* and put in the right *place* at the right *price*” (1989: 72).
With regard to the product, Cooper says that language planners must recognize, identify, or design products which the potential consumer will find attractive. These products are to be defined and audiences targeted on the basis of (empirically determined) consumer needs. Promotion of a communicative innovation such as a new official language refers to efforts to induce potential users to adopt it, whether adoption is viewed as awareness, positive evaluation, proficiency, or usage (1989: 74). Place refers to the provision of adequate channels of distribution and response. That is, a person motivated to buy a product must know where to find it (1989: 78). And the price of a consumer product is viewed as the key to determining the product’s appeal to the consumers (1989: 79). This approach is proposed against the background of established parameters in language policy and language planning: language planning is future-oriented; it involves complex decision-making, assessing and committing valuable resources both human and material, assigning functions to different languages or varieties of a language in a community (Wardhaugh 1987), and regulating the power relationship between languages and their respective speakers in the linguistic market place (Bourdieu 1991).

5. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, let me reiterate that mother tongue education – or its denial – is as important as any other aspects, political and economic planning among them, which at the moment appear to be the main concerns of the state. A commitment to linguistic pluralism (Cobarrubias 1983: 46) and thus to linguistic democracy means that the use of the mother tongue in education (and other higher domains) is, as many linguists have pointed out, a fundamental human right (eg, Skutnabb-Kangas 1988, Tollefson 1991, Phillipson 1992). Therefore, there is an urgent need for South Africa to take a hard look at its language-in-education policies, with a view to revitalizing mother-tongue education as a means by which to empower the masses. Revalorizing the indigenous does not mean saying farewell to English and Afrikaans. Rather, it means bringing these languages to equality with indigenous languages as required in the constitution. It entails, as Webb (1995: 103) correctly points out, “making the indigenous languages desirable and effective [tools] for educational development, economic opportunity, political participation, social mobility, and cultural practice”. Like any language-planning exercise, revitalizing the mother tongues will come at a price: agencies must be established to encourage use; curriculum materials must be developed and teachers trained; researchers must be encouraged to study them; official blessing of some kind must be given; and money must be spent. But, as Tollefson (1991) aptly observes, only when the language achieves a full range of functions and no stigma is attached to its use has it arrived. For the indigenous
languages ‘to arrive’, the masses need to know what an education in these languages would do for them in terms of upward social mobility. Would such an education, for instance, be as rewarding as, say, English- or Afrikaans-medium education? African masses would not support or strive to acquire mother-tongue education, even if it were made available, unless this education was given a real cachet in the broader political and economic context. Whether African languages are used in education or not, speakers of these languages must be made aware of the threat that the languages are facing from English. Recent studies (eg, De Klerk 2000, Bowerman 2000) of language practices in urban African communities show that English is increasingly becoming the language of the home in these communities, especially for interaction among the younger generation. Unless communities themselves take the initiative to maintain their languages, the languages are likely to face the fate that the Koesan and Indian languages did: attrition and eventual death.

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The Democratization of Language Policy
A Cultural-Linguistic Analysis
of the Status of English in Kenya

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Abstract
Attitudes towards English in Kenya tend to cluster around two extreme positions – largely unquestioned acceptance of the dominant position of English among the mass of the population, on the one hand, and strong opposition to the continuing use of the imposed colonial language among sections of the educated elite, on the other. The essay traces the origin of the high status of English from the colonial period to the present and suggests an alternative language policy that would bridge the chasm between the two extreme views.

1. Introduction

The debate about the status of English in Kenya is as emotional as it is in most of the former British colonies and there is no reason to believe that it is going to end soon. For many Kenyans the position of English in their environment is taken for granted, for it is the language their children have to learn at school. To this group it is simply the language children must learn in order that they may get ahead in life and other questions may not be warranted. They do not find any point in debating whether Kenya needs no English or more of it. Among these people, and probably the majority, are those who do not speak a word of it. Those who do not speak English at all or just have a smattering of it would like their children to grow up speaking it, even at the risk of forgetting their native languages. For them English represents a gateway to prosperity and cultural refinement.
On the other extreme there are Kenyans, mainly the educated elite, who link English to their country’s inglorious past of political and cultural subjugation. This group is opposed to the status of English as an official language, the language that dominates the public life of many Kenyans. The link with the ignoble past causes this group to assert that Kenya will not be fully free from neo-colonialism until it divests itself of the language of slavery and oppression. The suggestion is to have Kiswahili developed, adapted and adopted for the roles played by English today. After all, they argue, Kiswahili has performed very well in that capacity in Tanzania. However, this group is regarded with a lot of suspicion by the other group and is being accused of ‘inverted snobbery’; that is, now that they have acquired sufficient English and are occupying plum positions in the public and private sectors, they can afford to crusade against English. They are like the generals who burn the bridge after crossing over.

This accusation is not altogether misplaced; but it must also be remembered that challenging the position of English in the world today is a cultural and political act that involves a certain level of sociopolitical sophistication, which can be found only in the educated elite. It is therefore not surprising that the educated can dare to question the usefulness of English when its benefits seem so obvious to, possibly, undiscerning eyes.

The naivety of the first view is catered for by suggesting effective learning of English to all children while at the same time placating the no-English group by allowing more teaching of native languages and providing them with more functions in order to enhance their prestige. The essay is proposing a language policy that ensures survival of the minority languages and conserves the cultural richness supported by the languages, while at the same time recommending the strengthening and expansion of the teaching of English as a second language.

2. Cultural stereotyping

The discussion of the status of and attitude to English in Kenya today only begins to make sense when it takes into account the socio-historical context in which the language arrived at the shores of the Eastern Africa coast in the nineteenth century and the subsequent colonizing enterprise of the British Empire. Colonial discourse is a product and source of racial and cultural stereotypes, and it is the stereotypes that define identities as groups continually see themselves as reflecting the antitheses of the ‘Others’. The colonized people perceived themselves as opposites of the technologically and culturally superior West, hence as a group that had to strive to draw level with its nemesis at some future date. The stereotype of a Kenyan native was captured forcefully in the following words of Lady Eleanor Cole, a representative of
the East African Women’s League in her presentation to the Joint Committee on Closer Union in East Africa on 6 October 1931:

Women settlers are living in close contact with native life. They see his most barbarous side. They know that the Native carries out a dying sufferer from his hut to be often eaten by wild beasts before he is dead, rather than that he should pollute the hut by dying in it. They know natives will leave a baby to burn because it is believed to be unlucky to pull it out of the fire. They see and hear often of the circumcision of the women. They see the Native regarding his woman as part of his chattels, in no way his equal [...]

To anyone living in Kenya today it is evident that the white race must be the governing race whatever doctrinaire theories may be laid down to the contrary. If political equality is preached to the Native we women feel sure that trouble will come of it. (1931: 125, my emphasis)

This is elaborately quoted because of two reasons: First, because of its wild and false generalizations about the ‘Native’ cultural practices and second, because of the strength of her political assertions. The vivid picture of the Native is that of an irrational and worthless being incapable of managing the political affairs of his modern society. He is given to the white race as a servant by Providence and therefore has no business thinking of self-determination. The claim that Africans throw the sick out in order to be eaten by wild animals is outrageous. It is true that at the point of death some communities took the sick to a shelter outside the home but always with an attendant to monitor his progress. The sick were never abandoned or fed to the beasts.

The radical view of the Native held by the Settler Community has always been considered by historians to be extremist and not reflecting the view of the British Empire as a whole. But it is certainly representative of the Victorian image of Africa throughout the West. And so the benevolent side of the white stereotype reads as follows:

It is quite evident that as European civilization spreads among the natives and his standard of comfort is raised he will desire more and more to associate himself with the language and literature of the race whose civilization he adopts. (Denham 1928: 15)

This is the British government position represented by the Colonial Secretary, Edward Denham, in his report on Native Progress in 1927. It is just a matter of semantics since the underlying message here is that Africa is not on the same rung as Europe on the evolutionary ladder; it has to work hard to catch up with Europe and one way of doing that is by learning European languages and literature. This view was stressed even more strongly as recently as 1960 by Karen Blixen when she bluntly declared:
The dark nations of Africa, strikingly precocious as young children, seemed to come to a standstill in their mental growth at different ages. The Kikuyu, Kavirondo and Wakamba, the people who worked for me on the farm, in early childhood were far ahead of white children of the same age, but they stopped quite suddenly at a stage corresponding to that of a European child of nine. (quoted in Ngugi 1993: 134)

According to Ngugi, we must take Blixen seriously because in the West “she is a saint, a literary saint, and she has been canonized as such. She embodies the great racist myth at the heart of the Western bourgeois civilization” (Ngugi 1993: 135). But Blixen is not the only one in the honest racist crusade; she merely continues the long tradition of the Hegelian stereotype of ‘historyless’ Africa. Joseph Conrad also takes a journey to the heart of darkness where he meets beings he finds difficult to characterize as human:

the men were – No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity - like yours - the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. (in Achebe 1978: 4)

According to Achebe, Conrad “projects the image of Africa as the ‘other world’, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization” (Achebe 1978: 3). The humanness of these black creatures is being measured by contrasting it to that of the European and since there are only some elements or aspects of similarity the black man must be the lesser human being, if he is one at all.

Colonial discourse implies cultural contact between divergent cultural groups and this contact is mediated by and consummated through language. The asymmetric inter-cultural relationship is also reflected in and reproduced by the linguistic choices that have to be made. Whose language is going to be used to transact business between the colonized and his master? The language of the powerful will be the language of power and privilege as well. In Kenya the ‘Natives’ realized very soon after they were forcefully subdued by the imperial might of the British that English was a powerful ingredient in the power game they were henceforth going to be engaged in. So in 1928, the Colonial Secretary recognized this when he said in a memorandum:

It is quite impossible to keep in touch with the requirements and any establishment which is opened for teaching English to Africans can obtain hundreds of pupils. The native is also very anxious to be able to read the newspaper and to be able to write a letter to a friend. It is becoming common for natives to congregate round any person who can read aloud an English newspaper to them. (Denham 1928: 20)
An enormous demand for English has been created and it is this anxiety and enthusiasm to acquire English that the white man had to manipulate to his advantage in the ensuing discourse with the African. English education was given to a select few, mostly to the sons (not daughters) of the colonial chiefs and the sole objective was to use them as a link between the white administration and the natives. This was how the British perfected their principle of indirect rule in their colonies; and the reverberations of that policy are still felt as the second generation of those chosen few are controlling the politics and economy of Kenya today. The interpretation of this demand is varied. Some regard this as a demand to learn English so that they would be like the white men, while others interpret this to mean the instrumental desire to use English to gain muscle to fight back the colonial intrusion into their cultural and political space. There are also others who see this as evidence of the linguistic superiority of English over the local languages.

The undeniable fact is that English was a direct challenge to the cultural stability of the native, an affront to his medium of effective communication by the members of a new ‘out-group’. This is painfully illustrated by a popular story in Kenya that a colonial African Chief after a visit to England came back home to tell his people that ‘those people are so civilized that even their children do not speak Kiembu; they speak only English.’

The contextual realities in which English was introduced to the African left the poor Chief with no other way of perceiving English than as the mark of human civilization. English was more than just a medium of transferring thought, ideas, information and customs; it was the ultimate proof of ‘human-ness’. The chief was stereotyping the white man’s existence and thereby defining his own group existence. Unfortunately, this stereotype is not restricted to the untutored African Chief, as there is evidence of this even from among linguists. Writing about English, Otto Jespersen says:

> Nevertheless, there is one expression that continually comes to my mind whenever I think of the English language and compare it with others; it seems to me positively and expressly masculine, it is the language of a grown-up man and has very little childish or feminine about it. (1990 [1938]: 2)

Jespersen looks at data from a language of Hawaii and concludes:

> Can any one be in doubt that even if such a language sound pleasantly and be full of music and harmony the total impression is childlike and effeminate? You do not expect much vigour or energy in a people speaking such a language; it seems adapted only to inhabitants of sunny regions where the soil requires scarcely any labour on the part of man to yield him everything he wants, and where life therefore does not bear the stamp of a hard struggle against nature and against fellow-creatures. (1990 [1938]: 3; my emphasis)
Jespersen, himself not a native of England, completes the picture of the races who inhabit “sunny regions” and who, not coincidentally, are the people who were colonized. He puts English on a pedestal where no other language fits and the best that is left for speakers of other languages is to strive to learn the language of civilization, the language of men, the language of reason, the language of power and opportunity.

3. The present status of English in Kenya

English is the official language and therefore the medium of instruction, the language of government administration and the language of the law courts. It shares this official status with Kiswahili but only in so far as Kiswahili is co-official language in Parliament and that one requires proficiency in Kiswahili to be a naturalized citizen of Kenya. The other native languages have no official status to speak of, apart from being media of instruction for the first three years of education. English therefore enjoys much greater functional space than the other languages.

The policy as it stands today is basically assimilationist in character – giving official and legal support to English to dominate the lives of the Kenyan people. It is a continuation of the colonial arrangement since the result is the promotion of English at the expense of the other languages. In the present state of sociolinguistic research and knowledge available to us, a good language policy must take into consideration the following concerns:

- human rights implications for minorities
- economic utility of each language
- national integration and government efficiency
- group identity as well as personal identity
- aesthetic expression.

The assimilationist approach ignores most of the above concerns of a good language policy and the obvious outcomes of the policy include: poor educational performance blamed on inadequate mastery of English, the denial of justice at the law courts which use a language foreign to most accused people, stratification of the country into the English-speaking elite and non-English speakers, denial of access to vital information in the media and suppression of creative expression through mother tongues. This has led to a total distortion of the native cultural values and created a crisis which requires an urgent solution through deliberate intervention by the state.

For example, a survey by the Media Institute conducted in Kenya in 1998 to determine the public’s preferred sources of information revealed that 54.9% preferred the English Daily Nation as their primary source and this was followed by 15% who preferred the Kiswahili daily Taifa Leo. In the electro-
nic media 44% said they preferred Kiswahili news on the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and KBC television. Kiswahili news was preferred by 19% of the respondents. The KBC English channel was preferred by only 11%.

The survey also revealed that the majority of those who prefer the English daily and the English broadcasts are those with secondary education or above whereas those with lower education go for the Kiswahili papers and Kiswahili TV and radio broadcasts. The vernacular radio was preferred by those who indicated they had no education and this accounted for only 3.9%. The results can be interpreted to mean that the more influential section of the population seeks information in English and therefore more information will be produced in English and not in the other languages. The claim that English is a neutral language that can be used to unify Kenyans therefore falls flat since there is every evidence that the policy helps to stratify society by denying one section critical information that is made available to the other.

There are equally depressing stories about English in the judiciary and other institutions but for now we shall move on to some of the suggested solutions to the present chaos. We shall begin by looking at the views of two extreme groups which I shall call the Ngugiists and the Anglicists for lack of better terms and then suggest a third alternative.

4. The Ngugiists

In his essay entitled “Imperialism of Language” Ngugi argues that educated Africans are “equipped with the linguistic means of escape from the dark Tower of Babel, and [...] had their minds systematically removed from the world and the history carried by their original languages” (Ngugi 1993: 32). In his Whorfian belief about language, Ngugi vowed that he would never write again in English since “foreign languages, no matter how highly developed, will never be Kenyan languages” (Ngugi 1981: 194).

Ngugi’s position is that for Kenya to achieve real cultural liberation it must abandon the current policy which guarantees English an elevated position as the medium of expression of Kenyan nationalism and cultural identity. As Sapir said:

We see and hear very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predisposes certain choices of interpretation. (Sapir 1949: 162)

The Whorfian view poses the question whether a foreign language can be used to express native emotions, feelings and aspirations effectively. How creatively can Kenyan children use English in a science classroom? How effectively can Kenyan children express their inner feelings in poetry and prose through the English medium? If, as Hodge and Kress (1979: 63) assert, “language becomes a second reality, the taken-for-granted basis of individual
messages and thoughts,” can Kenyans truly express these “messages and thoughts” in a language other than their native languages?

One might argue that a foreign language well mastered can be as effective a medium as a native language for developing literary as well as scientific skills. However, a commoditized, standardized foreign language is often not evenly distributed with the obvious consequence that some sections of the population receive less of it in quantity and quality. This means that the precious commodity will be accessible to a select few, hence become a criterion for selecting the bad from the good, the weak from the strong. In other words, English becomes the basis for stratifying Kenyan society.

Ngugi and his disciples have vigorously campaigned for replacement of English with Kiswahili as the major language of national discourse but it is yet to be seen whether this is what Kenyans want. Surveys among Kenyan students suggest that English is still the most preferred language in most of the important domains like education, the mass media and governance, although for purposes of cultural identification they prefer Kiswahili (Kembo-Sure 1992: 1).

The point in Ngugi’s position is purely politico-historical and disregards the current pragmatic considerations which are both societal and personal. For example, Kenyans realize the practical benefits of using English in education both for individual families and for the country as a whole. However, Ngugi’s position is important in language planning discourse, in that it reminds us of the historical and political context of the assumed importance of English. Some of the evolving cultural and social realities in Kenya will be discussed in the latter parts of the essay.

5. The Anglicists

In his book Song Of Ocol, Okot p’Bitek gives us Ocol as a caricature of a deculturated African man who wishes to see the demolition of all that is African and ‘move on’. He tells Lawino:

I see an Old Homestead
In the Valley below
Huts, granaries ...
All in ruins;
I see a large pumpkin
Rotting
A thousand beetles in it;
We will plough up
All the Valley
Make compost of the Pumpkins
And the other native vegetables,
The fence dividing
Family holdings
Will be torn down
We will uproot
The tree demarcating
The land of clan from clan
We will obliterate
Tribal boundaries
And throttle native tongues
The 6umb death

This is the antithesis of Ngugi’s position that Kenyans should get rid of English in order to realize full independence and, in fact, full development. The pumpkin, tribal boundaries, native tongues and the homestead are all images of the useless old past which must be discarded and be replaced by Western ways. The crusade here is about establishing the new ways without due regard for the values of the established traditional order that had guided the community from time immemorial. As Lawino, Ocol’s wife, answers him, it appears he is turning to Western ways because he cannot master the ways of his people in his confused state of mind:

Ignorance and shame provoke you
To turn to foreign things!
Perhaps you are covering up
Your bony hips and chest
And the large scar on your thigh
And scabies on your buttocks

However, Anglicists do not stop at the adoption of English as the medium of communication in most of the domains; they go further to prescribe the standard, which is normally the native-speaker standard. In the 27 May 2001 edition of the *Sunday Nation*, the paper with the highest circulation in the country, a top columnist, Philip Ochieng’, had the following to say to his readers who complained about his use of too many unfamiliar words:

If I were Philip Okundi, Kenya’s English would be top of the list of industrial items to be banned by my Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS). For language is the most important of industrial products. There can be no oral communication except through a complex orchestration of human hands, brains and vocal organs. (Ochieng’ 2001)

Ochieng’ is calling for a Kenya English Academy to screen the kind of English produced and to monitor the use of English in order to protect people from impure, adulterated language. He makes his point even more strongly
when he sees language as reflecting the moral and intellectual status of its users:

That the English spoken and written even by our Ph.Ds. is so poor is vitally linked to the fact that their socio-moral consciousness is equally narrow. But there is no short cut. You can gain such a consciousness only through intellectual travail. Only through ceaseless study I have acquired whatever I know and the language in which I impart it. (Ochieng’ 2001)

For those familiar with literature on purism and standards, Ochieng’s position is not a novel one. For example, in his book *Paradigm Lost* John Simon also equates ungrammatical language with bad social habits and subhumaness.

Bad grammar is rather like bad manners; some one who picks his nose at a party will still be recognized as a minimal human being and not a literal four-footed pig; but there are cases where the minimal is not enough. (Simon 1980: 20)

As I mentioned earlier, the distribution of an official standard language is always uneven and this means that the Philip Ochiengs and John Simons who master the language through “intellectual travail” are a tiny elitist minority. This uneven distribution was carefully crafted by the colonial education system and, in the Marxist sense, the imbalance prepared the ground for language as a site for a class struggle in the cultural symbolic system, chiefly language and the creative arts.

To illustrate the tragedy of learning through a foreign language, the text in Appendix One may be useful. This is an abstract from a third-year university student wishing to prepare a conference paper on the problem of AIDS in Kenya. The text is full of deviations, some of which distract the reader from the topic. However, there is evidence that the author has a true and serious view about the tragic situation he is trying to describe. This is a Kenyan who has had exposure to English, at least in school, for fifteen years, but does not meet the standards of ‘socio-moral consciousness’ that the purists set.

If the adoption of English as a compulsory subject and medium of instruction was meant to standardize its provision to all, does the outcome across schools and regions reflect any equity? The fact is that, with universalization of primary education and subsequent dramatic expansion of secondary education, the mythical ‘standard’ can no longer be dreamed of. Besides, even the select few during the colonial period did not reach the native-speaker levels that purists demand. The standards must be established from local varieties and not imported ones; the American variety came about by first rejecting the British standards and it did not come easy. Serious work must start towards establishing a realistic national standard.
6. The emergence of alternative forms

The international standards in spoken and written English will remain as elusive as the national or regional standards. There may be no consensus on what attributes constitute a national standard, but we know we can be identified and identify ourselves with certain speech forms: i.e., grammatical and idiomatic forms that have a regional distribution. Without trying to argue for a Kenyan standard, I would wish to look at examples from an emerging language ‘mix’ in Appendix Three. This is what is popularly known as *Sheng*, a mixture of English, Kiswahili and other local languages. This had its epicentre in Nairobi but has now spread out to other towns and rural settlements.

The genesis of the code is the strong desire to build solidarity within a group using language as a symbol of that solidarity. The Kenyan youth want a symbolic system outside Kiswahili and English, which they can use to set themselves apart from others and to enable them to express their world in a unique idiom that represents only their world. For example:

1. That *jamaa* feels so hot and he’s *bila* doze.
   [That chap feels so hot, but he has nothing interesting to say.]
2. I found *akina* Suzie just *maxing*.
   [I found Suzie and the rest just relaxing.]

In code-switching literature, the analysis of this would claim an imposition of lexical items from Kiswahili and other languages on an English syntax but there are also items from sources very difficult to identify. There are also neologisms which are completely undecipherable to the uninitiated and these are what makes the code exclusive to the in-group members. The expressions, however, respect either the English word-formation rules or the morphological rules of one of the Kenyan languages – in the following Sheng sentences, for example:

3. *Beshti ya mine alishow tuishie ocha*¹
   [my friend asked me to go to his home area with him.]
4. Our neighbours have *hamad*²
   [our neighbours have moved.]

The use of Sheng is an attempt by the youth to construct a new identity, a new world and a new reality in which a communicative code defines membership

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1 *Beshti* is a corruption of the English word “best” and turned into a noun to mean “my best friend”; *ya* = of; *alinshow*: a (third-person singular) – *li* (past) – *ni* (first-person singular object) – *show* (the English verb being used here to mean “request”); *tuishie ocha*: *tu* (first-person plural) – *ishie* (go) – *ocha* (home rural).
2 *Hamad* is a Kiswahili word meaning “move house”. The suffix -*d* has been added to make the verb past in the same way we use the English past morphmeme -*ed*. 
of the in-group and isolates members of the out-group. This the youth will often do by switching to the jargon in the presence of their elders and to this extent English has provided a resource for manipulating the existing reality to construct a novel verbal reality.

The Sheng phenomenon was initially dismissed as an anti-social or a protest code akin to other known underworld argots, but its common appearance in homes and offices among the initiated does not support this theory. It evokes different reactions from members of the out-group, with some condemning it as corrupting the youth while others think it is an expression of their group rights in the shared communicative space, where adults always claim dominant control. This is but natural, since language attitudes are functions of interpersonal and intergroup interactions. The youth have to contend with social sanctions requiring them to take it all from the elders and conform to what is posited as right by adults, including speech forms. That is the source of struggle which gave birth to Sheng and keeps sustaining it. We shall now look at another strategy used by local languages to accommodate English in their language ecology.

7. Borrowing

Even those Kenyans who have not had the rare opportunity to go to school and learn English and learn it well, have the privilege of using borrowed items from the rich English lexicon. The list in Appendix Two demonstrates how Kenyan languages have creatively indigenized some English words to the extent that monolingual native speakers of the languages do not recognize the words as borrowed. The cultural contact with the English is clearly demonstrated by the subsequent language change witnessed in the Kenyan languages. Although borrowing has been largely unidirectional (from English), reflecting the power relations of the speech communities, English has also borrowed a few words, eg, safari, panga, duka. Purists would argue that borrowing is a sign of language degeneration, but the fact is that in situations of language contact there is bound to be some influence by one language on the other and for various reasons, not only perceived cultural superiority.

Borrowing reflects the internal development of the Kenyan languages and if language is symbolic of the cultural identity and the social reality, then contact with English has engendered a new socio-cultural identity. As early as 1928, only eight years after Kenya was officially declared a colony of the British Empire, a colonial officer recorded some 40 English words borrowed by the Agikuyu. Borrowing in this case is regarded as a strategy speakers of a language adopt to cope with new concepts and items introduced into the cultural space through contact. The British intrusion into the African space required more than just hostile military repulsion; it also required the penetra-
tion of the British mind. That is why Ezeulu, the Chief Priest, sends his son to the mission school not to turn into an Englishman and Christian, but to learn the ways of the white man and come back to give his secrets to the Umuaro people (Achebe 1965). Linguistic borrowing, like learning a new language, was a way of engaging in an evolving colonial discourse.

8. Conclusion

We have discussed the encounter between English and the Kenyan languages as representing the meeting of diametrically opposed cultures, and strategies that each group employed to survive the crisis. The Kenyan ‘Natives’ accepted the English language, and actually demanded that it be taught to their children, but that in no way meant that they accepted wholesale the cultural and political domination which followed.

The British responded to this demand by dispensing English education to a small elite group which they could manipulate to serve their imperial ambitions. The English language was cunningly turned into a tool for the subjugation of the local population with the cooperation of the educated elite. The educated elite have actually continued to collude with the centre to ensure the domination of the linguistic scene by English, long after independence.

We have seen that independence does not change language use dramatically since English has maintained its dominant role in education, the mass media, industry, law and governance. The extreme views discussed are either to replace English altogether and have Kiswahili take its place or to dismantle all the local idioms and foster an all English-policy. Neither view can solve the complex problem at hand; some third alternative must be found.

After discussing the several strategies local populations are adopting to cope with the complex linguistic situation, I would venture to say that the only prudent way to go is plurilingualism. As the world is opening up for pluralism in politics, education, trade etc., we must regard acceptance and development of all languages as the option. This is not to say that all languages must perform all functions at all levels and at all times. Every country, every society will give fair treatment to all its languages so speakers of every language have a choice of which language to use at what time for what purpose. As contained in the OAU Language Plan of Action for Africa, all members must ensure that all languages within their boundaries “are recognized and accepted as a resource of mutual enrichment.”

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Appendix 1

Student writing on the AIDS crisis

It has affected each one of us,
Parents have lost their beloved daughters,
Dads with their beloved sons,
Husbands cannot forget their suffering wives.
Our sisters and brothers depreciate in our sights.
Students have lost their teachers
Teachers have lost their students.
Employers cannot explain it.
Employees left with no employers.
Kenya has lost its old men
And young men alike.

Our hearts get startled when we hear such words mentioned around us. We can no longer bear the pain of what has happened to our beloved ones. The enemy AIDS seems to have attacked us and rendered us helpless. NO cure the provocative formula to the rich and poor. The thought of our immediate neighbours suffering from the disease arouses our human concern. We cannot any more eat to our fill. The suffering is great.
I would have liked to start with a high note to discuss this but i feel discouraged when i see my fellow friends, brothers, sisters even my parents continue befriending with AIDS help it to spread. How long will they take to be convinced that AIDS kill and not a friend to human kind.
Appendix 2

English loans in Nandi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NANDI</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kiait</td>
<td>gear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiplelipul</td>
<td>bloody fool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kotit</td>
<td>coat</td>
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<td>leepol</td>
<td>level</td>
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<td>lokeshen</td>
<td>location</td>
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<td>madam</td>
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<td>matkatit</td>
<td>mudguard</td>
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<td>menecha</td>
<td>manager</td>
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<td>paipol</td>
<td>bible</td>
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<td>pastor</td>
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<td>taxi</td>
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<tr>
<td>taransipaa</td>
<td>transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temit</td>
<td>damn it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

_Sheng_ (source: Waithera 1999)

Oti: Wassup!
(What’s up?)

Jamo: It’s coolo.
(I’m fine)

Oti: What is the plot today?
(What’s the plan today?)

Jamo: I’m bustin’ voo today with shorty.
(I am going to Carnivore today with my girlfriend.)

Oti: You must be staked.
(You must have a lot of money.)

Jamo: Bila. Just kiasi. Do you have a gaff?
(No, just enough. Do you have a cigarette?)

Njogu: Will you guys fika (come to) my bash (party) kesho (tomorrow)?

Charlo: Yeah, we’ll fika. (come) But you know me, I’ll be busy so I’ll fika
(arrive) late, maybe around ... yaani (I mean) late. I’ll fika (arrive) late. Like twelve hivi (or so).

Njogu: Sawa sawa (OK), you just fika (come) at any time.

Odhis: What time is it starting?

Njogu: At around seven.

Sally: The bash (party) is for?

Njogu: Ah. Just a bash (party).

Odhis: There’s some quoro (quorum) there, ama (isn’t there)?


Odhis: Will there be barley (alcoholic drinks)?

Njogu: Kawa (as usual) bana (man).

Odhis: Aah. Basi (in that case) we’re set. Kwanza (first of all) it’s a Friday.

Julie: Si you organize for us a rack (car)?

Charlo: That’s simple.
Julie: Then us guys will chill (wait) for you then you don’t turn up. What cuts (happens)?
Charlo: Too bad.
Sally: You know the way you guys like tupa-ring (disappointing) chicks (ladies).
Njogu: So the thing is set. You’re fika-ring (coming) tomorrow?
Charlo: Yeah.
Njogu: Sawa sawa (OK).
Sally: You guys don’t play (con) us. Sawa (OK)? You sikia (hear)? You guys play (con) us you are in shit.
Appendix 4

Further examples of *Sheng* (from Waithera 1999):

1. Mazee yule manzi ni supu.
   [Man, that girl is beautiful]
2. I badly need stake for clad.
   [I badly need money for clothes]
3. It seems you guys are kularing vibe.
   [It seems you guys are just talking]
   [from *funga mlango* – close the door]
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Postcolonial Language Planning in Tanzania
What Are the Difficulties and What is the Way Out?

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ABSTRACT
The essay discusses the language policy of Tanzania and shows how the ideals of the immediate postcolonial period have been eclipsed by the aspirations of the socially dominant groups, whose desire to protect their interests brings them into conflict with the government’s ‘swahilization’ policy. Instead of a forced choice between Kiswahili and English, the essay advocates a third way, of not rejecting English, but of reconstituting it in a more inclusive, ethical and democratic way so as to bring about economic and social harmony in society. In this way, it is hoped that all young learners from different social and economic strata currently in the education system will be empowered for their future productive role in society.

1. Introduction: genesis of the politics of English as the medium of education in Tanzania

TANZANIA\textsuperscript{1} was first a German colony (1885–1914) and then a British Trustee Territory (1919–61) while Zanzibar was under the Oman Arab Sultanate (1652–1964). Language policy in Tanzania was and still is partly determined by this historical background. During the German era, Kiswahili was the vehicular language. It was the language used

\textsuperscript{1} The name Tanzania was coined in 1964 after Tanganyika and Zanzibar united on 26 April to form the United Republic of Tanzania – in short, Tanzania.
to rule the colony. It was also the medium of formal Western education\(^2\) for those members of the indigenous population who received it.

During British rule, however, English was introduced into the education system. Before progressing further, we should perhaps mention that a tripartite system existed with separate schools for the European population, the Indian population, and the African population.\(^3\) In the schools for the Africans, English was at first taught as a school subject with the aim of using it as the medium of education in the higher classes. There were, therefore, clearly spelled out language policies to achieve these ends. For example, as early as the 1920s the British colonial office in London took an interest in the education of the indigenous peoples of its colonies in Africa.\(^4\) Other missions followed the earlier visits of the 1920s. Of particular interest, with regard to educational policy and practice in general, and language policy in particular, is the *African Education Study* of 1951–52, which visited all British colonies in Africa. The study team was divided into two groups: the Eastern and Central African group and the Western African group. Among several recommendations made by the East and Central African group regarding language policy the following are of interest to this essay:

Recommendation 16: Use of certain vernaculars in primary education [...]  
Recommendation 18: A policy should be followed which leads to the eventual elimination of Swahili from all schools where it is taught as a lingua franca. (In Kenya, a policy of gradual elimination over the whole territory could be followed. In Tanganyika a more piecemeal policy would be wiser. At first one or two ‘vernacular areas’ could be detached from the main

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\(^2\) Formal Western education during the German colonial period typically consisted of up to four years of primary schooling, while during the early years of British rule and until the mid-1950s, it was six years of primary education.

\(^3\) The tripartite system was abolished on 1 Jan 1962 just after Tanganyika gained its independence. The new language policy in education was that Kiswahili became the medium of instruction from Std. I – IV (ie, lower primary school). English was introduced as a subject in Std. III and was the medium of instruction from Std. V – VIII (ie, middle school) and in secondary school. At that time there was no university in the country. Tanganyikans who qualified for higher education were sent to Makerere College in Uganda or to Britain. Makerere College catered for the East African British territories of Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar during the colonial days.

\(^4\) The Phelp–Stoke Commission on education in the colonies visited, among other countries, the East African British colonies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. And among other things, the question of medium of education was central. In Kenya, Kiswahili was associated with islamization and was therefore considered unsuitable as the medium of education. In Uganda there were at least 15 major ethnic groups. In Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Kiswahili was more widespread and was already in use as the medium of education for lower classes and as a vehicular language of administration.
Swahili-teaching bloc and in them a more vigorous vernacular plus English policy pursued).

Recommendation 19: As soon as competent teachers are available, the teaching of English should be introduced in the second year of school life with the aim of giving in three years of study a reading ability sufficient to ensure permanent literacy given adequate follow-up. English should be used as the medium of instruction in the fourth year as an extension of the direct method of teaching.

Recommendation 22: English should be taught in primary schools to produce good reading ability, speaking ability be given in middle and secondary schools with a mandatory oral examination as part of the School Certificate examination.

Recommendation 23: English should be strengthened in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) as part of the general education of the students and part of the language policy, which gives a quite new importance and weight to English (and selected vernaculars).

It was on the basis of the above recommendations that English found its way into all levels of the education system in Tanzania as part of the language policy in education pursued by the British colonial government. It is these roots which Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) argue to be the formative discourses and practices in ELT today. It is important to point out here that many top government officials who are currently in power obtained their education during this time or during the period just after independence. After independence and until 1967 the curricular and language policy in education remained that practised during the British colonial days. Significant changes in education and language policy began in 1967.

2. Kiswahili: the language of nation-building in the newly independent Tanganyika

In Tanzania, the struggle for independence began in earnest in 1954 after the founding of TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) by Julius Nyerere. TANU adopted Kiswahili as the language for this struggle.\(^5\) It united more than one hundred and thirty tribes in the country during the struggle for independence and became the most appropriate national language for the independence struggle. To give it its due weight, the first president of Tanganyika,

\(^5\) There are two main reasons why Kiswahili was adopted during the struggle for independence. First, English was seen as the language of the enemy. Second, not many Tanzanians had acquired it because it was learned in schools. Thus the majority of the Tanzanians who were wholeheartedly involved in this struggle did not speak or understand the English language.
Julius K. Nyerere, used it to address the first independent national assembly. This gave Kiswahili the impetus required to make it the official and national language from the onset of independence. Thus, after the country had gained independence, the new leaders found Kiswahili to be the most appropriate language for nation building. It was therefore easily adopted and widely accepted as the national/official language to unite the nation and to ensure that no single tribal group would dominate linguistically. Later policies and ideologies of TANU, the ruling party, such as the Ujamaa ideology, adult literacy campaigns of the 1970s and the implementation of universal primary education (UPE) depended greatly on Kiswahili as the medium of transmitting the message. Other economic and social development plans such as the fifteen-year development plan (1965–80) greatly depended on transmission of the messages in an accessible medium – and Kiswahili was the rational and patriotic choice.

The early days of independence were followed by the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964, which also had a significant impact. For example, in Zanzibar, Kiswahili was made the official language and Arabic and English were banned in the Isles by a government decree. This reinforced the earlier TANU efforts to make Kiswahili the official and the national language of mainland Tanganyika.

3. Kiswahili vs. English as the medium of Tanzania’s education system

As pointed out earlier, the major move to make Kiswahili the medium of education in the Tanzanian education system began in 1967 after the announcement of the Arusha Declaration and the subsequent Education for Self-Reliance policy. According to this policy, Kiswahili was made the medium of primary education. It was argued at that time that this policy of swahilizing the medium of primary education was a step towards swahilizing the medium of secondary and higher education in subsequent years.

However, since these first attempts to swahilize the medium of the country’s education system in the mid-1960s, the Tanzanian government has made very little progress.

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6 Tanzania has one hundred and thirty ethnolinguistic groups – the largest, the Wasukuma, has about 5 million speakers and the smallest tribes have a few thousand speakers.

7 Before this policy, the medium of instruction in lower primary schools (Std. I – IV) was Kiswahili and the medium of the middle school (upper primary school) (Std. V – VIII) was English.
3.1 National Development Plan 1964–80

On attaining independence, Tanzania, like most former colonies, inherited the following: a very weak economy, very few trained middle- and high-level skilled workers in all sectors, and a very low life-expectancy. The immediate aims of the newly independent governments were therefore to raise the income per capita, to attain self-sufficiency in trained and middle- and high-level skilled manpower and to raise the life expectancy through developing medical infrastructure. To achieve these objectives, education was seen as one of the important catalysts for development. In the case of Tanzania, it was argued that the best option would be to make primary education universal: ie, compulsory, for all school-aged children. It was also argued that secondary and higher education be reserved for the few who would later serve the majority, and, in Nyerere’s terms, “those few who received the privilege of getting secondary education had a duty to repay the sacrifice which others had made.” It was therefore argued that to make secondary and higher education relevant to Tanzanian needs, it had to be offered in the medium of Kiswahili. The main reasons for this view were as follows: first, education should not alienate those who received it from their society. Secondly, it was expected that those who received higher education would use their knowledge and skills to bring about the rapid economic and social development of Tanzanian society. These aims were stated in the Education for Self-Reliance policy document of 1967 and in the second Five Year Development Plan Document (1969–74). In line with these developments, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a directive to all heads of secondary schools in 1969 that the O-level examinations would be conducted in Kiswahili with effect from 1971.8

3.2 Recommendations of local vs. foreign experts

A shift in the official/national policy from English to Kiswahili after independence (and the subsequent Cultural Revolution which swept most independent nations) led to a decline in the use of English, and subsequently, a decline in the standard of English language proficiency. This decline was further reinforced by the change in the medium of primary education mentioned earlier. This state of affairs led the government and learning institutions to carry out several studies of the language situation in Tanzania. For example, in 1975 the National Kiswahili Council of Tanzania (BAKITA) commissioned Materu and Mlama to undertake a study on the viability of using Kiswahili as the medium of education in secondary schools. Similarly, in 1979 the

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8 The only paper which had been in Kiswahili before that was Siasa (Political Education), which has now been renamed Uraia (Civics).
Presidential Commission (popularly known as the Makwetta Commission) was appointed to undertake a study on the general educational policy and practice of the post-Arusha declaration era. Other local educationalists and sociolinguists also undertook similar studies in the country – mainly as part of educational research for their Master’s degree studies. At the institutional level, the University of Dar es Salaam administered English language screening tests to their prospective undergraduates to establish their needs and deficits in academic situations.

The findings of all these local experts and of the English language-screening tests pointed out that English was something of a barrier to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in secondary schools and higher education. The local experts subsequently recommended a shift to Kiswahili as the medium of education as an extension of the language of instruction policy pursued in primary education. Based on the results of the screening tests, however, UDSM established a communication skills unit to offer intensive English courses and study skills tuition as a short-term measure for the period in which English was to remain the medium of higher education in Tanzania. Let us turn to the views of these local and external experts.

3.3 The Makwetta Report and its recommendations

The Makwetta Commission undertook a fact-finding mission regarding educational reforms in the country. It visited almost all regions in Tanzania, inspected institutions of learning and interviewed people from all sectors of society. It also toured other countries for the purposes of comparison. The Commission strongly recommended a shift to Kiswahili in the entire education system and set targets to ‘swahilize’ the medium of instruction in secondary education by 1985 and in higher education by 1992. The government, however, stalled these recommendations and instead invited an outside view – the Criper and Dodd Commission.

3.4 Criper and Dodd’s report and their recommendations

As pointed out above, instead of heeding the recommendation of the local experts mentioned above, the government invited foreign experts with assistance from the British Council in 1985 – the Criper and Dodd Commission. The Commission conducted a thorough survey of the language situation in secondary schools and in the institutions of higher education.

The interesting and significant point of difference between the local and foreign experts in their study on the medium of instruction is their findings. They both pointed out that English had ceased to be a viable medium of education in Tanzania for various practical and ideological reasons. However,
while the local experts advocated a shift to Kiswahili, the international experts recommended strengthening the English language in the country’s education system. The government heeded this recommendation. This resulted in a ten-year English Language Teaching Support Project (ELTSP 1986–96). The main reason for this favourable official attitude towards English probably was the package attached to the recommendations of the foreign experts – especially textbooks, which formed part of the support from the British Government. The materials were mainly designed for use in the UK. For example, the stories, pictures, etc. were designed for a British cultural context. Furthermore, audiotapes or videotapes accompanied some of the textbooks. But not all schools in Tanzania have the necessary equipment or suitable language laboratories for such materials. In fact, not all schools have a reliable supply of electricity.

In a nutshell, we can see from this experience that language teaching/learning materials, curricula and language teaching pedagogies offered as part of the ELT support from donor countries such as Britain or the USA raise a number of questions about their relevance and appropriateness to the Third-World recipients.

3.5 Other government documents

In the case of Tanzania, the question of the appropriate medium of instruction in secondary and higher education dominated the education and training policies of 1993 and 1995. In these documents, the problem of English as the medium of instruction is acknowledged, but the government kept on sticking to English. This was mainly due to the conditionality of the ELTSP – that English must remain the medium of secondary and higher education in Tanzania.

A significant language policy document is the Tanzania Cultural Policy, which states that Kiswahili shall soon be the medium of the entire education system. The Government has already set a target – that by 2010 Kiswahili shall be the medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. Whether this target will be met is as yet an open question, as even now there are conflicting views among the Ministry’s officials on the implementation date.

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9 See Canagarajah (1999) for similar experiences in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.
10 Only between eight and ten percent of Tanzanians have access to electricity, mainly in major towns.
11 Tanzania receives education at aid from the USA in the form of personnel (Peace Corps) and teaching/learning materials.
12 For example, the new Minister for Education and Culture, J. Mungai, declared in an interview with the BBC that “we haven’t reached that stage, we don’t even have
3.6 The dominant group and the politics of English-medium education in Tanzania

While the stated language political goal is to swahilize Tanzania’s entire education system, in practice, the dominant elite group is thwarting the Government’s efforts. Prior to the liberalization of the mid-1980s (the Ruksa period), English-medium primary schools were for the children of the expatriates working in Tanzania. All Tanzanian children went to public primary schools where the medium of instruction is Kiswahili. After abandoning the ideologies and policies of the Arusha Declaration and the subsequent liberalization of the economy, English-medium kindergarten/primary schools began to mushroom in Tanzania. These institutions are very expensive for ordinary working people and peasants and are found in major towns only. They are thus meant for the rich. In the case of Tanzania, this is mainly the administrative elite who occupy key positions in the government’s machinery. They are the people with the power to implement or not to implement the government language policy as stipulated in the 1997 Cultural Policy document, which is regarded as the main language policy document for implementation of swahilization.

In my recent study of the elite’s knowledge of the government language policy, their attitude towards government efforts to swahilize the medium of education and their behaviour towards this process (Mafu 2001), the following was established:

– that the elite are aware of the government language policy in general: ie, they are aware that Kiswahili is the national and official language in Tanzania;
– that they are aware of the problems associated with English as the medium of education but are not ready to change to Kiswahili. For example, they recognize student difficulties caused by code switching and code mixing between English and Kiswahili in their lectures. They claim that they do so because they know from experience that not all students can follow lectures conducted entirely in English. They base this claim on the way their students answer essay questions in the examinations and classroom assignments. On the other hand, when they visit rural people to conduct research or on outreach activities, they code mix between English and

Biology, Chemistry books written in Kiswahili” (Tanzanian Guardian, 14 April 2001: 8). This is clearly a U-turn on the earlier Government stance announced by the Vice President in March 2000 at the International Kiswahili workshop, where the Vice President stated that the Tanzanian Government was committed to swahilization.

13 Only a very few rich parents sent their children to neighbouring countries where the medium was English.
Kiswahili even though they are aware that peasants in Tanzania do not understand English and that the official language policy requires them to use Kiswahili. Almost all their research findings are written in English – hence not easily accessible to the peasants; that they are not serious about promoting swahilization. Instead they send their own children to English-medium kindergarten/primary schools or to neighbouring countries where the medium of primary education is English. The expectations and aspirations of their children are those expressed in the teaching materials imported from the West. Their children are made to study English so as to give them the sort of life depicted in the teaching and learning materials.

3.7 Anglicization and globalization

Today the world is moving towards a single capitalist world economy dominated by multinational corporations, which for the most part have promoted English as the lingua franca of international capitalism (Pennycook 1994). The capitalist system has become global in part through technological advances. This is particularly true in the case of information technology, telecommunication and audiovisual media, which are of growing importance, as is succinctly explained by Wright (2000), who argues that “there is now an ever-growing internationalism, an increasing acceptance of intervention in the internal affairs of the state, economic globalisation and continuous technological advancement and a perception of cultural convergence, which have denationalised many aspects of national life. Globalization seems to constitute Global Anglicisation” (79).

Tanzania is part of this “global village”. It participates in international affairs. For example, it plays a significant regional role in the Great Lakes States of Africa, which are currently involved in internal feuds and wars. It accepts refugees from these states and it has now sent a peacekeeping force to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tanzania also participates in other international forums such as the OAU, the UN and its associate bodies. It has an urgent need to succeed in economic terms. This global participation seems to force Tanzania to expand English for the foreseeable future.

4. Analysis and conclusion:
the role of English in postmodern Tanzania

Currently there is a complex triglossic situation developing in Tanzania. English is the medium of secondary and higher education and the medium of international communication. Kiswahili, on the other hand, is the official and the national language. It is also the medium of primary education. Local and
family languages are numerous. It is important to stress here that Tanzania is a developing nation. It needs to educate its population appropriately from the grassroots level up. It needs English for negotiating successfully in the international arena.

In this essay, it has been shown that English has continued to be the medium of secondary and higher education in Tanzania despite the negative consequences this has had on learners. It has also been shown that the elites send their children to English-medium schools so that they can have a head start when they proceed to secondary and higher education, where the medium of instruction is English. It is therefore imperative to reconcile the needs and desires of different groups in the society: the well-educated elites will not abandon their educational advantage and the larger numbers of peasant farming families need to have greater social mobility. At first sight these are incompatible goals. Moreover, all this must be achieved within a situation of scarce resources both financial (to purchase appropriate teaching and learning materials) and manpower (to hire or train experts in the field of ELT).

If secondary education is to swahilize, there may be an even greater tendency for the children of the elites to be educated outside the state system. As there is a pressing need for bilinguals (Kiswahili/English) in all sectors of the state economy and government, those educated to be bilingual would be at an advantage. Although the Swahilization of the education system would make the next level of education available to the great majority, they would still be barred effectively from full social mobility since they would be unlikely to become competent Kiswahili/English bilinguals.

I therefore recommend a type of bilingual education in secondary and higher education in Tanzania which can overcome the above-mentioned problems if and when the education system is swahilized. Tanzania should consider bilingualism as additive. That is, students should be able to use Kiswahili skills, which they have already acquired during their primary education, in learning English when they join secondary and higher education. In order to put such a strategy into practice, thorough research and needs analysis is called for to ensure a smooth implementation of the bilingual education policy. The politics of English in the Tanzanian education system continues.

**Works Cited**


“Hear from my own lips”
The Language of Women’s Autobiographies
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ABSTRACT
The aim of this essay is to focus on the relationship between identity, culture and the use of language in women’s autobiographical writings in English. The essay mainly analyses Buchi Emecheta’s autobiography *Head above Water* (1986) and Sindiwe Magona’s autobiographical texts *To My Children’s Children* (1990) and *Forced to Grow* (1992). The three works are interesting examples of the plurality and non-homogeneity of autobiographical female voices. Emphasis is given to the relationship between oral and written literature, the use of figurative language exploited by the two writers, the rhetorical devices they employ and the impact of Western literary models upon their own writing.

In *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women’s Autobiography* (2000), Gillian Whitlock analyses a wide range of colonial and post-colonial women’s autobiographies, from the *History of Mary Prince* (1831) to the most recent autobiographical texts. She suggests that despite, and within, such a multifaceted selection it is still possible to observe “how the subject negotiates a space to speak” (Whitlock 2000: 2). She stresses the complexities of the genre and admits that “rather than constructing an identity of history of women” she is more interested in “difference and intimacy” (3). By the term ‘intimacy’ she means “how deeply personally embedded colo-
nization and resistance are in thinking and writing about the self – a small pink map at the heart of things” (7).

An analysis of Buchi Emecheta’s *Head above Water* (1986) and Sindiwe Magona’s *To My Children’s Children* (1990) and *Forced to Grow* (1992) shows how appropriate Whitlock’s statements are, as all these three texts are good examples of how varied the goals, styles, narrative techniques of women’s autobiography may be. These two authors differ in social background, upbringing and education. Emecheta is an Igbo woman writer living in London, Magona is a South African teacher of the Xhosa ethnic group: the first author mainly draws upon her experiences as an expatriate, trying to find her own space as a woman and a writer in a foreign environment, while the second chronicles the difficulties of her life in a society ruled by patriarchy and apartheid. The main feature that can be said to unite their voices is the fact that they both follow the well-established pattern of a chronological order: from childhood, through school days, to life as an adult, including important events such as marriage and motherhood. Emecheta’s narrative ends with the publication of *The Joys of Motherhood* in 1979, while the first part of Magona’s autobiography covers her first twenty-three years and the second part ends with Magona’s departure for New York in 1984.

Similarities may be noticed between the lives of the two women authors – for example, in their being abandoned by their husbands, and struggling, as single mothers, to survive and make ends meet. The maternal trope has been, in fact, considered particularly relevant to Magona’s two-part autobiography as she “projects an individual’s attempt to create a space for herself by maneuvering through two competing yet converging maternal discourses, one Western, the other African” (Koyana 2001: 63). However, the way the two writers see themselves as subjects, how they approach and develop the genre and their attitudes towards the reader, are elements that reveal great differences between them. Their aim in writing their autobiographies, and therefore the value they assign to the genre, is dissimilar, as it is based on a divergent way of looking at one’s identity and, therefore, of representing oneself. Such a differentiation is made explicit not only by the content of their narration, but, above all, by the linguistic, rhetorical and textual strategies employed by the two authors.

Sindiwe Magona’s first autobiographical text, *To My Children’s Children*, is introduced by a preface ‘From a Xhosa Grandmother’ built on a series of questions directly addressed to a great-granddaughter (Magona 1994: vii). This preface is followed by a dedicatory allocution, presumably aimed at the same addressee, titled “A Child of the Child of My Child”. Both the preface and this introductory appeal stress the intimate nature of her narration, which is meant to be confined to a family sphere (even if Magona is writing for a
public of unknown readers). The very title of the autobiography reinforces this idea. Magona underlines her need to share her past with the descendants of her family and considers herself as the living memory of a yesteryear that belongs not only to her, but to her clan. In this way the recollections of her own life are considered both as an instrument to analyse and state her own identity, and as a help for future generations to understand themselves and their own history. While narrating her own story, she narrates a common past: the life experiences, difficulties, sorrows and struggles shared by her own people. A personal story becomes, then, part of the history of a whole people. The individual, though maintaining its central position both as subject – as the one who had an extraordinary life – and as narrator – as the one who chooses what to narrate – takes its place within a world of which it is only a piece. The individual still plays a role as a model, as the recipient of an exemplary life, but the narrative focus shifts from the individual who is narrating to the individual(s) to whom the narration is addressed. Magona’s autobiography is, therefore, a link between the private and public. The personal becomes political. The Western criteria of autobiography are challenged by such a perspective: identity as an autonomous self-hood grows from one’s identity within the group and leads to an attempt at collective self-determination. In an interview, Magona confirms that her “writing is, therefore, an attempt to put on record some of that collective consciousness [...] or, at least, a slice thereof” (Koyana & Gray 2001: 81). This attitude on the part of the writer is confirmed by the final words of her first volume where Magona addresses her great-granddaughter again (Magona 1994: 167).

The fact that Magona considers herself and her life events as part of a story that involves her whole clan, and the fact that she talks of herself within her group, is made evident by her repeated use of the first-person-plural pronouns, both nominative and accusative. She resorts to the first person plural not only when referring to herself and her mates during her childhood days (Magona 1994: 5, 9), but also when narrating about herself as an adult, for example when writing about school colleagues (Magona 1997: 67, 69), about the group of Church Women Concerned she joins (Magona 1997: 122), the Women’s Movement (Magona 1997: 166) and, generally, any time she denounces apartheid restrictions (Magona 1994: 66) or aims at stressing her adherence to rituals, customs and beliefs of her ethnic group (Magona 1994: 95). Magona certainly makes use of the first-person-singular pronoun in her text when writing of her feelings, emotions, fears and expectations, but she presents a well-balanced mixture of ‘I’ sentences stressing her individuality and ‘we’ sentences stressing her bond with others. This also highlights her political involvement and her critical attitude, which become more and more evident in Forced to Grow.
Emecheta’s autobiography, on the other hand, is dedicated to the memory of Chiedu, the writer’s eldest daughter, who died in 1984. The text, then, might be considered as a tribute to the author’s dead child. However, there are no further references to the family as addressee of the text in the introduction to the book. While it is quite obvious that Magona considers her recollections as a heritage to be transmitted to her own family descendants, thus claiming a social and political role, Emecheta’s autobiography is less bound to her clan. Emecheta starts her work as a biographer of herself when she is already a well-established and famous writer. By 1986 she had already published most of her novels, some children’s books and she had already been awarded various prizes, from the Daughter of Mark Twain Award to the Best British Writer’s Award (this last one for the *Joys of Motherhood*, 1979). Her autobiography seems to derive mainly from her need to provide the background to her literary career (Emecheta 1986: 2).

*Head above Water* addresses a public of general readers and critics, rather than her family, therefore losing the intimate flavour of Magona’s autobiography. There is no kinship relationship between her public and herself. She is really addressing her own readers, the ones who have already read her other works, and, as she underlines, may even be already familiar with some of the episodes she is going to describe. Thus, if expressions such as “my child” appear now and then in Magona’s text, to reinforce the ‘family’ image, in Emecheta’s we will find such formulas as “my reader” (Emecheta 1986: 2).

Emecheta’s text has the more usual and Western character of an autobiographical work dealing mainly with one person’s thoughts and emotions. It is significant, though, that the first-person-plural pronouns, both nominative and accusative, appear when she describes herself as a child together with the children of her age group while listening to the stories told by her father’s elder sister in the compound (Emecheta 1986: 7). Her bond with her own group appears to have been stronger during her early life, while her London years seem to increase her distance from her origins, as is emphasized by the use of the first-person-singular pronoun. It may be noted, however, that Emecheta resorts to first-person-plural pronouns whenever she is reminded in London of her past life in Lagos (Emecheta 1986: 135). The use of first-person-singular pronouns does not indicate a more selfish attitude on the part of the writer, but a different way of looking at the objectives of the genre and also a different attitude towards oneself. If an autobiography expresses the need to consolidate one’s identity, readers might conclude that Magona’s identity lies within the group and is bound to it, while Emecheta is more self-centred, at least in this stage of her life, and tries to find her own identity outside her group.
Because of her previous writing experience Emecheta describes her new task in her introduction as a relatively easy one to carry out (Emecheta 1986: 1). The fact that Emecheta inserts this work of hers within the list of her other published works underlines how her approach to her autobiography is not different from her approach to her works of fiction – which, anyway, were closely based on her own life and had a deeply autobiographic flavour. Her wish to become a writer and to tell her own stories is the thread that unifies the text. What makes her different from other Igbo, immigrant women, is her success as a writer. The self she wants to enhance in her autobiography is the writing self – all the other roles she fulfills as daughter, wife, mother, student and social assistant are less relevant. Readers will soon be told that the model of her writing is deeply rooted in her tradition, as she considers oral culture as the source of her information.

For Magona, by contrast, this is the first attempt at writing. Towards the end of her first book she admits that “we are not a writing people, culturally. And this cultural trait is very strong in my family” (Magona 1994: 142). In Forced to Grow she affirms that “writing was no less of a myth to me than Icarus and his attempts to reach the sun” (Magona 1998: 184). Maybe because of this lack of confidence in her writing skill, soon after her invocation at the beginning of To My Children’s Children, Magona underlines the link between the text which she is going to construct and the oral tradition of the people she belongs to: “As ours is an oral tradition I would like you to hear from my own lips what it was like living in the 1940s onwards. What it was like in the times of your great-grandmother, me” (Magona 1994: 1). Words such as ‘hear’ and ‘lips’ are associated with orality and not with a written text. She is addressing listeners and not readers like Emecheta. The contradiction implicit in the very act of writing is that Magona is not really telling her story by word of mouth but in writing, by word of pen or computer.

From the beginning of their texts, while describing their childhoods, both writers stress their ties with the traditional figure of the storyteller. Both of them stress how the art of story telling was mostly in the hands of women. Magona refers to the figure of her grandmother telling iintsomi, the fairy tales of amaXhosa (Magona 1994: 5), thus giving her readers the key to understanding her own role as a grandmother and a storyteller (Magona 1994: 5, 6). In the first book of her autobiography, Magona also introduces the character of an aunt, an urban story teller, who relates family events to her. Later on, Magona also quotes other examples of women story tellers in a different context. She is a young woman, already burdened with a family, who, despite her education and her being a qualified teacher, is obliged to work as a maid servant to earn her living and support her children. The storytellers, then, are the other poor women like herself whom she meets going to work and coming
back. The stories they tell are as funny or dramatic as the stories told by her aunts when she was a child: however, they speak of a dreary life and ways of coping with an unjust society. The roles of such township storytellers is political, as their stories are meant as examples of resistance, refusal and rebellion in African women’s everyday battles. This type of story telling forms the pattern of Magona’s famous first fictional work, the collection of short stories Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night (1991).

Emecheta, on the other hand, devotes many pages to the figure of her father’s elder sister, Nwakwaluzo Ogbueyin, her big mother, who told children stories. Emecheta also underlines how she physically resembles this aunt of hers (Emecheta 1986: 242). In these utterances Emecheta’s inspiration is connected to the tradition of Ifo, the Igbo oral genre. As Susan Arndt explains,

*Ifó* are only remotely an equivalent for the English term of folk tale because their social function has very little in common with modern “bedtime tales” in the UK and other European countries. Moreover, the fact that *Ifó* are improvised and dramatized in the course of the performance distances *Ifó* from folk tales, which are nowadays nearly always in writing and therefore fixed. (Arndt 1996: 51)

Emecheta therefore refers to an oral tradition to fulfill her role and transfers oral narration to the written text. It has been noted that she

*igboizes* the novel genre by negotiating devices going back to the Igbo narrative tradition, such as irony, repetition, dialogues and integrating of genres of Igbo oral literature into her narratives. (Arndt 1996: 28)

The same may be said of her autobiographical text, especially in the frequent use of dialogue, which appear to be one of her favourite tools. In resorting to dialogue, she adopts the oral-aural nature of narration, thus temporarily transforming the readers into listeners. However, along with the Igbo narrative tradition, Emecheta is also shaped by Western written tradition. Her double cultural background heavily influences her whole writing career and therefore also her written autobiography.

The two writers have, of course, their own favourite rhetorical devices. Emecheta’s autobiography offers a combination of narrative and descriptive modes, but also has a dramatic quality, as the Nigerian writer re-creates vivid everyday scenes before the readers/public whenever she reproduces a dialogue. She transfers into writing something that she has been told, and she transcribes it quoting the direct speech she remembers. She transcribes the voice of her big mother telling stories, asking questions of the children who are listening to her, the voices of the women at the compound, of the girls at the college, of her teacher (Emecheta 1986: 24), of her *chi* (Emecheta 1986: 24, 78, 80, 84). She reproduces long dialogues between the social worker and
herself (Emecheta 1986: 49), her husband and herself (Emecheta 1986: 91) and her children and herself (Emecheta 1986: 83, 84, 85).

The directness and orality of Emecheta’s text is evident in the many questions and answers which fill her pages. These may be real questions people ask her, or the questions she imagines her readers would ask her (Emecheta 1986: 109) or rhetorical questions she would ask herself (Emecheta 1986: 68, 197). Her rhetorical questions create a bond between herself and her public (of readers? of listeners?) and can be found scattered everywhere, giving the sense of a conversation between her and the reader, as in the defiant question: “So what was there for a woman to do, enh?” (Emecheta 1986: 37)

Magona’s use of dialogues is different. Hers are less frequent and shorter. Moreover, they fulfill a different role, since, by reporting the dialogues, she lets her people be heard. It is, in fact, quite obvious that Magona often literally translates these dialogues from her native language into English, as in the dialogue ‘performed’ when somebody comes to announce the death of a relative (Magona 1994: 55). They are often long monologues, rather than dialogues, reproduction of speeches such as the one uttered on her coming of age (Magona 1994: 64). Magona’s use of dialogues reinforces, then, the chorality of her autobiography and the importance she gives to the traditions, embodied by relatives, who are the reliable figures of her life.

Owing to both the strong bond between Magona and her clan and her role as a storyteller, her text is rich in traditional songs (Magona 1994: 38; 1998: 26), riddles (Magona 1994: 12, 13) and tongue-twisters (Magona 1994: 32), which are given in Xhosa and accompanied by an English translation. She also introduces more idiomatic expressions and more proverbs than Emecheta. The idiomatic expressions quoted by Magona reveal a language which stresses physicality and matter-of-factness, as in the following examples: “In our location a professional person was rarer than a hen’s tooth” (Magona 1994: 58); “They cooked father’s child” (59); “buttocks are stingy” (Magona 1998: 4). Also, the proverbs are linked to a substantial realism, as in “It is on a stormy day that the hen’s tail is revealed” (8); “A hand washes that which washes it” (38); “only the wearer of the shoe can feel the pinch” (69). It is quite clear that these proverbs are translated from Xhosa into English, and sometimes they are accompanied or preceded by the Xhosa source.

By contrast, the influence of Emecheta’s westernized education may be seen in her continuous references to the Bible and quotes from anglophone authors. Emecheta has a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures than Magona, who admits she is not an expert on the Holy Texts. Emecheta quotes lavishly from the King James Version. However, her religious references often have an ironic twist and are used to contrast her reality with a far off ‘mythical’ world, as can be seen in the following examples: “I don’t want to be another
Lot’s wife” (Emechta 1986: 2); “The walls of these ‘posh nosh’ flats were as thick and solid as those of Jericho!” (44); “One would have thought that but for the disturbance I was causing they would have gone straight up the imaginary Jacob’s Ladder in their desire to be the pilgrims whom Bunyan had idealized in The Pilgrim’s Progress [...]” (20), where there is a combination of literary and religious references.

Emecheta quite often cites Bunyan also in her fiction. In other parts of her autobiography she quotes Rupert Brooke, Keats (Emechta 1986: 18), Byron (19), Shakespeare (18, 20), Coleridge (23), Chaucer (45) and Somerset Maugham (157). She also refers to well-known European fairy tales and folk stories such as Hansel and Gretel, Snow White (22) and The Pied Piper of Hamelin (45). Emecheta’s mixing of traditional Igbo orality and Western culture stresses her dual cultural heritage, while Magona, in the rare instances that she quotes a classic, only cites a novel of Xhosa literature, The Wrath of the Ancestors, by A.C. Jordan. This will remind readers of her declared love for Xhosa language and literature (Magona 1998: 108).

Consistent with the value she places on her origins and her people, Magona makes frequent use of code-switching, that is the combination of language items belonging to her two linguistic codes, English and Xhosa. Despite the political message of her writing, Magona does not resort to political code-switching,1 where no translation into English is given, but usually has an organic form of code-switching where the translation into English of the word or sentence always follows the Xhosa words as in “[...] and yielded umfimo, wild spinach, to our mothers” (Magona 1994: 9); “ootikoloshe, the little people, and izithunzela, the zombies” (9); “Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi”, the Xhosa ‘Once Upon a Time’” (12); “ugqobhoko olululo asinto ixelma ngomlomo. Lubonwa nqezenzo” – which loosely translates: True faith is not something announced by words. It is seen through actions” (Magona 1997: 31); “Baqatshulwe! Baqatshulwe!” (‘They have been given incisions!’) (Magona 1994: 54); “Sindiwe Buya’ (‘Sindiwe return.’) (99); “Ngubani na lo?” (‘And who may this be?’) (141). The use of organic code-switching can be also found in Forced to Grow, as in the following examples: “Umabuy’ekwendeni – a returnee from wifehood” (Magona 1998: 1); “Sell dagga [marijuana]?” (6); “Makhulu! Makhulu! Please come and listen!” (30); “Umama wakho uza kuzal’ amawele afileyo – Your mother will give birth to dead twins” (67); “Whuwow! Ngathi ndiyazibona ndipethi’inc wadi! Ndaguggib’ukuba nabawentwa! Yhu” (Wow! I can just see myself carrying books. After I have children! Gee!”) (80); “Her lament - ‘Ukuba

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1 I here refer to the distinction between extrinsic, organic, and political kinds of code-switching drawn in Gordon 1998: 75–96.
bendisemtsha! Ngeli lenu ixesha! – Were I still young. In these times of yours’ – speaks volumes” (196). Very rarely, Magona’s code-switching involves Afrikaans – a language she admits she knows only poorly – and English as in “‘Here God, die vroumens is kaal!’ (Good God, this woman is naked!” (Magona 1994: 27) and in “‘Geld wat stom is, maak reg wat krom is’ – ‘Money which is dumb makes right that which is crooked’” (Magona 1998: 34), which is also an example of her passion for proverbs.

The conspicuous presence of code-switching in Magona’s texts stresses the implicit political message of the author, whose objective is to enhance the culture of her own group, while writing about her own life. This underlines once again the different meaning Emecheta and Magona attribute to autobiography as a literary genre, where the main divergence lies in considering autobiography mainly as a tool to talk about oneself, in a quite traditional, confessional mode, as in Emecheta’s case, or as a means of offering a picture of a wider slice of a social context where the individual is seen only as a part, as in Magona’s case. Such a dissimilarity, despite the analogies which may be drawn between the two women writers, supports, then, the ideas suggested by Whitlock about the pluralism and non-homogeneity of autobiographical female voices. These texts testify not only to two different personalities, but also to two different ways of perceiving and shaping cultural memory through one’s autobiography.

**Works Cited**


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Linguistic and Literary Development of Nigerian Pidgin
The Contribution of Radio Drama

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ABSTRACT
Drama serials aimed at public enlightenment have in recent years become an important feature on Nigerian radio. Many of them employ Pidgin as the main or only language. Although linguists have suggested that most of the writers who use this language in artistic texts lack the necessary competence and produce deviant forms of it, some radio drama texts received high ratings in a survey of the linguistic appropriateness of a large number of Pidgin texts conducted by the authors of the study. The authors supplement their report of these survey results with analyses of extracts from one drama serial, Rainbow City, and show how, in this serial, successful handling of linguistic codes and literary aspects combine to make it possible for the writer to drive home serious messages in a language that has long been associated with ridicule.

1. Introduction

The language that is the subject of this essay is known by the name of ‘Nigerian Pidgin’ (or ‘Nigerian Pidgin English’), popularly also ‘Broken’. These terms suggest some kind of trade jargon, and this was indeed how it started off in the eighteenth century (Agheyisi 1984: 211–12). However, the status of Nigerian Pidgin (henceforth NP) has changed dramatically since then. Today, it functions as a lingua franca in a wide range of contexts (Agheyisi 1984: 212), and it has been described as “the most widely spoken language in the country” (Faraclas 1996: 2). The less educated are usually thought of as the typical speakers (Agheyisi 1988: 230),
but NP is also used among the educated in informal situations (Agheyisi 1984: 212). In addition, it has acquired a number of functions beyond private informal communication (Agheyisi 1984: 212–13; Jibril 1995: 233–34). The most notable among these new functions of NP is perhaps that of a medium for radio broadcasting. For example, in Lagos, where the research on which this essay is based was conducted, several local stations have programmes in the language. One of them, Radio Nigeria 3, even has five hours daily on its programme schedule; besides music and entertainment programmes, the station’s broadcasts in NP include news and some public enlightenment talks. Public enlightenment is also the aim of certain drama serials wholly or partly in NP which are aired by a number of stations. It is these drama serials that this essay is primarily concerned with.

We decided to include texts from two serials in our research. One of these, entitled *Rainbow City*, deals with various social issues, in particular citizens’ rights and duties in a democratic society. The other, *One Thing at a Time*, is about problems surrounding reproductive health, especially AIDS. Such topics obviously require the introduction of many concepts for which NP may not have a term, and the question therefore arises whether the scriptwriter will be able to avoid excessive borrowing from English. Similar problems have been investigated by Augusta Omamor in regard to NP in literature and some media texts (see Omamor 1997; also Elugbe & Omamor 1991: 61–72). She comes to the conclusion that many of the writers produce a heavily anglicized form of the language which she describes as “pseudopidgin” (1997: 221). However, most of her examples are from written sources, and, as in fact in the whole literature on NP, radio language receives scant attention. This is, we believe, a serious omission, especially since many of these broadcasts are directed first and foremost at an audience with less formal education and

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1 *Rainbow City* is written by Tunde Aiyegbusi and produced by the African Radio Drama Association. *One Thing at a Time* is written and produced by Kola Ogunjobi with support from the Society for Family Health and funding from the Department for International Development. We are grateful to the producers for making scripts and tape recordings available to us.

2 While Agheyisi (1984: 227–28) and Jibril (1995: 236, 239–42) are among the few authors who make reference to NP on the radio, Omamor (1997) does not include any radio texts. Elugbe/Omamor (1991) contains, besides a transcription of a news broadcast that appears virtually without comment (168-70), an analysis of the speech of Zebrudaya, the hero of the radio and television comedy serial *Masquerade* (61–66). The authors conclude that Zebrudaya’s speech “represents an unfortunate attempt to speak Standard English by an ill-informed person” (63). This serves their aim of showing that there are forms of non-standard English distinct from NP, but it should be pointed out that Zebrudaya’s speech is apparently intended as precisely such a form, and not as NP; this becomes clear in the context of the drama, where Zebrudaya’s broken English contrasts sharply with the NP of his wife, for example.
consequently less knowledge of English than the reading public, so that a high degree of anglicization would be much more problematic in this context than it is in written texts.

2. The corpus study

In view of the issues outlined above, we decided to make radio language an important part of a research project on English influence on NP for which we did fieldwork during a six-month period in 2000. As a first step, we compiled a corpus of spoken NP, the composition of which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text categories</th>
<th>Number of texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio broadcasts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Rainbow City / One Thing at a Time)</em> (5/5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-broadcast speech</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are, in total, forty texts of approximately 2000 words. Half of these are from the radio, with ‘News’, ‘Advice’ (public enlightenment talks) and ‘Drama’ as subcategories and in the latter section, five texts from each of the two serials. The other twenty texts are samples of various types of spontaneous, non-broadcast speech from fluent speakers with at least a secondary education, the minimum educational level that one would also expect of broadcasters. This corpus was subdivided into 320 shorter extracts (eight per text), which were distributed among twenty-two competent informants along with a linguistic questionnaire where he/she was asked, first, to assess the fre-

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3 We would like to acknowledge the financial support of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in the form of a doctoral research grant (HSP III) to Dagmar Deuber during the period mentioned.

4 Most of the informants were advanced students or lecturers in English and other language-related disciplines at the University of Lagos. All claimed a good knowledge of NP, to which most had been exposed from childhood. L1 competence, though claimed by some, was not made a prerequisite for participation in the study, since NP is still mostly spoken as L2 and good L2 knowledge is considered sufficient for most practical purposes, including broadcast production (Smart Esi, Head of the Pidgin Section at Radio Nigeria 3, p.c.).
quency of what he/she considered English lexical and, separately, grammatical elements in the extract in question on a four-point scale ranging from ‘very frequently’ to ‘not at all’, and, if applicable, to provide examples of such elements; then, in a second section of the questionnaire, he/she was asked to give an overall assessment of the language of the extract – also on a four-point scale – with regard to two criteria, which will be explained below. The results for the whole corpus (with the four possible answers to each question collapsed into two categories each) are as follows:

Figure 1. Use of English elements

![Figure 1. Use of English elements](image)

English influence, as Figure 1 shows, was found to be more pronounced in the area of lexis than in grammar, although in both areas the informants judged in the majority of cases that English elements were used only infrequently or not at all. The fact that most of the extracts seem to conform more or less to what the informants regard as NP at least grammatically may explain in part why the results of the overall assessment (Figure 2) were remarkably positive (another possible explanation being that some anglicisms have attained a high degree of acceptability):
The language of over 90% of the extracts was rated as a fully or fairly satisfactory form of NP for the informant personally as an educated speaker, and was also thought to be fully or fairly intelligible to an NP speaker with little or no formal education.

Furthermore, we compared responses across categories, applying the chi-square test for statistical significance. Summarizing the results as presented in the appendix, we can say that the radio sample as a whole shows, according to the questionnaires, significantly less use of English (in lexis as well as in grammar) than non-broadcast speech, and also received better overall ratings, although, since almost all of the extracts in all text categories were rated as satisfactory and intelligible, the difference is only apparent if full satisfactoriness and intelligibility are taken as the criterion. Among the radio subcategories, ‘Advice’ and ‘Drama’ were found by the informants to be less influenced by English in lexis (there is no significant difference in grammar) and were given better ratings than ‘News’. There are also significant differences between the two drama serials. The informants found fewer English lexical items in the Rainbow City text group, which also has better overall ratings. The texts in the corpus which, in the view of the informants, are least influenced by English and most satisfactory and intelligible are therefore those in the category ‘Advice’ and the Rainbow City drama texts.

The corpus study thus shows that there is a general tendency among educated speakers to insert English elements, especially lexical items, into their NP, but also that radio scriptwriters and broadcasters try with varying degrees
of success to adapt their language to the less well-educated target audience. Still, English elements are far from absent from the broadcasts. This even applies to *Rainbow City*, which was rated so highly in the study. However, the use of English expressions does not necessarily mean the serial is written in ‘seudopidgin’ as analysis of some extracts in the following section will show.

3. The language of *Rainbow City*

The first extract that we present here is from a scene where a character called “Chairman” (he is the chairman of a taxi drivers’ union) is giving another character, Madam Asabe, some advice on her newly formed traders’ union.

Extract 1 (from *Rainbow City*, Episode 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text in NP</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: Last week one member run come tell me say dat woman wey we go give money keep na jibiti woman. That di woman don dey borrow small small from di money. […] Abeg help me. Wetin we fit do now?</td>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: Last week a member reported that the woman we had entrusted our money to is a fraud. That she has started spending the money. Please help me. What can we do now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: Uhm, anyway, na simple matter. Una don register una union?</td>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: It’s a simple matter. Have you registered your union?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: No, we never register am.</td>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: No, we haven’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: Ah-ah.</td>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: Are you serious?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: Dem say we no go fit register if we no get proper officers wey we choose for election.</td>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: We were told that the union can’t be registered unless we have duly elected officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: Na true. Dat one na true. So make you people make your elections.</td>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: Yes, that’s right. So you should hold elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: Mhm.</td>
<td><strong>Asabe</strong>: Mhm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: When you don register, una go take all your union money go bank.</td>
<td><strong>Chairman</strong>: Once the union is registered, you’ll take all your money to the bank.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*English elements in italics; only the first occurrence is marked.*

---

5 The script of *Rainbow City* is written in adapted English orthography; the spelling of some words has been modified in the corpus for the sake of consistency.
Apart from the subordinator *that*, which Madam Asabe uses in one instance (l. 3) instead of NP *say* (cf. also “tell me *say*” in l. 1/2), and *you (people)/your*, which alternate in the extract with the NP second person plural personal and possessive pronoun *una*, the elements that could be classified as English in this extract are lexical items without NP equivalents that are crucial to the topic under discussion. Their use is probably deliberate and seems justified in a public enlightenment programme as long as they are not too numerous and their meaning becomes clear in context.

Extract 2 is taken from a scene where one of the characters, Adolphus, is quarrelling with his daughter Vero, who he intends to marry off to a rich old man instead of allowing her to take her secondary-school examination once more (she has already failed three times).

Extract 2 *(from Rainbow City, Episode 4)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text in NP&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: [...] which kind rubbish you dey talk for my ear?</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: What nonsense are you telling me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vero</strong>: But papa, mama told me she has given you the money.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: I no send anybody message o. Eh? Dat money instead make we throway for your WAEC, I go take am feed your broder and sister.</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: I didn’t ask anybody for help. Rather than waste the money on your exam, I’ll use it to feed your brothers and sisters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vero</strong>: Papa, you no get right to force me to do what I don’t want to do.</td>
<td><strong>Vero</strong>: Dad, you don’t have the right …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Eh? Na me you dey talk to, Vero? Me, N.K., eh, me, your papa?</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Are you talking to me, Vero? Me, N.K., me, your father?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vero</strong>: Papa, I tell you make you no make me vex with you. Now you come dey do and talk as if I no get any right over what I want to do with my life.</td>
<td><strong>Vero</strong>: Dad, I warned you not to make me angry with you. Now you’re acting and talking as if I don’t have …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Oh oh. I know who dey behind all dis katakata. Eh. I know say na dat boy Chris.</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Oh oh. I know who’s behind all this trouble. Yes. I know it’s that boy, Chris.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>b</sup> English elements in italics; only the first occurrence is marked.

The insertion of the highlighted English sentence and sentence fragments can be interpreted as code-switching which serves a specific purpose: Vero invokes the connotations of English – power and knowledge – in an attempt to
assert herself over her father and to prove her intellectual abilities. Of course, Adolphus may rightly suspect that she picked up some of the phrases from her well-educated boyfriend, Chris. Code-switching is also found in the non-broadcast part of the corpus, and some additional recordings of less educated speakers that we made show that in an urban environment – and this is after all where Rainbow City is set – even speakers with little formal education often intersperse their NP with English words and phrases they have picked up informally.

All in all, the language of Rainbow City may not be perfect NP, but the writer succeeds in drawing on English to fill lexical gaps and reflect typical urban speech patterns without a major loss in authenticity and intelligibility.

4. The question of ‘authenticity’

The linguistic authenticity of literary NP is an important issue, but, as the discussion above has shown, one should beware of overstating the case. Indeed, the efforts of concerned linguists to point out instances of “pseudopidgin” and contrast them with authentic or “regular” NP (Omamor 1997), commendable though they may be in principle, sometimes promote a variety of the language which one may describe as ‘academic NP’. The phenomenon can be observed, for example, in the phonemic spelling system used in attempts to pidgin-ize what are considered deficient representations of the language. NP lacks orthographic as well as any other kind of standardization, and a phonemic spelling system has so far been employed only by linguists. Therefore, translations into ‘regular’ NP of this type would not always be easy for the NP speaker who is not a linguist to interpret if they did not appear side by side with the ‘deficient’ version in modified English orthography. This points to a gap between well thought-out academic arguments for phonemic spelling systems and the realities of everyday language use which Görlach in his discussion of pidgin/creole dictionaries has aptly formulated thus:

In spite of the linguistic advantages of phonemic spellings, language planners ought to reconsider whether it is not wise to choose a convention that is closer to English: readers of pidgin texts can be expected to be bilingual, and more fluent as readers in the prestige language English, so why not accept in spelling a state of affairs that is likely to happen in pronunciation, too, with the increasing impact of English? (1998: 195)

The quotation also hints at another problem: what the conservative linguist regards as ‘regular’ NP in terms of phonology, but also lexis and grammar often fails to take account of the new, partially anglicized varieties of the language developing in a multilingual context where NP coexists with English. A detailed discussion of the features of these varieties and the degree to which
elements newly borrowed from English have become established in NP is, however, beyond the scope of the present study and requires further analysis of the corpus.⁶

5. NP in literature

Like the authenticity of literary NP, the use and functions of the language in literature have been the subject of much discussion.⁷ For now, creative activity in NP is centred on drama and on poetry, where collections written exclusively in the language have been published. No full-length novel has been written in NP.⁸ Rather, there are occasional instances of direct speech by characters who are shown to be poorly versed in the use of English. This is in line with a general tendency in the use of NP in literature: besides being associated with humour, NP is often put into the mouths of characters of low social status. In addition, these characters may also be portrayed as being of low moral standing; it is telling that the “first full-fledged ‘Pidgin personality’” (Zabus 1992: 122) in a novel, namely the title character of Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Jagua Nana* (1963), is a prostitute.

Serious discussion of NP literature has largely been limited to these written works. Oral forms such as radio drama have hardly been mentioned, perhaps because they cannot be classified as literature without some qualifications. But in this neglect, the present status of NP as an essentially oral language, and the capacity of an oral medium such as the radio to function as a base for the development of an NP literature, are also overlooked. In addition, as mentioned above, written literature has often promoted the view of NP as the language of a permanent underclass. But a convincing argument can now be made for the language having transcended that role. And if the expression of profound thoughts in accessible idiom is a major quality of literary language, we sometimes need to turn to a medium like radio to discern the evolving capacity of NP in that connection (it has to be said, though, that the stereotypical use of NP observed in much of the written literature is also found in radio texts). Again, *Rainbow City* is a good example.

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⁶ For a perceptive though of necessity limited description of English-influenced NP as spoken by fluent speakers (which must be distinguished from “interlanguage” NP [Agheyisi 1984: 222 ff.]), see Agheyisi 1984: 217–22.

⁷ As this is not the place for a detailed survey of literary uses of NP and criticism thereof, the interested reader is referred to the literary works cited in Jibril (1995), Elugbe & Omamor (1991), Omamor (1997) and critical studies like Obilade (1978), Zabus (1992), or Ezenwa–Ohaeto (1994).

⁸ One may wish to make an exception here for Ken Saro–Wiwa’s *Sozaboy* (1985), which, however, is written in a mixture of NP and English (standard and non-standard) which the author has chosen to call “rotten English” in the “Author’s Note” (1985: np).
6. Literary dimensions of *Rainbow City*

*Rainbow City* may have the limitations of a popular serial, but it does show that NP can move beyond its stereotypical role. The characters in the drama are engaging and its conflicts are significant enough to reveal human nature in its manifold shades. The themes are legion; they include unemployment, corruption, gender stereotypes and all the consequences which such problems can have. The sustained use of NP to highlight these issues in a style that is at times comic but at times also sobering runs counter to negative attitudes about the ability of the language to handle serious issues and about the role and status of NP speakers vis-à-vis speakers of English.

To illustrate this, we have chosen an extract from a scene that was excluded from the corpus project because it is one of a few scenes where one character uses English consistently. This demonstrates another aspect of the Nigerian linguistic reality in which sometimes speakers of English and NP interact and understand each other quite well. The context of extract 3 is that Duma, the owner of a betting office, has ordered Adolphus to pay the money that he owes him but is faced with Adolphus’ outright refusal.

Extract 3 (from *Rainbow City*, episode 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duma</strong>: You should be ashamed of yourself, Adolphus.</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Because I owe you? How much do I owe you in the first place? Don’t you also borrow money from your customers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Because I owe you? Eh? How much I owe you self? Eh? You too you no dey borrow money from people wey dey come stake uh for coupon here? [...]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duma</strong>: Look, you are a wreck and a wretch, that’s what you are, Adolphus. Only a wretch like you can do what you are doing to your poor daughter! Pressing the helpless girl’s favours on Mr. Johnson, that notorious he-goat!</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Heh, Duma, eeeh, I see say noto jackpot pool office you come run for Endurance Villa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Heh, Duma, eeeh, I see say noto jackpot pool office you come run for Endurance Villa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duma</strong>: Deny it if you can. Shameless man!</td>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Duma, I can see that it’s not only the business of pool betting that you want to concern yourself with in Endurance Villa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolphus</strong>: Eh?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duma</strong>: Deny it!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Adolphus**: Me shameless man?
**Duma**: Yes!
**Adolphus**: I gree. But wetin we go call man wey dey make corner corner love with one buka madam?
**Duma**: Eh?
**Adolphus**: Hm.
**Duma**: Adolphus, what did you say just now?
**Adolphus**: I talk say e no go tay wey wind go blow and e go scatter feddar for fowl nyash.

| **Adolphus**: I accept. But what do you call a man who’s engaged in an illicit affair with a food seller? |
| **Adolphus**: I said that very soon, the wind will blow and reveal the hidden anus of the chicken. |

The two characters exemplify the opposing social categories between which a barrier is often erected in literary contexts. But contrary to the stereotypical pattern, the English speaker, Duma, fails miserably in his attempt to claim a superior status. The NP speaker, Adolphus, acknowledges that he is a debtor but then counter-attacks by bringing up Duma’s adulterous affair with his neighbour’s wife. A controversy is thus raised about what constitutes a “shameless” act. The listener is implicitly called upon to resolve the moral question by weighing what could be regarded as an act of survival on the part of Adolphus against Duma’s socially abhorrent behaviour. When, after his ‘real self’ has been revealed, Duma recoils in a sensitive self-recognition reminiscent of the guilty-secret convention of the nineteenth century English novel, it becomes clear that the moral ground on which he stands in making his accusation against Adolphus is not so secure. Adolphus’ successful resistance is, one might say, symbolic of the new status of NP and its speakers in literature and points to a future in which the subservient role of both will have become part of literary history.

### 7. Conclusion

In the absence of any official language policy in support of NP, we have to agree with Agheyisi’s statement that “the success of the standardization of NPE [Nigerian Pidgin English] will have to depend on the individual efforts of interested users of the language” (1988: 240). Radio drama – if, like Rainbow City, it is of linguistic and literary merit – can make a significant contribution in this regard.
Works Cited


## Appendix

### Table A.1. Corpus study/comparison of major text categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question, answers</th>
<th>Number of corpus extracts (% in brackets)(^9)</th>
<th>Radio broadcasts total n. = 160</th>
<th>Non-broadcast speech total n. = 160</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Use of English lexical words/expressions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>16 (10%)</td>
<td>14 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly frequently</td>
<td>36 (23%)</td>
<td>62 (39%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>84 (53%)</td>
<td>74 (46%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>24 (15%)</td>
<td>10 (6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Use of English grammatical words/constructions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>8 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly frequently</td>
<td>13 (8%)</td>
<td>28 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>84 (53%)</td>
<td>76 (48%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>59 (37%)</td>
<td>48 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Personal assessment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully satisfactory</td>
<td>100 (63%)</td>
<td>69 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfactory</td>
<td>49 (31%)</td>
<td>76 (48%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely unsatisfactory</td>
<td>11 (7%)</td>
<td>14 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unsatisfactory</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Intelligibility to uneducated speaker:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully intelligible</td>
<td>90 (56%)</td>
<td>68 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly intelligible</td>
<td>66 (41%)</td>
<td>83 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely unintelligible</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unintelligible</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels:

1.1. (radio broadcasts vs. non-broadcast speech; very/fairly frequently vs. infrequently/not at all): \(p \leq 0.01\)

1.2. (radio broadcasts vs. non-broadcast speech; very/fairly frequently vs. infrequently/not at all): \(p \leq 0.01\)

\(^9\) Percentages in this as well as the following tables may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
2.1. (radio broadcasts vs. non-broadcast speech; fully satisfactory vs. all other answers): $p \ 0.01$

2.2. (radio broadcasts vs. non-broadcast speech; fully intelligible vs. all other answers): $p \ 0.05$

Table A.2. Corpus study/comparison of radio subcategories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question, answers</th>
<th>Number of corpus extracts (% in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News total n. = 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Use of English lexical words/expressions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly frequently</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Use of English grammatical words/constructions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly frequently</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>25 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Personal assessment:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully satisfactory</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfactory</td>
<td>20 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely unsatisfactory</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unsatisfactory</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Intelligibility to uneducated speaker:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully intelligible</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly intelligible</td>
<td>28 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely unintelligible</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unintelligible</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels:
1.1. (news vs. advice/drama; very/fairly frequently vs. infrequently/ not at all): $p \ 0.01$

1.2. –

2.1. (news vs. advice/drama; fully satisfactory vs. all other answers): $p \ 0.01$

2.2. (news vs. advice/drama; fully intelligible vs. all other answers): $p \ 0.01$
Table A.3. Corpus study/comparison of drama serials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question, answers</th>
<th>Number of corpus extracts (% in brackets)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainbow City total n = 40</td>
<td>One Thing at a Time total n = 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Use of English lexical words/expressions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly frequently</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>28 (70%)</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Use of English grammatical words/constructions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very frequently</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly frequently</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently</td>
<td>23 (58%)</td>
<td>19 (48%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>14 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Personal assessment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully satisfactory</td>
<td>33 (83%)</td>
<td>21 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfactory</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>17 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unsatisfactory</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Intelligibility to uneducated speaker:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully intelligible</td>
<td>30 (75%)</td>
<td>19 (48%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly intelligible</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>20 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely unintelligible</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally unintelligible</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels:
1.1. (Rainbow City vs. One Thing at a Time; very/fairly frequently vs. infrequently/ not at all): p 0.01
1.2. –
2.1. (Rainbow City vs. One Thing at a Time; fully satisfactory vs. all other answers): p 0.01
2.2. (Rainbow City vs. One Thing at a Time; fully intelligible vs. all other answers): p 0.05
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“That’s all out of shape”
Language and Racism in South African Drama
Haike Frank
University of Freiburg

ABSTRACT
This essay examines discussions about language in plays by South African dramatists Athol Fugard (Blood Knot and ‘Master Harold’ ... and the boys) and Susan Pam–Grant (Curl up and Dye) and analyses forms of language use and word play by characters from various racial backgrounds. Language competence proves to be an important element in the oppressed group’s increasing conscientization. By contrasting racist and condescending language use with the honest language of oppressed individuals, these plays suggest that a creative, multilingual dialogue in opposition to the monolithic and monolingual discourse of apartheid is a powerful medium for anti-apartheid agency.

JACQUES DERRIDA, in his essay “Racism’s Last Word,” makes us aware of the power of language when he comments on the term and concept of ‘apartheid’. He asserts that the word ‘apartheid’ isolates ‘being apart’ in a kind of essence or hypothesis and connotes “quasi-ontological segregation” (1985: 292). Thus, he argues that segregation is defined as natural and that the term ‘apartheid’ itself is inclined towards racism. Derrida concludes:

there’s no racism without a language. The point is not that acts of racial violence are only words but rather that they have to have a word. Even though it offers the excuse of blood, color, birth – or, rather, because it uses this naturalist and sometimes creationist discourse – racism always betrays the perversion of a man, the ‘talking animal’. It institutes, declares, writes,

1 A line spoken by the character Zachariah in Blood Knot (Fugard 1987: 74).
inscribes, prescribes. [...] It does not discern, it discriminates. (1985: 292; emphasis in original)

We must not forget that racial segregation long preceded the coinage of the term ‘apartheid’. In fact, it was not until after World War II, a time when the National Party campaigned for the separate development of the different racial groups in their assigned geographic zones, that the word ‘apartheid’ was introduced into the political code of South Africa (cf Derrida 1985: 291–92). Yet, with the implementation of apartheid in 1948, the power of apartheid discourse and rhetoric grew and apartheid became the “national institution[...] of racism” (Tiffin & Lawson 1994: 8).

Race thinking, like colonialism, is motivated by the impetus to draw binary distinctions between the civilized and the primitive. This is reflected by the racist language of apartheid, the medium through which the concept that ‘white’ equals ‘good, human, and civilized’ and ‘non-white’ equals ‘bad, inhuman, and savage’ is perpetuated (cf also Ashcroft et al. 1989: 7–8).

By analogy with Peter Hulme’s definition of colonialist discourse as an “ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships” (quoted in Collits 1994: 64), apartheid discourse can be understood as the sum of linguistically-based practices aimed at maintaining apartheid’s racist hierarchy. Contemporary theory recognizes the importance of language for the existence and functioning of apartheid. As Terry Collits maintains, racism is not “examined as a thing-in-itself, but as a dense system of ideological practices over time intertwined with history, language, gender and class relations, and problems of representation and interpretation” (1994: 64; my emphasis).

According to apartheid discourse, the voice of the oppressed population cannot be heard since it is accorded neither place nor agency in the linguistic practice of society. Furthermore, anti-apartheid protest cannot occur since it is defined as a form of communication unavailable to non-whites. Apartheid discourse becomes a system built around language closure and can again be compared to colonial discourse in that, as Tiffin & Lawson assert, both aim to appropriate, distort and erase native cultures and subjects, yet must simultaneously contain them in order to exercise control (1994: 6). Thus, negation automatically implies existence. And interaction between whites and non-whites has not been as unilateral and monolingual as colonial discourse has presented it to be. As we know from the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha,

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2 The group of non-whites was further subdivided into South African Indians, coloureds, and black Africans. All the groups were considered to be part of low, subhuman species. Nonetheless, a sub-hierarchy was created by apartheid: the Indians were considered superior to the coloureds who were defined as superior to the Africans, the lowest of the low.
strategies such as mimicry and hybridity can be exercised in the face of a powerful system of oppression. For the assumptions that accompany the binary opposition of colonizer and colonized are merely constructed limitations that define the colonized in partial terms only. These oppositions as well as their correlative power structures are inevitably ambivalent and can be dismantled and overcome by the subaltern (see Bhabha 1994).

This essay aims to investigate the way South African dramatists incorporate the topic of language and racism into their work. Three plays by Athol Fugard and Susan Pam–Grant will be used to show how, according to the playwright, racist discourse and apartheid rhetoric pervade life under apartheid and how this situation is countered in the non-white characters’ reflections on language.

In Athol Fugard’s 1961 play *The Blood Knot* (first performed at Dorkay House, Johannesburg, revised as *Blood Knot* in 1985⁴), the poor, illiterate, coloured (i.e., of mixed-racial descent) character Zach wishes to express his feelings of constant degradation and maltreatment in apartheid society. He asks his more educated brother: “They call a man a boy. You got a word for that, Morrie?” and goes on to describe this word as being “squashed, like it didn’t fit the mouth.” Morrie offers the lexemes “prejudice” and “injustice”. As the pronunciation of these words gives Zach trouble, he concludes that they are “all out of shape” (all *BK* 74). His comment on the production of sound becomes a metaphor for apartheid-ridden South African society. Furthermore, Zach tells Morrie of how he was rudely dismissed when he asked his white boss if he could switch from his position of gate-keeper back to cleaning pots in order to relieve the strain on his aching feet. The boss simply replied: “Go to the gate or go to hell ... Boy!” (*BK* 74). With Morrie’s help, Zach is now able to classify and evaluate this racist reply: “Prejudice and inhumanity in one sentence!” (*BK* 75).

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³ This essay is not concerned with the topic of multilingual theatre, which thematizes contact and interaction across apartheid’s constructed race barriers by reflecting South Africa’s polyglot language situation. The birth of multilingual theatre can, according to Temple Hauptfleisch, be traced back to the 1970s when the fabric of traditional South African society was being questioned, challenged and radically altered. The increasing use of various South African languages as well as local language varieties points to the rich but hitherto unexploited cultural mix in polyglot communities (cf 1990). Essays by Annette Louise Combrink (1990) and Yvonne Banning (1990) also discuss this topic.

⁴ All quotations from the play are from the revised version *Blood Knot* (Fugard 1987) and are flagged as *BK* followed by page number.
This exchange between Zach and Morrie illustrates the use and abuse of language under apartheid. Zach will only be heard by whites if his words signal his compliance with apartheid rules. According to apartheid’s racist discourse, any requests, complaints or other expressions of ideas, feelings and opinions by coloureds and blacks carry no meaning outside of what this discourse allows. As cheap labour, non-whites are an essential building block of apartheid’s economy, but they are placed in the roles of the silent and preferably invisible subjects. Thus, from the perspective of apartheid discourse, Zach’s request to switch positions is perceived as a dissident’s attempt to challenge the regime’s superiority, not as the wish of a physically tired subject. Furthermore, this example shows clearly that whites like to address non-whites with orders and insults. ‘Normal’ mutual conversation between the white and non-white group does not exist. Apartheid rhetoric makes it impossible to describe reality outside of its discursively imposed frame, and language becomes subjected to manipulation.

However, the scene from Blood Knot also suggests that, in the long run, apartheid will not be successful in manipulating language, driving language towards closure and thus defining reality as fixed and unchanging. Zach’s increasing desire and ability to name his abuse implies that he is becoming conscious of the prevailing racial, and also social and economic, discrimination. It also shows that he is subjected to various forms of oppression, and that each of these methods, from covert to overt, is equally condescending. The accumulation of insults and injustices seems to allow the power of the whites over him to become more threatening. However, since his degradation follows the same pattern every time, it is easier for him to identify and analyse it. Appropriating strategies such as labelling, categorization, and rational analysis, he is able to understand his predicament and, through Bhabhaesque mimicry and repetition (1994: 85), begin to destabilize the locus of white power. Although he does not actively resist apartheid to ameliorate his situation, but instead embraces his coloured identity and his position in society at the end of the play, his story suggests that consciousness-raising and education are possible strategies of self-help with which the oppressed could learn to improve their own situation.

5 This is suggested in Blood Knot’s ‘park scene’. Zach and Morrie engage in a role-playing game in which dark-skinned Zach attempts to teach his light-skinned brother Morrie how to act white. Zach plays the black park keeper/garbage collector, whose presence troubles and threatens Morrie in his ‘white’ manhood: “What did you mean crawling around like that? Spoiling the view, spoiling my chances! [...] I hate you, do you hear? Hate!” (BK 120).
In Fugard’s play ‘Master Harold’ ... and the boys (which premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre in 1982), the seventeen-year-old white boy Hally is caught between the attitudes fostered by apartheid and his relationship with the two black adult servants of the family, Sam and Willie. The servants’ humanity and dignity allow them to offer Hally support, love and friendship, despite apartheid’s threatening and clear-cut barriers and rules. Compared to the verbal encounter with his boss that Zach relates in Blood Knot, Hally and Sam’s conversations are much more friendly. Yet the power of apartheid discourse makes itself felt when Hally claims the right to define concepts. Sam describes his and Willie’s hobby, competitive ball-room dancing, as “beautiful” and as “art”6 while Hally, who has never seen a real dance, claims the right to impose his connotations on it: “There’s a limit, Sam. Don’t confuse art and entertainment. [...] I’m sure the word you mean to use is entertaining.” (MH 32). With this comment, Hally proves to be prejudiced, repeating clichés and revealing his ignorance. He looks down on Sam, his linguistic skills and his hobby. For the boy, dancing adds up to “prancing around” and having a “so-called good time” (MH 32), something that he denies can be defined intellectually as a real “occasion” (MH 33). Yet when he decides to write his essay for school on an “annual event of cultural or historical significance” about the township’s upcoming dance championship, it suddenly becomes a “significant event” (MH 34) in his vocabulary. Hally knows that his teacher is expecting an essay on topics such as the “commemoration of the 1820 Settlers” (MH 28). The pupil classifies this exercise as one that intends to promote the internalization of national myths and stabilize state discourse. Afraid of his teacher’s authority and power, Hally must justify his unusual choice with words that will mollify him. He explains to Sam and Willie:

[...] my English teacher [...] doesn’t like natives. But I’ll point out to him that in strict anthropological terms the culture of a primitive black society includes its dancing and singing. To put my thesis in a nutshell: The war-dance has been replaced by the waltz. But it still amounts to the same thing: the release of primitive emotions through the movement. (MH 34)

Hally’s speech is shockingly racist and propagandistic. His arguments sound pre-fabricated and are in direct keeping with the tenets of imperialist cultural anthropology (Gainor 1995: 133) which have influenced apartheid’s racist discourse. Thus, his topic choice for his essay in no way displays racial open-mindedness. As he fails to realize that his own words are discriminatory, we must conclude that he has been successfully indoctrinated by apartheid discourse. Although Hally declares his short speech to be a strategy to pacify his

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6 All quotations from ‘Master Harold’ ... and the boys are taken from Fugard 1987 and flagged MH followed by the page number on which they appear. Here: MH 31.
teacher, it is revealing that he never apologizes to Sam and Willie for his remarks, leading us to believe that he, too, is infested with racism.\footnote{As Gainor remarks, this “notable moment in the drama certainly leaves room for the audience to question the views expressed by Hally” (1995: 133). Furthermore, it is questionable if Vandenbroucke’s remark that “Hally savours the taste of words, sometimes pretentiously, but always sincerely” (1985: 188) adequately reflects his behaviour in this scene.} Thus, Hally emerges as an immature prankster who, despite writing on the black ballroom-dancing competition, ends up subscribing to apartheid discourse and parroting contemporary propaganda. In this light, Albert Wertheim points out that Hally becomes a “caricature and replication of the classroom teacher he so much dislikes” (2000: 143). This example, then, shows that language can manipulate its users effectively. Hally fails to use his intellectual abilities to overcome his arrogance and linguistically displayed pretentiousness (see Gainor 1995: 133; Jordan 1993: 466) and understand what is unjust about the society he lives in.

By contrast, Fugard characterizes Sam as an intelligent and emotionally mature man whose life experience and suffering have made him understand the machinations of apartheid as well as its psychological foundations: irrational fear, ignorance and prejudice by whites lead to the condescension displayed towards blacks in order to confirm white power. Sam is much more critical of reality than Blood Knot’s Zach and can objectively observe, analyse and react to his environment. As Sam knows, the driving force behind racist behaviour is the desire for self-respect. In the case of Hally, his need for human respect and love is not satisfied by his family. The shame of having to deal with a crippled and drunken father is more than the boy can bear, driving him to verbally and physically take out his self-destructive anger on his friend and surrogate father Sam. Sam, however, overlooks Hally’s rudeness and gives him a second chance, choosing to restore the friendship between them by calling him “Hally” instead of “Master Harold,” thus freeing himself of what critics have called the “burden of ideologically determined inferiority” (Olivier 1982: 11) or the “socio-political patterns of mastery and servitude” (Durbach 1987: 506). Although Sam is less educated than Hally, his humble and sincere language of humanity and dignity challenges apartheid’s false hypocritical rhetoric which in the end fails to accord whites the power they believe it gives them.
Susan Pam–Grant’s *Curl up and Dye* (which premiered at the Black Sun nightclub and Market Theatre, Johannesburg, in 1989) is set in the last years of apartheid. It examines the social, economic and cultural problems that accompany the transition of South Africa from an apartheid nation to a young democracy. It portrays transitional Johannesburg through the interaction of five women at a hairdresser’s salon in Joubert Park, a slowly decaying, hitherto Afrikaner working-class neighbourhood that has now become a “grey-area” (Schwartz 1989: 27).8

I wish to focus on a short dialogue which can easily be dismissed as a comic and minor scene, yet can also be read as indicative of the social and racial issues addressed in the play as a whole. Rolene, the white working-class manager of the salon, is doing a crossword puzzle and reads the clues out loud to her loyal but underpaid helper Miriam from Soweto:

**Rolene.** [...]‘Anyone who sees a school performance of *Hamlet* will feel [...] virtuous that he can claim he sat or saw it without wishing he were somewhere else.’ Now we got to choose the right word – you know, the word that sounds better.

**Miriam.** But I don’t know what a hamlet is? [H]ow am I supposed to learn these high class words if you don’t teach me.

**Rolene.** All right then, what do you think it means?

**Miriam.** A hamlet? I know a helmet.

**Rolene.** Sometimes you can be real stupid. A Hamlet is a . . . a small piece of ham – simple.

**Miriam.** Aah – a piglet?

**Rolene.** Yes. So what do we put – sat or saw?

**Miriam.** Saw – put saw.

**Rolene.** Why saw?

**Miriam.** You can see mos it’s clear, Rolene. You can’t sat a pig – but you can saw a pig ...9

Miriam is eager to do crossword puzzles with Rolene because she sees it as her opportunity to learn. This scene suggests that, despite her low level of education, she is intellectually flexible and can use language creatively.

She asks about the meaning of the word *Hamlet* and thus shows that she wants to understand the words before analysing the signification of the sentence as a whole. In the light of Rolene’s similarly poor level of education where knowledge about Shakespeare is simply not relevant, Miriam is left to her own devices. Her attempts to decipher the meaning of *Hamlet* reveal that

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8 For a discussion of *Curl up and Dye*, see Kruger (1999: 193–94).

9 All quotations from *Curl up and Dye* are taken from Pam–Grant, 1993 and flagged *CD* followed by the page number on which they appear. Here: *CD* 101.
she can analyse and work on different linguistic levels. She plays with phonemes (hamlet/helmet) and can identify morphemes (pig-let); semantically speaking, she shows that she knows that ham is made of pork (ham-let/pig-let); and she can analyse verb structures grammatically (sat/saw a pig).

In this conversation, Miriam emerges as a smart character with an open mind. She shows genuine interest in learning and passes the value and importance of education on to her children. She even goes to see the school principal to explain why she is late in paying the school fees and thus risks arriving late for work. Her behaviour shows that she has understood that education is the *sine qua non* for climbing the social ladder. It is indicative of her outlook that words she does not know qualify as "high-class" (*CD* 100). The idea that better education will bring about positive social development or upward movement had already been explored by George Bernard Shaw in *Pygmalion* (1913). Miriam seeks a better future for her children through education just as Eliza uses her education to move beyond her mentor Higgins to a state of independence.\(^\text{10}\)

Thus, it is not surprising that Miriam actively demands to be taught. She defines Rolene’s role as that of teacher and places herself in the role of the student. On the one hand, seen from the perspective of colonial discourse, she is re-asserting the binary opposition of the supposedly educated, civilized white versus the uneducated, savage black, the prevailing attitude in the neighbourhood (*CD* 86). Yet, as the spectator realizes, mimicry quickly turns to mockery. Miriam is subconsciously subverting the rigid imperialist hierarchy. Her language represents one form of what Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins call the “languages of resistance” (1996: 164).\(^\text{11}\) Miriam’s way of speaking highlights her potential for acquiring social and racial consciousness. She does not question South African society’s structure from a racial point of view; she feels that she belongs in Soweto and expresses no desire to move to a neighbourhood like Joubert Park. Yet, she clearly believes that education – acquired through the mastery of language – is the key to social and economic or class\(^\text{12}\) improvement and will improve one’s quality of life.

Seen from Rolene’s perspective, Miriam represents a threat to her social position. Miriam’s iron will to educate herself could eventually allow her, or

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\(^{10}\) I am indebted to John Douthwaite for emphasizing this similarity in the discussion following my paper.

\(^{11}\) Gilbert and Tompkins define the “languages of resistance” as all linguistic forms of resistance against imperialism that help to imbue the colonized peoples and their own systems of communication with a sense of power (cf 164–202, especially 164–66).

\(^{12}\) For comments on *Curl up and Dye* as a play about class struggle, see Thamm (1989). Loots (1996) reads the play in terms of class and gender.
at least her children, to become more socially mobile in the transitional society. Instead of learning from her helper, Rolene feels threatened and must assert her superiority. Thus, she falls back on apartheid discourse. Her language is again characterized by closure as becomes clear in her racist exclamation: “I’m not picking up people’s dead hair, sis – I’m a hairdresser, not a bladdy sweeping girl” (CD 87). By defining Miriam as a “sweeping girl”, she reduces her to an untrained and immature servant, echoing the experience of Blood Knot’s Zach. Rolene knows that she clearly lacks Miriam’s inner drive to ameliorate her position and to come to a clear understanding of the world around her. Just as she refuses to admit to Miriam that she does not know the meaning of the word “Hamlet,” she fails to confront her abusive husband. Thus, mastery of language becomes a metaphor for the mastery of life.

To conclude, the three plays presented here all treat the issue of language at a meta-level. Blood Knot introduces the idea that daily oppression can be identified and understood more easily if its concepts and words are known. ‘Master Harold’ ... and the Boys contrasts pre-fabricated, manipulative apartheid language and racist discourse with the honest language of a true human being. And, finally, Curl up and Dye foregrounds that education, here symbolized by language learning, is the key to improving one’s social and economic status. Thus, these plays suggest that apartheid discourse and rhetoric can be countered by using language consciously and creatively, presenting language as a powerful medium for anti-apartheid and postcolonial agency.

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Beyond the Domain of Literacy
The Illiterate Other in The Heart of the Matter, Things Fall Apart and Waiting for the Barbarians

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ABSTRACT
The controversies of critics and writers over the suitability of English as a vehicle of African identity, Abdul JanMohamed warns, erroneously suggest a linguistic choice which, in actuality, most Africans have never had. Far from being an alternative language, so JanMohamed, English represents a profoundly alien phenomenology for sub-Saharan indigenous communities, who possess no chirographic traditions of their own. The idea of the most foreign aspect of English for an African being its writtenness is absolutely central to the novels The Heart of the Matter, Things Fall Apart and Waiting for the Barbarians. While comparing the different ways in which Graham Greene, Chinua Achebe and J.M. Coetzee portray the encroachment of anglophone literacy on African life as an assertion of colonial power, the essay will also show how all three authors discover in the illiteracy of the African native a focal point for their own legitimization of literary inscriptions of African orality.

1 These words have recently been heading the advertisements of the technology consulting firm Accenture. The announcement challenges Western professionals to imagine themselves as part of a scenario in

2 For example, the New York Times (Tuesday, 3 April 2001).
which they are stripped of both the ability to speak the world’s first lingua franca, and, even worse, to use the world’s main script. Predictably, the advertisement goes on to assure that with Accenture’s expert guidance it is perfectly feasible to obtain the necessary command over a language and script even as exotic as Chinese. One of the reasons why the strategic exploitation of the notorious difficulty of Chinese is guaranteed to have the desired effect of alarming conventionally educated Westerners is their tendency to take the global hegemony of alphabetic literacy for granted and to assign the idea that other writing systems might come to be used to the same extent as the alphabet in international communication to the domain of fantasy.

Arguably, it is for similar reasons that linguistic studies into aspects of English as a world language rarely distinguish expressly between speakers of English who are literate in the language and speakers who are not. Nor do such studies often display a special interest in the existence of different levels of literacy. Rather they seem content with assuming that all native speakers of English possess, and all non-native speakers aspire to, largely the same reading and writing competence. Literary criticism succumbs to the same inaccuracy as it fails to question whether the world-wide spread of English has indeed produced those homogenously literalized readerships it tends to posit (at least implicitly) in its discussions of the new anglophone literatures. This omission seems particularly surprising in studies of Third-World literatures and especially of literature written in and about Africa.

As Abdul JanMohamed (1984) has pointed out, it is because of the lack of literate traditions in Subsaharan indigenous cultures that the presence of European chirographic phenomenologies has always posed greater problems in Africa than anywhere else in the former European colonies. According to JanMohamed, twentieth-century writers and critics of African literature have mistakenly been trying to resolve these problems in arguments about the suitability of English as a vehicle for African cultural identity. Instead they should have asked whether the medium of writing can at all do justice to the orality of African cultures. “Doing justice” to the orality of African cultures, to JanMohamed, seems to mean first of all representing them “authentically”: i.e., not from a eurocentric and, hence, specifically literate angle, but as experienced and used by oral cultures and communities. “Doing justice” to African cultures, it seems necessary to add, includes another equally complex task: namely, that of rendering not only African orality but also European literacy from ‘outside’, of conveying the foreignness that still pertains to originally European literate traditions in Africa. The following comparative analysis will show how three novels set in Africa and written in English establish this foreignness by comparing different literate European and non-literate African consciousnesses.
The first novel, *The Heart of the Matter* by Graham Greene, centres on a Catholic police officer from England whose strictly pragmatic attitude to writing distinguishes him from the other members of the colonial establishment portrayed in the novel. They all seem devoted to setting up an enclave of British culture in West Africa, which typically involves engaging in all sorts of literate practices, both mundane ones such as writing letters, telegrams, diaries and reports and more sophisticated ones such as reading and composing poetry, going to the theatre, and discussing works of English fiction at meetings of the local library club.

For the protagonist, Major Scobie, the more literate (or literary) of these practices serve a rather dubious form of escapism which he attributes to a profound reluctance on the part of his expatriates to experience Africa as what it really is rather than as a conglomerate of European colonies. He is convinced that, to people like his wife, “literary Louise,” and her admirer, the would-be poet Wilson, “truth has never been of any real value” (208). He winces at the banality of their sentimental poetic language, feels lost in the tangle of lies into which they force him and believes that sincerity, while “the sound of English spoken in England,” is absent from the English spoken in Africa. “Here intonations change […] in the course of a few months,” he reflects, “[become] high-pitched and insincere, or flat and guarded.” (41–42)

Thus alienated, Scobie turns towards the Syrian tradesman Yusef, who insistently claims to suffer the same isolation as Scobie because he is illiterate. Yusef’s repeated assertions of his cultural inferiority stand in odd contrast to his familiarity with Shakespeare, his knowledge of the Bible and his fluency in English, which all suggest that, in reality, Yusef has assimilated, even perfected the colonist’s art of deception. This suspicion is corroborated by the figure of Scobie’s boy Ali, who, in contrast to Yusef, has never appropriated the foreign culture but retained a marked aloofness from it, which is underscored by his broken English, his indifference to the Westerners’ intellectual pursuits and an illiteracy totally unlike Yusef’s, an illiteracy to which Ali seems perfectly reconciled as part of his rootedness in African oral culture.

Typically, Greene does not expand on the orality of either Ali or Yusef, but relegates the two characters to the very background of the novel. This has frequently earned him the charge of eurocentric prejudice. To pronounce this charge is to ignore that Greene’s novel does reflect on its own limitations, namely, in that it foregrounds the practical impossibility for any literate person to ever fully comprehend an Other who is not literate. Arguably, it is upon the recognition of this impossibility, along with a growing awareness of his own entrapment within literate traditions and a literate mode of thinking, that Scobie decides to kill himself. Arguably, too, it is as a last desperate attempt to free himself from his own dogged belief in the written word that
Scobie starts to prepare his own exit (from life as much as from the text). The final part of the novel describes in detail which precautions he takes to stage his death as the consequence of a fatal illness. To this end he also manipulates his up to then scrupulously truthful records. In other words, he ends up after all using writing as the other British do in the novel – as a means of distorting reality.

In relating the transformation of Scobie (significantly nicknamed “Scobie the Just” by the other British in the novel) into a liar, the novel finally dissociates itself from its protagonist and at the same time rescues its own authority as a kind of literary psychogramme which, unlike its suicidal protagonist, does not venture outside the secure domain of literate epistemology in the apparently ‘mad’ expectation of comprehing the non-literate African Other. Still, this does not mean, as Schaffer (1991: 590) suggests, that Greene ultimately subscribes to the literacy represented by Lousie Scobie or Wilson. Rather, he has his novel end as an ironic comment on the implication of these characters in Scobie’s destruction as well as on their presumptuous faith in their own hermeneutic abilities, which typically fails them as they attempt to grasp the truth of Scobie’s death.

In the second novel under discussion, *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe pursues the very opposite goal. Critics agree that he successfully transcends European literary conventions and convincingly captures the complexity of oral Ibo culture in the English language (cf, for example, Innes 1992: 32–35, JanMohamed 1984: 37, Klooss 1986: 41) They tend to omit, however, that, as part of this project, his novel implicitly also reflects on the African native’s non-literacy as an aspect of his/her Otherness vis-à-vis British civilization.

As in *The Heart of the Matter*, in *Things Fall Apart* the Other (here the British in Africa) is constructed as an absence by way of carefully omitting any reference to a literate world outside oral Ibo culture in the main part of the novel. Only occasional textual gaps remind the reader of his/her own literacy and of the text’s writtenness. Although plain omissions, these gaps are highly functional. One such gap marks the episode which describes how the first white man arrives in the village of Abame and, after a brief and futile exchange with the locals, who do not understand his language, is killed by them. The people of Abame think nothing of it when some time later more whites appear and discover the unconcealed evidence of the murder. The reader, in turn, is filled with a sense of foreboding at the Africans’ apparent naivety. Aware of the whites’ legal possibilities of redressing the injury, he/she is led to question whether this naivety is really only a harmless sign of innocence or not also one of irresponsibility. At any rate, the final outcome of the episode: ie, the complete destruction of Abame, elicits a far more differentiated inter-
pretation from the reader than the Ibo men recounting the episode in dialogue are able to give.

A similar interpretative input is required of the reader when the narrative shifts from Okonkwo to his son Nwoye, who, deeply disturbed by his father’s participation in the ritual killing of his stepbrother Ikemefuma, leaves his tribe, joins a Christian mission, and learns to read and write. At first sight it seems perfectly plausible in the light of earlier characterizations of Okonkwo as an embittered victim of the changes brought about by the British that he should condemn his son’s disloyalty as an “abomination” (108) and refuse to consider him one of his kin. On another level, though, Okonkwo’s unforgiving attitude also establishes a structural parallelism between the first part of the novel, which tells the story of Okonkwo’s father Unoka, and the part leading up to Okonkwo’s suicide; a parallelism, which encourages the reader, who is aware of the novel’s textuality, to compare Achebe’s protagonist to his late parent and to interpret him more critically as yet another father figure who obstinately adheres to his own principles even at the risk of completely alienating his son.

The role literacy (the reader’s literacy) is thus assigned implicitly in Things Fall Apart as a means of more dispassionately judging African traditions is specified further by Achebe’s introduction of the District Commissioner at the end of the novel. Contemplating Okonkwo’s dead body, the commissioner considers that Okonkwo’s story could make interesting enough reading to include in the book he intends to write on African primitives. “One could almost write a whole chapter on him,” he ponders. “Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate.” (147–48). The irony of this passage is obvious. What merits special emphasis, though, is that the novel as a whole may be read as a direct negative response to it. After all, Achebe devotes not just a paragraph but the entire novel to the story of Okonkwo and thus precludes that his narrator should be someone like the District Commissioner. To deconstruct the District Commissioner’s authority on African primitives even further, he has him identify Ibo orality as a most infuriating “love for superfluous words” (146). “One must be firm to cut out details” (148), he asserts at the end of the novel, clearly unable to conceive of himself as part of a literary text reducing the presence of Western civilization in Africa a mere detail almost worth leaving out altogether.

Chinua Achebe’s deconstruction of colonialist notions of writing and literate culture through his ironical reduction of the District Commissioner to a mere detail, is radicalized by J.M. Coetzee in Waiting for the Barbarians. Like Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, the protagonist of this novel is an official representative of a colonialist regime, a magistrate stationed at a tiny frontier settlement. Like Scobie, he finds himself in the role of a mediator
between Africans and Europeans, and gradually is drawn to the side of the Africans as he realizes that Western culture, once transplanted into an African context, reduces its agents to savage torturers of the by contrast surprisingly humane and civilized natives. In the course of the events the magistrate also observes how the English language adapts to the atrocities which the speakers of that language commit and how the African natives, as the victims of these atrocities, are captured in the ensuing discourse. Symptomatically, as long as the barbarians are prisoners at the settlement and as such entrapped in the colonial narrative of subjection, they are described as “strange animals” with “vast appetites” and “volatile tempers” (18), as “ugly people” (24) allowing themselves to be “herded” (24) in the corner of a yard where they silently endure the humiliation and pain inflicted upon them.

Doubting the efficacy of such modes of linguistic subordination, the magistrate begins to suspect that the true nature of the native will always remain beyond his comprehension. Accordingly he comes to confess that he knows what to do with the female barbarian whom he keeps as his mistress “no more than a cloud in the sky knows what to do with another” (34). He therefore resolves to return her to her people. Yet, even after their parting, he continues “to swoop and circle around the irreducible figure of the girl, casting one net of meaning after another over her” (81). His inability to let go of the girl is not much different from the other settlers’ obsessive preoccupation with the barbarians whom they suspect to be lurking outside their settlement and in whose absence they keep inventing forever more unlikely scenarios for their attack.

The dreaded onslaught never happens. The barbarians never materialize in the form in which they are imagined, namely as aggressors. Still, the settlers continue to arm themselves against the expected disaster. “WE STAY,” they write on the walls of their houses (130), not as a message to the barbarians, who cannot read, but to support each other morally against their common imaginary enemy. What they fail to see is that, rather than the imminence of their attack, it is the barbarians’ failure (or stubborn refusal) to attack that challenges their own presence at the imperial outpost and deconstructs the story of their waiting, the only story which they enact. With the evident futility of this waiting, Coetzee establishes the probably most obvious parallel between *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Waiting for Godot* as this futility ultimately subordinates the settlers discursively to the barbarians, just as Vladimir and Estragon are subordinated to the forever absent but, because of his absence, dominant Godot.

Thus Coetzee moves from using the African native’s otherness at first like Greene as a cipher of intangibility to interpreting it provocatively as an aspect of the African native’s empowerment. Such an interpretation opens up
remarkable possibilities for the African writer to undermine European literary traditions; possibilities, again, quite different from those exemplified by *Things Fall Apart*; possibilities which Coetzee has the narrator protagonist explore in his translation of the poplar slips. Although he himself does not know what to make of these ominous pieces of writing he discovered on one of his archaeological investigations, he resolves to ascribe their authorship to the barbarians and supply his adversaries with the sort of reading expected of someone like him whom they believe to be an ally of the barbarians. In a superbly ironic scene, he informs Major Joll that the slips represent a full record of the abominations committed during his regime. For a moment, Coetzee’s narrator enjoys the horror in Joll’s face at the mere idea that someone might have used a foreign writing system, of which he himself has no command, only to produce a counter-version to the history he has been trying to construct by systematically occluding certain less advantageous details of his rule over the settlement.

The possibility that he himself might have insight into an epistemology beyond his adversaries’ grasp seems to hold fantastic opportunities for revenge for the tormented hero and narrator, in which he can indulge only briefly, however. Only too soon does Joll realize that the knowledge his opponent feigns of the contents of the poplar slips is as much a product of Western imagination as is his conspiracy with the barbarians for which he has been imprisoned. However much Joll would like to charge him with treason, he cannot because this would entail acknowledging the validity of a truth he is even more unwilling to concede than to grant the magistrate his freedom. On a metafictional level, however, this resolution of the antagonism between Joll and the magistrate reconstitutes only a relative freedom for the narrator of the novel, while it is the barbarians who are ultimately assigned exclusive authorship on the question whether there is indeed another story of Africa’s colonization apart from that recorded in alphabetic writing is awaiting its discovery in a cultural climate less ignorant and dismissive of non-alphabetic scripts.

A comparison of *The Heart of the Matter*, *Things Fall Apart* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* shows that to understand the image of the Other in anglophone fiction about Africa, it does not suffice to register strategies of demonization or romantic idealization as employed in the portraits of Yusef and Ali, of temporary ironical focalization as used in the description of the District Commissioner or of metafictional de- and reconstruction as applied to the treatment of the barbarians. These strategies demand to be seen in relation to the literacy posited as the text’s epistemological basis. Only thus is it possible to appreciate how, in spite of their dissimilarities, all three of these novels suggest that whether literary English in Africa will ever transcend its own limitations as an originally European means of expression is above all a
matter of who its agents are in Africa. Sadly, the development implicitly anticipated as the most inevitable for Africa by all three novels is the opposite of what is happening in Africa at present. Since the 1990s, access to the literacy we Europeans tend to take most for granted has been regressing from a recognized human right to a privilege in Africa. In consequence a majority of Africans might not necessarily rejoice with us at the relatively easy availability of anglophone literacy elsewhere in the world and its global predominance. Rather, English as a world language might well constitute a far more immediate and serious existential threat for them than the possibility that Chinese might one day be the world’s first web language does for us.

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3 The assessment of literacy rates is, admittedly, an extremely difficult affair, which is why scholars such as Scribner & Cole (1981) and Street (1995) warn of too much theoretical concern with the definition of “literacy” or the categorization of different literacies because such attempts would only divert attention from the actual problem. What is needed instead, according to them, is an understanding of both literacy and illiteracy as ‘plural activities’ and a more differentiated view of the social realities generating literacies and illiteracies. This, so Mace (1998: 13–14), would also help to disprove such popular equations as that of schooling and literacy and reveal that people may acquire literacy even independent of school systems. However, in Third World contexts and especially in Africa, where, due also to the particular orality of the population, alternative ‘literacy events’ are certainly rarer than in other parts of the world, the availability of schooling and school attendance still seems to provide the most conclusive information about the educational standards of the different communities. The following facts, therefore, do merit special mention: In 1999, more children in sub-Saharan Africa were out of school than in 1990. Forty million African children are not attending primary school. According to current estimates, by 2015, fifty-seven million children of primary school age will not be in school in Africa. In other words, three out of four of all the school-age children in the world not attending school will be African, when the continent has only twelve per cent of the world’s children. In the 1990s, thirteen African countries cut their education budgets under IMF programmes. In Mali, Zambia, Burkina Faso and Chad education budgets fell to one per cent or less of gross domestic product. (http://www.newafrica.com/education/articles/afr_illiteracy.htm, 1 June 2001.)


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“The nuisance one learns to put up with”

English as a Linguistic Compromise in Es’kia Mphahlele’s Fiction

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Abstract

Es’kia Mphahlele’s commitment to and pronouncements on the use of English as a creative medium in black South African literature situate him squarely within a postcolonial problematic of abrogation and appropriation whose ambivalence is implicitly predicated in the statement which serves as a title for this essay: “English, the nuisance we have to put with,” taken from an article written in the US (Mphahlele 1973: 37) after almost twenty years of exile. In numerous articles and essays, Mphahlele has repeatedly justified his choice of English as a medium for creation in a colonial context and carefully analysed how a colonial language can be used to convey African experience and as an instrument of self-discovery and social mobility. In this essay I want to show how Mphahlele’s ambivalent stance towards English can be accounted for in terms of a tension between abrogation and appropriation (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 39) and results in a form of writing which is both a cultural act and a literary creation.

1. Mphahlele’s approach to English

Mphahlele’s position on the use of English and of African languages has always been consistent. At the outset of his writing career he felt no qualms about using English in his literary and critical writings but at the same time he strongly encouraged budding African writers to use African languages in their works and academics to teach African literatures in African languages, as he did at the Accra Conference in 1962.
His choice of English was a purely pragmatic one. It was bound up with the circumstances of his upbringing in Marabastad, one of the African slums of Pretoria. One cannot dismiss the fact that English was generally considered the necessary gateway to knowledge and qualification in South Africa but, in the case of Mphahlele, as he frequently recalls, there was also a clearly personal commitment, probably related to the fact that he became literate through the medium of English:

I was pretty poor in English, which was the medium of instruction. I read and read, and read till it hurt. But I also got a good deal of pleasure out of it. And I felt proud because I was overcoming my awkwardness. (Mphahlele 1957: 51)

He has frequently harked back to this initial experience of being able to read English, stressing how this experience stimulated his imagination as a child:

From that day when at the age of seven, you began the printed alphabet in words and sentence formations, and later when words leapt in front of you and spoke to you of many things, of far-away lands, of misty horizons, of the adventure of living, of man’s conquest – from that day onwards, something was going to drive you from one exhilarating discovery to another. But these things came to you in English. Which meant you were simultaneously absorbing English ways of thinking, which were to modify or condition some of your own indigenous ways of thinking. (1974: 29)

In order to better appreciate Mphahlele’s stance on the use of English it is helpful to place it within the debate over the question of languages in South Africa, which has been going on for decades. The final report of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG), presented to the then Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Dr Ben Ngubane, on 8 August 1996 evokes the context of the debate in the following terms:

Colonial and apartheid language policy, in concert with socio-economic and socio-political policy, gave rise to a hierarchy of unequal languages which reflected the structures of racial and class inequality that characterise South African society. The dominance of English – and later Afrikaans – was sustained systematically in order to reinforce other structures of domination […] The task that has to be accomplished is […] no less than challenging the hegemony of English – and to a lesser extent of Afrikaans – circumscribing their gatekeeping functions in our society. (LANGTAG 1996: 12-13)

The debate over the hegemony of English as a medium of communication and instruction has turned on the question of Standard English or, in other words, on the question of appropriation and abrogation. While for some – mostly African writers and educators – English would have to be modified so as to reflect the impact of African cultures in its everyday use, for others – English-speaking South Africans – Standard English should be preserved. Thus, in
1993, the English Academy of Southern Africa justified the maintenance of Standard English on the grounds that it is “the only language that can serve South Africa in certain unique functions, […] that English is a main international language with 300 million native speakers” and that “the deviations from the standard are more likely to be individual mistakes than to be the beginnings of a codifiable new English” (English Academy of South Africa 1993: 10).

Njabulo Ndebele, on the other hand, in a keynote address delivered at the Jubilee Conference of the English Academy in 1986, declared that “English is not an innocent language” because, he added, “language is a carrier of a range of social perceptions, attitudes and goals” (Ndebele 1986: 112) and, in his view, it still remains a vehicle of the corporate world. Therefore, he concluded, English as used in South Africa by Africans “must be open to the possibility of becoming a new language” (Ndebele 1986: 114).

Another writer, Sipho Sepamla, claims that for most of the people Standard English is irrelevant:

We are using English but we’ve stopped to be embarrassed by our mistakes in English because we have decided to merge the English taught with that which we have acquired through usage. A user aims at being intelligible regardless of the number of broken rules in the process. (quoted in Alexander 1989: 59)

The empirical stance which underpins Sepamla’s position is one Mphahlele would not have disagreed with, although it must be noted that Mphahlele’s interest does not lie so much in the communicative aspect of the language as in its creative potential. As he has repeatedly pointed out, when he wants to communicate with his people or address certain gatherings he resorts to his mother-tongue, SeSotho (Mphahlele 1986: 32). What Mphahlele has always been striving for is the shaping of a literary language that would be the site of cross-cultural meanings or resonances, so that the colonizer’s language might be appropriated and forced to acknowledge and validate the presence of an African culture.

2. Writing African culture

Mphahlele’s experimenting with English has resulted in the creation of a literary medium freed from the shackles of the linguistic norms that had been imposed by missionaries and teachers. His overall intention was to anchor his use of English to an urban African cultural background. His strategy evokes Roland Barthes’s definition of writing as an act of social solidarity, fulfilling a function which links creativity and society. It implies “the choice of a social arena within which the writer decides to locate the nature of his language” (Barthes 1953: 18).
Mphahlele has always considered his adoption of English as a compromise, similar to other compromises he had to negotiate in his life. As he puts it, “life for an oppressed person is one long, protracted, agonizing compromise” (Mphahlele 1982: 71). When he started to write, his major concern was to reconcile his choice of a European language with his cultural background in a meaningful way:

At the time I started writing, around 1945, we hadn’t been exposed to African writers in the African languages, and so our single models were those which we read at school. And so English became a more natural thing for me to write in, although I communicate at other levels with my own mother tongue. (Mphahlele 1986: 32)

Mphahlele’s pragmatic approach to English is that of a man who has been exposed to a long tradition of mission-school education in South Africa and who has been using the language for many years as a student, teacher, journalist and writer. However, he is not ready to accept the indiscriminate imposition of Standard English when dealing with the reality of African cultures. Thus he strongly criticized Francis H. Dutton’s translation of Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka*, published in 1931, on the grounds that Dutton was confident that the biblical style of the Authorised Version would adequately render the epic diction of Mofolo. In other words, he takes exception to the high-handed appropriation of an African text and an African culture by means of an idiom which is deemed appropriate to reflect the tonality of an African epic. He therefore insists on the necessity of reshaping the language to make sure “the English language can speak in a way it has never done before among us” (Mphahlele 1976: 7), that it is the black man writing to the black man “talking a language that would be understood by his own people” (Manganyi 1981: 24).

The general principle upon which Mphahlele’s strategy is based consists of instilling into English the flavour of African languages as they are spoken in everyday life, mingling the communal voice of people with the personal voice of the narrator (Mphahlele 1976: 8). These voices are rooted in the shared experience of the contradictions of South Africa so that they can be understood by all. In his short stories (apart from his first collection *Man Must Live* published in 1946) – *In Corner B* (1967), *The Unbroken Song* (191) – and in his autobiography and novels – *Down Second Avenue* (1959), *The Wanderers* (1971), *Chirundu* (1979), *Father Come Home* (1984) – he has constantly experimented with a plurality of voices echoing different cultural backgrounds in urban or rural contexts.

Mphahlele has also expounded his conception of appropriation in various essays and in two booklets which he published for the benefit of young
authors who attended the writing workshops he organized in Kenya and South Africa: *A Guide to Creative Writing* (1966) and *Let’s Write a Novel* (1981). In the former he recommends that a writer listen closely to his people’s speech, that he translate a character’s thoughts that go on in his mother tongue into English, along with images so as to “capture the mood, atmosphere and word pictures or images of what a character is saying or doing in his own language” (Mphahlele 1966: 24–25). In the latter he hones his previous recommendations to convey the sense of what he later calls “a multiplicity of languages and discourses to express ‘multi-cultural’ being” (Mphahlele 1997). If characters speak ‘broken English’ it should be recorded in their speeches. If they speak an African language or Afrikaans, this is expected to shine through also in the “English” literary rendering.

This basic principle has been applied to his fiction through different devices which generally operate within a framework of code-switching. The narrator uses standard English while the characters use a popular medium conveying the echo of an African language. Glossing, untranslated words, translated proverbs, metaphors or comparisons, interjections (“God’s people!”, “Jo-nna-jo!”, “the ancestors are my witnesses!”), forms of greetings and word images are among the most commonly used devices. Word-images translated into English offer an insight into the rich expressiveness of African languages: “A man is a man because of other men”, “A cow will give birth to a pig if that cousin of his doesn’t end up in a mental hospital” (Mphahlele 1989: 138, 141); “child of my brother has been vomited by sleep” meaning that the child’s sleep has been disturbed by a nightmare, “do not come into my mouth” meaning do not interrupt me, “I’ll come out of the grave and breathe maggots into your life” meaning I will come to haunt you (Mphahlele 1984: 3, 47, 78). The English is occasionally moulded on the syntax and idiom of an African language to convey the immediacy of dialogue: “‘Yes,’ he says, he says ‘My mind stretches back to Sedibeng’”, “‘I say to him, I say, ‘You went to Fort Victoria’” (Mphahlele 1984: 93). In this way, Mphahlele gives the impression that English “bears the burden” of his culture, replacing the metaphors of the dominant language by those of African languages, inscribing Otherness in the colonizer’s language while using the authority of its hegemonic position to validate African experiences.

The gap which is thus inscribed within the language produces what Mphahlele calls resonance, that is the capacity of language to resound with other voices which metonymically recall a history, a culture and myths which encompass the present of enunciation:

You may inherit the culture that comes with the language but if you’re using it as a tool to write out of your own cultural experience you are then adding another dimension to what you are doing […] You’re using the language in
quite a different way from other people will use it who live in England [...] I’m sure your African tradition feeds into the language and the thought that goes into it turns it into a different thing, very often, from the way it’s been used elsewhere. (“South African Writers Talking” 1979: 9)

The literary text is thus, according to Ashcroft, “written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the centre, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular language” (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 39) in order to redefine cultural identity in a colonial context. He further points out that “the most interesting feature of its [English] use in post-colonial literature may be the way in which it also constructs difference, separation and absence from the metropolitan norm” (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 43–44).

With Mphahlele, this cultural difference is defined as “the ironic meeting point between protest and acceptance, not resignation in the face of oppression or deprivation, but an artistic readiness to confront and work out the reality which surrounds the author” (Gaylard 1995: 88). In his own way, Mphahlele inscribes his writing within a form of liminality which he defines in the following terms:

a kind of tug-of-war between this acceptance and rejection; and we are unconsciously trying to reconcile the two. I think [...] we have to a large extent come to a point of equilibrium [...] where we know exactly what it is we don’t want from those fellows there, and what it is that we need to consolidate in ourselves. (Mphahlele 1987: 138)

3. Writing in the liminal zone

Writing in the liminal zone, defined as “a transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 131), corresponds to Mphahlele’s decision to adapt his use of English to the functions he ascribes to his writing as a social act. His perception of that function has changed over the years. Whereas in the period immediately before and after his exile his writing was largely determined by the aesthetics of realism, his return to South Africa led him to the conviction that he could only “recover the texture of things” through what he calls “prose poetry” (Mphahlele 1987: 141).

The first category corresponds to a predominantly urban setting. He writes from the perspective of the ordinary members of society, which justifies Mphahlele’s qualification of this type of writing as “proletarian” literature.

Nowhere is the ironic and unstable meeting point between protest and acceptance so brilliantly illustrated as in his short stories and particularly in
“Mrs Plum” (Mphahlele 1967). The first person narrator, who is a black maid-servant called Karabo, relates her experiences and reveals the contradictions and less palatable aspects of her madam, Mrs Plum, who is a typical white liberal, a member of a white women’s opposition group, the Black Sash. Karabo’s testimony is told in confidence, as though directly addressed to an anonymous listener. This form of orality accounts for the fluidity and spontaneity of her English, which, incidentally, she takes great pains to learn. However, the African words and idioms and the syntax which occasionally copies the syntax of her mother tongue never allow the listener/reader to forget her cultural background.

The strength of her voice lies precisely in the constant tension maintained between her growing mastery of English, which accords with her discovery of the white world, and the hovering presence of her African cultural background conveyed by African linguistic intrusions into her adopted tongue. Karabo stands for both acceptance insofar as she adopts some of the norms and values of a Western way of life, and for protest in her refusal to be over-exploited and to comply passively with her employer’s arbitrary authority. “Mrs Plum” thus displays a form of writing which is perfectly coherent since first it inscribes the agency of the subject in the mastery of the English she uses, and second it constructs textuality as a personal and adequate rendering of the narrator’s urban experiences.

Mphahlele, despite his involvement and interest in urban modernity, never rejected his African identity but it was not until he went into exile in Nigeria that he fully came to embrace it: “Nigeria restored something to me which I thought I had lost – the sense of being African, and the feeling also that although we had knocked about here, in a white-settled country, we hadn’t lost what we had started off with, in the matter of traditions and customs” (Mphahlele 1987: 135). The rediscovery of being an African through exile led him to reflect upon the kind of writing he wanted to produce.

After his return to South Africa Mphahlele sought to add another dimension to his writing through the development of what he calls “prose poetry” (Mphahlele 1987: 140). His aim was to use English in such a way that it could convey the numinous presence which envelops the lives of Africans, especially in rural areas, and capture his personal experience of homecoming as a spiritual celebration. He now wanted his English to relate meaningfully to the history and culture of African peasants, villagers and migrant workers. His method consists in imitating and weaving together different voices – that is different varieties of English and different sociolects – so as to reflect the plurality of social experiences and the persistence of African cultural modes. His prose thus partakes of the epic and the elegy. While his handling of English syntax is basically the same as in his urban stories, he does not so much
seek to capture the tang of a vibrant urban idiom as to let it resound in unison with the voices of an age-long culture so as to create deeper resonances. More care is attached to translating into understandable forms the thoughts and language of his African characters to suggest the influence of orature. Interpolated texts drawn from the traditions of heroic and praise poetry, word images, colloquial expressions and proverbs, glossed or untranslated words are used to reinforce the African cultural bias while his dialogues encompass the variegated spoken forms which also make up the discourse of rural people, that is broken English spoken by migrant workers or by children learning to speak the language. Thus, “the untranslated words, the sounds and the textures of the language can be held to have the power and presence of the culture they signify – to be metaphoric in their ‘inference of identity and totality’” (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 51–52).

This metaphoric capacity implies a semantic dislocation of English as illustrated by one character in *Father Come Home*, a retired and disabled miner who endlessly delights in repeating the same word “tintinnabulation” merely for the quality of its sound, since he has almost entirely forgotten what it means:

Maleka […] came across the word ‘tintinnabulation’ and fell in love with the sound of it. A younger man looked it up in the dictionary. But to him the meaning was never as important as its sound, especially when he broke it up into syllables – tin-tin-na-bu, lay, shun! He remembered vaguely that the word had something to do with the ringing of a bell […]. (Mphahlele 1984: 31)

This innocent dallying with one word in fact points to how English can be appropriated in a meaningful way. The idea which finally underpins Mphahlele’s handling of English boils down to a re-motivation of the language whereby its material form or signifier is disconnected from its European norms and values and linked to an African cultural content in order to achieve a form of writing “moulded by its social finality” (Barthes 1953: 17).

4. Conclusion

Es’kia Mphahlele is a writer who through his reflections on and practice of English is certainly one of the best authorities on how English can be culturally appropriated by Africans. As he says, “South African writing in English by blacks has emerged both in spite of racism and because of it.” English is for him “a political and economic weapon for a proletariat” (Mphahlele 1973: 35). Beyond the question of English as a medium of communication and instruction, Mphahlele has sought to shape forms of writing in English that can meaningfully relate to the colonial history and multiculturalism of South Africa and inscribe in it the cultural specifics of the African community at
large. In other words Mphahlele ascribes to this African English a unitary cultural function which he defines as a way “to bridge the rural/urban gap amongst ourselves and create a sense of unity, a sense of cultural unity so that the urban man can be in one way or another reinforced by a knowledge of where he comes from, where he is going, and what has happened to him so far” (Manganyi 1981: 39).

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The politics of English on the Asian subcontinent
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The Interface of Language, Literature and Politics in Sri Lanka
A Paradigm for Ex-Colonies of Britain

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ABSTRACT
During colonial times, the English language occupied a dominant position, but the colonial educational system was not a mass or egalitarian system. The presence of the colonial masters had a suffocating effect on the creative energies of the local inhabitants and literature in English emerges paradoxically from the growth of nationalist currents. In its early phase, this literature can be termed mimicry. The potential insurgency of mimicry is evident in an adoption of an indigenous identity at times. When writers began to feel nationalist currents keenly, their central problem was reconciling their own sensibility, indigenous traditions and realities, on the one hand, and Western literary and other traditions and influences, on the other. Once this clash of cultures phase was over, the poets wrote out of their personal situations. For some writers, the choice or adoption of English was a major problem, while it was not so for others. But both groups had to adapt English to express realities alien to it and convey their own indigenous spirit. We have now moved beyond the ‘Prospero–Caliban syndrome’.

English was for me neither a matter of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption – well, yes, there was adoption, but it was I who was adopted by the genius of the language.
– Joseph Conrad, ‘Author’s Note’ (1919), A Personal Record

In its continuing and growing vitality over the last three decades, Sri Lankan literature in English seems to be disproving the pessimistic views expressed periodically with regard to it. For instance,
in 1981, it was asserted: “For the most part, the prognosis for creative writing in English in Sri Lanka is gloomy. [...] creative writing in English is unlikely to have the chance for survival that its counterpart in India has” (Obeyesekere 1981: 17). Actually, “its counterpart in India” has had similar views expressed in regard to it. For instance, in 1963, it was Buddhadeva Bose’s considered opinion: “As late as 1937, Yeats reminded Indian writers that ‘no man can think or write with music or vigour except in his mother tongue’; to the great majority of Indians this admonition was unnecessary, but the intrepid few who left it unheeded do not yet realize that ‘Indo-Anglian’ poetry is a blind alley, lined with curio shops, leading nowhere” (Bose 1982 [1963]: 150).

During colonial times, the English language, the language of the colonial masters, occupied a dominant position. The vernacular languages were downgraded in the classroom. When Ediriwira Sarachchandra (1914–96), who lived to see himself acclaimed as the doyen of Sinhala letters as well as the leading novelist in English, was employed in the early 1940s as a Sinhala teacher at St Thomas’s College, still the leading private school in Sri Lanka, the young Westernized students nicknamed him “Tagore.” Sarachchandra considered this a compliment, but to the students this was an expression of the fact that they found him amusing. R.K Narayan’s account of the situation in India is corroborative:

In the classroom neither of these two languages [Sanskrit, the classical language of India, and Tamil, his mother tongue] was given any importance; they were assigned to the poorest and the most helpless among the teachers, the *pundits* who were treated as a joke by the boys, since they taught only the ‘second language’, the first being English as ordained by Lord Macaulay when he introduced English education in India. English was important and was taught by the best teacher in the school, if not by the ruling star of the institution, the headmaster himself. (Narayan 1982 [1964]: 138)

The teaching of English itself was conducted in the carrot-and-the-stick approach, and English was the passport to a bright future. When Sarachchandra was a boy, a child could be fined five cents for speaking a word of Sinhala or Tamil in school (Sarachchandra n.d.: 692). Five cents was a significant sum in those days. At Royal College, the premier government male school founded by the British in 1835 as the Colombo Academy, the top prizes were the Governor-General’s Prize for Western Classics, the Stubbs’ Prize for Latin Prose (Stubbs was a British Governor), the Shakespeare Prize and the Prize for English Essay. There were no special prizes for Sinhala and Tamil. This system at Royal College (the name itself significant) continued even after Independence (1948). Ngugi wa Thiong’o records the same kind of situation as prevailing in Kenya (in a harsher form):
English became more than a language; it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference.

Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. And how did the teachers catch the culprits? A button was initially given to one pupil who was supposed to hand it over to whoever was caught speaking his mother tongue. Whoever had the button at the end of the day would sing who had given it to him and the ensuing process would bring out all the culprits of the day. Thus children were turned into witch-hunters and in the process were being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one’s immediate community.

The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child’s progress up the ladder of formal education. (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986: 438)

Reggie Siriwardena’s “Colonial Cameo” (1989) creatively depicts this kind of linguistic situation in the home, the English school and society in Sri Lanka:

My father used to make me read aloud
in the evening from Macaulay or Abbots’ Napoleon (he was short,
and Napoleon his hero; I, his hope for the future).
My mother, born in a village, had never been taught
that superior tongue. When I was six, we were moving
house; she called at school to take me away.
She spoke to the teacher in Sinhala. I sensed the shock
of the class, hearing the servants’ language; in dismay
followed her out, as she said, ‘Gihing ennang’.
I was glad it was my last day there. But then the bell
pealed; a gang of boys rushed out, sniggering,
and shouted in chorus, ‘Gihing vareng!’ as my farewell.
My mother pretended not to hear the insult.
The snobbish little bastards! But how can I blame
them? That day I was deeply ashamed of my mother.
Now, whenever I remember, I am ashamed of my shame.

The contrast between the phrases “Gihing ennang” [I will go and come (again)] and “Gihing vareng!” [Go and come!] depends on a feature of diglossia. In many speech communities, two or more varieties of the same language are used by the same speakers under different conditions. A striking
feature of diglossia is the existence of many paired items, one high, one low. “Gihing ennang” is a polite, customary form of salutation in Sinhala on leaving and is used between equals; “vareng” is an impolite, imperative form and is used to those considered social inferiors (for instance, servants). Siriwardena refers to Sinhala as “the servants’ language” because English had become the language upstairs (as in England even as late as the fourteenth century, the French even of Stratford atte Bowe was more genteel than English, and in Russia where, with no political pressures involved, Russian was relegated to a position inferior to French). The poem points to other hard social facts: it is implied that the father feels that English is the key to his child’s prospects and that the students and the upper class have been brainwashed. The poem is written in postcolonial times and concludes with the poet-persona’s postcolonial revision of his colonial attitude. This kind of change, conceding the importance and dignity of the mother tongue, is now found among the English-educated Sri Lankan intelligentsia.

Though English did enjoy a privileged position in Sri Lanka in colonial times, it would be a mistake to imagine that English education was implemented widely and satisfactorily. The colonial educational system was neither a mass system of education nor was it egalitarian; it was meant to provide the colonial masters with native personnel to man the intermediate rungs in the ladder of employment both in government and in private enterprises undertaken by Europeans, the superior posts being reserved for the ruling race.

In the colonial era, English was taught only in ‘English schools’ which were attended by only a tiny minority of school children. Thus, in 1914, at the height of the colonial era, only 37,500 pupils attended English schools, while 347,500 were registered in ‘vernacular schools’. In 1931, when universal franchise came in, there were 84,000 pupils in English schools while 476,000 went to vernacular schools. On the eve of independence, some 180,000 pupils were found in English schools, while 720,000 attended vernacular schools. (Souza 1969: 6)

In later colonial times, the teaching of English was expanded, but never more than modestly, to cater to selected higher echelons in the administration and professions. In his well-known minute on education (1835), which launched English education in India, Thomas Babington Macaulay stated:

It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern. (Macaulay 1982 [1835]: 55)

Leonard Woolf’s account of education in Africa confirms the typicality of this colonial situation:
It is no exaggeration to say that no European government in Africa had made a serious attempt to begin the education of the native so that eventually he might be capable of taking his place as a free man in the new economic and political society, which Europeans have introduced into Africa. Out of an estimated revenue of nearly two million pounds in 1924, the Kenya Government allotted pounds 44,000 to be spent on prisons and pounds 37,000 on education. I deny that any European Government in the twentieth century can claim to be civilised if it spends 20% more on providing penal servitude and hard labour for its subjects than it does on providing them with education. The population of Kenya includes nearly 2,500,000 Africans, 36,000 Asiatics and 10,000 Europeans. The Government spends pounds 37,000 on the education of the 2,500,000 Africans and pounds 25,000 on the education of 10,000 Europeans. (Woolf 1928: 29)

It is important to pay attention to Woolf’s observation of “the new economic and political society which Europeans have introduced” as well as to the failure of the European powers to meet the admitted “obligation to education” (Woolf 1928: 88), indicating that imperialism brought about social change and that self-interested economic and political motives were the main forces behind imperialism.

As commonly in the ex-colonies, in Sri Lanka the presence of the colonial masters had a suffocating effect on the creative energies of the local inhabitants. English literature in Sri Lanka emerges from the growth of nationalist currents. Its counterpart in India came of age earlier because the nationalist movement on the subcontinent developed, and assumed the character of a mass struggle, earlier. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 and Gandhi launched the non-violent, non-cooperation movement in the 1920s; understandably, the Big Three of the Indian novel in English (before Salman Rushdie arrived on the scene), Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao could write significant novels and mature in the 1930s. (Of course, the origins of the Indian novel in English predate the nationalist struggle. The first Indian novel in English, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*, was published in 1864.) On the other hand, a national consciousness was born in Nigeria later, in 1938, with the return of Nnamdi Azikwe and H.O. Davies after their education and experience in the West. Cyprian Ekwensi published his first novella, *When Love Whispers*, in 1948, but the phenomenal growth of the West African novel came after Chinua Achebe, widely regarded as the patriarch of the modern African novel, published *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, the first African novel to enjoy a wide international readership. Nigeria won independence in 1961, whereas India did so in 1947.

Mainly as a consequence of the freedom struggle in India, Sri Lanka was granted independence by Britain a year later. Because its independence was acquired more easily – in fact, too easily – Sri Lankans did not forge as strong
a national consciousness as the Indians. After independence, the ruling and social elites in Sri Lanka were formed by the ‘brown sahib’ class, whom Macaulay categorized as ‘interpreters’. He described them as “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay 1982 [1835]: 56). One could substitute ‘Sri Lankans’ (or ‘Africans’) for ‘Indian’. So a Macaulay-style English education had put wealth and power in Sri Lanka into the hands of the English-speaking alone.

In 1956, Mr S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike harnessed the grievance/envy and aspirations of the Sinhala-speaking (that is, the lower middle class and those of still lower social status), the Pancha Maha Balavegaya, the five great forces – Sangha (the Buddhist clergy), Veda (the practitioners of indigenous medicine), Guru (the teachers in the vernacular), Govi (the farmers) and Kankan (the working classes), forces which represented the true majority of the people, and dislodged the United National Party which had ushered in Independence and remained in power since then. Elected Prime Minister in that year, Mr Bandaranaike had released not only populist but also nationalist currents, which had been stimulated earlier by Anagarika Dharmapala. Bandaranaike restored the Sinhala language, the language of more than 73 per cent of the population, to its position of authority in the country, in education and the administration. Sinhala became both the national and official language. Thus, English was displaced from its preeminent position as the official language and medium of instruction in schools and universities. English had to be relegated to the status of a second language after Independence, sooner or later, despite the regrets of the English-educated classes, but it was not properly treated as such. It was neglected for two decades and even reviled. The English-educated, however, remain(ed) the decision-makers. But faced with the change in the power-structure at several levels and a significant diminution in their status and privileges, they became more aware of themselves and the social, cultural and literary context in which they lived. Their response to the changes of 1956 was negative rather than positive, yet it led to fruitful results in the field of creative writing.

This historical explanation is not the complete story. The Department of English in our single university in the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s made a positive impact. The influence of its critical work and standards spread beyond the portals of the University. The University Dramatic Society (Dram Soc), under the guidance of the then Professor of English, E.F.C. Ludowyk, was the leading theatre group in the country and set the standards in the production and choice of plays. At that time, young graduates founded journals such as Harvest, Symposium, Community and Points of View, which gave expression to their critical and creative preoccupations and maintained
credible standards. Their counterparts in the media dealt with literary matters on the same high level. All this created a climate for writing and the beginnings of a literary tradition. Naturally, the imaginative writing itself, as it later turned out, came from those who had been to university (such as Patrick Fernando, Yasmine Gooneratne and Chitra Fernando) as well as from those who had not (such as Punyakante Wijenaike, James Goonewardene and Lakdasa Wikkremasinha).

The Department of English also produced a negative impact. It was rarefied, and colonial influences made its perspective eurocentric. The function of university drama seemed to be essentially intellectual, to interpret distinguished Western drama – an academic ‘trip’ to the West. Ludowyk defended his position in later life in these terms:

Perhaps there was some snobbery, some arrogance and some narcissism involved, but I still think that it is worth while keeping the lines open for internationalism. After all, that is, by definition, one of the functions of a university, and we were a University society. (Ludowyk 1971: 7)

Nevertheless, he did admit in the same article:

I remember Nicholl Cadell telling me, as we talked on the lawns of King George’s Hall [of the University College] after a performance of Lady Precious Stream, that he’d have been better pleased at seeing something written by a contemporary playwright in Ceylon. He was right. [...] I think this was something the Dram Soc should have tried to do. It has, I think, to be put down to the debit side. (Ludowyk 1971: 6)

Thus, the Department of English had an inhibiting effect on creative writing – of plays as well as other forms of literature. It produced only one significant writer, Patrick Fernando, during the whole period; he produced only one volume, The Return of Ulysses, and that, too, as late as 1955.

Fernando was a Roman Catholic and he read Western Classics at the University of Ceylon in Colombo; these constitute the background for his poetry. He was English-educated and belonged to the middle class. Language (English) and class in that period served to insulate him from the world around him; even the momentous changes of 1956 were not important in his case. The framework for his poetry is not Sri Lankan as such. His is an alienated sensibility but, uncommonly, an acute one. Early in his career, he wrote classical poems, which captured the spirit of the originals and also possessed a contemporary interest, such as “The Lament of Paris”:

In the quiet arbour of your high-walled soul, Love
Shall gently pluck the hidden strings and sing
Of him who distilled blood of heroes just to paint
Red, the rosy toenails of his runaway Grecian girl.
In these poems, Fernando is basically writing of such permanent themes as the enduring power and tragic destiny of love as in this instance. His later satirical poems are his best efforts. In “Chorus on Marriage,” he contemplates the decline of feelings in a human relationship in terms of an allegorical framework of the vicissitudes in a kingdom resulting from the deaths of successive rulers:

Swiftly their love sickened, and patiently,
Without one murmur, in a year or two,
Departed. The grave was dug in memory.
A faint awareness stood as monument.
No epitaph except the world’s wild guess:
The wise observed a searing of the will,
The pious blamed a lack of timely grace,
While cynics certified love mortal. Still,
How magnificent love’s coronation –
The virtues all attending, all princes present,
And roads dizzy with dancing!
So limited a reign forecast by none.

The couple are not particularized and this facilitates a general application of the poet’s theme. The incongruity between the elevatedness of the allegorical framework, the imagery, and the ordinariness of the human realities generates a satirical tone and reveals the satirical standpoint of the poet which both controls and inhibits the feelings of pathos. The poem descends briefly from fantasy to the real world in the last stanza:

He scans the share list, chuckling now and then,
And she is knitting socks for charities,
Both dreaming of a girl known long ago.

The scene is conventionally Western rather than Sri Lankan, and conveys the poet’s view here, that marriage finally deteriorates into mere convention without love.

Fernando’s poetic world is often non-specific. His language is polished and minted, approximating to Standard British English as closely as a Sri Lankan could do so. His forms are well-crafted and orthodox. His poetry is written to British specifications, and he met the stringent Leavisian poetic standards. He published his volume in London. Thereby, he made his mark as a poet. He illustrates on the literary plane the process which Homi Bhabha has termed ‘mimicry’, whereby the colonized subject is reproduced as “almost the same but not quite,” as having an identity “almost the same but not white” (Bhabha 1994: 86, 89). The flaw in the colonial mimesis, whereby “to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English” (Bhabha 1994: 87), and the potential insur-
gency of mimicry are revealed in his genre pictures of Negombo fisherfolk. Here Fernando ruptures his Anglicization and comes closest to being identifiably Sri Lankan. In “The Fisherman Mourned by his Wife,” he is external to the fisherfolk, but in “Sun and Rain on the West Coast,” he seems to be virtually amidst them:

‘Your father was different – dew or no he used to go.’
‘That’s why he was drowned; and who drove him to it?’
‘Jesu Maria! Manuel, Manuel, stop sinning so.’
‘Don’t cry, I only asked a question, mother.’
‘Cecilia, bring your brother his tea, girl.’
‘Hurry up, but mind the ants in the sugar.’

Fernando’s dialogue captures the sharp interchange between son and mother; their characters, individualistic and conventional, respectively; their styles of speaking, the son laconic, the mother tending to garrulity; the last line seemingly a resolution to the altercation, yet not quite that because “the ants in the sugar” is literal as well as a metaphor for their kind of life and life in general, its serious implications radiating beyond the immediate scene. The insurgency latent in mimicry was carried further by Yasmine Gooneratne, who was stimulated by Fernando into becoming a poet both like and unlike him, and still further by Lakdasa Wikramasinha, who, in turn, was encouraged by Gooneratne and was more radical than both.

Yasmine Gooneratne is sensitive to the English language in relation to the sociopolitical situation; her poetic world is specific. Her first volume of poetry, *Word Bird Motif*, was published in 1971, the year of the insurgency launched by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP or the People’s Liberation Front), which mobilized the Sinhala-educated rural youth with no prospect of employment and no faith in the existing order of things. The volume contains no reference to it, yet the poem “Peradeniya Landscape” is surely significant, pointing forward to the insurgency:

[...] though one knows quite well the future dawns
Less brightly for them, and a muttering
Protest hushes birdsong on these well-kept lawns.

“Them” refers to the undergraduates with a Sinhala background of the beautiful university campus at Peradeniya – cut off from jobs by lack of English as well as by being monolinguals with no prestigious connections. In “Post Office Queue,” Gooneratne’s feelings are more ambivalent as she confronts a Sinhala speaker:

Let me say quickly, before you criticize
Me, that it isn’t really my fault
For all my shortcomings I humbly apologize,
That your life lacks salt
[...]
But to ask in English for a stamp is not yet a mortal sin
Your insular virtue need not make me dirt.
[my emphasis]

Gooneratne is aware of her upper class, cosmopolitan and English affiliations and of the Sinhala speaker as being deprived but belonging more to the island. Her defensiveness is part of an ambiguous, complex and unresolved attitude.

The insurgency itself and the sociopolitical situation which engendered it, appear strongly in her long poem *The Lizard’s Cry*, published in 1972. In a section depicting a journey, there is a scene on a train when a compartment is invaded, the mother passing biscuits to her daughters:

[...]
Feeding them, maternal sparrow drab and intent
she stares at a newspaper’s erected tent
opposite, seeing without seeing them the headlines, elegant
tall English fences that she cannot see beyond.
Or get behind as the paper’s owner has done
determined she shall not look into his eyes, none
of her belongings touch his, breathe his breath, con his page
in the intimacy of what is now her carriage.

These lines (my emphasis) dramatize the class divide between the world of the monolinguals and those whose first language is English. Class appears as bad as caste – a virtual ‘untouchability’ comes into play. An earlier section deals directly with the insurgency:

Now in this dark, forgotten legends move
upon the leaf: your fiery youth embrace
Death till it seems the Princess ‘fair of face
and amorous’ courts again her taloned love.
See as the grace and vigour of your race
sport in a gun’s eye, her soft fingers rove
deliberately the honey-coloured flank [...]
to slay their shaggy sire as a new breed
of beast-begotten heroes, man-hood’s seed
proven by parricide, brazenness the tester
of female faith, set up murderous deed
Once more for target[...]

Rumour probably fuelled by verbal propaganda deliberately distorting the rebel’s policy towards reactionaries was current especially in remote villages, though not actually believed, that the guerrillas intended killing everybody over the age of forty. Gooneratne connects this with the legend of the origins of the Sinhala race as related in the *Mahavamsa*, a chronicle written in the
fourth century AD, and elsewhere. According to the story, Suppa Devi, the daughter of the king of Vanga, present-day Bangladesh, joined a caravan “desiring the joy of independent life”, to quote Geiger’s translation (Geiger 1960: 51); however, a lion attacked the caravan in the forest; all fled save the princess who stroked the lion who grew amorous and carried her to his den; there she lived and bore him a daughter and a son. When impatient of confinement, the son broke out and led the women back to civilization where a king wedded Suppa Devi. The lion returned and discovered their absence. Crazed with grief, he ravaged the kingdom and none could stand against him until his son Sinhabahu slew him, won the offered reward, wedded his sister and founded a kingdom named Lata. His grandson Vijaya, literally Victor, led the Sinhala or lion’s blood people to Sri Lanka. Gooneratne sees the JVP, in whose ranks women in blue trousers fought alongside their male comrades, prefigured by the lion’s offspring.

Much later in the day, Sumathy Sivamohan in her poem “In a Foreign Tongue” (1997) is able to catch the same kind of linguistic/sociopolitical complex in a wider net, in a manner less rich and more direct:

My teacher
talked of a
Sri Lankan English

Where is this
thing?
Tons of Shakespeare, Shelley and Shaw
Press upon me
how to clean rice in English?

Unfound it in the
 parched land planted with paddy
Strewn with shots of
Justice protest hate revenge
the ending is not coming.

Sivamohan suggests that the decision-makers who speak (and most often, think) in English do not base their policies on the needs of the cultivators in a predominantly agricultural country. They find alien ideas closer to their Eurocentric thinking than the realities faced by their non-Colombo countrymen. English does not penetrate these areas, nor does it help the villagers. This mismatch, it is intimated, leads to revolution – a sense of ‘(in)justice protest hate revenge’ fired the JVP insurgencies of 1971 and 1988–89.

Sivamohan’s reference to her teacher who “talked of a Sri Lankan English” is of interest. Since Professor H.A. Passé made a case for ‘Ceylon English’ as
a dialect in his doctoral dissertation titled “The English Language in Ceylon”,
presented to the University of London in 1948, and taught this to students at
the University of Peradeniya in the 1950s and early 1960s, younger linguists
have spent considerable energy in developing Passé’s thesis, arguing, for
instance, that Sri Lankan English is an “independent, distinctive and fully-
formed linguistic system adequate for the communicative and expressive
needs of its users” (Kandiah 1981: 102). This kind of postcolonial subversion
of British English as the absolute Standard is found in India, Africa, Australia,
Canada, Singapore, indeed in all the ex-colonies of Britain, starting with the
USA.

Far more intractable and fearful than the JVP insurgencies has been the
current so-called ‘ethnic’ problem. Unlike the JVP, the Liberation Tigers of
Tamil Eelam (LTTE) receives foreign support and has its own well-organized
international network, though it has been categorized as a terrorist group by
the US State Department, by Britain, Australia and India. It has now been
clearly identified that Sri Lanka is being plagued by a problem that is not
ethnic but purely terrorist. Jean Arasanayagam has been preoccupied with this
problem. She is a Burgher, of mixed descent (Dutch, Tamil and Sinhala), and
is married to a Tamil Hindu. She has been concerned with how this problem
affects identity, as in her poem “Murals” (1994):

We walk through barriers
Seeing our new identities at checkpoints
[...]
rapid scripts form in our minds, a stammer of
dialogue or silence that make us snail retract
Into the shell we knew to be so brittle
[...]
Somewhat carelessly looking into the barrels of
guns and noticing off-handedly that the lips
of the young soldier are chiselled finely like the
statue of David or Apollo in some Roman square.
[my emphasis]

The poet is this year (2002) probably around 68 years of age and is very
accustomed to the earlier period when there were no communal divisions that
really affected any individual. Though the violence, except for occasional
suicide bombers and other LTTE cadres slaughtering civilians in Colombo, is
localized in the North and East of the island, security measures such as
“checkpoints” reflect it in other parts of the country and keep it in the fore-
front of our minds. Sri Lankan English poetry has consistently reflected the
interface of language, literature and politics.

Yasmine Gooneratne confessed in “The Second Chance”:
A man may travel very far
In body or in mind
And never be unfaithful to
The land he leaves behind.

But poetry, the way I went,
Gave me a better view
I learned to see, and love at last
A land I never knew.

[my emphasis]

The poet’s honesty is striking. Gooneratne has discovered her inheritance through art. But the sensibilities of several English writers remain remote from Sri Lankan realities and remain Western. The anglicized Punyakante Wijenaike, James Goonewardene and Romesh Gunasekera in Reef see the villagers as not like their sensitive, educated selves, but as much the Other (inarticulate, violent, irrational, sex-ridden, cunning yet mindless) as the natives were to the sahibs and the bwanas.

When Sri Lankan writers began to feel nationalist currents keenly after 1956, whatever their reaction to them, their central problem was that which faced all writers in ex-colonies at the same stage of literary development – that of reconciling their own sensibility, indigenous traditions and realities, on the one hand, and Western literary and other traditions and influences, on the other. The problem can be extremely difficult and lead to cultural dislocation. In his poem “Stanley meets Mutesa,” David Rubadiri clearly wishes to suggest that the meeting of the two men represents a penetration of his own culture by the West, but the poem verges closely on the stereotyped Western account of the coming of the white man. But Gabriel Okara, in his poem “Piano and Drums,” is able to present the conflict of cultures more effectively from an African point of view:

And I lost in the morning mist
of an age at a riverside keep
wandering in the mystic rhythm
of jungle drums and concerto.

The two central symbols of the poem – the piano as a symbol of Western ways and the drums of African ways – are used in this climactic final stanza to convey how both the poet and his society are lost in this cultural conflict central to both.

In Sri Lanka, Lakdasa Wikramasinha’s poem “To My Friend Aldred” reveals, at an subconscious level, the split in the personalities of our poets caused by their attempt to reconcile their Eastern and Western legacies. The poem is written in a vein of high-spirited fun:
My dear Chap,
In this Kandyan weather there is
no shame in having in your bed
a servant maid –
the same passion moved others too, famous in time –
when there were servant maids about:

Achilles for one – who gave his heart to
Briseis, a milky slave,
& Tecmessa: enemy blood, as Horace has it;
and Agamemnon fired Troy and burnt his heart to a
cinder, hot for a virgin there.

Although the poet had a penchant for dwelling on his lineage, Ezra Pound is
one of the ancestors Wikkramasinha never acknowledged and his poem leans
on “Homage to Sextus Propertius: XII”:

Who, who will be the next man to entrust his girl to
a friend?
Love interferes with fidelities;
The gods have brought shame on their relatives;
Each man wants the pomegranate for himself;
Amiable and harmonious people are pushed incontinent
into duels,
A Trojan and adulterous person came to Menelaus
under the rites of hospitium,
And there was a case in Colchis, Jason and that woman
in Colchis;
And besides, Lynceus,
you were drunk.

– in its ironic tone, in its blend of classical allusion and colloquial idiom.
Wikkramasinha’s use of local imagery and references¹ – he describes the
woman thus:

Breasts like gourds, and ripe and Oh
nodding like geese. Thighs
like plantain trunks –

is in a style of self-conscious comedy, whereas the classical metaphor and
allusions, as in the opening of the poem quoted above, are employed with

¹ Sinhala poetry, drawing on Sanskrit conventions as well as sight, conventionally compares breasts to ‘hansa’ (swan or goose) and thighs to plantain trunks, rounded, smooth and silky to touch (“vata-mata silutu-vatora” – rounded, sleek thighs – the Kuveni asna).
relaxed grace, showing that he is more at home in the Western part of his
inheritance, which is more integral to his personality.

Given this kind of conditioning, it came naturally to a poet in the 1960s,
Gamini Seneviratne, to write of his personal predicament in this vein in “Two
Songs of Myself”:

Am a lone wolf
In the winter forest gnawing
the ice
If I should see a man
Stamping into warmth on covered thighs
I’d pull him down
And tear at him [...]

It is not illegitimate for a poet to use culturally alien (in this instance, ex-
tended) imagery. The poet has the right to exploit every area of experience
and every resource of language, alien or not, and this kind of Western
experience and language may even be regarded as having become interna-
tional through common knowledge and currency. In a way, the crucial ques-
tion is whether the poet communicates his meaning and, in this case,
Seneviratne certainly does so at his own rather adolescent level. But all this is
a less than complete justification and how well he conveys his meaning is an
important question: That Seneviratne should write in this manner is evidence
of his deracination and his style is thereby less immediate.

It has been widely accepted that postcolonial literatures “emerged in their
present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by
foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their
differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre” (Ashcroft et al. 1989:
2). It thus became a commonplace in literary criticism to adopt the position
that “the most characteristic problem of the Commonwealth poet is that of
being caught between old and new, between inherited and acquired” (Halpe &
de Silva 1972: 4). It is stated as if this problem is everywhere and always true
of postcolonial poetry. Actually, this is only partly true and the problem
ceased to be central or important a decade or two after independence from
colonial rule. With the clash of cultures phase now over and behind them, the
poets in the Commonwealth such as Jean Arasanayagam in Sri Lanka, write
as do their counterparts in Britain or America – out of their personal situa-
tions.

Another commonplace of literary criticism concerns what is regarded as a
major problem for the postcolonial writer, the choice or adoption of language,
English. In the words of David Carroll (referring to African writers): “We are
faced with the paradox of a people describing and identifying themselves by
means of a foreign language which embodies the values and categories from
which they are seeking to free themselves” (Carroll 1986: 2). In Sri Lanka, Lakdasa Wikramasinha, in a “Note” to his first book of poems, *Lustre* (1965), wrote:

I have come to realize that I am using the language of the most despicable and loathsome people on earth; I have no wish to extend its life and range, enrich its tonality.

To write in English is a form of cultural treason. I have had for the future to think of a way of circumventing this treason; I propose to do this by making my writing entirely immoralist and destructive. (Wikramasinha 1965: 51)

Wikramasinha was twenty-four years old at this time, still immature, and there is an element of attitudinizing in his ideology, but his radical spirit remained with him to the end. He was ‘immoralist’ in the sense of reacting against the colonial morality of the English-educated. This could lead to powerful mature poetry:

Don’t talk to me about Matisse, don’t talk to me about Gauguin, or even the earless painter Van Gogh, & the woman reclining on a blood-spread [...]
the aboriginal shot by the white hunter Matisse.

The coinage “blood-spread” (substituted for the predictable “bed-spread”); “the aboriginal,” an artistic as well as colonial stereotype; the ambiguity of words that follow it; all serve to suggest imperialist exploitation in the guise of art, poetry more rich and strong than mere pro-Third World, anti-imperialist propaganda. Here Wikramasinha’s poetic skill is destructively directed. On the other hand, he appears to have attached positive values to native tradition, partly perhaps due to the wound of alienation apparent in his flamboyant declaration of anti-British feeling, partly due to vague, half-formed impressions and memories which prompted him to cherish his aristocratic Sri Lankan ancestry (there is no irony when he praises the feudal lady in ‘From the life of the Folk-poet Ysinno’). He tries to be a cultural nationalist, to find a positive sense of connection, if not identification, with the life of his country.

On the other hand, Yasmine Gooneratne’s attitude to the controversial question of writing in the English language is different from Lakdasa Wikramasinha’s – not ‘cultural treason’. It is stated most explicitly in her poem ‘This Language, This Woman: A Lover’s Reply’. She discloses that it “was written out of irritation at the continual denigration of English by Sinhala writers who had no conception of its range (and very little competence in it) that was a feature of the literary milieu in Sri Lanka during the 1960s and 1970s” (Gooneratne 1979: 24). It was during this period that the term *kaduwa*,
the Sinhala for ‘sword’, to refer to the English language, was coined and gained a currency which continues till today. Sinhala-speakers perceive(d) English as a weapon to cut them down, to intimidate and control them. Gooneratne’s voice in her poem is that of someone highly literate in English.

If you should try to take her from me
I’d launch no thousand ships to bring her back
the braggadocio of the imperial theme
that shielded her being now a derelict wreck.
[…]
now the distorting old connection’s done
fit her to be your Mistress, and my Muse.

She dissociates the English language from Sri Lanka’s colonial past and approaches it as a lover. The spiritedness of her defence makes an impact through the deflationary use of classical metaphor and Marlowean allusion and the dual meaning of “Mistress”. She has a counterpart in India in V.K. Gokak, who espoused English in the midst of the language debate there in his poem ‘English Words’ (1947):

Speech that came like leech-craft
And killed us almost, bleeding us white!
You bleached our souls soiled with impurities.
You bathed our hearts amid tempestuous seas
Of a purer, dearer, delight.
[…]
Fathomless words, with Indo-Aryan blood
Tingling in your veins,
The spoils of ages, global merchandise
Mingling in your strains!

It is Indian souls that are “soiled with impurities”; English comes as a cleansing agent. English has “Indo-Aryan blood”, a brother to Indian languages. It is recognized by Gokak early in the day as “global merchandise.”

Raja Rao wrote: “One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own” (Rao 1938: 5). R. K. Narayan’s position is essentially the same: “We are still experimentalists. […] We are not attempting to write Anglo-Saxon English. The English language, through sheer resilience and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization. […] it has served my purpose admirably […]” (Narayan 1982 [1964]: 140-1). Similarly, Chinua Achebe stated: “I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African sur-
roundings” (Achebe 1993 [1975]: 434). Es’kia Mphalele’s position is consistently close to Achebe’s.

On the other hand, Ngugi adopted a radical stance in regard to language and saw English as a “means of spiritual subjugation” and imperial domination (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986: 435–55). He stopped writing in English and took to writing in his mother tongue, Gikuyu, though he makes a concession to English as a pan-African and world language by providing translations of his works in English. Really, few writers have a choice in regard to the language of their creative work or are good bilinguals. Achebe admits that he had “no other choice” (Achebe 1993 [1975]: 434). Lakdasa Wikramasinha wrote in Sinhala, but his Sinhala verse is laboured and awkward, often padded with idiosyncratic coinages not rooted in the language; it is far inferior to his English poetry. In Sri Lanka, among the hundreds of postcolonial writers, there seem to me only three true bilinguals – Ediriwira Sarachchandra, Tissa Abeysekere and Sita Kulatunga. In India, Arun Kolatkar writes poetry in both English and Marathi and often translates from one language to the other. Kamala Das writes poetry in English and fiction both in English and Malayalam, her mother tongue. But she has remarked, “it’s my poems that are my life and not my prose” (Kamala Das n.d.: 332). Nissim Ezekiel expresses the position common among writers in English in India: “I cannot write in any Indian language” (Ezekiel 1982 [1969]: 153).

The diverse responses of creative writers to English and their tendency to make the language of literature an issue, especially during the earlier stages (that is, immediately after Independence) of postcolonial literature are valid, but not the arbitrary and simplistic demands of critics. It is the generally accepted view of twentieth-century poets and critics that the language of poetry is most effective, if not only effective, when it reflects the idiom of everyday speech. T.S. Eliot argued that “poetry has primarily to do with the expression of feeling and emotion; [...] Emotion and feeling are best expressed in the common language of the people – that is, in the language common to all classes; the structure, the rhythm, the sound, the idiom of a language, express the personality of the people which speaks it [...] a poet must take as his material his own language as it is actually spoken around him” (Eliot 1945: 19, 22). W.B. Yeats thought: “In literature, partly from the lack of that spoken word which knits us to normal man, we have lost in personality, in our delight in the whole man – blood, imagination, intellect, running together” (Yeats 1901: 266), and he sets out to make good this supposed loss in his own later poetry. F.R. Leavis, perhaps the most influential critic of the twentieth century and the counterpart of Johnson, Coleridge and Matthew Arnold in their day, consistently lauds the poets who employ the “utterance, movement
and intonation [...] of the talking voice” (Leavis 1953: 11) (Donne, Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, for instance).

But it seems to me that this point of view is vulnerable. It ignores key questions, though it is true that modern poets made a contribution to literature by re-introducing conversational tones after these had been virtually banished for a long time in Romantic rhetoric and musicality (during the Victorian period). Modern linguistics has sharpened our awareness of the varieties of speech and dialects, of regional, class, group and individual variations in speech of the same language within single countries. From which kind of speech should the language of poetry draw sustenance? Can there be universally applicable touchstones? How much does it account for the achievements of modern poetry itself? Despite Yeats’ declared view and although F.R. Leavis praised Yeats’ later poetry for employing “the idiom and movement of modern speech” (Leavis 1942: 42), the language of Yeats’ great poems such as “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Among School Children,” though incorporating elements of polite educated speech, is basically and in an overall way stylized. Really, what matters is whether poetry works as poetry, whatever the kind of language that is employed.

Sri Lankan critics have adapted the position in the West in regard to the language of poetry. It is argued that the language of the Sri Lankan writer should reflect “in an ideal form the actual rhythms and idiom of living Ceylon English speech” (Kandiah 1971: 92) and even further that the language of the Sri Lankan writer in English gains vitality if “derived from Sinhala”, from the vernacular (Kandiah 1971: 91). The argument is also put in a crude and dogmatic form: “No Lankan poet, seeking to evolve through his work a Lankan identity, can hope to do so without an equal commitment to the Lankan language” (Ismail 1984: 24). My criticism of Western writers and critics applies to their Sri Lankan counterparts. Moreover, to be so conscious of language and pay it special attention is to separate language from content and experience whereas, in the case of a truly creative writer, his experience will find the language that comes naturally to it: this will determine its components, whether Sri Lankan or British or whatever mix. Lakdasa Wikramasknha is often eulogized for employing Sri Lankan English in his poetry, yet his use of language is not a simple matter of doing so but is original, incorporating expressions derived from a variety of sources. Moreover, as Wole Soyinka said in an interview, “we are now beyond the ‘Prospero–Caliban’ syndrome of the complexities which attend the adoption of a language of colonial imposition”; “the ‘Prospero-Caliban’ syndrome is dead” (Soyinka 1984: 1730, 1731). Soyinka went on to amplify his point of view:

English of course continues to be my medium of expression as it is the medium of expression for millions of people in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone,
Gambia, Kenya, who I want to talk to, if possible. And I want to talk also to our black brothers in the United States, in the West Indies. I want to talk also even to Europeans, if they are interested in listening. But they are at the very periphery of my concerns. I do know that I enjoy works of literature from the European world, I’d be a liar if I said I didn’t. And I also enjoy literary works from the Asian world, Chinese literature, Japanese literature. I teach Japanese drama. I’ve taught Chinese poetry, when I was in the literature department. I always interjected the translations of poetry from the Asiatic world because I wanted to open up that vast area. I enjoy the works of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Gogol, etc. So, I find no contradiction, no sense of guilt in the fact that I write and communicate in English. (Soyinka 1984: 1731)

In our own region, Kamala Das, in her poem “An Introduction,” expresses the right spirit in regard to these matters:

Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.

Creative writers in ex-colonies of Britain have reached a stage where the use of English in creative work has ceased to be an issue, and critics have now to think beyond the parameters to which they have been long accustomed. English has become a naturalized language in a great many countries. It has come to stay, is spreading, and literature in English is set to proliferate in every conceivable direction. Indeed, the world language will, in time, generate a world literature.
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The Master’s Language and Its Indian Uses

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ABSTRACT
Most contemporary educated Indians have absorbed English from their early schooling onward, and have internalized it with ease. However, there are some who have also internalized the history behind the use of English. Some politically motivated Indians have made a forced attempt to find Indian equivalents to replace the internalized English vocabulary – a parochial exercise which, arguably, disrupts communication and may result in comical effects. Contemporary Indian English fiction flourishes in this sociopolitical context. In some writers we see a deliberate attempt to revive and sustain the old colonial relationship with English. Other writers refuse to be controlled by such a memory. But both kinds of Indian writers are aware that English has come to stay. I intend to show how these two kinds of relationship with English condition and control Indian fiction writers, using for illustration selected novels of the pre-Independence 1930s and from the recent 1990s.

MULTILINGUAL INDIA has the second largest number of English speakers in the whole world, though this amounts to just about two percent of its population. Some Indians find it hard to see English as a language distinct from their colonial past. But the present generation of educated Indians perceives it and even owns it as their language – Indian or otherwise – absorbed from their early Indian schooling onward. They are not constrained by narrow notions of national identity and loyalty. English is very much a part of themselves and their daily lives. It is inseparable from their everyday concerns and from the different forms of their learning experiences: it is not merely a means of learning marketable subjects like business administration and computer science. Most educated Indians are
bilingual. Their emotions, feelings, ideas, and knowledge are all as much in the English language as in their mother tongue. They cannot put English outside their consciousness as a tool to be used only when needed.

A forced attempt by the purists of Indian culture and languages at finding Indian equivalents to replace the already internalized English vocabulary seems a ridiculous exercise. It puts an undesirable distance between people’s knowledge and understanding. People find most of the newly coined and unearthed Indian vocabulary disruptive of both their thinking process and communicative process. This whole parochial exercise of finding local equivalents produces comical effects even though it yields political benefits for some (if we understand political benefit as narrow personal gain). These politically motivated Indians consider English as a tool of the Indian elite, used to widen the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged. They see the widespread use of English and its popularity as an urban phenomenon, the result of westernization and an unmistakable form of neocolonialism. These facts show that in contemporary Indian society some Indians have internalized English with ease, while others have internalized the history behind the use of English. Some even promote the politics that such a colonial history has left behind.

Contemporary Indian English fiction thrives and flourishes because of and despite this sociopolitical context. In some Indian novelists we see a deliberate attempt to revive and sustain the memory of the old colonial relationship. Others refuse to be controlled by such a memory. But both kinds of Indian writers are aware that English has come to stay, so that these two attitudes run parallel rather than counter to each other. They are seen in the way the Indian novelists manipulate the English language for creative purposes. The two kinds of relationship with the English language condition and control Indian fiction writers.

There are differences in the way literary artists use history. Some have a light-hearted attitude to it, some fictionalize it and even feel free to recreate it. Some of the early Indian novelists who were exposed directly to the traumatic political events of the land have an entirely different attitude to history. They published novels both before and after Independence. Their immediate closeness to the colonial situation conditioned their perception of the British and their attitude to the use of English. Novelists like Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand engaged history seriously, took an overt political stand and their novels reveal a definite commitment to a cause.

\[1\] There are numerous words like shirt, photo, electricity, cinema, loudspeaker and bicycle for which there are equivalents in Indian languages but which are seldom used and rarely understood by the common man. He does not need the translation because he himself has been translated.
Modern Indian writers also use history but with a difference. The past can be a sustaining force or a negative obsession. The recent novelist Arundhati Roy is interested in the effects of colonialism on people rather than in colonialism as such. In that sense, she engages the past seriously and artistically but refuses to be controlled by it. This is evident in her use of the English language, too. Awareness and examination of the past leads to introspection. It in turn liberates one from an obsession with the self and the perception of the self as an eternal victim. Because of the distance from direct colonial rule, many of the post-Independence novelists are able to create an alternate reality as a response to and not necessarily in opposition to the accepted version of the historical reality. In the earlier Indian novels we can see a certain amount of colonial consciousness in the choice of themes and treatment of them and even in the use of the English language. Their writing is informed by the British presence in their own consciousness even after the physical exit of the British. But modern Indian novelists are mentally freer and are very un-self-conscious about the use of the English language.

The Big Three among the Indian novelists in English – Anand, Rao, Narayan – and other early writers were repeatedly questioned by the critics about the choice of their medium of expression – though this choice was personal, it had political implications. When most of them explained in full-length essays their position regarding the choice of language, it took a daring Kamala Das to react vehemently in her poem “An Introduction”:

I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar, I speak three languages, write in Two, dream in one. Don’t write in English, they said, English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins, Every one of you? Why not let me speak in Any language I like? The language I speak Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest, It is as human as I am human, don’t You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and Is aware.

Raja Rao used a sanskritized English in his metaphysical novel Serpent and the Rope and captured the Kannada rhythm in English in his Kanthapura.
when he focused on a small village and its involvement in the freedom movement. R.K. Narayan created his own Indian small town, Malgudi, but kept aloof from daring deviations and violations of the so-called standard English.

But Mulk Raj Anand’s aim was not merely to give a Punjabi flavour to his English. His novels were born out of his ultra-sensitivity to the concerns of the untouchables, coolies and waifs. While presenting the life of the unlettered, he had to use a kind of English that could reflect their despicable situation and state of degradation. Anand experimented with the English language to capture the Indian ethos without necessarily violating the basic rules of English. It was a challenge, an experiment that was frowned upon by conservative, uninitiated readers.

But as far as Anand was concerned, the subject and the medium were not a matter of his choice, but they chose themselves. He knew he would not have taken to fiction writing if he had not been burdened and traumatized by the life of the untouchables and his inability to make a significant difference in their lives. He would not have written at all if he did not have the tool of English. His priority was to do justice to themes rather than to the felicity of expression. He was more a humanist than a stylist. He preferred to use the master’s language for an Indian cause, the cause of the downtrodden, a human cause. He manipulated it in such a way that he could awaken the slumbering conscience of the people – Indian and British. So the experimentation done is with a purpose, for a cause, a very conscious exercise. He knew that the Indian reality was being filtered through a language that is Indian because of accident, a stroke of history.

It is interesting to note that G.V. Desani experimented much like Anand in *All About H. Hatterr*. Desani’s novel was accepted as a classic, a landmark in Indian English fiction and a significant influence on future writers. But as a classic, the novel was left alone: often alluded to, but seldom read.

The literary theorists are right when they say that no action is free of politics. Politics is too much with us: there is no escape from it. There is hardly any area in life that is not directly or indirectly touched by it. Even in the choice of the medium, the writer makes a public statement. An interaction with the audience becomes a discourse and in this case, an Indian novel in English is a call for interaction with a particular kind of audience with eyes set on an overseas market. Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* was praised all over the world for its innovative quality. But it also raises questions – innovative for whom? Appealing for whom? Would it have received the same acclaim if written in Malayalam, even if a highly skilled translator had made it accessible to the world and the educated people of the other states in India?
The moment an author chooses English as a medium for literary creation and thereby fixes the target of readership, the consumerist nature of writing is determined. English becomes a political world language, and creative writing in English becomes much more than an aesthetic act; it becomes a commodity. Success is often understood in terms of advances, royalties, American rights, British rights, film rights.

The novelists of Anand’s generation also depended on the recognition and approval of the liberals among the colonial masters. Narayan shot to prominence when Graham Greene endorsed his merit. Anand became a celebrity, after twenty rejections of his novel *Untouchable*, because of E.M. Forster’s intervention. But compared to the days of dependence and subservience some of the newer novelists have even gained bargaining power. There is dependence on Western readership on one hand, but the Indian English writers are also positioned comfortably now to command respect and even dictate terms.

The next political issue in Indian English literature is the assumption that there is an India that needs many interpretations. This is the age-old notion proposed by the Indologists, Orientalists and promoted by the creative writers and translators. This assumed role of being an interpreter of India creates in the writer an anxiety to be authentic. The writers are aware that their raw material is Indian, they are Indian but their readers are not necessarily so. When the topic is the Dalits, the writer is conscious that the readers are not Dalits. This again has political implications and imposes certain unconscious checks on the writer. A writer often tends to become unduly conscious of his national and regional identity when he addresses a global audience and also when he responds to issues related to his homeland. There is no escaping the anxiety to present a picture that appeals. An average writer becomes defensive and even unduly patriotic.

But most of the liberated new generation of novelists interrogate and negotiate reality while fictionalizing it. In this respect, Salman Rushdie’s contribution is phenomenal. In his *Midnight’s Children*, he threw away the burden of being Indian by being truly Indian. That has certainly infused courage into his generation of novelists. His chutnification of English is not an attempt to negotiate with the medium. It is the language of someone who has grown up in a multicultural, multilingual Bombay. The post-Independence novelists writing in English are basically a bilingual generation that is more comfortable with English, a kind of lingo that is unselfconsciously Indian and English at the same time. It has evolved because of the inadequacy of standard English or standard Malayalam or Hindi to express the culture, subculture and multiculture of India. Now we have a host of new writers liberated by Rushdie, and they have rejuvenated English and reinvented modern Indian fiction.
The experimentation done with English by Anand involves deliberation, a definite self-consciousness. A writer like Arundhati Roy, on the other hand, is not worried about the ideological question of using the language of the colonial masters for creative needs. There is no deliberate or artificial attempt to indianize English either as her English is already indianized. Anand had to negotiate between the pressures of standardization and the pressures of localization, but Roy has no standard English against which she has to measure her English. She does not have to imitate the British to perfect her language. In that sense the authority is absent and her concern is readership and communication. What G.V. Desani did as an artistic endeavour comes naturally to Roy. While Anand had to labour and experiment, Roy could play with English. Her writing is an excellent example of using the master’s tool and excelling the master but not being conscious of it.

Readers both in India and abroad also have come a long way in their relationship with English. There is growth towards maturity in this relationship. A practitioner of English is no longer dubbed a traitor to the Indian cause. Roy’s novel has shown that the basic difference between the culture of the writer and the culture of the reader is no barrier to communication. It is the shedding of the overt anxiety to interpret India that makes the Indian writers assume a commanding position in today’s world. In this regard it is noticeable that the recent Indian novels carry no glossary of Indian words which the earlier novelists carefully prepared and appended to their novels. Even those who attack Roy’s innovations as language gimmicks cannot ignore the serious concerns of the book – casteism in Christianity, self-interest and sexism in Marxism, the dilemma between family and self, passion and restraint in the modern world. Most of the adverse criticism levelled against Roy’s novel is rooted in resentment and envy of her fame and monetary gain.

Another political issue that emerges within India because of the use of English is the tension between the stand adopted by the regional-language writers and the Indian English writers. The regional-language writers argue that they are worried about the threat posed by an acquired culture submerging the indigenous culture. When the Indian English writers are assured of recognition, the regional writers have to be content with limited circulation, paltry royalties, and feeble hope of newer editions. Very few of the translations of their books into English make their way into the global market or academia. This certainly contributes to the envy and tension between the two kinds of writers within India.

Both kinds of writers deal with the same raw material of Indian experience. Users of both the mediums have the right to their Indian sensibility. But the regional literature seems to have a better claim to authenticity. There is no denying that the Indian English writers are an intellectual product of the
colonial situation. They get the maximum benefit out of the process of de-colonization but they bear no responsibility to the society they write about. Indian English literature is blamed for being export quality literature, out of touch with the masses and real India. It is argued that English is the language of the elite who remain marginal by choice, because of the power that their marginality gives them.

But the language that the contemporary Indian novelists use tilts neither towards British nor American English. It is a vibrant language enriched by Indian experience. It is also enriched by popular culture: electronic media, pop music and the information technology boom. Linguistic changes happen in response to cultural change. A dynamic society like India shows rapid linguistic change. The recent writers are in touch with contemporary reality, the living language, and this contributes to the vibrancy of their creative medium. They have no hesitation to invent new words, and revise current idioms and phrases to suit the needs of a fast changing society. Literature is only one of the contexts for language use. Language is a product of culture and literature is a part of culture. Language can be examined only within the social context of the community that uses it. Ignoring the social contexts would mean only a partial understanding of the process of literary creation.

Thus recent Indian English fiction has retained a distinct Indian identity, and at the same time has absorbed aspects of globalization dictated by the realities of the modern world. It is in a position to play a mediatory role of interpreting India to the rest of the world, just as it makes literatures in different Indian regional languages available to the rest of India. When English plays a role of such significance within India and outside, political reverberations are bound to exist.

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Bringing Back the Bathwater
New Initiatives in English Policy in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT
This essay examines current changes in attitudes to English in the Sri Lankan education system. At independence from Britain fifty years ago standards were high but nationalists soon rejected English as a medium of instruction. Unfortunately, this also downgraded English, even as a second language. Though it was compulsory, failure to ensure good teachers meant that few students now can use the language satisfactorily. This has damaged higher education, since students cannot read books, while few are published in vernacular languages. Present remedial policies face entrenched attitudes, including a generation that saw English as the ‘kaduwa’, the sword cutting down aspirants to social advancement. Conversely some still believe English should conform to British standards, and that English courses at university should resemble British ones. This limits these to an elite that cannot help with teaching the majority of students now requiring basic language competence for educational and social advancement.

The last few years have seen several new initiatives in the field of English education in Sri Lanka. English from the first year in school and new texts at secondary school are amongst these. In this essay, however, I will deal mainly with developments at the top end of the school curriculum. At the same time a change now happening at universities, where new departments of English avoid traditional English Literature syllabuses, may also be relevant.

In 1999 English was made compulsory for students at the Advanced Level final school examination, on the strength of which students are admitted to
university. Two years later it was decided to permit English medium for students in the Science stream at this exam.

The mention of permission indicates that, before, English medium instruction was not allowed, which was the case for the preceding twenty years. Shortly after Independence in 1948, a policy was introduced that brought education firmly under the control of the state. An argument which all might accept, that government has a responsibility to provide education for all children, was transformed into the dogma that government make all decisions about education. It was also, with a few significant exceptions, to be its sole provider.

One of the most far-reaching effects of this bureaucratic centralization occurred in the 1950s, with the decision to move to education in the vernaculars. It is strange now to think that government in those days could regulate in what language parents could have their children educated. It is even stranger to think that the regulations still remain in force, so that freedom of choice in this regard is not even a matter of contention here.

There was, it should be noted, an interesting feature about the regulation when it was first introduced. Though it straitjacketed Sinhala and Tamil students in their own languages, it allowed not only Burghers\(^1\) but also Muslims to be educated in English. It may be relevant that the Minister of Education at the time happened to be not only Muslim, but also a former school principal who understood very well the value of this concession.

This privilege was not available widely, and Muslim children in rural areas suffered as much as the rest. Indeed, by being confined mainly to Muslim schools, they were generally restricted to Tamil, which was even worse as far as job opportunities were concerned in what was in those days an expanding public sector.\(^2\) It was urban children who benefited from the Minister’s sleight of hand. And I would claim it was that divide, the disparity between opportunities available to urban and rural sectors, that allowed politicians to be so destructive towards the latter. Their own children, after all, cocooned in Colombo, would continue to have a command of English whatever the medium in which they were instructed.

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1 Burghers are descendants of the Dutch and Portuguese who had often intermarried with locals but still saw themselves as distinct. They prided themselves on the English they had learnt from the British, and thought it natural to use it. As a result, in general they resisted the transition to the vernacular languages.

2 In theory, the provision that Sinhalese and Tamil children should be educated in their separate mother tongues was fair, and any imposition of Sinhalese on Tamil children would have been resisted. However, a practical consequence when speakers of the main language naturally got priority for jobs was that Tamils were at a disadvantage. Muslim students, whose mother tongue was Tamil, but who had no particular nationalistic bent towards it, also shared in this disadvantage.
And they could read books. One of the astonishing aspects of the insistence on vernacular education is the fact that it was not accompanied by a coherent book development policy. Though the country has a National Library Services Board, the idea of liaising with the Ministry of Education or trying to fill in gaps that national education policies had created was for a long time not on its agenda. Recently there has been an attempt to develop school libraries, but with no clear guidelines as to how this is to be done. Yet this is not surprising, since for years the principle of the Ministry was that just one standard government textbook per course and class was enough.

English then ceased to be a medium of instruction in national schools, for Arts students in the 1950s, for Science students in the 1960s, for Burghers and Muslims by the early 1980s. Not, I suppose, coincidentally, it was the very year in which the English medium stopped completely in schools that the phenomenon of International Schools began.

International Schools are those in which children are educated in the English medium. The first of these was founded in 1982, when the drawing-rooms of Colombo woke up to the fact that their children would otherwise suffer. To rescue them there appeared a new St. George to attack the dragon of ignorance, a Tibetan who had originally come to Sri Lanka to set up a fast-food restaurant. It was his wife, an English Oxford graduate, who became Principal of the Colombo International School that some businessmen set up, but the entrepreneurial skills of the fast-food expert cannot be underestimated. Between them, when they fell out with their sponsors, they convinced the Secretary to the Prime Minister to have the school taken over. The Prime Minister’s children went to that school, and it became a Government Owned Business Undertaking, under the Ministry of Housing and Construction.

This was just as well, for the Minister of Education was on the warpath and sent the papers to the Attorney General’s Department so he could prosecute the school. But, whether it was because of political influence or the recognition that the legislation would not stand up in the courts, there was no prosecution. The Colombo International School still flourishes, and counts the current President’s children, now at English universities, amongst its alumni. Other politicians in turn helped to set up other International Schools, and there are now several all over the country. They all charge fees, some quite a lot, which means they cater essentially to the richest in our society.

So much for the rich. What about the rest? They continue to be educated in Sinhala or Tamil, with English merely a compulsory Second Language. It is compulsory in the strange Sri Lankan sense of the word, in which there are no sanctions if it is not acquired. So there is no requirement to pass English at Ordinary Level, not even to get into University. The result, as the statistics tell you, is that fewer than a third of students pass in English, while many do not
even take the exam since the subject is neglected in the majority of schools, the textbooks are incomprehensible to most students, and the teaching is inadequate. And if you look at the paper, you will see that even a Distinction in such a paper is no evidence of competence.

How did this situation arise? If we look first at attitudes, it would seem that, with the nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s, there came into positions of authority a generation that thought English unimportant, when it did not resent it. Many school principals now are not competent in English, and until recently the majority felt there was no reason for their students to be any better. Given the need to do well in other subjects to go to university, they stressed those and used English periods for extra work in what seemed essential. Even those who felt English should be taught did not know how to monitor this, so all they required was completion of the textbook.

This indeed was an equally serious problem, for the manner in which syllabuses and textbooks were prepared over the last forty years was bizarre. The books in fact gave no indication what the syllabus was. It was claimed, when the question was raised, that the syllabus was implicit in the Teacher’s Guide. This was not readily available, and in any case was written in such complicated language that few teachers could understand it.

The books themselves belong to the days when English was considered an International Language, that is one needed for communication with foreigners. So the main character in the secondary texts was an English girl called Anne and, though she was visiting Sri Lanka, there were lessons about her charming cottage in the English countryside. The series began with her being met at the airport. It clearly never occurred to the writers, who were supervised by a British Council expert, that for most children the function of greeting would have been better taught in terms of an experience they were likely to share, for instance meeting a relation at the bus stand.3

How did all this happen? It is worth remembering that, in the period after independence, teaching became a profession with little appeal to those fluent in English. Many good teachers found jobs abroad. Of those left, it was rarely the best who became administrators. So decisions for the whole country were sometimes made without informed consideration, often at the suggestion of experts from elsewhere, frequently after brief visits or training programmes in other countries, trips sometimes seen as the high points of tedious and thankless careers.

3 It should be noted that the textbooks have at last been revised and seem now to be more suitable for Sri Lankan children. However they still do not incorporate a clear syllabus, or define the level of skills expected from students. Also there has been no concerted attempt to encourage further reading, through development of the sub-skills of reading as well as through production and distribution of supplementary readers.
So in the 1960s we had structuralist descriptive linguistics, which – when applied to teaching – discouraged correction and promoted a climate of permissiveness. This was understandable in America, where the method was invented, since students were exposed to the correct version of their language all the time. In Sri Lanka, while teachers exulted at not having to correct work, errors got entrenched. Later, the Communicative Approach became gospel among language teachers. Unfortunately, teachers trained under Structuralism became purveyors of this too. Many of them thought grammar should not be taught, that simple tenses were taboo, with continuous forms being preferable, and that role play meant repetition of the dialogues in the book.

How could they have done otherwise? The methods by which English teachers were recruited became more and more absurd over the years. A Credit in English at Ordinary Level continued to be a sacrosanct qualification, even as the examination itself became worthless. At some time in the 1970s it was recognized that the teachers being recruited knew nothing, and greater stress was laid on training, with all sorts of courses being devised. But these emphasized what was termed methodology, and little attempt was made to improve language capacity. This changed in the 1980s, when District English Language Improvement Centres (DELICs) were set up round the country, to help potential teachers with the language. But, though these did a reasonably good job, as the base from which they had to build up declined, the final levels achieved were still inadequate. Few teachers now, even trained ones, can write a paragraph free of any errors.

Meanwhile there was an attempt to establish pre-service Colleges of Education, and in the late 1980s the Ministry decreed that no more untrained teachers would be recruited. But then there came a Minister who, having sent his own child to an International School, changed the policy completely. He recruited volunteers, some of whom could barely speak English, and of course they were confirmed in time, as political support was required.

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4 I recall once suggesting that grammar should be taught to teachers at least. I was told that Quirk’s *University Grammar of English* had been prescribed for students at the pre-service Training College. I suspect this came after a recommendation from a foreign expert in linguistics. The book is, of course, a work of grammar analysis that even first-language speakers at university would find challenging.

5 Which continued to be woefully old-fashioned. As recently as the 1980s, Peradeniya Training College, for instance, considered the best, still demonstrated question machines on the lines of the old bioscope.

6 The National Coordinator for English had a marvelous response when asked why more candidates did not fail the language test set at Training College. This was that government would not be happy with failures, after a couple of years in which it had paid for the course as well as the teachers’ salaries.
In such a context, implementation of the new plans will be difficult. Fortunately, there has been some preparation, in that a few universities have begun English programmes on a larger scale than before. These were a long time coming, largely because even in the aftermath of independence it was a colonial mind-set that dominated existing English Departments. Though they were well-funded, in part so that they would produce the teachers of English the nation so badly needed, they did nothing to fulfil this requirement. They continued with traditional literature courses, adding a dash of linguistics instead of the language component that might have been useful. Their boast was that their products could go on to postgraduate work at Cambridge. Teaching English to Sri Lankan students in rural schools just did not come into it.

As numbers declined, with very few students following Special Courses in each of three universities, and rarely more than single figures for English as part of the General Degree, they began recruiting teachers who had passed the First University exam externally. But typical of the thinking was the new Combined Degree created for them at one university. The rationale it seems was that they were not good enough to do a Special, but since they had come in on this privileged intake, they should do more English than the two papers a year allowed for the General Degree. The third paper then devised was on Literary Theory, and involved study of Coleridge and Richards and Eliot. How this would help secondary-school pupils, in particular those in rural areas, was never explained. It was probably not considered.

In the early 1990s, however, with a dynamic new Chairman at the University Grants Commission, an attempt was made to broaden the scope of English at tertiary level. A Diploma Course was begun at Affiliated University Colleges, which took in students without Advanced Level English (essentially a Literature course then) and tried primarily to improve their language. They also had courses in language learning and language teaching, in addition to some literature. Many went on to complete a degree when the AUCs were converted into universities. Meanwhile, the University of Sri Jayawardenē-

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7 The Peradeniya Department, for example, had, according to recent UGC statistics, the highest ratio of staff to students of all university departments in the whole country.
8 This, at any rate, was the reason offered by one Head a decade back, in explaining why the traditional syllabus could not be changed. It should be noted, however, that, with the advent of younger staff in the early 1990s, radical changes were made – though the degree programme is still targeted at sophisticated users of the language such as only a few urban schools can furnish.
9 A course in which three subjects are studied at very general levels.
10 Though the English of the first batch to complete the course (in 1998) still left much to be desired, the next group was better, and were snapped up as English teachers when the new Advanced Level English Language programme was begun.
New Initiatives in English Policy in Sri Lanka

pura, which had initially supervised these programmes, devised a new syllabus with two English subjects for the General Degree: namely, language and literature. That Department now has about forty students a year, most of them with only Ordinary Level English. A similar programme began at the Southeastern University, and even Peradeniya, the most traditional of our universities, was thinking of making English at degree level available to those who had not done Literature at Advanced Level.

Perhaps even more importantly, USJP began an External Degree targeted at teachers and demanding language competence as well as sustained reading. This now attracts many candidates previously confined to the literary approach that the Peradeniya and Kelaniya external syllabuses had promoted. It is notable too that, in the marking of the papers of these candidates, great stress is laid on language ability. Regrettably, sometimes at other examinations, while syllabus content indicated a determination to abide by what were termed high standards, the tendency had developed to condone errors of language if understanding of the texts was apparent. This had the potential of leading to the sort of situation that developed in Training Colleges, where students who cannot write grammatical English are still allowed to qualify.

So, too, the new Advanced Level English course concentrates primarily on language. When such a course was mooted some years back, the initial response of the Ministry was that it existed already. They had to be convinced that what they had was an English Literature course, with Shakespeare and suchlike, that could be understood only by a few students from urban schools. What was needed was English, a language course following on from the Ordinary Level which, as noted, very few students pass.

This was finally agreed, and the first students taking the course sat their Advanced Level in August 2001. The Ministry, however, got cold feet, and declared that it would not be compulsory to pass it to get into university. Nevertheless, students have taken to the course quite avidly, which suggests a new perception in the new generation about the language. No longer is it seen as a ‘kaduwa’, a weapon to keep in subjugation those not of the elite. Rather, it is simply a tool for advancement, essential for the increasingly ubiquitous computer as well as for books.

The change of attitude was perhaps helped by a course book devised by some of the younger staff at the universities. They were given a syllabus full of pietistic content rather than actual language competence. Fortunately, the course material ignores the syllabus and the interests of students were taken into account, so that the text has proved very popular.

Responses from students have been satisfactory, naturally since these teachers are more competent in the language than many who previously served in such rural areas.
Encouraged perhaps by this positive response, and the insistence on English among employers, the Ministry considered this year of experimenting with the English medium. However, given that the number of teachers is limited, it was decided to allow this option only to Science Advanced Level classes. The number of schools that decided to take up the challenge is relatively small, but it seems that there is at least one school in most districts, so students who wish to work in English will be allowed to transfer to such schools.

The policy represents a start, but it is unfortunate that it has not gone hand in hand with changes designed to extend the opportunity much more widely in subsequent years. At a recent meeting at the Ministry, several principals asked that they be allowed to begin English medium lower down, but it was felt this might be too contentious. One way of promoting equity would be to begin at least one English medium school in each zone, which is an option now being considered.

Such a policy would also help with producing enough teachers from each area to extend the possibility to all schools later. After all, given the centralized system of teacher recruitment, those who are drawn from the prosperous areas of the country where English is better known get themselves transferred back to their home regions as soon as possible. Zonal recruitment would help, but needs language training, which clearly English-medium schools could provide.

What is essential, then, at this stage is the will to take initiatives further, to resist the idea that English is the language of the privileged, and instead to make it clear that the government will make it a priority to provide it to those areas deprived of it in the past. Accepting the argument that, because it cannot be given everywhere, it would be unfair to allow its use anywhere, is to accept that change is impossible. To make a start now, however, a start that is focused on the underprivileged, will ensure that in time there will be enough teachers to supply all schools. That would certainly be a step towards the social equity that all governments proclaim but which few are willing to pursue if it means temporary unpopularity.
Cross-Cultural Encounters in Amit Chaudhuri’s *Afternoon Raag* and Yasmine Gooneratne’s *A Change of Skies*

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**Abstract**

This essay describes the role of the English language in two South Asian novels in English from the 1990s. Both texts contain self-reflexive and highly innovative strategies for reconsidering the hegemonic structures imbedded in the use of English in a postcolonial context. The two novels depict the experiences of South Asian scholars who visit universities in anglophone countries. Close reading of the encounters with diverse Englishes in both novels reveals that both cite colonial stereotypes only to dismantle the authority of the vestigial hegemonic structures represented by the English language. By comparing the two novels, this interpretation stresses common patterns of replacing binary concepts of the use of English with individual, creative hybridizations.

In this essay I shall discuss the role of the English language(s) in the cross-cultural encounters depicted in two recent novels by writers from the Indian subcontinent. The texts describe multiculturalism in different academic settings: Amit Chaudhuri’s *Afternoon Raag* (1993) deals with the experiences of an Indian PhD student of English literature at the university of Oxford. Yasmine Gooneratne’s *A Change of Skies* (1991) focuses on the adjustment struggles of a Sri Lankan academic and his wife who go to Australia on a visiting professorship. The English language constitutes a shared element between the South Asian protagonists and their host societies; it maps out a contact zone where cultural diversity and change are negotiated. Even
though the protagonists in both novels come from westernized, anglophone backgrounds, they are confronted with cultural and linguistic differences in their new surroundings, and their attempts to ‘come to terms’ with this diversity reflect ambiguous attitudes toward English. The novels stress the fact that these different Englishes are related to colonial history and that they are in a dynamic interaction with each other in which multi-layered hegemonic structures come into play.

Postcolonial literature in English is rich in strategies for coming to terms with the contradictory politics of English as the language of creative writing. Many attempts have been made to overcome the binarisms of East/West, colonized/colonizer, etc, and to deal with the power implications inscribed in them. The novels discussed below constitute two examples of humorous strategies. In both texts, the hegemony of the English standard is rivalled by other Englishes, and the very claim to hegemony is ironically undermined as power relationships undergo multiple inversions.

Novels about South Asians going to a Western university for their education or academic careers carry many interesting postcolonial implications as they re-create some of the power structures inscribed in the history of colonialism. Education was among the most effective tools of cultural imperialism, the ambivalent effects of which are alive in intercultural encounters of east and west to this day. While colonial education introduced its recipients to attractive fields of knowledge, admission to these was bought at the price of endorsing aspects of colonial rule. Not only is an awareness of these conflicting relations firmly inscribed in the education system on the Indian subcontinent (Rajan 1992: 7–28), but the history of colonial education is even explicitly referred to in several novels (eg, Meena Alexander’s *Nampally Road*, Adib Khan’s *Seasonal Adjustments*, Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* and Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy*). The continued existence of anglophone education on the subcontinent, the pan-subcontinental use of English as the lingua franca of intellectual exchange and recurring debates on alternatives to English (eg, Hindi) show that there is an ongoing negotiation of the ambiguities of endorsement and resistance with regard to the cultural hegemony of English.

The topic of cross-cultural encounters in academic settings features in many South Asian novels written in English. One reason for this is that many writers are both novelists and scholars. This is the case with the two novelists discussed in this essay: Amit Chaudhuri was born in Calcutta in 1962 and read English at the universities of London and Oxford besides writing four novels, for which he has won numerous prizes, as well as poetry, fiction and criticism which are published in various periodicals and magazines (Hussein 2000: 1). Yasmine Gooneratne was born in Sri Lanka in 1935 and studied
English at the universities of Colombo and Cambridge. She taught in Ceylon and Australia and wrote several volumes of poetry before emigrating to Australia in 1972. Founding director of the Post-Colonial Literatures and Languages Research Centre, she is now emeritus professor of English at Macquarie University. She is the author of sixteen books to date, which include critical studies, poetry, fiction, essays and accounts of literary and historical figures.

But apart from biographical reasons, universities constitute settings which lend themselves to an analysis of how postcolonial novels criticize the authority of standards, be they linguistic or more general. Universities are educational institutions representative of authority, and they conserve personal hierarchies. The constellation of teacher and student, for instance, mirrors the juxtaposition of colonizer and colonized, especially since one of the strategies for legitimizing colonial rule cast the colonizers in the role of paternalistic instructors helping to further civilization, “informed by the sense that colonialism is really a ‘developmental’ project” (Gandhi 1998: 32) while the colonized was conceived of as “half-child” (Nandy 1983: xii, 7). Universities are sites on which temporary expatriates from different cultural backgrounds converge: internationalism and multicultural co-operation are fundamental to their structures. At the same time, even though the universities portrayed in the novels present a smooth surface of multicultural amity, they are also areas over which overt and covert competitions are fought.

The first novel to be examined with regard to the role of the English language(s) quietly dismantles a large range of hierarchies as well as crossing various borders. Amit Chaudhuri’s novel *Afternoon Raag* is remarkable for its re-creation of an overseas student’s states of mind during his three-year sojourn at Oxford University in the 1980s. The first-person narrator-protagonist remains unnamed, his anonymity underlining an element of indeterminacy in his life. The novel is an example of a migrant author’s transcultural innovation. Its form is taken from a poetic programme indicated by the title: a *raag* is a piece of classical Indian music which seeks to evoke a specific atmosphere or mood. Tied to a particular time of the day or season, it is realized through improvisations around a set scale of notes or intervals (Chaudhuri 1993: 29; Danielou 1975: 58; Seth 1993: 426). *Afternoon Raag* thus constitutes a formal experiment of an intermedial kind as it translates the qualities of *raag* music into the medium of a written text in order to illustrate the in-betweenness of an overseas student’s situation.

*Afternoon Raag* presents us with a very selective view of Oxford. None of the fellow students the narrator names are English, and he focuses on no foreigners other than those of (South) Asian origin. The few English students the protagonist comes across remain an unfathomed mystery to him, and the
lack of understanding between him and them is highlighted by linguistic observations: for instance, when he comments on overhearing a group of British girls, “speaking in a rapid language that I hardly followed” (Chaudhuri 1993: 69). For the protagonist, English people form a somewhat strange minority whose alterity is confirmed by their accents. Off campus the narrator notes that the town ‘belongs to’ other South Asians besides students: bus drivers and shopkeepers. The only English characters mentioned very briefly are working-class people referred to as “the aboriginal community that led an island-life, its daily routines and struggles, and scarcely heard of Empire or took part in governance” (92), otherwise described as “white men leading black lives” (93).

This constitutes an ironic inversion which applies fragments of the colonial world-view to present-day England, only with different agents. However, the ‘conquest’ of Oxford by South Asian immigrants is not a triumph; it is embedded in a narrative characterized by an overall sense of dislocation. The protagonist’s fellow-expatriates are an accidental cast of alienated migrants whose presence underlines the distance between England and the Indian sub-continent rather than removing it. The novel’s general sense of bewilderment robs the otherwise amusing role switch of its potential edge.

As a consequence, the novel’s main cross-cultural encounters take place between South Asians of different backgrounds. The protagonist, a westernized cosmopolitan, befriends his housemate Sharma, a fellow postgraduate whom he “might never have met in India” (25) as “he was from a village in North India, and it was miraculous that he should be here in Oxford among other Indians of a different class” (129). Their friendship is an unequal one as the boys’ command of English marks a class distinction between them:

Towards the beginning of our friendship, he [Sharma] had told me very seriously that I was to help him improve his English. He was writing a thesis on Indian philosophy, but he longed to be a stylist. I would, thus, recommend to him a book whose language had given me pleasure, and he would read aloud passages from Mandelstam or Updike or Lawrence to me, either in the morning or at midnight, times when I was sleepy […] (9)

Sharma’s mimicry refers to a colonial constellation in which Indians studied the English language through literary models set by the colonizers (see Viswanathan 1989). The social inequality of the two students is reflected in their interaction: Sharma more or less keeps house for the protagonist, who in turn takes the role of the Brahmin poet-cum-scholar, sings and teaches Sharma English. The relationship of the two boys thus constitutes an anachronistic master–menial constellation in which several models are reflected: Oxford University’s scout tradition, the colonial social constellation (except that now both the position of the European colonizer and the Indian colonial are occu-
pied by Indians of different backgrounds), and the protagonist’s Indian home, where the family are waited on by servants whose lives they monitor. However, an inversion of roles takes place, because it is Sharma who during their phonetic exercises ends up teaching the protagonist something about the English language:

His English had a strong, pure North Indian accent, so that he pronounced “joy” a little bit like the French “joie”, and “toilet” like “twailit”. Yet this accent, I soon learnt, was never to be silenced completely; it was himself, and however he trained himself to imitate the sounds of English speech, “toilet” when he pronounced it, would always have the faint but unmistakable and intimate and fortunate hint of “twailit”. (9)

Far from encouraging Sharma to expunge his Indianisms, the protagonist discovers that they have a function in beautifying the English language. By focusing on his friend’s linguistic ‘problems’, the protagonist ascribes to Indian English qualities similar to those of his music or poetry. As they stress the foreignness of the speaker, they have the power to make everyday life into something special and meaningful.

In describing the interaction of these South Asian characters, Chaudhuri plays with various neo- and postcolonial constellations, using references to the English language as a subject of study in order to evoke old binarisms and hierarchies and tracing their development in playful hybridizations. In the aesthetically-oriented and relatively carefree universe of timeless Oxford, the language of poetry vanquishes the politics of English.

It is a long journey from Chaudhuri’s Oxford of migrants to the cross-cultural encounters described in Yasmine Gooneratne’s *A Change of Skies*. Here, the majority culture, which is quietly deposed in *Afternoon Raag*, plays a major role in the linguistic and personal struggles confronted by the novel’s protagonists as different cultures clash in an overt and complex comedy of manners. *A Change of Skies* deals with the young Sri Lankan linguist Bharat Mangala–Davasinha and his wife Navaranjini, a trained librarian, who move in the 1960s to Sydney, where Bharat is offered a visiting professorship. The protagonists are uneasily aware of being among the lucky few privileged foreigners. Evidence of xenophobia towards immigrants, not least produced by prominent Australian academics, and racist prejudices against other minorities, such as the Aborigines, make them feel self-conscious about their situation. Their critical comments on Australian society and their own role in it are transposed onto the plane of language in a number of key scenes.

Like the westernized protagonist of *Afternoon Raag*, Gooneratne’s characters learn that there is a wide gap between growing up in an anglophone environment on the Indian subcontinent and speaking the English language in a country where it is the first language. Despite their mixed feelings about Aus-
talian society (which they initially experience as semi-barbaric and related to Western culture only via the English language), their first strategy for coping with this situation is to assimilate. Like Sharma, Navaranjini tries to learn the standard language, but she discovers that there is no institutional help:

It occurred to me that he [her husband] might be a good deal happier living in this foreign country if we both learned to speak the language. That very week, I went to the School of Languages at Southern Cross University, and asked if I could be enrolled as a student of Australian. But it didn’t work out. There were rows of Japanese students queuing up to learn English, and rows of Australian students queuing up to learn Japanese. Nobody seemed interested in teaching, or studying Australian. (Gooneratne 1991: 120)

Left to her own devices, Navaranjini starts to take notes while listening to the radio, setting down every unfamiliar term as Australian vocabulary. Of course, Navaranjini with her upper class background speaks ‘perfect’ English. As a consequence, the unknown expressions that make it into her list tend to be non-standard expressions, slang and swearwords: “Like this very ancient Australian word which begins with a ‘b’ and rhymes with ‘custard’, which I first heard used – at a party! – by one of my husband’s colleagues [...] I consulted our host who told me to my surprise that Australians use this word as a term of affection” (121). The ironic destandardization of Australia is part of a tongue-in-cheek campaign to comically subvert Australia’s role as a representative of civilization. It is important to note that Gooneratne’s novel democratically extends this comedy to Navaranjini and Bharat themselves, as well as to their friends in Sydney’s Sri Lankan diaspora: racism and stereotyping are emphatically not reserved for white Australians (82, 87, 119; see also Bredella 2001: 374).

The novel’s title goes back to a quotation from Horace, which the novel translates as “He who crosses the ocean may change the skies above him, but not the colour of his soul” (167). This dictum is ironically inverted in A Change of Skies, as the protagonists undergo decisive changes subsequent to their emigration. The context of Horace’s letter adds to the irony. He argues that personal happiness is independent of one’s place of living, which is proved wrong since Australia provides Barry and Jean with challenges and opportunities which allow them to reinvent themselves in multiple ways and to find fulfilment in professions which would have been closed to them in their Sri Lankan peer group.

Gooneratne’s novel developed from a short story entitled “How Barry Changed His Image” (Gooneratne 1989), which indicates that change and adaptation are among its central themes. The novel contains a chapter of that title which deals with the protagonists’ most decisive step in assimilation to Australian society. Hampered by his long name, which is the only crucial fact
about himself which he is able to alter, Bharat changes his name to Barry Mundy, and Navaranjini calls herself Jean. The name change signals an ambiguous reaction to the hegemony of Australian culture. On the one hand, the protagonists give in to the majority; on the other hand, this move indicates a loss in status (Gooneratne 1991: 122–23). Their new name carries an echo of mundus, thus embracing the entire world, but also the pejorative connotations of ‘mundane’.

The Mundys seemingly simplify their identities for the benefit of their Australian friends. However, their name change is embedded in the novel’s play with telling names. Barry’s Western colleagues are all named after seafood, sporting a hierarchy which ranges from crabs to dory (and in which the Mundys occupy quite a high position). Of course, by becoming one of these “fishy people”, Barry assimilates to his surroundings. He renders himself edible or digestible for Australian tastes. However, the critic Dorothy Bramston has also pointed out that mundy has a Sinhalese meaning which contains a warning that immigrants may go to the top but they may also “end up as the dregs of the new society” (Bramston 1996: 30). As Gooneratne herself explains in an end-note, the device of using a specific name code echoes a practice of colonial rulers to attach derogatory names of animals or even vegetables to their subjects whose long Sri Lankan names they refused to learn: it served as a gesture of appropriation and degradation (Gooneratne 1991: 327–29).

The playful treatment of a topic full of such aggressive undercurrents culminates in Jean’s dramatic encounter with Professor Ronald Blackstone. At a university party, Jean is introduced to the sociologist whose racist and xenophobic radio broadcasts first led her husband to change, and she addresses the sum of her accumulated Australianisms to the baffled academic in a scene full of multiple contextual ironies directed in equal measure to the ‘Australian’ language and to the university as an institution of narrow-minded prejudice and arrogance. Jean then proceeds to explain the implications of her husband’s name change:

“Barry. Do you know what ‘Barry’ means in Sinhala? Let me tell you, Professor Blackstone. In Sinhala, the word bari means ‘incapable’. It means ‘impotent’. And it was you who made my husband trade in Bharat for a name like Barry.” [...] “You are a yahoo and a wrinkly, Professor Blackstone, [...] a shithead and a stinker.” (128)

Even though Jean’s collected Australianisms elicit from Blackstone something like an apology, the actual process of changing the Australians is rather more complex and drawn-out. As this scene shows, Jean, the faithful appendix to her prospering husband, is in the process of jettisoning her background
position. After a few years in Australia, the protagonists undergo further substantial changes, and again, comments on the English language accentuate their developments. Barry becomes so jaded with the snobbery of his Australian university colleagues that he quits his university post in order to set up language classes for Far Eastern refugees. His wife meanwhile makes a career for herself by publishing a best-selling cookery book that consists of recipes combining Eastern and Western cuisine. Though radical, this change constitutes a mere variation of their former activities. Jean the housewife and cook opens twin highway restaurants, and Barry, who helps out (specializing in seafood dishes!), divides his time between teaching, cooking and writing a guidebook for immigrants. The restaurant displaces the university, even though both share the same mission, as we learn from a newspaper article about the Mundys’ establishments:

“Good cooks, say Barry and Jean, are like good writers, they create works of art. Feasting the senses, firing the imagination, exercising the intellect, civilising the mind, fine food – like fine books – can admit us to spiritual experiences, transports of joy.” (294)

By turning their attention to the production of food, the protagonists confirm a cliché about what South Asians can do to make a success of going to the West: open a restaurant (Khan 1998: 77). The migrants’ process of negotiating individual change in foreign surroundings is unresolved in A Change of Skies. As the narrative is pieced together by multiple narrators (Barry and Jean, Barry’s grandfather, various Australian neighbours and friends, and, after their sudden death, Barry and Jean’s daughter Edwina/Veena), the novel reads as a series of fragments, each of which illustrates a possible immigrant reaction to living in a new country: the exaggerated care for one’s cultural roots as practised in a diasporic group, attempts to blend in with the dominant culture, protest against this domination and making the precarious balance of these negotiations into one’s life’s work. The novel’s fragmentary form as well as its comic and parodic elements thus challenge readers, who are denied a comfortable solution, to regard multicultural encounters as an open case and an ongoing interaction.

Despite their differences in tone and style, both novels share the strategy of defusing the crisis of alienation through a move beyond the standard culture or language, represented by the universities, and towards syncretic forms of multiculturalism, represented by artistic and culinary skills respectively. The migrants depicted in the novels challenge inflexible standards and uncover stereotypes. The settings of England and Australia mapped by the two novels suggest the global application of syncretic innovations. The domination of the standard language and majority culture is overcome as the novels play with it,
exploiting the poetic license that foreign speakers may enjoy. Humour is among the novels’ most important devices for overcoming the dichotomy of East and West and replacing it with a creative dynamic of mutual exchange. Rigid institutions are dismissed as meaningless settings (*Afternoon Raag*) or left behind (*A Change of Skies*) as the novels’ emphases on idiosyncrasy favour individual and transcultural modes of expression, thereby celebrating the versatility of the English language(s) in coping with diversity and change.

**WORKS CITED**


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Imperial Pretensions and *The Pleasures of Conquest*

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**ABSTRACT**

Yasmine Gooneratne’s *Pleasures of Conquest* is set in “Amnesia” (post-colonial Sri Lanka in disguise). Potent overtones of cultural and economic hegemony are manifest in the novel. This is clearly illustrated in the “Mallinson Project,” named after its patron, the American pulp-romance novelist Stella Mallinson. Like the other satirical characters in the novel, Stella “demonstrates a familiar pattern of fallibility, based on illusions of grandeur and ill-conceived notions of philanthropic responsibility” (Khan 1986: 359). With the support of the Amnesian Government, she aspires to translate into English a series of Amnesia love stories. The “Mallinson Project,” however, can be seen as “an act of imperialism, a misappropriation of Amnesia culture as transgressive as the physical invasion by the British” (Shaw 1996: 49). My essay will seek to explore the cultural ramifications of imperialism in Gooneratne’s fiction. I will also examine Gooneratne’s deft use of irony and comedy as a way of ‘writing back’.

**DIB KHAN,** in his review of *The Pleasures of Conquest,* notes that comedy is seen as a comparatively recent and very necessary development among Third-World émigré writers seeking to explore the consequences of imperialism in fiction (1996: 358). Khan comments on how Third-World literature has started to take itself less seriously and has even learned to “chuckle at the flaws in its own indigenous cultures” (359). He says the use of comedy, and especially the willingness to laugh at the predicaments created by colonization, suggests that “post-colonial writers are beginning to accept the conclusion of Saleem Sinai (from Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*): “We must live, I’m afraid, with the shadows of imperfection.” It is
an imperfection that embraces all humanity: the colonizer and the colonized, the sahibs and the natives” (quoted in Khan 1996: 359).

Yasmine Gooneratne continues the trend begun by Rushdie. Without detracting from her seriousness of purpose, her second novel *The Pleasures of Conquest* makes us laugh at those crucial moments when the principal characters are at their most vulnerable. Set mainly in ‘Amnesia’, an idyllic, tropical island-nation between Australia and Asia (postcolonial Sri Lanka in disguise), Gooneratne’s novel does not intend to be moralizing as it fictionalizes the human face of imperialism in its various forms. In this essay, I will seek to examine the cultural ramifications of imperialism in Yasmine Gooneratne’s novel. I will also explore how the author uses irony and satire as a form of resistance and literary subversion.

In *The Pleasures of Conquest*, the protagonist Stella Mallinson, an American pulp-romance novelist and accidental imperialist, wishes literally to create her own version of history — Amnesia. She is supremely enthusiastic about promoting Amnesia’s literary culture and her efforts are ardently supported by the Amnesian Government. For the Mallinson Project, Stella hand-picks nine of Amnesia’s “stupendously talented (but sadly, yet unknown writers)” to contribute chapters to “unique and wonderful piece of creative literary art” (27). The book, to be entitled *Nine Jewel Rice*, sees a series of Amnesian love stories translated into English. In *Nine Jewel Rice*, the Project seeks to showcase nine “specially selected ancient Amnesian sites, thus bringing their existence, their historical importance and their picturesque attributes to the attention of a hitherto uncaring world and opening them up to tourist development” (27). The Project can be seen as “an act of imperialism, a misappropriation of Amnesian culture [which is] as transgressive as the physical invasion by the British” (Shaw 1996: 49). Gooneratne addresses issues of cultural and economic hegemony through Stella, who, like the other satirical characters in the novel, “demonstrate[s] a familiar pattern of fallibility, based on illusions of grandeur and ill-conceived notions of philanthropic responsibility” (Khan 1996: 359).

Self-interest and presumptuous virtuosity on both sides are ingeniously tackled in *The Pleasures of Conquest*. The illusion of Stella’s altruistic magnanimity is cultivated by the Amnesian politicians. The Minister for Tourism and Immigration is quick to seize the obvious advantages offered by the Project (both for the economy and for his career). In his opening speech at the launch of the Project, he praises Mrs Mallinson for her “social concern and her compassionate heart.” He goes on to say “it was Amnesia’s good fortune that she had ranked herself with its defenders against the forces of capitalist exploitation” (34, my emphasis). Stella relishes her role of sympathetic activist. In an interview with *Topaz Magazine*, she tells the reporter:
‘You have some massively talented writers here and no one in the States has ever heard of them. It’s a shame. It’s an international disgrace. Not your shame. Not your disgrace. Ours. Because it’s due to the stranglehold the West has on the international book trade. Particularly, I have to admit it, the USA – ’ here Stella laughed her light, tinkling laugh, and the reporter laughed with her. Either he was nervous, or he was aware of her soaring sales figures in America. (26)

Stella Mallinson’s façade of humble deference is stripped away when the journalist innocently (or not so innocently) asks Stella where her book is to be published.

What a question! Stella Mallinson looked at the reporter with barely disguised irritation.

Where else but in the United States of America, where the mechanics of marketing and distributing books, like other manufactured goods, are better understood and more profitably practiced than anywhere else in the civilised world? (28)

With spontaneous irreverence, Gooneratne brushes away illusions and re-arranges perspectives. In the scrambling of familiar objects into incongruous juxtaposition, her irony “allows the real truth to flash through the mildly coloured cloud of dissimulation” (Highet 1962: 57). Irony’s ability to express two meanings simultaneously “designates a literary mode in which the text creates an artistic vision only to destroy it by revealing its own process of arbitrary manipulation or construction” (Hutcheon 1991: 9).

Central to the novel is the New Imperial Hotel. Thoroughly capitalizing on “Amnesia’s picturesque past” (245), the hotel is an extravagant celebration of old colonial ambiance and everything “to flatter the occidental ego with imitations of Western superiority” (not unlike the Raffles Hotel in Singapore) (Gooneratne, in Khan 1996: 360). According to Khan, it is “a monument to the exploitative excesses of history” (1996: 359). Erected by an Amnesian king in 1592, the hotel later became “an emblem of Dutch mercenary success.” In 1815, it became the headquarters of the British Resident when the British conquered the Inner Kingdom. The Resident upon his conversion to Buddhism then returned it to the Amnesian people. Currently owned by a multinational chain, the name of the hotel – the New Imperial – is distinctively appropriate as it symbolizes the ‘new’ cultural imperialism thriving in Amnesia. Located in the heart of the Inner Kingdom, the New Imperial Hotel is a pivotal point in East-West relations. Narelle Shaw comments that “each phase of its history reflects an ironic reversal of what had come before” (1996: 48–49). Khan adds that “[b]y the end of the book it is virtually impossible to distinguish between the conqueror and the conquered. Who is really being exploited – East or West?” (1996: 359)
The history in Gooneratne’s novel is that of imperialism which is duly perpetuated throughout the ages. The author charts its uninterrupted course skillfully through links between Stella Mallinson, Sir John D’Esterey and Philip Destry. Nineteenth-century British Resident in Amnesia and later Chief Translator to the British Crown, Sir John is introduced into the novel through the discovery of a series of letters by the American academic Philip Destry. The irony lies in the fact that Philip Destry’s connection to Sir John D’Esterey “is not a link of blood but by those mystical ties of common understanding which connect man with man across time and space, creating a kinship of the mind” (207). Indeed, the “parallels” between both D’Esterey and Destry are “irresistible” (137). The letters reveal the noble civil servant, John D’Esterey, as a “master spy” whose treachery and betrayal of the Amnesian king embodies the colonial mentality. Philip Destry’s character is similarly ruthless, predatory and opportunistic.

Wholly deluded, Philip Destry envisages himself as a monarch in the “kingdom of the mind” (130). “The construction of an academic career was an enterprise, he reflected, not unlike the building of an empire” (116). He smugly admits that “the women in his life” (lovers and research assistants) were “the brazen wheels that had kept the golden hands of [the Destry] Empire in motion” (116). As Narelle Shaw notes, “[exploitation of women] is simply another guise of colonialist mentality” (1996: 49). Destry blatantly incorporates his assistant Leila Tan’s research into his own work. Arrogantly dismissive of her contribution, he relegates her to a mere footnote. Gooneratne executes her irony brilliantly. She writes calmly, in restrained terms, never growing melodramatic or indignant about the injustices of colonization or the hypocrisy of men. Gooneratne advances the argument that History is undoubtedly written by the conquerors. What her irony does here is to undermine and puncture the grandiose pretensions of the imperial ‘villains’, to demonstrate what villainy is like when transferred to the postcolonial world.

In Gooneratne’s *The Pleasures of Conquest*, the author looks at a society in which two cultures confront each other. Irony allows the presentation of different perspectives without taking sides (Susskind 1991: 39). Gooneratne openly satirizes hypocrisy and artifice. Satire in the novel serves to prod people into an awareness of truth and dramatizes and exaggerates objectionable qualities in people and society (Feinberg 1967: 17). By exaggerating postcolonial hypocrisy and inconsistency, Gooneratne exposes it to public view and degrades the perpetrators. For the author, the satirical narrative and characterization is not the end: it is the means. *The Pleasures of Conquest* can be read as an ironic view of “moral stagnation” (Shaw 1996: 361).

Gooneratne maximizes the element of farce in her novel. This is clearly seen in how a “little mishap” could contribute to Stella Mallinson’s dizzy
ascent to become Amnesia’s latest “national heroine” (33, 45). This is how it is described or, rather, interpreted by Topaz Magazine:

[Mrs Mallinson] was escorted into the hotel by His Excellency the [Amnesian] President, and was handed a bottle of champagne by the USIS representative, Mr Robert Bolton, which she smashed with great eclat against the white marble replica of the crown (a symbol of our pre-Independence days) that dominates the New Imperial Hotel’s banqueting hall.

It was an original and forceful gesture, entirely unrehearsed and truly symbolic of the distinguished American author’s deep sympathy for independent Amnesia’s nationalist aspirations. (33)

But it becomes apparent to the reader that “Stella knew nothing and cared less about independent Amnesia’s nationalist aspirations. She had, as a matter of fact, aimed at the pedestal and missed” (33). This misrepresentation however works to her utmost benefit. As a result of her “lucky miss”, she is now warmly received and favoured by her detractors who had previously made “snide comments” about her “projected attacks on the Queen’s English” (34). It is clear that Stella had no reason to “take a swipe at the crown. Why should she?” (34). We are told that Stella was rather fond of the British Royals: “Not only had she been informed by the tabloids that both Princess Diana and Princess Margaret were fans of her novels, but she had even considered dedicating one of them to the Prince of Wales” (34).

In The Pleasures of Conquest, language is tied explicitly to the question of power. The sense of the comic and the ironic in Gooneratne’s novel is triumphantly revolutionary. Her irony acknowledges the force of the dominant culture and yet contests it. Through the use of humour, she seeks to exert pressure on the prevailing ideology. Her criticism of people and society is subtle; it is a gentle “criticism made entertaining by humour and moving by irony and invective” (Feinberg 1967: 18). In the novel, “several voices of dissent” take issue with Stella Mallinson’s plans for Nine Jewel Rice:

‘Who, might one ask, is this Mrs Mallinson, that she should presume to teach local authors how to write about their own country?’ asked one young fire-eater, an expert in one of Amnesia’s indigenous languages.

An academic from a local university expressed grave doubts about what he saw was a subtle form of neo-colonialism. ‘In all seriousness’, he said gloomily, ‘I urge my country’s literary community to remember the Trojan Horse.’ (35)

The very potent and potentially contentious point about neocolonialism is conveniently forgotten as other academics present at the session greedily seize upon the mention of ‘horse’ to demonstrate their knowledge and showcase their expertise. The whole discussion thus degenerates into a farcical and
largely irrelevant discussion about whether horses were indigenous to Amnesia and how and when they arrived on the island.

The politics regarding the use of English versus that of the traditional Amnesian language is raised. Gooneratne hints at English as the tongue and tool of the modern imperialist. In the novel, the same expert in local languages inquires why this local project is “being carried out in a foreign language, namely English, and not in our country’s own noble and expressive tongue?” (36). Lou Randolph, Stella’s very able publicist, comes to her rescue with the deft reply that “the choice of English as the medium for the project had been based on purely practical and economic considerations.” Lou Randolph invariably and ironically draws attention to the fact that:

Since most consumers of the finished product were likely to be Americans, and since not many Americans were known to be practiced readers of the local languages [...] the [Amnesian] collaborators on the project had been informed quite early on that they would have to bear with, and work within, the limitations of English. This was, of course, a heroic sacrifice on their part [...] but they were willing to make it in the interests of their country. (37)

The decision to write *Nine Jewel Rice* in English substantiates the “rule of consent” by American economic power and Amnesian acquiescence (Gandhi 1998: 145). Stella Mallinson, with her retinue of present-day colonizers, endeavours to disguise their material investments and economic interests by presenting the Mallinson Project as a humanist commitment to the literary advancement of the Amnesians. But it is clear that imperialism is essentially a parasitical relation. Gooneratne’s irony here is transgressive rather than oppositional.

Gooneratne deftly uses humour and irony to subvert the ideology of the centre. It is a way of ‘writing back’, of positing resistance against the canon. Often wielding irony as a form of double vision, she “implicitly challenges any claims to universalism or speech in the name of humanity” (Hutcheon 1991: 49). It is a double vision, which informs subversive local practices. The writer highlights the incongruity contained in the discrimination between impulse and pretension, between being and seeming, between people as they are and persons as they aspire to be. For Gooneratne to speak from the margins, figuratively or literally, is in effect to decentre ethnocentrism.

This essay recognizes that, in practice, “all communicational codes, especially language are ambiguous, double and even duplicitous” (Hutcheon 1991: 10). By the deliberate and extensive juxtapositioning of Western/Asian and colonial/postcolonial, the author opens the way for a lucid, continuous and consistent commentary on the other (Mudrick 1952: 39). Irony has become a powerfully subversive tool in the re-thinking and re-addressing of history (Hutcheon 1991: 73). It possesses compelling powers that unmask and
debunk. As Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson maintain, imperialism was largely challenged by a radical and dissenting anticolonial counter-textuality.

Just as fire can be fought with fire, textual control can be fought with textuality [...]. The post-colonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power that resides in discourse and textuality; its resistance, then, quite appropriately takes place in – and from – the domain of textuality, in [...] motivated acts of reading. (Tiffin & Lawson 1994: 10)

In The Pleasures of Conquest, irony is used to expose the incongruities and discrepancies of power structures, as well as emphasize the importance of the language–place disjunction in the construction of postcolonial realities (Ashcroft et al. 1994: 28).

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“Language is the skin of my thought”
Language Relations in Ancient Promises and The God of Small Things

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, I will be looking at two novels written in the last decade of this last century by two Indian women writers: Ancient Promises by Jaishree Misra; and The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy. In my reading of these works, I propose to look at how the authors demonstrate that their (female) protagonists have been deprived of their rights through the adroit use of language on the part of their persecutors, who, sadly enough, are members of their families. The languages being used and even manipulated in given key situations in the two novels are English and Malayalam. A second and pertinent question is whether both Misra and Roy wrote these novels with a view to catering for a mainly English-educated audience, both in the East and the West. A connected issue is if they used English as a matter-of-fact instrument which is accessible to the majority of their readers, while at the same time operating on the premise that English was so much a part of the Indian Weltanschauung that it would not offend anyone’s sensibilities as regards the authenticity of the presentation of the diverse socio-cultural situations depicted in the novels.

Survival was one thing half-way children were good at, hopping effortlessly back and forth between their different identities. Never quite belonging anywhere. (Jaishree Misra, Ancient Promises, 178)

There is fiction in the space between
The lines on your page of memories
Write it down but it doesn’t mean
You’re not just telling stories
There is fiction in the space between
You and me

Leave the pity and the blame
For the ones who do not speak
You write the words to get respect and compassion
And for posterity
You write the words and make believe
There is truth in the space between.
– Tracy Chapman (1999), Purple Rabbit Music (ASCAP)

1. Introduction

Language is often used as an instrument of power – it can hurt, exclude and even deprive a person of their rights – the right to speak, the right to be heard and the right to be one’s self and to have that self acknowledged by one’s surroundings. Two novels written in the final decade of the last century by two Indian women writers will be analysed in this essay. In my reading of these works, I propose to look at how the authors demonstrate that their protagonists have been deprived of their rights through the manipulation of language and language attitudes on the part of their persecutors, who, sadly enough, are members of their families.

The languages which are being used in given key situations in the two novels are English and Malayalam. The authors, Jaishree Misra, who wrote Ancient Promises (2000), and Arundhati Roy, who wrote the by now well-known The God of Small Things (1997), are of Malayali backgrounds and have spent a considerable part of their lives in Kerala, where Malayalam is mainly spoken. However, both writers are no strangers to the English language, either. They, like many educated Indians, have had unlimited access to the English language and its literature, an unmistakable and irrevocable legacy of the British Raj.

Several impressions come to mind when looking back on the last 50 years of the Indian novel in English. William Walsh cites the extraordinary versatility of the English language, which proved itself capable of expressing the strongest feelings of members of a culture extremely remote from Britain. Walsh however is also of the opinion that if the use of English was due in the first place to the British Raj, its persistence and its increasing influence (long after the departure of the British and in spite of a natural national(ist) hostility) owed everything to the capacities and the resourcefulness of the (English) language itself (Walsh 1990: 123–24).

When reading Indian-English works of fiction, one does well to remember that the Indian writer is often inevitably bicultural and lives within a multi-
lingual cultural idiom. She is born with the skill to switch her cultural code according to the needs of her social situation. And even when she lives in a native social context, she at once lives with many mainstream cultural traditions and several substream cultural currents. This suspension, this being caught between several cultural types creates a split in the writer’s literary personality. Ganesh Devy observes that by resorting to both Indian and English literary styles, the Indian writer aspires to be both pan-Indian, international and yet faithful to local nuances and colour – the styles in Indian-English literature clearly show this compulsion (Devy 1990: 340–53).

A second pertinent aspect is the question whether both Misra and Roy wrote their novels with a view to catering for a mainly English-educated audience, both in the East and the West. Uma Parameswaran has highlighted the main responses of critics towards Indian authors writing in English, observing that most Indian critics are adversely critical. Whereas Indian writers who chose to write in English in earlier decades were reproached for choosing viewpoints and plots that would appeal exclusively to the English-reading world (which brought recognition and remuneration), most non-Indian critics appeared appreciative of these efforts on the part of the Indian authors (Parameswaran 2000: 24).

Since India’s strict caste system forbids close communication and social interaction between people of different caste backgrounds, it is here that language becomes the link and deregionalizes the characters in the novel. The author is able to establish, on the human level, a plausible dialogue between characters who come from different regions and social backgrounds; a hallmark of India’s cultural pluralism. English therefore becomes a unifying factor; a colonial tongue adapted to local native needs. Uma Parameswaran is of the opinion that in fiction one deals with particular human beings, human motivation and actions which are not necessarily rooted in regional or linguistic identities.

Language of the human heart and mind is wordless. Language is a vehicle for expressing an experience and its simplicity or complexity should be influenced by the simplicity or complexity of the situation or of the total artistic composition, not by education, vocabulary or dialect of one who experiences it. (Parameswaran 2000: 48)

Hence she does not question the high level of sophistication of language used by the authors to express the thought patterns of unsophisticated characters as well as nuances of verbal idiom. Examples of such unsophisticated characters who use an unrealistically refined register of speech are Velutha in *God of Small Things* as well as Ammuma and Mrs Maraar in *Ancient Promises*. 
Velutha, an Untouchable, would not have had access to the kind of English Roy uses in his speech. Yet Roy reports his thought patterns and lends his speech a certain dignity by using a more or less standard variety of English. This of course contributes to the reader’s perception of Velutha not just as an Untouchable, but rather as a person with rights.

Ammuma, Janu’s grandmother, and Mrs Maraar, Janu’s mother-in-law, being of an older generation of Keralan women, would not necessarily have learnt English nor used it in the manner related by Misra. Both these characters, had they been real, more likely than not, would have communicated in Malayalam and not in English.

Although English has been accepted as one of India’s two national languages, it does not belong to any specific region of the country and thus does not have the status of a regional language. Rather English seems to be used as a language of status, and the fact that English is an international language (the only one at India’s disposal at present) adds to its position as a status language. As Devy has observed,

> The English language in India is treated, by a more privileged class of Indian society as an intrinsically superior language as compared with Indian regional languages […] The general Indian attitude of not violating the received norms of the English language comes from the respect it enjoys as an enormously resourceful language that it has been elsewhere. (Devy 1990: 348)

This attitude to English as a language is clearly presented in both novels in varying degrees.

2. The God of Small Things

One of the key scenes which trigger the reader’s animosity against Baby Kochamma, everyone’s favourite arch-villain in Roy’s novel, is her infamous persecution of the twins Rahel and Esthappen, especially when she hears them speaking Malayalam, a language with as much value for them as English. The reprehensible anglophile ex-nun imposes punishments on the twins and forces them to practise their English pronunciation:

> Baby Kochamma eavesdropped relentlessly on the twins’ private conversations, and whenever she caught them speaking Malayalam […] she made them write lines […] I will always speak English […] A hundred times each […] She made them practise an English […] song […] They had to form the words properly, and be particularly careful with their pronunciation. (Roy 1997: 36)

The persecution of the ‘half-Hindu, hybrid twins’ by their great-aunt is, however, set in contrast to the twins’ mother, Ammu who “used Kipling to
love her children before putting them to bed: ‘We be of one blood, you and I’’ (58).

As the reader notes in the course of the novel, both Malayalam and English are very much part of the twins’ lives. Roy is extremely conscious of her protagonists’ hybrid nature – emphasizing their twin heritages of the Malayali culture of Kerala as well as the colonial British influence. One must note that nothing of the twins’ Bengali father seems to have had a lasting influence on them – neither the language nor the culture. The adult Estha does not seem to have developed any kind of relationship with his father in the years in Madras when he was Returned.

In his essay “Große Worte, kleine Dinge,” Dirk Wiemann believes that the Rushdiesque, ‘magical’ use of language in the child’s universe is correlated to the twins’ perspective (Wiemann 1998: 4). Estha and Rahel assume that incomprehensible constructions are secret formulas which evoke certain sensations:

Cuff+link=cuff-link. This to them rivalled the precision and the logic of mathematics. Cuff-links gave them an inordinate […] satisfaction, and a real affection for the English language […] Humbling was a nice word, Rahel thought […] Twinkle was a word with a crinkled happy edge […] Boot was a lovely word. Sturdy was a terrible word […] later became a horrible, menacing goose-bumpy word. (Roy 1997: 51, 54, 145, 153)

When the narrative perspective draws nearer the twins’ viewpoint, the text contains numerous instances where words and whole phrases have capitals. This is a signal to the reader that he has gained access to the children’s minds, making apparent the often incomprehensible and threatening adult world. The children pick up language partly as used by the adults around them and partly constructed out of their personal childish myths conveying their own small private meanings: “a Highly Stupid Impression”, “Anything Can Happen to Anyone”, “It’s Best to Be Prepared”, “Loved from the Beginning”, “an Afternoon Gnap” etc. The twins are so precocious in their perceptions and use of language that they resort to reading backwards to form a kind of secret language understood only by them – this too being considered symptomatic of their undesirable, incorrigible hybrid status by members of the family. Another captivating aspect of language in the child-like consciousness is that the twins do not yet seem capable of distinguishing between the word and the deed; indeed, Estha is under the impression “That you had to say it to do it”, while Rahel is convinced that her wishes and hopes have tangible consequences: “Rahel knew that it happened because she had been hoping that it wouldn’t. She hadn’t learnt to control her hopes yet. Estha said that it was a Bad Sign” (58).
This perhaps infantile belief in the almighty power of thoughts and words finds its threatening confirmation in Ammu’s admonition to Rahel for her thoughtless remarks: “When you hurt people they begin to love you less. That’s what careless words do. They make people love you a little less.” This child-like conceptualization of the magical properties of language expands to include the adults too, as and when Roy wills it, hence the likening of her style to that of Rushdie’s. The key figures in the novel have their thoughts and views articulated, using this formula of capitalization. Examples of this childish frame of reference are to be found when Mammachi legitimates Chacko’s sexual activities with the female workers as “Men’s Needs” (168); Chacko speaks in his “Reading Aloud voice” expounding his philosophical theories on “Love, Sadness, Infinite Joy” (118); Ammu is carried away by her “Far More Angry than Necessary Feeling” when her children let her down in the Indo-British Behaviour Competition in that unforgettable family scenario at Cochin Airport (145); Baby Kochamma indulges in paranoid ritualization of daily activities: “For a Breath of Fresh Air”, “To Pay for the Milk”, “To Let out a Trapped Wasp” (28) – all reflections of her self-obsession, gradual mental deterioration and self-imposed ostracization.

3. Ancient Promises

In contrast to the experiences of the twins in *The God of Small Things*, the protagonist of *Ancient Promises* is made to suffer indignities because she follows her natural impulse to speak in English. Janaki or Janu, who is forced into an arranged marriage to the wealthy, traditional Kerala family, the Maraars, is chided by her mother-in-law and ridiculed by her sisters-in-law whenever she uses English. Janu was brought up in the Indian metropolis of Delhi, and thus is used to speaking English and Hindi while resorting to a hybrid form of conversational Malayalam (ie, mixed with English), to communicate with her parents and grandparents:

> Non-Kerala families like mine tended to mix up English and Malayalam into an easy, casual city-speech that had worked reasonably well [...] . Now that I was here forever, it would look like that brand of Malayalam was going to be woefully inadequate. Even worse, seen as stylish. (Misra 2000: 80)

Janu is humiliated time and again by the female members of her husband’s family, who belong to a respectable caste in Kerala, as shown by the family name, Maraar. It is possible that they are the remnant of the matrilineal social set-up common to that region, hence the authority of the older female members is not questioned. In one telling incident, when Janu’s mother-in-law asks her if she’d like a cup of tea on her first morning in the Maraar household as a new bride, the following exchange takes place:
I replied ‘Yes, please.’

‘Look you’re not in Delhi anymore. Like it or not, you now live in Kerala, so I suggest you drop all these fashionable “Pleases and Thank Yous”. Here we don’t believe in unnecessary style.’

It tore a tiny little scratch inside me somewhere, and suddenly the many times that I’d been told off for forgetting a little kindness or gratitude seemed so falsely, so pretentiously Delhi.

Was her displeasure because I’d spoken English? I cast about frantically for the Malayalam to use […] remembering vaguely that there were no equivalent words for a casual Please and Thank you. (80–81)

Due to her multilingual upbringing in Delhi, Janu feels an outsider in her new home in Kerala because she cannot speak fluent Malayalam; her marginalization is exacerbated by the constant criticism from her in-laws:

It didn’t sound as if anyone in this family had grown up outside Kerala, the Malayalam flying around me was fast, fluent and elegant. My years of growing up in Delhi and having to struggle with Hindi in school, had relegated Malayalam to a very low priority. It was getting clearer by the minute that my holiday-Malayalam, so comical it sometimes even made my grandparents giggle, was unlikely to endear me to this family. (81)

It soon becomes apparent in the course of the novel that it is more than just Janu’s previous cosmopolitan lifestyle and outlook which prompts the Maraars to criticize her. Her use of English could have been considered a threat and an affront to the more traditional authority of this family, who pride themselves on being ‘real’ Malayalis, rather than ‘modern’ multilingual, cosmopolitan Indians. Janu observes:

[…] speaking English would be misconstrued as attempting to be stylish and speaking in Malayalam had on occasion been greeted with sarcastic laughter. I was better off pretending to be the bashful bride. (86)

The fact that Janu’s mother-in-law Mrs. Maraar was vociferous in her objections to her new daughter-in-law would lead one to suppose that the older woman felt that she had to establish her own authority as matriarch of the house, just in case she had entertained any notion of usurping the Maraar authority as the wife of Mrs. Maraar’s only son. Janu, of course, who was just looking for love and acceptance, is understandably nonplussed at this constant show of hostility. Another possibility is that Mrs. Maraar is jealous of her daughter-in-law’s education.

Tertiary education in Kerala takes place almost exclusively in English. In a sociolinguistic analysis of “hybrid conversational Malayalam” among Keralan college students, C.V. Kala discovered a rather interesting attitude towards
the use of English among Keralan Malayalis, which could perhaps help to explain the Maraars’ rather strange behaviour:

In households which have their first generation of college going teenagers, the latter regard it ornamental to use English too frequently. By contrast households with a well-educated parental generation try to curb such a trend among their children, as a matter of a respectable speech discipline. However the general urge among teenagers is to mix English freely in their speech when they are in a town or in their college premises. (Kala 1977: 269)

The general attitudes of Malayalis towards English and Malayalam, which have remained constant even after India gained independence from British rule, have been more recently characterized by A. P. Andrewskutty:

Although English was an instrument of colonisation, it was the choice for at least a large section of people. They imbibed it as a pragmatic instrument of economic competition. Attitudinally, Malayalees keep a well thought-out balance in properly assessing the pros and cons of learning English and Malayalam. In this respect they have been practicing a happy but typical mixture of localisation and globalisation with reference to their mother tongue and the other tongue, English. They have been resorting to the same game […] with Hindi and other languages as well. (Andrewskutty 1996: 30)

One can assume that Janu and her parents were fortunate enough to have found this “well-thought-out balance” in their use of the three main languages at their disposal. Thus poor Janu, who was used to juggling all her languages (English, Malayalam and Hindi) in diverse contexts of her life, finds herself constrained to use the one language she isn’t proficient in, which effectively leads to her being silenced; Janu’s sense of herself is completely jeopardized; she begins loathing herself, for being one of the ‘half-way children’:

I was still too nervous to put up much of a fight and still found my Malayalam letting me down at moments that cried out for a sharp retort. [...] It didn’t take long for me to start hating myself for the many different things that give the Maraars reason to […] laugh […]: for not being able to speak Malayalam elegantly, for forgetting constantly not to mind my P’s and Q’s; for having been brought up in Delhi. (Misra 2000: 97, 118)

This is an instance of how language can be manipulated to deny a person her basic human right of expressing herself as she chooses and thus rendering her powerless and without any form of personal agency whatsoever. On a personal note, I sympathize with Janu’s frustration, being a native speaker of English myself and a Singaporean Malayali who can’t really speak the language very well, nor read or write in it. Meena Alexander, another Malayali author who writes in English, has expressed this rather typical postcolonial predicament:
I have never learnt to read or write in Malayalam and turned into a truly postcolonial creature, who had to live in English, though a special sort of English, I must say, for the version of the languages I am comfortable with bends and sways to the shores of other territories, other tongues. [...] Yet the price of fluency in many places may well be loss of the sheer intimacy that one has with one’s own culture, a speech that holds its own sway, untouched by any other. But perhaps there is a dangerous simplicity here…. (Alexander 1996: 11)

4. A translation of cultures

Of course, the aspect of translation is of significance in this study. A pertinent question would be if the authors wrote in English with the intention of providing a translation of cultures, of sorts, so that readers could comprehend the local contexts as a whole. Translation implies a far-reaching transfer between cultures and participates in the different forms of contact and contention between cultures (Bachmann–Medick 1997: xii).

One might ask: which aspects of a culture are actually translated? Foreign cultures are accessible first and foremost through their representation in myths, rituals and ceremonies as well as artworks and texts. Thus, the translation of a foreign culture as done in the two novels depends very much on alternating interaction which leads to an understanding of that culture outside the area of simple metaphorics (Bachmann–Medick 1997: 7). This entails then the translation of different cultural codes and coding methods. On looking at the use of language in the two novels the reader confronts these differences and learns to recognize the significance of local cultural interests in Kerala, as presented by Roy and Misra. One significant way how literary texts make readers experience ‘Otherness’ is through the use of language which is not completely translated by the authors. In works written in English by writers from the former colonies, regionalisms and local references are differently positioned in the spectrum of intelligibility.

In his essay “‘Hahnji’ means ‘Yes Sir’,” David Stouck cites Reed Way Dasenbrock’s belief that the political significance of a literary work from a foreign country is to be found in the amount of work the reader has to undertake in order to comprehend the text (Stouck 1998: 67). It is only by doing this work and by making the effort to understand a different way of speaking that we can appreciate cultural difference. Stouck also observes that “if everything is translated into our terms and made readily accessible, then our cultural categories will be reinforced rather than challenged” (67).

The two authors have slightly different ways of embedding Malayalam words and phrases in their texts. Roy unashamedly braids phrases and whole sentences of Malayalam into the English tapestry of her narrative and with
equal nonchalance either translates them sparingly or leaves them untranslated, confident that her readers will sift the meanings implicit in the general context of the narrative situation. Misra seems to be a little more self-conscious – she has lightly peppered her narrative with just a few Malayali words where ostensibly no other equivalent in English could be found. Both authors do not do this with the singularly simplistic aim to imbue the novels with authentic local colour; instead this serves to elucidate the eccentricity of language and its uses in the postcolonial environment of Kerala, where Malayalam and English are given equal importance. The range of contextualized reflection and work on these texts undertaken by the reader covers the dimension of the ‘implicit’, the ‘unsaid’, the ‘left out’, which can then be reconstructed from the elements of the text and the plot, thus enabling a translation of the cultural ‘deep structure’ of the text, or: “cultural translation was always a matter of determining the implicit meaning of the speech and action of the ‘others’” (Hastrup 1990: 55).

Both Roy and Misra do not offer glossaries or lists of explanations at the end of the novels, leaving quite a few nuances of vernacular idiom unexplained, hence ‘unsaid’. This contributes to the crucial centre of a literary work’s meaning in terms of its international audience – one must realize that the authors are aware of their audience. In her study of Kamala Markandaya’s works, Uma Parameswaran addresses this very practice (or lack thereof), justifying that italics, explications and glossaries only distract the reader and in effect sets up boundaries:

If they explain or explicate Indian customs, they alienate the Indian reader into concluding that they have only the non-Indian reader in mind; if they write without explanations, they risk alienating the western reader, for who wants to read something that requires one to go to anthropological texts or glossaries at the end of the volume? (Parameswaran 2000: 77)

The untranslated words do not just assert a cultural distinctiveness but also present a form of resistance to demands that literature conform to either accepted varieties of American and British English or the diverse regional languages of India. The hybridity evident in this enmeshing of two separate discursive strategies can be read as a political act – to claim and preserve that particular cultural territory for Malayalam speakers who are generally bilingual. Simultaneously the problem of localizing the author, the text and the reader is addressed; here the use of specifically Malayalam words has a nostalgic function of re-situating the Malayalam-speaking, Keralan reader as well as the narrator in a remembered and familiar past. This type of code-mixing on the part of the authors then serves to de-centre the English reader temporarily from her own culture by insisting on cultural difference.
Thus the use of foreign, unfamiliar language elements in a largely English literary text is often an indication of how much an author (consciously or unconsciously!) expects her readers to cultivate that middle ground where mainstream and marginalized can meet – it is on this site, this overlapping interstitial space (the space between), that the engaged reader (Euro-American, Indian or otherwise) must change their way of perceiving the Other. This insistence on new perception through the incorporation of alien language elements, which grows ever stronger, is what Mikhail Bakhtin would term ‘dialogic language’; a language engaged in articulating experience, histories and viewpoints; an exercise which involves readers in building bridges between specific cultures.

As I mentioned earlier, Roy and Misra, like most other contemporary Indian-English authors use English as a literary device to transcend regional barriers and sociocultural differences. As a foil to this benign attitude towards English in the Indian literary arena, it is also important to consider the case of Malayalam speakers and their current attitudes to their mother tongue in the light of the novels discussed here. Andrewskutty observes:

The socio-political changes to which the speech communities have been continuously subjected in Kerala have enabled the common man and even the scholarly to rediscover Malayalam as a language useful for education, technology, mass media and political dialogue. At the same time, an average Malayalee is aware of its limitations in a number of practical situations in life. This awareness continues to help him, generally, in not becoming unnecessarily biased in its use [...]. The genuine willingness to consider language as a tool for progress and stability makes a Malayalee a typical representative competitor for survival in the twenty-first century. (Andrewskutty 1996: 31)

I would like to conclude with a similar observation which reflects the idea that ‘language is a tool’. I once had the privilege of hearing Arundhati Roy read at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1997. She was then asked by her interviewer, Sigrid Löffler, about her “strange, new and creative type of English”. Roy replied that “having been born and bred in a country where the British ruled for over three hundred years,” it was quite natural that she should use a variant of English that is often used in the state of Kerala, in South India. She went on to emphasize the fact that language was a very personal tool that could be adapted to the individual’s needs and concluded: “Language is the skin of my thought.” No doubt many Indian and other non-Euro-American writers, who are heirs to this legacy left by colonialism, would quite happily agree.
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NEW ZEALAND, CANADA, THE PHILIPPINES: ENGLISH IN MULTILINGUAL CONSTELLATIONS AROUND THE PACIFIC RIM
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From “carefully modulated murmur”
to “not a place for sooks”
New Zealand Ways of Writing English

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ABSTRACT

The dynamic of Aotearoa New Zealand’s political and economic re-orientation away from a geographically remote European ‘Home’ towards an alignment with the Pacific Rim may be seen to correlate with a growing cultural self-confidence, which has among other things a clear sociolinguistic dimension. In many cases the linguistic changes in New Zealand English monitored over the past decade by two landmark studies – Bell & Holmes (1990) and Bell & Kuiper (2000) – have also found their expression in literary works. The trajectory from Mansfield’s sub-Bloomsbury mode to Sargeson’s Kiwi vernacular was dramatic enough but recent decades have seen the curve grow even steeper. Against that background the essay attempts to determine just how linguistically distinctive such ‘national’ voices may be and to what extent they are instrumental in articulating a sense of cultural identity.

THIS ESSAY TAKES AS ITS BASIC PREMISE the dynamic of Aotearoa New Zealand’s political and economic re-orientation away from a geographically remote European ‘Home’ towards an alignment with the Pacific Rim. That movement may in turn be seen to correlate with a growing cultural self-confidence, which has among other things a clear sociolinguistic dimension. The contention of the essay, reflected in a title which pays tribute to Allan Bell and Janet Holmes’s pioneering collection of essays on the subject: New Zealand Ways of Speaking English (1990), is that
the use of distinctive linguistic forms investigated and documented both in that volume and in Allan Bell and Koenraad Kuiper’s companion landmark study published at the end of the same decade: *New Zealand English* (2000) can also be monitored in the written language and specifically in literary texts.¹

The “carefully modulated murmur” quoted in the title of this essay was Frank Swinnerton’s characterization of Katherine Mansfield’s speech, drily reported here by C. K. Stead:

> There is sometimes argument about whether Katherine Mansfield, who spent almost half of her short life in Europe, can really be called a New Zealand writer.

> There is another, apparently unrelated question: When did a distinct New Zealand speech establish itself?

In his book *The Georgian Literary Scene* Frank Swinnerton describes meeting Katherine Mansfield in 1912. He describes her as “one of the most enchanting young women I had ever met”, but he mentions that she “hummed or intoned her words [...] hardly parting her lips”. By this I conclude that New Zealand English was established by 1912 and that Katherine Mansfield spoke it.

Any variant of English can be spoken well or badly. Swinnerton was charmed by Mansfield’s “carefully modulated murmur”. However, if you don’t move your lips or your jaw much, some of the sound tends to go up into the nasal cavities, and what happens to it there is seldom pleasant.

If, as I do, you speak New Zealand English, certain kinds of orotund utterance are not possible without faking. It’s best to aim for clarity and confidence, and hope for a little of Mansfield’s music as well. (McCrum, Cran & MacNeil 1986: 300–301)²

¹ The existence of those two collections of essays itself documents the remarkable growth of New Zealand as a significant world centre of sociolinguistic work including detailed research on the distinctiveness of the local variety, therein outstripping the former dominance of work on what Burridge & Mulder (1998) by neat analogy term “OZE” (Australian English), and frequently extending findings to wider linguistic and sociolinguistic questions. On this, see, for instance, Bell & Kuiper’s own introductory chapter: “In the 1990s research on the nature of NZE has attracted considerable international interest, so that international sociolinguists are now relatively frequent visitors to a country which is en route to almost nowhere else. It is notable that what has created this interest is precisely work on the distinctiveness of NZE itself” (2000: 21; cf also 15,18).

² This is taken from a personal communication sent by Stead to the authors of the BBC TV series *The Story of English*. What Stead calls a “variant” might perhaps more appropriately be termed a “variety” – but then Stead, though an authority on many things, is not a linguist. His assumption that Swinnerton is characterizing a national variety of English rather than Mansfield’s idiolect is unsubstantiated. The New Zealand novelist Marilyn Duckworth (2000: 275) refers to her fourth husband, John
The reference here is to the phase during which New Zealand was very much that ‘other England’, a self-conscious RP-speaking, elocution-lessoned, dutiful colonial daughter of the established culture, as opposed to subversive, subcultural Australian English, with its orientation towards Cockney or Irish English.\textsuperscript{3} Ironically, though, the imitation was conspicuous enough to be recognized by the true-born native speakers in the ‘Home’ country as somehow not quite the genuine English article.\textsuperscript{4}

Nowadays, while the parent country seems increasingly to be adopting EE (Estuary English) as its prestige variant of choice, the gradual (linguistic as well as general cultural) emancipation of Aotearoa New Zealand is being voiced, in the full sense of the word. RP is ceasing to enjoy its long-established prestige in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{5}

Whereas Holmes & Bell had in their introduction (1990: 11) quoted Bell almost a decade earlier raising “the interesting question of whether there is any realistic hope of New Zealanders developing their own distinctive linguistic identity, or whether a more likely scenario will see them falling both culturally and linguistically ‘out of the British frying pan into the American fire’” (1982: 254), Donn Bayard, an American linguist and anthropologist long resident in, and observant of, New Zealand in general and of NZE in particular, concludes Bell & Kuiper’s 2000 volume with his aptly entitled essay “The cultural cringe revisited: changes through time in Kiwi attitudes towards accents,” quoting from a recent article in the (NZ) \textit{Listener}:

\begin{quote}
Our actors [in 1980] mimicked Cockney or would-be Rada [Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts] accents on stage, just as our newsreaders mimicked the BBC, with small betrayals of enunciation that signalled to the careful English listener that these people came from Somewhere Else, somewhere not quite England but that wanted to be a pale, South Pacific shadow of it. Now, of course, things are different. These days, our Pakeha children do not talk of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{3} Apparently, for Mansfield’s husband – the very English John Middleton Murry – the precise location and disposition of his “colonial” wife’s actual origins were so unimportant that he was content to refer to her “hailing” from that “island”, in the singular.

\textsuperscript{4} When I played a recording of Fred Dagg (from Donn Bayard: ‘Accents, attitudes and Americanisms’ [1992]) to the conference audience, an Australian member of the audience (Syd Harrex) commented that this could well have been an Australian speaking.

\textsuperscript{5} According to a personal communication by Elizabeth Gordon (1997) cited in Burridge & Mulder (1998: 8). In her radio broadcast “R.P. – or that colonial twang” (1992) Gordon remarks that, on the other hand, the British now seem to be less snobbish about, and more genuinely interested in, the way visiting New Zealanders speak.
England as home; they know who they are and where they belong. (McGee 1997: 34 / Bayard 2000: 297)

Adding his own emphasis to the statement “Now, of course, things are different,” Bayard queries its validity and goes on to remark that:

it seems both definite and inevitable that the cringe toward NA accents, vocabulary etc. is here to stay. New Zealand, like the rest of the world, simply cannot escape the all-pervasive media influence of *pax Americana*. In short, it looks as if [the] answer [to Bell’s question] is clearly “yes!” from the standpoint of attitudes toward accents; as Bell continues, “Perhaps a speech community as small and homogeneous as New Zealand will regularly look beyond itself for a prestige speech standard (1982: 255).” (Bayard 2000: 323)

In their contribution to Bell & Holmes, Elizabeth Gordon and Marcia Abell had still been pretty sanguine:

When we compare present-day attitudes in general with those expressed in the first part of [the twentieth] century by the school inspectors and other writers concerned about speech, it would seem that there is now a much greater acceptance of New Zealand speech. Perhaps this can be related to other attitudes whereby Britain is no longer regarded by New Zealanders as ‘Home’, and there is a growing confidence in and acceptance of a distinct New Zealand identity in the world. (1990: 35)

Looking at some of their examples illustrating the old attitudes, one would have to admit that things have indeed changed since the days of the classic *arbiter elegantiae linguisticae* Arnold Wall. Wall, the very English Professor of English at Canterbury University and a prominent weekly radio broadcaster on ‘The Queen’s English’ in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was the author of *New Zealand English: How it should be Spoken* (1938). It would appear remarkable that he did not add “if it should be spoken at all.” Indeed, he did manage on at least one occasion to sink below his own high standards and to mobilize unexpected reserves of tolerance: “I remember how, at the outbreak of war in 1914, seeing that young students whose speech left much to be desired yet died gloriously at Gallipoli, I told myself that I must never criticize New Zealand speech unkindly” (quoted in Gordon & Abell 1990: 32). Seldom has the stiff upper lip quivered with more pathos.

On the other hand, though, even the briefest of glances at the Appendix to Marianne Hundt’s 1998 study is hair-raising. Hundt reprints letters to the editor of *The Dominion* documenting an ongoing argument sparked off by an article by Janet Holmes on the new NZ “vowel shift” that raged for several months in the autumn and winter of 1994–95. One might, of course, classify such a virulent recrudescence of prescriptivism as a backlash against the prevailing consensus and therefore indirect evidence of a greater degree of toler-
ance in the wider society – the newly marginalized with their backs to the wall fighting a rearguard action against what they perceive as the forces of political correctness. But it is unexpected all the same.

Mansfield’s New Zealand provenance may well, according to the Swinnerton-Stead view of things, have been recognizable on the phonological level in her actual performance as a speaker, but it is scarcely detectable in her work. Tony Deviser has pointed out that “It is not difficult to find New Zealand literary works which either in their entirety (especially shorter poems) or for many pages at a stretch are written solely in the common core of international English, with nothing identifiable or uniquely New Zealand in their language.” This would certainly be true of Mansfield, who is very sparing in her local usages, one of the few examples being in “Her First Ball,” where only the reference to Leila’s “sitting on the veranda listening to the baby owls crying ‘More pork’ in the moonlight” indicates a New Zealand rather than European setting (Deviser 1998: 395). As Deviser continues, “Some New Zealand writers in the past appear to have deliberately eschewed a strong local flavour in their language, often to avoid alienating the wider readership implied by overseas publication” (396).

When it is there, local linguistic flavour generally tends to manifest itself on the phonological, and, even more, on the lexical plane. In grammatical terms, divergence from the standard is rare. The accent is hard to render, and most attempts to reproduce in type non-standard vocalizations of the common core are feeble and ineffective. This is not so surprising in a world where not only the authors of folk-linguistic books on dialects but even the compilers of serious dictionaries sacrifice the accuracy and unequivocality of the IPA for the supposed ‘reader-friendliness’ of amateur transcription. Whilst observing that “many of the key features of the NZ accent cannot be conveyed at all by respelling (the fronted long vowel of farm and last, for example),” Deviser himself does not deviate from this common practice in his editorship of the NZ Pocket Oxford.

On the other hand, non-standard (particularly lexical) forms of New Zealand English (NZE) are becoming increasingly accepted in New Zealand itself, a country which in Emily Perkins’s (1998) memorable phrase is “not a

6 A section of ‘New Zealand Writers’ Week’, held in Dunedin in March 1993, which was punningly entitled “Foreign rites: selling ourselves short”, pinpointed the frequently outrageous, bizarre, unreasonable and simply unfair demands made by prospective US publishers on New Zealand fiction for settings, speech and cultural allusions to be modified to make them familiar to their own potential home readership. Such pressures frequently operate on a double standard. Whereas geisha and kimono are considered part of general knowledge, moko and whakapapa are not.
place for sooks.” The significant context is her review in the British press of *The Oxford Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997), edited by the late Harry Orsman. Typically for discussions of such reference works, of which there are by now quite a few, Perkins homes in on the slangy, citing such colourful items as *rip, shit or bust*. There is, she observes, “a satisfaction in imagining that a non-New Zealand reader might be sent to the dictionary to decipher exactly what is meant by” that expression. Such lexicographical *schadenfreude* sounds like a case of the Empire getting its linguistic own back. Being exactly the kind of ignorant reader she envisages, I do not begrudge Perkins her understandable satisfaction in the slightest, the more so as what I found – in Elizabeth and Harry Orsman’s somewhat earlier *New Zealand Dictionary: Educational Edition* (1994) – amply rewarded the chore of consultation:

*rip, shit and (or) bust*

Said of a person or action having no consideration of the consequences or the quality of the result; often as an exclamation or asseveration indicating a vigorous (or over-vigorous) approach to a job, problem etc. Various euphemised as *rip, tip or bust*, or *rip, split or bust*, with the latter suggesting a wood-splitting origin [possibly originating from a folk story: the reference is probably to a desperate straining at stool for relief].

Who says New Zealanders can’t be orotund?

Perkins quotes Orsman reminding us in his introduction that: “Pioneer immigrants had to cope with ‘bush’, ‘creek’ and ‘gully’ replacing ‘woods’, ‘brook’ and ‘vale’” and then adds her own comment: “The New Zealand words sound harsher, wilder.” The chronicling of those harsher, wilder words in a venerable Oxford tome must surely be seen as one of the more subtle attempts to reverse the cultural cringe. Ironically enough, though, many peculiarly British dialectal words for rural matters – a classic example being *sook* itself, a call-word or pet name for a calf – were ‘transported’ to New Zealand and preserved there as in aspic, to appear to subsequent generations as uniquely endemic New Zealandisms. This would also apply, for instance, to *hogget* and to many other terms centering on and reflecting the country’s predominantly agricultural economy.

Perkins herself is perhaps one of the best exemplars of the way harsher, wilder linguistic endemisms have found their way into the country’s literature, proving if nothing else that New Zealand women are not necessarily sooks either. The following extracts from *Not Her Real Name and Other*

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7 “(also sooky, sookie) colloq. - n. 1 timid or bashful person; cry-baby; [sissy] 2 hand-reared calf” – definition from Deverson’s *New Zealand Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (1997); “British dial. suck.”
Stories (1996) illustrate what the Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature terms her “tellingly authentic dialogue” (1998), even though some of the lexical items are by no means exclusively NZE but, rather, reflect a fairly universal (and gender-neutral) current tendency to avoid the deletion of expletives:

Things here are OK. I want to leave school but not allowed. Mum’s spazzing out because I told her I quit smoking – stupid – then she found a packet in my room. [...] Julie’s OK but she never wants to wag school to watch Prisoner. [...] Yuck Stiff O’Donnell is perving I better go. (13–14)

I’m moving in with my boyfriend, we’re in love you know, he’s asked me to marry him ... Shit. Shit fuck. (31)

The original development towards making the earthy-tangy-racy colloquial NZE idiom more acceptable, if not yet quite respectable, in literature had already been rung in during the 1930s and 1940s by Frank Sargeson, whose murmuring, such as it was, was anything but carefully modulated and whose seminal influence came to be seen widely as a viable alternative model to Mansfield’s Home Counties gentility. The language of Sargeson’s works did not merely include the Kiwi vernacular; it positively embraced and celebrated it, albeit not uninfluenced by Hemingway and Sherwood Anderson. As Deverson puts it,

In the 1930s and 40s the growth of a more realistic, down-to-earth fiction embodying the voice of the ‘ordinary’, often down-at-heel New Zealander brought much more of the characteristic Kiwi vocabulary into natural literary use than previously, with Sargeson’s short stories setting a most influential example. Sargeson’s colloquialism was still quite decorous, though, and it was not until the more liberated 1960s and 70s that the writer who wished could mine the more indelicate layers of NZ slang and vulgarism, now collected in David McGill’s Dictionary of Kiwi Slang and Dinkum Kiwi Dictionary. (1998: 397)

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8 This is an influence not just noted by academics and critics but even more significantly testified to by Sargeson’s fellow-writers, sixteen of whom paid tribute to him in Landfall (1953) on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday for having demonstrated by his own example that “our manners and behaviour formed just as good a basis for enduring literature as those of any other country.”

9 The trend is evidenced by a whole range of joke-linguistic booklets, probably going back ultimately to Afferbeck Lauder’s classic Let Stalk Strine (1965), that deal with “New Zealand-speak”, eg, Alex Buzo’s Kiwese: A Guide, a Dictionay, a Shearing of Unsights (1994). Buzo is actually an Australian, hence doubtless a model of detached objectivity. There is even a German spin-off on the market produced by Claudia Daley and Martin Lutterjohann and entitled Kiwi-Slang: das Englisch
The trajectory from Mansfield’s sub-Bloomsbury mode to Sargeson’s Kiwi vernacular was dramatic enough, but recent decades, as the case of Emily Perkins shows, have seen the curve grow even steeper, and the kind of idiom originally seen as man’s language – too coarse for Mansfield, just right for Sargeson – has become widespread in literature as in everyday usage:

The New Zealand writer Gordon Slatter conveys some of the flavour of New Zealand slang in his novel *A Gun in My Hand* [1959], in what he calls “the jargoning of the working man at rest”: “I was shikkered to beat the band. He’s a randy old coot always hanging about the cat’s bar. I been carryin ya all morning. He was full on nines and I was full on jacks. He got on to me about smoking in the shed. No sense bustin ya guts out. Blow that for a joke. Time for a coupla draws before the bell goes. An it ran like a hairy goat an I did me chips.” (McCrum, Cran & MacNeil 1986: 366)

The stringing together of individual instances might suggest a richer mixture than is actually the case, but nevertheless this book does provide an abundance of source material for students of New Zealand slang, the most prominent among them being Harry Orsman himself. The blurb to the recently published new edition of the novel corroborates its status as a linguistic goldmine: “this story can be seen as a study in itself of the evolution of English language usage in New Zealand – its slang and clichés, its borrowings and conversions.” Actually, the publisher’s highlighting of the book’s – supposedly conscious – status as linguistic treasure trove might itself be read as a sign of the times, further reinforcing the thesis that New Zealand literature has come to exhibit an increasing preoccupation with language over recent decades. And Elizabeth Gordon, maintaining that Slatter has “a wonderful ear for the everyday language of the 1940s and 50s,” substantiates her characterization of the novel as “an excellent resource for New Zealand vernacular and slang” by quoting the following passage:

Gone into partnership with old Snow. He’s a hard shot. Hard as the hobs of hell. There’s money in it, boy. Ya gotta work, though. Yeah tis too. I been busy as a one-armed paperhanger. Now listen, you jokers ... (Slatter 1959: 147)

The point is generalized by Deverson: “Literary works provide the lexicographer with a wealth of citable evidence for the currency and meanings of local expressions in all fields and styles. (Sargeson and Slatter are much

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*Neuseelands* (1994). The title would seem to imply that NZE is, by definition, slang – a common fallacy.

10 Recently republished (in 1998) under a different title: *The Returned Man*. Perhaps the original title was felt to be open to misunderstanding in times when public attitudes to firearms have changed.
And Perkins, referring to Orsman’s *Dictionary* and its sources, remarks: “Literary fiction gets a fair suck of the sav. The quotations range from Denis Glover to Robin Hyde, Allen Curnow to Katherine Mansfield, Keri Hulme to Janet Frame.” Such comments viewing the novel as a mine of linguistic data can, however, be misleading if one were to visualize an entire work written in a homogeneous style. It is largely the *dialogue* of the novel that reads thus. The first-person, present-tense narrative, on the other hand, is couched in a fairly ‘neutral’ style, and does indeed incorporate authorial – including metalinguistic! – comments such as “I don’t like these new slangs”, by which the narrator in this case means the excessive knee-jerk use of “hooray” (Slatter 1959: 152).

Still, there is nonetheless, it seems, a significant tendency for changes in language use, in speech patterns and habits, to find expression in literary works. But Deveron’s use of the verb ‘to mine’ implies a sort of hermeneutic circle: linguists search literary works for examples of idiomatic usage, colloquialisms and slang; authors of literary works consult compendia of idiomatic usage, colloquialisms and slang which are themselves repositories (and sometimes shrines) of literary usage. The self-consciousness of this process would again seem significant and symptomatic of the post-Sargeson phase. Whereas Mansfield seems to have consciously avoided local colour, many authors in the wake of Sargeson have consciously sought it out.

Not the least interesting aspect of this phenomenon is that New Zealand has produced an unusually large number of people interested in, and in recording, language use, particularly New Zealand language use, whether real or supposed. In proportion to its size and population, New Zealand has produced an unusually large number of lexicographers, some of whom have been so influential at the power centres of English-language recording that they are not universally known to be, let alone thought of and spoken of as, New Zealanders. Britain, and England in particular, has quite a knack for absorbing as her own those who speak the language but come from elsewhere. In literature, for instance, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw are cases in point. In the field of lexicography Eric Partridge, for instance, is known as *the* expert on slang in English but not many people seem to know that he was not an Englishman. The former editor of the *OED*, Robert Burchfield, is “one of several distinguished expatriate New Zealand lexicographers” and there was even a “notorious ‘New Zealand mafia’ in the Oxford University Press –

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Kenneth Sisam, John Mulgan, Dan Davin, Robert Burchfield, and others less renowned. Oxford *(in Oxford)* counted almost as a New Zealand publisher.*¹²*

According to Deverson,

Poets as well as fiction-writers in recent decades have exploited the whole range of New Zealand expression. Perhaps the most spectacular example of this was James K. Baxter, whose increasingly uninhibited use of language often encompassed New Zealand terms, from the botanical to the colloquial and the indigenous. Baxter’s broad Kiwi style is seen in lines such as “dark as a dunny the under-runner” (“Never no more”) and “drunk / In Devonport on Dally plonk” (“Letter to Sam Hunt”), and in references to various “Pig Island” institutions (“The Plunket nurse ran in / to scissor off my valued foreskin”, in “Letter to Robert Burns”). In short, New Zealandisms of all kinds, including place and other proper names, are now part of a reader’s normal expectations of New Zealand writing, though the words used are rarely more than a tiny percentage of the writer’s total vocabulary. (1998: 397)

Deverson also goes on to comment on how “the growth of literary writing by Maori, as one manifestation of the Maori cultural renaissance, has brought both significantly more native vocabulary into literary use and greater acceptance of Maori as an integral part of the language of New Zealand literature” (1998: 397). Hand in hand with that process has gone an increasing tendency to use such indigenous terms naturally. It is taken for granted that the reader can or should be able to understand the words without the crutches of a translation or glossary. But Maori writing in English now constitutes such a significant proportion of Aotearoa New Zealand literature that this aspect of the subject – the use of Maori words, phrases and concepts – demands separate treatment in a depth and breadth which are not possible within the scope of this essay.

All in all, I think it can be claimed that New Zealand writers today, whether Maori or Pakeha, have developed linguistically distinct “national” voices which are instrumental in articulating a distinct cultural identity. Coming to a similar conclusion, Deverson has pointed out that for all the common elements that New Zealand English shares with other national varieties, there does remain “a solid core of words with either Australasian or specific New Zealand reference and use; diversity of places and peoples precludes total linguistic uniformity, even in a ‘shrinking’ world. The words New Zealanders use will continue to articulate their own separate national and regional identity as well as their membership of a worldwide community of English speakers” (1998: xxviii).

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Maori or English? The Politics of Language in Patricia Grace’s *Baby No-Eyes*

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**Abstract**

Since the early 1970s, when a landmark language survey revealed that the Maori language was in serious danger of language death, a concerted effort has been made by Maori and the New Zealand government to arrest the decline of the language. Maori writer Patricia Grace has responded to recent political debates regarding the future of the Maori language in her writing, and she has also incorporated Maori vocabulary and grammatical patterns into her fiction as a means by which to inscribe Maori cultural identity and to challenge the univocal authority of English, the language of the British colonizers (who annexed Aotearoa New Zealand in 1840). This essay explores a variety of linguistic strategies in Grace’s recent novel *Baby No-Eyes* (1998) with reference to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theories on the subversive potential of bi- and polylingual textual practices.

**Throughout her literary career,** the New Zealand Maori writer Patricia Grace has demonstrated an acute awareness of recent political debates regarding the future of the Maori language. In the 1970s, when Grace’s early publications first appeared, a landmark language survey revealed that Maori was in serious danger of language death, and since that period, a concerted effort has been made by Maori and the

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1 The survey revealed that while most Maori still spoke their native language in the early decades of the twentieth century, a huge reduction in speakers had taken place by the 1970s: most native speakers were over thirty years of age, and only about two percent of children were growing up speaking Maori as a first language (McRae 1991: 2).
government in order to arrest the decline of the language. Grace has reflected on these efforts in some of her more recent fiction in particular, but her own childhood experiences have also informed her literary responses to the language debate. Born to a Maori father and Pakeha mother in 1937, at a time when the use of the Maori language was prohibited in school grounds, Patricia Grace grew up speaking English as her first language. During her childhood in Wellington, New Zealand’s capital, she was the only Maori student at the schools she attended, and she has discussed the way in which she was made uncomfortably aware of her racial ‘difference’ from her fellow students (Grace 1999: 65). Although she did not speak Maori at school or at home as a rule, Grace did, however, learn some Maori language from her father’s side of the family, and she points out that from her childhood, she has incorporated Maori words and phrases into her ‘English sentences’:

My first language is English, and my knowledge of Maori is limited. When I was a child playing with my cousins and interacting with my father’s family, we spoke all the time in English, but in our English sentences we sometimes used Maori words. (Grace 1999: 72)

This practice of code-switching between English and Maori is apparent throughout Grace’s fiction, and is used as a marker of Maori cultural identity particularly amongst middle-aged or older characters. In Grace’s earlier work, Maori words and phrases are usually explicated for the benefit of non-Maori-speaking readers, with the exception of those Maori words which are familiar to most New Zealanders. In Grace’s first novel *Mutuwhenua* (1978), and in her first three short-story collections, glossaries are provided at the end of the

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2 See, for example, Grace’s 1992 novel *Cousins*, where one of the central characters describes her involvement with kohanga reo (Maori language educational programmes for children); and *Baby No-Eyes* (1998), where an elderly woman reminisces about the way in which her cousin was repeatedly beaten and humiliated at school for speaking Maori and for failing to master the English language.

3 As Ranginui Walker points out, in 1905 the Inspector of Native Schools instructed teachers to encourage Maori children to speak English in school playgrounds, and this injunction was rapidly “translated into a general prohibition of the Maori language within school precincts.” For the next five decades, Walker reveals, the prohibition “was in some instances enforced by corporal punishment” (Walker 1990: 147). Significantly, Grace has pointed out that during her childhood, her Maori relatives – particularly the older ones – tended not to speak Maori in front of the children because it was generally believed at the time that it was more advantageous to speak English (Tausky 1991: 90).

4 These include words such as *kai* (food), *whanau* (family) and *wharenui* (ceremonial meeting house).

5 These include *Waiariki and other stories* (1975), *The Dream Sleepers and other stories* (1980), and *The Electric City and other stories* (1987).
text, but code-switching between English and Maori is also often elucidated within the texts themselves.\textsuperscript{6}

From the publication of Potiki in 1986, however, Grace has made far fewer concessions to non-Maori-speaking readers. Potiki contains a higher proportion of untranslated Maori than can be found in Grace’s earlier work, and her decision not to include a glossary at the end of the novel has held for all subsequent publications. Recent statements Grace has made on this subject make it clear that her decision is a political one, based on the argument that writers from ‘minority’ cultures should not have to ‘translate’ their cultures for the benefit of other readers:

[Writers] of small population cultures must have the same freedom as other writers to be true to what they know and true to who they are. I need to be free to write in the way that I judge best for the stories I want to tell. I want my writing to be able to stand with the rest of the writing of the world without encumbrances such as glossaries, italics, footnotes, asides, sentences in brackets, introductory notes, or explanatory paragraphs disguised as plot [...]. I do not italicize [sic] because the words are not “foreign” to me or my characters and are indigenous to my country. (Grace 1999: 71, 72)

Grace’s choice of terminology in this excerpt is significant: the commonly used phrase ‘minority culture’ is here replaced with ‘small population culture’, which escapes the marginalizing connotations of the former. Grace avoids ‘othering’ her language and culture by according the Maori language an authoritative semiotic status within her narratives.

This type of cultural and linguistic reorientation is evident in other ways within Grace’s work. For example, in addition to incorporating Maori words and phrases into her writing, Grace also transfers Maori grammatical patterns across into the spoken English used by her Maori characters. This process may be interpreted in terms of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theories on the subversive potential of bi- and polylingual textual practices. In Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (1986), Deleuze and Guattari describe the liminal status of the ‘minor’ writer, one who uses the language of a dominant culture or class but ‘detrimentalizes’ that majority language in a politically enabling and subversive manner. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the ‘minor’ writer, writing in a ‘major’ language,\textsuperscript{7} can still ‘make strange’ or defamiliarize that

\textsuperscript{6} This practice is particularly evident in Grace’s short story “The Dream,” for example, in which characters constantly switch between Maori and English during their conversations with one another (Collected Stories, 1994).

\textsuperscript{7} Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology reproduces the eurocentric assumptions which Grace eschews in her preference for the phrase ‘small population cultures’ over ‘minority cultures’; throughout this essay I will therefore place the terms ‘major’ and
language by allowing the ‘minor’ language – particularly its grammatical or conceptual categories – to infiltrate the syntax of the ‘major’ language, allowing ‘one function’ to be ‘played off against the other’ in order that ‘all the degrees of territoriality and relative deterritorialization’ may be ‘played out’ (26). According to this reasoning, the ‘minority’ language therefore ‘inhabits’ or ‘occupies’ the dominant language, undermining any sense of univocal authority. This formulation bears some resemblance to Julia Kristeva’s theory on the ‘irruption’ of the semiotic (a pre-linguistic, somatic form of communication associated with the mother–child union) into the symbolic (the patriarchal language-system). 8

Deleuze and Guattari argue that in using these disruptive linguistic techniques, the ‘minor’ writer’s objective is to shift the parameters of meaning in a political act which serves to represent the interests of the writer’s own culture. They outline three identifying characteristics of ‘minor’ literature which serve this objective: first, the ‘deterritorialization of language’ as described above; secondly, ‘the connection of the individual to a political immediacy’; and thirdly, ‘the collective assemblage of enunciation’ (18).

Such strategies are abundantly evident in Grace’s recent novel Baby No-Eyes (1998). As I will demonstrate further below, an examination of a sample of linguistic strategies and effects in the novel reveals a continual process of linguistic deterritorialization, and Grace’s use of narrative polyphony enacts a form of collective enunciation, fulfilling the third function which Deleuze and Guattari identify.

There is also a clear political framework within the novel. The narrative is structured around a central violent incident, based in fact, which Grace targets as a locus of cross-cultural conflict. The early sections of the novel unfold Grace’s fictionalized version of the event, describing a car accident in which a young Maori man is killed, while his pregnant wife Te Paania survives the collision but miscarries after being rushed to hospital. As Te Paania lies unconscious after her ordeal, her baby is thrown into a waste disposal bin by staff and retrieved (with reluctance) after Maori relatives come to claim the body. Hospital staff insist on performing an autopsy while the family waits; when the body is finally returned, the child’s eyes are missing. The horrified

‘minor’ in inverted commas to indicate that I am using the terms advisedly and with specific reference to Deleuze and Guattari’s arguments.

8 In Revolution in Poetic Language (1984), Kristeva attributes to certain expressive art forms the ability to evoke the semiotic by occupying an intermediary space which challenges the binary, rational significatory structures of the symbolic. As I will demonstrate further below, the ‘irruption’ of Maori grammatical patterns into the syntax of Grace’s novel Baby No-Eyes operates in a similar manner, disrupting the univocal authority of the English language, the dominant medium within the novel.
family members then request that the eyes be restored, and after further delays the eyes are returned without explanation or apology in a small food jar inside a supermarket bag. This grisly incident is based on a real event that occurred at a New Zealand hospital in 1991, and, in her author’s note, Grace draws attention to the factual basis of her narrative.\(^9\)

Grace uses the incident as a focus for considering differences between Maori and Pakeha attitudes to death and the body: the Pakeha hospital staff in the novel, for example, describe and treat the child’s body with clinical detachment,\(^10\) while the Maori characters are horrified and grieved by the mutilation, particularly in view of the fact that the head is considered to be tapu (sacred) in Maori culture.\(^11\) Te Paania, her lawyer friend Mahaki and other family members become convinced that the conduct of the hospital staff is based upon a racist disregard for Maori people and their culture. The hospital’s failure to understand Maori attitudes to health and the body is represented as a microcosmic sample of a wider cultural hegemony, and Baby’s mutilation generates a web of associations which extends through the various levels of the narrative. Mahaki, for example, associates Baby’s disfigurement with recent legal cases he has investigated regarding the desecration of indigenous burial grounds by scientists and archaeologists wishing to study the remains of grave occupants. He argues that like the tribal remains which have been plundered by researchers, Baby’s body has been treated as “a free resource like air and water” (188). Baby’s relatives also suspect that the hospital staff removed the child’s eyes for experimental or profit purposes (84).

\(^9\) While Grace chooses not to name the hospital responsible for the incident, she has freely discussed her feelings of shock and outrage after learning of the event through a lawyer who was present at the hospital along with the bereaved family members, and she states that she wrote Baby No-Eyes in order to ‘give that baby a life’. She points out that in the ‘original occurrence’, the child’s eyes were not placed inside a food jar; instead, they were ‘put directly’ into a supermarket bag by staff at the hospital (Keown 2000: 55). Grace’s strategy of crafting factual events into her fictional narratives has been evident throughout her literary career. Three of her most recent novels, Potiki (1986), Cousins (1992), and Baby No-Eyes (1998), incorporate or allegorize various prominent land disputes of recent decades, for example, while many of her short stories are based on personal experiences and observations (Hereniko 1999: 76).

\(^10\) The doctor who is sent out to speak to the family, for example, refers to the child as a “body” and a “corpse”, offering to “arrange disposal” if the family so wishes (71).

\(^11\) After receiving the child’s eyes inside the food jar, Kura compares the conduct of the hospital staff with pre-European cannibalistic ritual where, following violent clashes between warring tribes, warriors sought to demean the foe “by the eating of a heart or the swallowing of chiefly eyes, to destroy tapu by the cutting off of sacred heads, to desecrate by making people into food” (162). Kura argues that Baby, too, has been transformed “into food,” and reads the incident as a terrible insult to the family.
These polemical claims are not, however, the sole source of political energy in the novel: as I will argue further below, various narrative and linguistic strategies which Grace deploys within the text also serve a political function in their challenge to the authority of the English language, which ostensibly functions as the ‘major language’ within the novel. There are four narrators in the novel, including Te Paania herself, her second child Tawera, her mother Kura, and Mahaki. Each narrator gives an account of Baby’s mutilation and its aftermath in his/her own unique idiom, offering different perspectives on the shared trauma of the event.

Other voices are incorporated into the text through the mediating perspectives of these four central narrators, and certain of these voices enact the process of linguistic deterritorialization as described above. The speech of Mahaki’s grandfather, for example, offers a particularly striking example of the way in which Grace transfers Maori grammatical and conceptual codes across into the syntax of English, creating hybridized zones in which the two languages meet and overlap. The old man’s first language is Maori, therefore his English is ‘occupied’ and to some extent ordered by Maori grammatical structures. The following speech is representative:

There was this old man Hori who talk to me about Anapuke. Well that hill, that Anapuke, you don’t hardly talk about. It’s from the far, old times, when there’s only the Maori [...] You go there it’s trouble – No pathway and big swampland all around, and it’s far. Far to us childrens. (151)

The apparent grammatical irregularities in this passage may be accounted for by examining some fundamental rules of Maori grammar. Tense, for example, is expressed in Maori not through modification to the verb itself but rather through the choice of preceding verbal particle. Thus s/he goes is ‘kei te haere ia’ (particle marking present tense {kei te} + verb {haere} + pronoun {ia}), while s/he went is ‘i haere ia’ (particle marking past tense {i} + verb {haere} + pronoun {ia}). This grammatical rule may account for the fact that verbal inflections for person, number and tense are lost in the old man’s speech (hence, for example, “who talk” in the first sentence), although it could also be argued that such ‘errors’ are characteristic of the speech of those for whom English is a second language, whatever their cultural background.

More specifically, and particularly within the context of Maori oral narrative, verbal particles marking particular tenses are often replaced by the non-specific verbal particle ‘ka’, which precedes the verb but has no specific tense value in itself, merely marking the phrase in which it occurs as verbal (Harlow 1989: 202). Tense is judged from context; therefore if a speaker begins a story in the past tense (i+ verb), s/he can subsequently mark all subsequent verbs with ‘ka’ with the tacit understanding that the past tense is being
expressed. This may account for the fact that all the old man’s verbs except the first “was” are in the present tense in the above extract, although it is clear from the context that he is speaking of past events.

A further example of grammatical transference occurs in the old man’s treatment of mass and count nouns, which are not differentiated in Maori. For example, ‘a book’ and ‘some food’ would be expressed using the same indefinite article ‘he’ (as in ‘he pukapuka’ and ‘he kai’), although in English ‘book’ is a count noun and ‘food’ is a mass noun. In the novel, the old man demonstrates this practice when he expresses his suspicion that bio-prospectors are desecrating a burial site on his ancestral land:

so that they can be known for putting a Maori in a sheep or rising a Maori up from a dust. (186)

Here the count noun “sheep” and the mass noun “dust” are both preceded by the indefinite article, indicating the old man’s reversion to Maori grammatical patterns. Te Paania’s grandfather makes a similar ‘mistake’ as he speaks to Te Paania about her dreams and fantasies that her dead child is still with her, ‘breathing in [her] ear’ (83). Te Paania’s grandfather’s explanation for Baby’s posthumous presence is as follows:

She got to hang around for a while so we know she’s a mokopuna, not a rubbish, not a kai. (83)

The final part of the sentence, which code-switches between English and Maori, marks the mass noun “rubbish” with the indefinite article, as Mahaki’s grandfather did with the mass noun “dust”. The last phrase “not a kai”, which translates literally as ‘not a food’, evinces the same construction.

At times, Mahaki’s grandfather’s speech also mimics the rhythms of Maori oratory, which, rather like the biblical language of the Old Testament, makes frequent use of repetition for rhetorical purposes. During an impassioned speech to Pakeha council workers investigating a land claim, for example, he switches into this repetitive style:

I come from the ground I tell you. No need to disturb the ancestors to tell you that. I come from the ground and the heavens. I come from the ground and the heavens in the most most faraway place. I come from the ground and the heavens in the longest longest time ago. I come from the ground and the heavens from the place deep deep felt in my heart, and my tongue come with me. (156)

As Mahaki points out, the old man’s oration is lost on the council workers; they “[don’t] have a clue what he [is] going on about” (156). In this exchange, Grace produces an estrangement effect: the old man’s speech is not intelligible to the council staff, although both parties are speaking the same lan-
guage. Grace creates a distinct expressive mode which blends Maori and English vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and her use of Maori oral rhetorical patterns subverts the univocal authority of the English language, the dominant medium of written expression in the novel.

This intersection between written expression and oral enunciation occurs at various moments throughout the novel, shifting the narrative mode from what often appears to be conventional first-person ‘written’ narration into the realm of oral immediacy. For example, chapter seven forms a section of Kura’s share of the narrative, and most of the chapter (which recounts her role in the recovery of Baby’s body) is conveyed through first-person narration. Partway through the chapter, however, Kura suddenly switches to second person narration, addressing not the reader, but members of her own family:

I was given this task while the others were occupied with Shane. I kept watch by Te Paania until you, her family, arrived. When the moment was right I talked to you about the baby. It was settled. You all agreed it was my job to see to Baby. I made sure I wasn’t taking any rights away from anyone. (59-60)

Here it becomes apparent that Kura is narrating for her family, not for the reader; the immediacy of oral delivery disrupts the rhythms of the first-person narration and simultaneously estranges the reader. Further, in the next chapter, it becomes clear that these words are being (or have been) spoken at the joint funeral ceremony for Baby and her father Shane, again creating a sense of double – or in this case triple – enunciation. In this chapter, Te Paania reports and repeats the very words Kura uses (or has used) when describing a Pakeha doctor’s clinical attitude to Baby’s death, thereby creating a Chinese-box effect and drawing the reader’s attention back to the previous chapter, where Kura quoted the doctor’s dehumanizing references to Baby as “body” and “corpse” (61).

Kura’s narrative seems therefore to exist in three dimensions: first, there are the words on the page itself (in first person); secondly, there is the immediacy of oral articulation as Kura’s mode of address shifts to second person; and finally, Te Paania’s repetition ten pages later re-creates a separate arena of immediate articulation as the words are spoken to the funeral congregation. In this way the narrative structure of the novel mimetically represents the Maori ritual of whaikorero, where different orators speak in turn on the marae. The effect is startling and unsettling.

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12 The marae is the ceremonial courtyard or space situated in front of the whare whakairo (carved meeting house), a focal point in the traditional Maori community.
The clue to these strategies, however, is given early in the novel, where Tawera reveals that the various ‘stories’ in the novel represent a collective enunciation:

‘All right Mum,’ I said, ‘tell us about yourself and about this sister of mine who has no eyes. Stolen? How come?’ ‘She died in an accident,’ Mum said. ‘If we’re going to tell about the accident we’ll have to tell everything.’ ‘We?’ ‘Gran Kura and me, and all of us in our different ways. You too, you’ll have to do your part. It could take years.’ ‘All right Mum and Gran Kura and all of us, let’s tell everything. Tell about ourselves, and about this sister without eyes who’s already four years old. I know there’s plenty of time but let’s get cracking.’ (19-20)

This passage is a cipher to the text in its entirety, which not only mimics the tradition of whaikorero but also points towards Maori attitudes to history as a dynamic process which is articulated and rearticulated from various individual and tribal perspectives.13 In Grace’s novel, each speaker transforms shared knowledge of particular historical details into an individual narrative; Grace therefore moves beyond Bakhtinian polyphony and towards Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of a collective enunciation: through its network of linguistic strategies, the novel becomes a performative and communal enunciative act.14

Grace’s use of multiple narrators therefore releases semiotic reverberations which militate against any sense of a unitary, centralized form of representative authority, complementing the disruption of syntactic structures as enacted by her intermixing of grammatical codes. Kristeva has suggested that this type of linguistic experimentalism releases revolutionary energies, but she has argued that the disruptive energies of the semiotic – which invades the syntactic structures of the symbolic – and the practical manifestations of political activism are almost always mutually exclusive:

The ramification of capitalist society makes it almost impossible for the signifying process to attack material and social obstacles, objective constraints, oppressive entities, and institutions directly. As a consequence, the signifying

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13 The Maori writer Witi Ihimaera, for example, has commented on this phenomenon: “[There] is no such thing as History. Rather there are many histories and, even within the Maori framework, this is acknowledged. Each iwi, each hapu has a different, or, rather, tribal approach to their histories which are more parallel observations having parallel facts and parallel perceptions on the same factual events. These are further informed by the holistic frameworks of the unreal as well as the real” (Ihimaera 1991: 53–54).

14 Jean–Pierre Durix also discusses the concept of communal enunciation with specific reference to Potiki (Durix 1997: 284).
process comes to the fore in the matrix of enunciation, and, through it, radiates toward the other components of the space of production. (Kristeva 1982: 105)

In Grace’s writing, however, the signifying process enacts both a direct and subtextual attack upon material and social obstacles: in her exploration of recent political and cultural developments in New Zealand race-relations politics (including language politics), for example, Grace critiques these obstacles directly; however, one must look to Grace’s linguistic craft in order to locate the political fulcrum of her work, as Elisabeth Köster suggests in her evaluation of *Potiki*:

> Silence has become a strategy of social domination, as silence engenders silence. Rather than echoing the legacy of colonialism through self-negation, the Maori must assert their ability as creators. [...] *Potiki* [...] posits that social change must be stimulated through questioning the authority of colonial discourse and producing testaments to resistance. (Köster 1993: 93)

*Baby-No-Eyes*, like *Potiki*, is a testament to resistance. If silence is complicity, Grace seeks to end the silence and to challenge the grammatical and social structures which have enforced that silence. The interface between the Maori and English languages in her writing becomes a site of resistance, an expression of political awareness and anger; Grace subverts the representative and constitutive power of the dominant English language by challenging, disrupting and transcending its fundamental rules of construction.

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Language, Humour and Ethnic Identity Marking in New Zealand English

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Abstract

Members of groups who are ‘out of power’ make use of a wide variety of linguistic and pragmatic strategies to signal and assert their group identity, and to subvert the pervasive influence of the dominant group. These range from standard phonological and lexical variables, through to discursive strategies such as code-mixing, code-switching, narrative and humour. This essay focuses, first, on three salient linguistic features which systematically serve to index Maori ethnicity: namely, the distinctive prosodic pattern usually referred to as a syllable-timed rhythm, the use of the interactional pragmatic particle *eh*, and the incorporation of Maori lexical items in predominantly English discourse. The essay then provides some more detailed qualitative analyses of instances of a pragmatic strategy which occurred exclusively, in the samples analysed, in interactions among Maori New Zealanders: namely, the use of humour as a strategy for marking the ethnic boundary between Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders. The data-base for the analysis is drawn from the Wellington Spoken Corpus of New Zealand English and the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project Corpus. The analysis supports the claim that linguistic and discursive strategies for marking group boundaries are particularly apparent in the interactions of minority or subordinate groups.
1. Introduction

Language is an important means of indexing social identities such as gender, ethnicity and professional identities. In any interaction, participants unavoidably signal and dynamically construct their complex social identities through their talk and behaviour. Social identities are systematically produced through, and embedded in, everyday forms of language use, and typically particular linguistic forms ‘index’ certain social meanings, including ethnic and gender identities (Ochs 1993). In other words, in everyday social interaction, speakers draw on participants’ knowledge of the social significance of different linguistic forms to ‘construct’ a range of different social identities, and to express different facets of a particular social identity in particular social contexts (see Holmes 1997a, 1998a).

Using intergroup theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979) as a basis for exploring this notion, Meyerhoff and Niedzielski (1994) propose that individual identity may be conceived as a complex of interacting aspects of different group or social identities. In any interaction, we are continually constructing different facets of our complex social identities. Hence, while all facets of an individual’s social identity are potentially relevant resources, individuals tend to present or focus on particular aspects of their social identity at different points in particular interactions, sometimes emphasizing ethnicity (Gallois & Callan 1981), sometimes gender (e.g., Meyerhoff 1996), sometimes power, authority or professional status (e.g., Holmes, Stubbe & Vine 1999), and sometimes organizational or institutional identity (e.g., Gioia & Thomas 1996).

Within New Zealand English, speakers’ resources for constructing different and complex social identities, for indexing Maori ethnicity or female gender, for instance, include linguistic variants – prosodic, phonological and lexical choices – as well as more pragmatic strategies and discursive resources, such as code-mixing, code-switching, narrative and humour. These resources can be used to consolidate and reinforce existing identity boundaries, locating a speaker as a paradigmatic exemplar of a particular group (see, for example, Holmes 1997a, 1997b). Alternatively, they can be manipulated to test or stretch the boundaries, and implicitly resist the normative tendencies which such boundaries represent. In this essay, we first identify salient features of sociolinguistic norms associated with a particular ethnic

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1 This research was made possible by grants from the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. We thank other members of the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) team for assistance and support with transcription. We also express our appreciation to those who allowed their interactions to be recorded and analysed as part of the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WCSNZE) and LWP databases.
identity in New Zealand English: namely, New Zealand Maori. The essay focuses on ways in which Maori New Zealanders make use of sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic resources to index their distinctive ethnicity, and in some cases to indicate dissatisfaction with or resistance to the dominant societal norms. In particular, the essay illustrates the function of humour as a boundary-marking discourse strategy used especially by groups such as Maori New Zealanders, who are in many social contexts ‘out of power’, in order to signal their awareness of salient ethnic boundaries, and in some cases to explicitly challenge the norms of the dominant group.²

The database for the analysis is drawn from the Wellington Spoken Corpus of New Zealand English (WCSNZE), and the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) Corpus. The WCSNZE consists of one million words of spoken New Zealand English collected in a wide range of social contexts. The contributors include women and men from a range of age groups and different social and ethnic backgrounds. (See Holmes, Vine & Johnson 1998 for a detailed description).³ The LWP Corpus currently consists of more than 1500 interactions collected from workplaces including government departments, commercial organizations, small businesses and factories (see Holmes 2000 for a detailed description).

2. Signalling ethnic identity in New Zealand English

2.1 Brief overview

Maori people are the indigenous people of New Zealand and constitute approximately 15% of the total population of 3.7 million (Statistics New Zealand 2001). Over the last ten years a considerable body of evidence has accumulated describing features of a distinct ethnic variety of New Zealand English, “Maori English”, and distinguishing it from the English of Pakeha New Zealanders (see Bell 2000, Holmes 1997c, Stubbe 1999, Stubbe & Holmes 2000).⁴ Many features which characterize Maori English (henceforth

² While the main argument of this essay is original, we have drawn for exemplification on material previously published in Holmes 1997c, Holmes & Hay 1997, Stubbe & Holmes 2000, and Holmes & Marra forthcoming a).
³ The WCSNZE is available on CD-ROM with the Wellington Corpus of Written New Zealand English from the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. See http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/.
⁴ The label ‘Maori English’ is used here as a useful shorthand to refer to a continuum of distinctively Maori registers or styles characterized by a range of features which vary according to the setting, the social and linguistic background of the participants, and the relative importance of signalling one’s Maori identity in a given speech context (see Benton 1991, Holmes 1997c). The term ‘Pakeha’ refers to New Zealanders of European origin.
ME) can be attributed to the influence of the Maori language, or to cultural differences in Maori norms of discourse. For instance, there are several phonological, prosodic, and syntactic features which are either distinctive to Maori speakers, or which occur more frequently in Maori than in Pakeha speech (Holmes 1997c), and thus acquire social significance as indices of ethnic identity. Maori people in general also use Maori lexical items more frequently than Pakeha do, often going well beyond the Maori vocabulary with which most Pakeha speakers of NZE are familiar (Benton 1991: 195, Deverson 1996, Macalister 1999, Kennedy 2001). There are also paralinguistic features, such as a high pitched giggle strongly associated especially with vernacular varieties of ME, and exploited to great effect by the late comedian Billy T. James in his constructions of an immediately recognisable stereotype of a rural Maori male.5

In the area of discourse norms, there are also a number of features which may distinguish Maori from Pakeha interaction. For example, Maori conversationalists sometimes seem (from a Pakeha perspective) to leave a great deal unstated, relying on implicit contextualization to convey their intended meaning. Conversely, there seems to be an assumption that the listener is providing an adequate response in many contexts by simply attending to what the speaker is saying, as opposed to providing the explicitly supportive verbal feedback which is the norm in Pakeha conversation (Stubbe 1998: 276). Finally, in this brief summary, while ME and Maori discourse strategies are the most obvious resources available for signalling Maori ethnicity, the Maori language itself constitutes an additional resource for some. While proficiency in te reo Maori is relatively limited, and sadly declining,6 those with even limited proficiency tend to draw on this in appropriate, usually Maori, socio-cultural contexts. Use of Maori words and phrases in English is therefore another resource for signalling Maori identity.

2.2 Three salient features of Maori English

In this section, we briefly describe just three features which are widely used and very salient features of ME, and which serve as important resources for signalling Maori ethnicity: first, a distinctive prosodic pattern typically labelled

5 The use of an exaggerated stereotype as a source of entertainment is a well-attested feature of minority group humour (Ziv 1988, Davies 1990).

6 Data from the 1998 language survey conducted by the Maori Language Commission (Ministry of Maori Development 1998) indicated that there are roughly 10,000 to 20,000 fluent speakers of Maori (representing approximately 4% of the total Maori population over 16 years of age), compared to an estimated 70,000 in the 1970s. On the five level scale used, the majority of Maori speakers (63.2%) were at the lowest level of fluency.
“syllable-timed” English, secondly the use of the pragmatic particle *eh*, and thirdly, the incorporation of Maori vocabulary into predominantly English conversational discourse.

### 2.2.1 Syllable-timed English

One widely recognized and almost stereotypical feature of ME is a distinctive prosodic pattern, generally described as a more “syllable-timed” rhythm, which clearly distinguishes the most colloquial varieties of ME from the more stress-timed Pakeha English (PE). Using a sample from the WCSNZE, Helen Ainsworth and Janet Holmes analysed the speech of ten young Maori and ten young Pakeha conversationalists (Holmes & Ainsworth 1996). The results showed that all speakers used more reduced vowels than full vowels in unstressed syllables, but Maori speakers used considerably more full vowels than Pakeha speakers overall (31.6% vs 18.6%), a statistically significant difference. This tendency to pronounce small grammatical words in unstressed positions with full vowels more often than is customary in stress-timed English contributes to the impression that ME is more syllable-timed than PE. Moreover, reassuringly, analysing the same data using more sophisticated instrumental measurement techniques, and a more comprehensive measure of the prosodies of syllable-timing, Warren (1998) confirmed the reliability of this finding of prosodic difference in the English of the Maori and Pakeha speakers.

Like many other features of ME, this feature may reflect the influence of the Maori language. Maori is mora-timed – a rhythmic pattern which is more similar to syllable timing than to stress timing. Further analysis of the distribution of this feature suggested that, although it distinguished ME from PE regardless of whether the Maori people speak te reo Maori, this distinctive prosody tended to occur more often in the speech of those with proficiency in Maori. So proficient Maori speakers used even higher levels of syllable-timed English than those who spoke little or no Maori (39% vs 30% for young Maori). However, and importantly, the levels of this feature in the speech of Maori young people who were familiar with Maori, though not proficient in the language, were significantly higher than in the speech of young Pakeha, suggesting that it serves as a salient marker of Maori ethnic identity. Hence a

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7 As a measure of syllable-timing, we counted the numbers of full for reduced vowels in function words like *of, to, for* etc., a strategy suggested by Laurie Bauer (see 1994: 414). But also see Warren (1998) for a discussion and Buchanan (2000) for an attempt to operationalize more sophisticated measures.

8 In particular, neither a mora-timed language nor a syllable-timed language are characterized by vowel reduction, while speakers of prototypical stress-timed languages do reduce vowels in unstressed position.
syllable-timed rhythm appears to be a sociolinguistically sensitive feature of ME, varying in frequency according to the background of the speaker, and the relative importance of signalling one’s Maori identity.9

The sample used in this analysis consisted of middle class well-educated Maori people. The kind of ME used by such a group must be considered a relatively standard variety. It seems likely that salient features occur in even higher frequencies in more vernacular varieties of ME, and in more informal Maori contexts (eg, in the marae kitchen, at the local pub in some areas, etc).10 It also seems likely that such features will function more prominently in contexts where language serves to mark social and ethnic boundaries, a point we return to below.

2.2.2 The pragmatic tag ‘eh’

A number of recent studies have investigated the social and stylistic distribution in NZE of addressee-oriented pragmatic devices such as you know (in utterances such as she was really kind you know) and eh (in utterances such as we’ve all gotta go one day eh) (see Bell 2000, Stubbe & Holmes 1995, Meyerhoff 1994, Stubbe 1999).11 Although these forms have a common discourse function of establishing or maintaining solidarity or connection between speaker and listener, their patterns of use can be shown to systematically index a range of social categories and contextual factors, including ethnicity (Stubbe & Holmes 2000: 253–54).

The first systematic investigation of the functions and distribution of eh analysed 245 instances in data from the Wellington Social Dialect Survey (Holmes, Bell & Boyce 1991). Meyerhoff (1994) demonstrated significantly different levels of use of this feature in the speech of Maori vs Pakeha: specifically, in interviews with a person of the same gender and ethnicity, Maori people (and especially males) used eh significantly more often than Pakeha New Zealanders (average indices of 34.2 for Maori vs 7.4 for Pakeha).

This pattern has been confirmed by a number of subsequent studies. An analysis of the distribution of eh in the conversation section of the WCSNZE

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9 This suggestion is supported by Bell’s detailed analysis (2000) of the English of Duncan, a young man who used a relatively marked variety of vernacular Maori English and who was very aware of his Maori identity.

10 A marae is a traditional meeting area for Maori people which generally includes a meeting house and a dining hall.

11 In NZE, eh forms the nucleus of a tone unit, and typically occurs with falling intonation, features which seem to distinguish it from eh in other English dialects (cf Bailey 1983).
indicated that the frequency index for *eh* for all Maori speakers was almost three times as high as that for all Pakeha speakers (38 vs 13), while the index score for the young Maori men in the corpus was 120, a very high rate for such a perceptually salient variable (Stubbe and Holmes 2000: 254). Analysing a carefully matched sample of conversational speech from young and middle-aged contributors, Stubbe (1999) found that *eh* was nine times as frequent in the speech of the Maori as the Pakeha speakers (average indices of 36 vs 4). Again, the Maori males (and especially the young Maori males) used *eh* significantly more often than any other group. This pattern was also evident in Bell and Johnson’s (1997) detailed analysis of the speech of four interviewees.

The prevalence of *eh* in the speech of Maori people may reflect the fact that *eh* functions in English in a way similar to the way the particle *ne* functions in Maori (W. Bauer 1997: 426). In other words this may be another example of a feature whose origins can be traced to the Maori language, although it is now extensively used by many New Zealanders, both Maori and Pakeha, who have very varied amounts of contact with the Maori language. It is, however, strongly associated with ME by many New Zealanders, and, as Meyerhoff (1994) points out, it clearly functions as a marker of Maori ethnic identity, especially for Maori men.

### 2.2.3 Maori lexical items in Maori English

It has been commonly observed that, regardless of proficiency in the Maori language, Maori people generally use more lexical items from the Maori language in English than do Pakeha. Analysis of the material in the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WCSNZE), for instance, clearly shows that there is more Maori vocabulary in the Maori interactions than the Pakeha. Kennedy (2001: 74) reports that “speakers who identified themselves as having Maori ethnicity used over 17 Maori words per 1000 words when speaking English, while Pakeha speakers used only two words of Maori origin per 1000 words.” Moreover, Maori speakers not only use more Maori word tokens overall, they also have a wider Maori vocabulary which they use when speaking English. In other words, Pakeha tend to re-use a few Maori words, whereas Maori people use a wider variety of Maori words in their

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12 The total number of tokens of *eh* for each group was converted into frequency index scores by calculating the rate of occurrence over 10,000 words, thus allowing valid whole number comparisons, adjusted for differences in overall sample size. The conversation section of the WCSNZE includes 50,000 words from Maori speakers, and 250,000 words from Pakeha speakers, approximately reflecting the ratio of Maori to Pakeha in the New Zealand population (Stubbe & Holmes 2000: 278).
English.\(^{13}\) This is even more true when speakers are using ME in a ‘Maori-friendly’ context. However, for obvious methodological reasons relating to the problem of adequate sample sizes and frequencies of occurrence, this is the area where there has been least systematic study.

In one recent study, Bellett (1995) showed that New Zealanders who identify as Maori tend to both know and (claim to) use a much higher number of Maori words in the context of NZE than those who identify as Pakeha or European. Analysing written data, Jeanette King (1995) found that 8% of the words used in newsletters addressed to those involved in Kohanga Reo (Maori language pre-schools) were Maori lexical items. She also commented, more anecdotally, that the pattern in the newsletters reflects “the spoken English employed by whanau members in meetings and in social situations outside the Kohanga” (1995: 52).\(^{14}\) She suggests that the use of a relatively high proportion of Maori vocabulary, serves as a solidarity marker among those with a commitment to the revitalization of Maori language and culture. Bell & Johnson (1997) similarly report that Maori lexical items often co-occurred with Maori topics along with clusters of eh in their interviews.

More extended sequences of code switching into Maori from English also underline shared ethnicity, as well as indicating a supportive attitude towards the Maori language itself (cf Jeanette King 1995). Obviously, this strategy is dependent on some degree of proficiency in Maori. The following example (from Stubbe & Holmes 2000: 255–56) provides a simple illustration of this point. Two men are establishing common ground by talking about the rural area where they lived as children (Maori words are in boldface).

**Excerpt 1**\(^ {15}\)

**Context:**

Two middle-aged Maori male friends chatting in the home of one of them

1. Rew:  Tikitiki /well we’re\ across the river from there and
2. Nga:  /ae [‘yes’]/
3. Rew:  if we wanted to go to Tikitiki we had to go

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\(^{13}\) See Kennedy & Yamazaki (2000) for information on the frequency of Maori words in the Wellington Written Corpus of New Zealand English.

\(^{14}\) ‘Whanau’ is a Maori word for an extended family group (Metge 1995: 16), but it is used here to refer specifically to the socially cohesive group of people involved in running the Maori pre-school.

\(^{15}\) All names used in examples have been changed to protect informants’ identities. We have done minor editing of original transcripts in places for ease of reading, eg, overlapping speech and vocalizations are not indicated where they are not relevant to the point being made. A series of dots indicates that a section of the interaction has been omitted. See Appendix for transcription conventions.
right round to Ruatoria
4. and back out again
5. Nga: that’s right yeah oh well we actually went
right around to Ruatoria
6. and down we didn’t cross across ++
7. *te awa rere haere te- too koutou taniwha i teeraa waa*
8. ['the river flowed over the taniwha
(legendary monster residing in deep water) there’]
9. Rew: in winter eh
10. Nga: *mo te wai- tino hohonu te wai*
11. ['because of the water - the water was very deep’]

The use of Maori words and phrases by Ngata (lines 2, 7, 10) when replying to Rewi’s comments carries very strong positive affect, much more than would be the case if the same meanings had been expressed in English. Rewi’s use of *eh* (line 9) in his response also serves to signal Maori ethnicity, as noted above, and strengthens the sense of solidarity or connection created by Ngata’s use of Maori (Stubbe 1998: 279).

Nicknames and kinship-related terms deriving from Maori cultural norms are additional ways in which Maori ethnic identity may be signalled lexically. Terms of address such as *mate, bro, sis, cuz, nanny, aunty,* and *uncle* are frequent in conversations in relaxed social contexts between Maori family and friends, and serve to index Maori identity by reflecting Maori language and cultural norms within NZE (see Johnston & Robertson 1993: 122).

Studies of ME have established a wide range of features which in combination characterize this variety, and distinguish it from PE in New Zealand. For the most part the two varieties are distinguished predominantly by the relative frequency of particular features rather than by distinguishing features which occur only in one variety or the other. In this section, we have briefly described three features which are arguably among the most distinctive and salient features of ME. For Maori who wish to assert their distinctive ethnicity, these features are obviously particularly important linguistic resources.16

In the next section, we examine the way Maori New Zealanders use socio-pragmatic resources, and particularly humour, to construct their ethnic identity as ‘different’ from the majority group, and to indicate areas of resistance to dominant Pakeha norms.

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16 Interestingly, however, these features seem to be precisely those which are most obviously being ‘colonized’: ie, gradually adopted by Pakeha who mix more frequently with Maori in Maori contexts and subsequently gradually integrated into many other varieties of Pakeha New Zealand English.
3. Humour as a strategy for constructing social identity

While researchers typically draw attention to the complexity and fuzziness of social concepts such as ethnicity and gender (Bayard 1995, Eckert 1989), analysis of everyday talk indicates that conversationalists frequently draw sharp social boundaries between groups using criteria which become salient in the course of a specific interaction. Humour provides a useful means of identifying such criteria because it functions as a source of insight into cultural attitudes and values (eg, Chiaro 1992). What is considered amusing is affected by cultural values; different cultural backgrounds and beliefs influence the kinds of things perceived as humorous. In the following excerpt two young Maori men make just this point.

**Excerpt 2**

*Context:*

Two young Maori male friends chatting in their workplace over lunch

1. Mike: ’cause the other thing– you’ve ever found
   like you talk to a Pakeha
2.    and you trying to tell a joke and they don’t get it
3. Kingi: yeah
4. Mike: but when you talk to a Maori /they do\
5. Kingi: /and they get it\ yeah yeah
6. Mike: yeah
7. Kingi: and that- the whole way you tell your jokes as well
8. Mike: YEAH [in a high pitched voice]: it’s how it goes man:
9.    and there’s like yeah still a lot of things like that

These young men here signal their awareness that differences in the use of English by Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders extend beyond linguistic features such as the use of Maori vocabulary items. They suggest that Maori humour is fundamentally different from Pakeha, both in content (what the different groups find amusing or “get”) and style (“the whole way you tell your jokes”).

Many earlier humour researchers have noted that humour performs important cultural functions, such as enforcing social norms and expressing cultural identity (eg. Limon 1977, O’Quin & Aronoff 1981, Duncan 1985, Pratt 1998). It is a readily available resource which many of the Maori contributors to our corpora draw on in order to construct themselves as ethnically different from mainstream Pakeha. One very specific strategy adopted for this purpose is humour which focusses on, identifies and emphasizes ethnic group boundaries. Minority groups are generally much more sensitive to areas of difference between their norms and those of other groups than are those in power.
Powerful groups take their norms for granted; they are ‘given’, assumed, unquestioned and even unconscious. Members of minority groups are generally much more attuned to areas of cultural difference between their own patterns of interaction and those of the majority group. In many areas they move between different norms on a daily basis, and, although they may not often consciously reflect on these regular adjustments, they can be brought into focus by particular circumstances or for particular purposes such as humour.

The use of humour by Maori people to indicate awareness of, and even to draw attention to, their ethnic distinctiveness was very apparent in our corpora. Three examples will serve to illustrate this point. In the first example (Excerpt 3), two Maori males are discussing the American film *Geronimo*, and wondering why it had a particularly short season in New Zealand. Kingi points out that there were very few “whities” in the film, and suggests this is the reason that the New Zealand public had not liked it. The discussion reflects the market reality that New Zealanders are numerically and economically dominant, and thus more influential in determining what gets shown at the cinema.

**Excerpt 3**

*Context:*
Conversation between two young Maori male friends in their workplace over lunch

1. Mike: yeah it’s good I don’t know why they stopped it eh
2. I suppose people just didn’t (like) Geronimo big deal
3. Kingi: well -pparently it didn’t have enough whites in it /[laughs]/
4. Mike: /[laughs]/
5. Kingi: no lead role eh
6. Mike: [laughs] [drawls] yeah
7. Kingi: what can you do
8. Mike: well that’s true

This excerpt clearly draws a boundary between mainstream ‘white’ New Zealanders and Maori New Zealanders. The humour emerges gradually in the form of ironic comments which reflect and emphasize cultural difference, and reinforce the distance between these Maori men and the *whities*, as they label them, a semantic category with a clearly pejorative meaning (cf ‘white people’ or ‘Europeans’). Speculating on why the film *Geronimo* was taken off

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17 The example is taken from Holmes & Hay (1997: 140), which provides a distributional analysis of humour in Maori and Pakeha conversation, and a fuller discussion of the cultural context. The more detailed pragmatic analysis is taken from Holmes & Marra (forthcoming a). See p. 10.
the circuit so early, Mike suggests (line 2) that people just didn’t like the lead character Geronimo. While theoretically there are many reasons why a character might be unlikeable, Kingi provides an explanation in terms of ethnic group or even race (line 3), forcing a re-interpretation of Mike’s term people as referring to ‘other’: ie, in this context non-Maori: the people who did not like the film must be those who considered that their own ethnic group was inadequately represented. This is a politically charged suggestion, since the issue of who constitute the people of New Zealand is the subject of ongoing debate in the country. The irony derives from the fact that in New Zealand it is Maori who are under-represented in almost every prestigious sphere. Mike laughs and Kingi pushes the point further, suggesting whities do not like films where the lead is not a white person (line 5). The irony is maintained with the nicely ambiguous, mock-despair comment what can you do? (line 7), and the equally sarcastically expressed ‘polite’ response, well that’s true, utterances which mimic the kinds of comments whities might make about the infiltration of dark faces into white domains, whilst also at another level reflecting Maori exasperation at the short run of a film with which their ethnic group could identify. Irony serves here as an effective strategy for drawing the boundary between Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders. It is supported by the skilful use of distancing devices, such as the choice of the pejorative label whities and the redefinition of people to mean ‘non-Maori’ in this context, as well as the sarcastic tone of voice which becomes particularly overt in the final two lines (7–8). The resistance to marginalization expressed in the content of this excerpt is reinforced by the use of salient features of vernacular ME, including distinctive pronunciation, syllable-timed rhythms, and two instances of the pragmatic tag eh (lines 1, 5).

The second example of ethnic-identity-marking humour is taken from a workplace meeting between two Maori men who work for a government department (Holmes & Marra 2002). The two men are on very good terms, as indicated by the relaxed and informal style of their interaction. In Excerpt 4, they laugh at the problems caused for the white dominant bureaucracy because Vince signs his names in variable form on different occasions.

Excerpt 4

Context:
Meeting of programme assessment review team
1. Vin: I’ve never had a standard signature eh bro
2. and ( ) got into trouble recently [whispers]: fuck:
3. Aid: over your /signature\
4. Vin: /I think it\ was er
5. Aid: cheques and stuff?
6. Vin: [laughs]: yeah: [laughs] [laughs]:
7. it’s just on everything: your passports and bullshit like that
8. Aid: well that’s hooahaa [‘useless, pesky’] paperwork eh

Shared Maori identity is asserted in almost every aspect of this short excerpt. Ethnicity is clearly linguistically signalled in the ME pronunciation of sounds, the syllable-timed prosody, by the use of the tag eh (lines 1,8) and the address term bro (line 1), which is much more frequent in the speech of young Maori than Pakeha New Zealanders. It is most explicit in the choice of the very Maori term hooahaa (line 8) to express irritation with Pakeha bureaucracy.

End tags are another discourse feature characterizing relaxed colloquial conversation. The end tag and stuff (line 5) has a dismissive effect: the speaker indicates that he considers such concerns unimportant. This derogatory tone is picked up and emphasized by Vince in his end tag and bullshit like that (line 7). The subversive humour constructs a bond of ethnic solidarity between the two Maori men, while simultaneously undermining the status and institutional authority of the dominant group. The two men collude in constructing a picture of themselves as victims of excessive bureaucracy and paperwork: they position themselves very clearly on one side of the fence with Pakeha bureaucrats on the other. Moreover, the excessive demands of the Pakeha bureaucracy and the attendant paperwork it generates is an ongoing and recurring source of humour in this team; this short excerpt is just one example of many where this recurring topic constructs team solidarity and cohesion while clearly indexing Maori ethnic identity.

Excerpt 4 also illustrates how humour may serve to express the tensions which many Maori feel in “Pakeha” work domains. There are numerous examples in our corpora of conversations between Maori who work in government departments or institutions, expressing frustration at the extent to which majority group: ie, Pakeha, norms go unquestioned in their workplaces. They identify a range of problems including incomprehension of what is perceived as Pakeha bureaucratic jargon and red tape, lack of understanding by Pakeha authorities of Maori ways of resolving problems and disagreements, and complications caused by Maori using unorthodox means to achieve their objectives – themes which are also evident in excerpts 5 and 6.

The third example of ethnic identity marking through humour nicely illustrates the latter point, while also demonstrating again the effectiveness of humour as a subversive strategy, challenging and undermining out-group norms and values (cf Coser 1960, Holmes & Marra 2002). In Excerpt 5, two young Maori men are planning a haangi, a traditional Maori method of cooking over hot stones in a pit in the ground for which they need a fire permit from the city council (Holmes 1998b). Hinemoa is a relative who works for the council, and this interaction fantasizes an exchange with her which first
invites her to the meal, and then asks her to provide the fire permit required to cook the food.

Excerpt 5

Context:
Conversation between two young Maori male friends at the home of one of them [Earlier in this essay, Matt and Hone are referred to as Mike and Kingi. Our choice of pseudonyms is consistent with a previous published analysis of this example – see note 2.]

1. Hone: cos you might have to get a permit eh from the council eh
2. Mat: city council
3. Hone: yeah
4. Mat: /[laughs]/
5. Hone: /hello Hinemoa/
6. Mat: /[funny voice]: hello:\
7. Hone: /knock knock knock\
8. Mat: /[laughs]/
9. Hone: /[laughs]//yes we’ve\ just got this haangi [glossed above]
10. Mat: /(yeah)/
11. Hone: you want to come around /to a haangi\
12. Mat: /yeah yeah yeah\
13. Hone: want to come round to a haangi
14. Mat: /(yeah perfect)/
15. Hone: /two\ things [laughs]
16. Mat: /[laughs]
17. Hone: and now here’s the application for a fire
18. Mat: yeah
19. Hone: sign here

Kinship or extended family relationships are central to the Maori lifestyle and patterns of interaction, and Maori people typically place a very high value on such relationships, and take very seriously the mutual obligations these entail (Metge 1995). The notion of allowing bureaucratic rules to over-ride social, and especially kinship, commitments is an alien and distinctively Pakeha one from this perspective. This is one basis for the humour in this excerpt which turns on differences between Maori and Pakeha ways of doing things, including how food is cooked, and how you can sometimes ‘manage’ or even manipulate the Pakeha system by means of Maori relatives who have infiltrated it. In fantasizing the duping of their cousin, Hinemoa, these young Maori men distance themselves from the Pakeha system within which she holds her respectable well-paid position. The example highlights the clear boundary
between the behaviours associated with her formal job as a council clerk within the Pakeha system, and those appropriate to her role as a Maori kinswoman. It is evident from the previous section of the conversation that Hone is very fond of his young cousin, and enjoys her company. Hence, she would undoubtedly be welcome at the haangi regardless of her powers at the council office. However, it is equally clear that in such a situation she is expected to recognize an obligation to assist her kinsman if she can. There is undoubtedly an element of subversion, of sending up ‘respectable’ Pakeha values.

Linguistically, this excerpt is a prime example of vernacular ME (Holmes 1997c). Stereotypical Maori ethnicity is strongly and deliberately indexed in the distinctively ME pronunciations, the exaggerated syllable-timed prosody and sing-song intonation, the high pitched laughter, and the repetition (lines 11, 13) – all features associated with the speech of the comic ‘no-hoper’ caricatured by the comedian Billy T. James, and reinforced by the tag eh (line 1), and the Maori lexical item haangi (lines 9, 11, 13). The status of this fantasized exchange as a caricature of a conversation for humorous effect is underlined by Hone’s use of the repeated “knock knock knock”, echoing the formulaic opening to a canned joke.

This joking exchange could also be interpreted as indicating the rather complex attitude of these young men to their young Maori female relative who is working in a ‘respectable’ job within the Pakeha system. It has been argued that female influence, though relatively covert, is nonetheless pervasive and highly valued in Maoridom (Metge 1995: 91–98). Nevertheless, male–female relationships are still very traditional, with males dominating most overtly authoritative and statusful positions and formal speech events, while females generally take a less prominent role. In the wider Pakeha-dominated social context, however, Hinemoa has status deriving from her job. Thus she can also be regarded as a legitimate target of their subversive humour.

As a response to sociocultural differences, then, humour can be used to reinforce group norms and values by expressing in-group solidarity and making explicit the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. As a response to Pakeha hegemony, humour is a powerful strategy for subverting norms, deriding ethnocentric attitudes, and sending up ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ procedures. It is also a means of expressing the tension between roles, alluded to in Excerpt 5, which many Maori experience in some aspects of their work within Pakeha organizations and institutions. In the following, and final, excerpt (6.1–6.2),
taken from our workplace database, this potential role conflict gradually emerges as a focus of discussion.\textsuperscript{18}

Excerpt 6 is from another meeting between the advisory staff of the government agency illustrated in excerpt 4. While the men are clearly involved in a serious task, they adopt an informal style and humorous tone which expresses their friendship, as well as indexing and foregrounding the solidarity associated with their shared ethnicity. Excerpt 6.1 is from an early phase of the meeting.

\textit{Excerpt 6.1}

\textbf{Context:}

Two Maori men in their workplace evaluating funding proposals

1. Vin: um all this stuff is in Maori bro
2. Aid: oh yeah I did read it I did read it
3. Vin: [laughs] I’m gonna take /photo\ copies of that
4. Aid: /yeah\ ..........
5. Aid: /you can (rip) them out eh\ /
6. like for the capability stuff and + recording
7. Vin: you’re a prof bro
8. Aid: yeah
9. Vin: yeah + evidence of application ....
10. + performance test (re ) examination and stuff
11. they even do that I don’t know how they do it +
12. be pretty amazing to actually visit there eh
13. and see how they do stuff eh

The humour in this excerpt revolves around the underlying assumption (widely held by the majority group in New Zealand society) that Maori are generally not good at doing their homework or at meeting bureaucratic demands. The relevant stereotype is the lazy happy-go-lucky Maori no-hoper character mentioned above. Ironically adopting this perspective, Aidan assertively claims to have read the material (line 2) thus challenging the stereotype (with the fact that the material was in Maori rendering his claim even more impressive). Pursuing this humorous key further, Vince’s comment \textit{you’re a prof bro} is doubly amusing. First, Maori are typically not expected to be experts in such areas, but, secondly, the advice which elicits this comment is hardly worth Aidan’s designation as a \textit{prof}, as the sardonic alignment of the words \textit{prof} and \textit{bro} emphasizes. The humour is based on the Pakeha stereo-

\footnote{This excerpt, and the points discussed in relation to it, are taken from a much longer interaction which is analysed more thoroughly in Stubbe & Holmes (2000) in order to exemplify the complexities of Maori interactional patterns of discourse.}
type of Maori, and emphasizes the fact that the views of these hard-working men about Maori capabilities are very different (a point further underlined by the comment *I don’t know how they do it*, line 11, in relation to the work produced by those whose proposal they are assessing). The humour exploits their knowledge of the very different views of Maori capabilities held by Pakeha and Maori, while subverting and challenging the assumptions which fuel such views.

These two men also index their ethnicity at other linguistic and discoursal levels. The use of the colloquial expressions, eg, *stuff* (lines 1, 6, 10, 13) rather than the selection of more precise terms, the joking tone and laughter, the informal discourse markers, eg, *like* (line 6), and the Maori-indexical forms *eh* (lines 5, 12, 13) and *bro* (line 1), all have the effect of constructing shared ethnicity, while also ameliorating the ‘technical’ atmosphere, which is particularly associated with the Pakeha world for many Maori.

Interestingly, at a later point in the interaction, the conflicts and tensions which are exacerbated by such an atmosphere, and of which many Maori working within a government institution are highly conscious, emerge as a topic of discussion. Excerpt 6.2 is one from many possible examples where the two men explicitly articulate the problems of being positioned as ‘insiders’ in an institution where Pakeha norms and values predominate and where they are dealing with material submitted by Maori people who are trying to play the Pakeha game – a strategy they recognize only too well from their own personal experience.

**Excerpt 6.2**

1. Aid: the other thing about these guys is that they + write +
2.    they’re tuuturu Maori [‘knowledgeable in things Maori’]
3.    but they’re always trying to- /still prepared\ to be Pakeha=  
4. Vin: /be Pakeha\  
5. Aid: /=so when they\ put their stuff in like this they=  
6. Vin: /and I hate it\  
7. Aid: =put they try and put it in what we want to read /you know\  
8. Vin: /yeah and I \ reckon it’s just bullshit but you know then again  
9. /I I can can understand why\  
10. Aid: /but you can understand why\  
11. Vin: ‘cause I’ve /done\ it myself  
12. Aid: /yeah\ ++ yeah  
13. Vin: you know but also-  
14. Aid: we do it /all the time\  
15. Vin: /I was wondering\ whether they try to mask what they can’t  
16. [laughs] do er Pakeha fashion? you know  
17. like mask it by using all this upbeat language  
18. because they haven’t actually worked out how they’re going to do it
Again the rapport of these two men is very evident as they repeat, echo and closely paraphrase each other’s contributions to the jointly constructed discourse. The humour in lines 15–20 is aimed at Maori who adopt what Vince identifies as typically Pakeha strategies of ‘bullshitting’ (to use a very New Zealand way of describing the ‘masking’ behaviour Vince describes). Again the contrast between Maori and Pakeha ways of doing things lies at the heart of the humour, and Vince lines himself up very clearly on the Maori side of the divide.

As summarized in Stubbe and Holmes (2000: 268), this perceived conflict between their professional and Maori identities also provides another reason for adopting a markedly Maori variety of English and informal speech style in their work interaction – a counter to their official role as gatekeepers for government funding. Moreover, because the men are involved in a task which revolves around specifically Maori concerns, their shared Maori identity is inevitably very salient. By indexing it both explicitly and implicitly through their discourse, they temporarily create a uniquely Maori space for themselves within a wider Pakeha working environment (cf Jeanette King 1999).

One further point is worth emphasizing in relation to the sentiments expressed by the two men in this last example. The example highlights the complexities of the dynamic construction of sociocultural identities in ongoing interaction. As Schiffrin notes, “social identity is locally situated: who we are is, at least partially, a product of where we are and who we are with” (1996: 198). As indicated in the introduction, people choose to emphasize or play down different facets of different socio-cultural identities in different contexts and even at different points in the same context. At any particular point speakers are actively constructing those aspects which are most relevant to their particular interactional goals at that moment. As a well-known strategy for handling ambiguity and expressing ambivalent attitudes, humour allows participants to better express the complexities of conflicting socio-cultural identities, as indicated in some of the examples in this section (Stubbe & Holmes 2000: 276).

Parallel examples can be found in our data set for another subordinate group – namely women – facing the conflict between the exercising of managerial power and authority on the one hand, and the maintenance of a collegial and egalitarian spirit of team work on the other. We have identified many examples where following a difficult decision or the resolution of a tense issue during which she has asserted authority explicitly, a woman manager introduces a humorous key into the discussion. In one case a manager joked that her one “cool competency” was her ability to make good coffee, thus
putting herself “one down” after a period when she had been explicitly assertive. In a similar situation, another manager introduced a humorous discussion of the height of a white board in relation to the length of her skirt and commented that the board had to be placed centrally rather than high up on the wall “so I don’t have to lean down and expose my underwear when I write on it”. In this case the humour serves to emphasize her femininity after a meeting in which she had been using stereotypically masculine management strategies. Humour clearly serves, then, as a means for expressing the complexities of competing professional, social and cultural identities, as well as a dynamic strategy for subverting socio-cultural expectations and norms.

It is interesting that all the examples we have used involve Maori men, an accurate reflection of the predominance of male humour in this particular area. The issue of ethnic identity seems to be particularly salient for Maori men – it is in this area that their subordinate status relative to the majority group is most apparent. As the previous point suggests, gender seems to be the equivalently salient issue for women – both Maori and Pakeha (see Holmes 1998a for a discussion of this issue).

The examples we have discussed in this section illustrate some of the ways in which Maori conversationalists use humour to construct themselves as ‘other’ and to emphasize their difference from the majority societal group. In both the content and the style of their humour, they signal their difference, indexing their ethnicity through the use of linguistically marked features of ME, expressed through pointedly subversive humour at the expense of majority group norms.

Finally, it is worth noting that there are no parallel examples in our corpora where Pakeha draw attention through humour to ethnic boundary lines separating Pakeha from Maori people (see Holmes & Hay 1997). Analysts have long pointed out that ethnicity is typically an issue only for the minority group. As Joan Metge comments,

> What most Maori find particularly upsetting is the unwillingness of many Pakeha to recognise the existence of cultural difference, their cool assumption that the Pakeha way of doing something is the only human way. (Metge 1986: 140)

We noticed that one of the features which most clearly distinguished the Maori from Pakeha conversations in our Corpus was the extent to which ‘being Maori’ seemed always a relevant factor in the Maori interactions. Ethnicity, it appears, is omnipresent for Maori conversationalists: it is sometimes foregrounded, the explicit focus of attention, but even when other issues are the ostensible focus of discussion, Maori identity is almost always a relevant background factor contributing to a thorough understanding and in-depth
interpretation of what is being expressed. By contrast, most of the Pakeha conversations do not indicate awareness of ethnicity as an issue; it does not appear to be an ever-present part of the Pakeha consciousness, as it is for the Maori contributors. Being Pakeha is simply experienced as ‘normal’ and unmarked (see Michael King 1985). The salience of the Maori/Pakeha boundary for Maori is no doubt one indication of their relative isolation from avenues of political influence and the corridors of power in New Zealand society (Fitzgerald 1993). As the analyses in this section have illustrated, humour is one available avenue for a subordinate group to assert their difference while expressing frustration and ambivalence at the effects of marginalization (see also Fine 1984, Pogrebin & Poole 1988).

4. Conclusion

Pakeha norms dominate in New Zealand in most sociocultural contexts. Maori ways of doing things are often either disregarded completely, or considered deviations from the norm. This is true for all varieties of ME, but especially the vernacular variety which is used as the basis of comedians’ caricatures as well as a resource for Maori humour. Three particularly salient features of ME were described: the use of a distinctive prosody, generally described as syllable-timed English; the significantly greater use of the interactional pragmatic tag *eh*, and the more extensive use of Maori vocabulary in English conversation.

It is equally true that distinctively Maori ways of speaking and rules of language use are rarely recognized. In this essay, we have illustrated one specific response to this marginalization. Maori speakers use humour to signal their awareness of salient ethnic boundaries, and to construct their ‘stance’ or ‘footing’ (Goffman 1979) in relation to the dominant group.

Our data clearly supports the view that the ethnic boundary between Maori and Pakeha is more salient for Maori speakers than for Pakeha, and that humour is one strategy used to express Maori people’s awareness of this boundary. Humour establishes connections and explicitly emphasizes shared interests, ideas, and values, as well as shared attitudes to the dominant group. Conversely, by emphasizing boundaries between Maori and Pakeha, and agreeing implicitly or explicitly through the expression of shared amusement on the existence and significance of such boundaries, Maori contributors strengthen connections between each other. Humour is a flexible discourse strategy which permits Maori people to exploit cultural and linguistic differences, to emphasize ethnic distinctiveness and highlight cultural boundaries,

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19 The discussion in Metge (1995) supports this viewpoint, and it has been confirmed by the Maori people whom we have consulted.
to resist, challenge and subvert majority group norms, and to explore the complexities of minority group status and the identity conflicts this generates in a society which pays little regard to Maori attitudes, values, cultural beliefs and sociolinguistic norms.

WORKS CITED


Appendix

Transcription conventions

All names are pseudonyms.

YES Capitals indicate emphatic stress
[laughs] Paralinguistic features in square brackets,
[drawls]: (colons indicate start and finish)
+ Pause of up to one second
... /......\ ... Simultaneous speech
= Utterance continues
(hello) Transcriber’s best guess at an unclear utterance
? Rising or question intonation
– Incomplete or cut-off utterance
… Section of transcript omitted
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Métissage and Memory
The Politics of Literacy Education in Canadian Curriculum and Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I discuss my current research by braiding a métissage of mother tongue and other tongues that are part of students’ realities in public school and university classrooms where English has been and remains the main language of instruction. This research focuses on writing as a way to investigate the researchers’ and their students’ situatedness in between languages and literatures and the linguistic and cultural ‘mixed blood’ that is part of their identities. As part of a teacher education program at a western-Canadian university and against the background of Canadian and international cultural, sociopolitical, and linguistic differences, this writing to transgress borders becomes a métissage of local and global languages, identities, and geographies. Situating ourselves “in the middle of language” (Cixous & Calle–Gruber 1997), we (re-)create the memories and stories of our ‘lived curriculum’ in between the mixed strands of others’ stories from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds with the hope of finding new possibilities for classroom praxis and inter/trans/cross-cultural understanding and interstanding.

It becomes ruthlessly apparent that unless we are able to speak and write in many different voices, using a variety of styles and forms, allowing the work to change and be changed by specific settings, there is no way to converse across borders, to speak to and with diverse communities. (bell hooks)

language thus speaking (ie, inhabited) relates us, ‘takes us back’ to where we are, as it relates us to the world in a living body of verbal relations […] putting the living body of language together means putting the world together, the world we live in: an act of composition, an act of birthing us, uttered and outered there in it. (Daphne Marlatt)
Like Hélène Cixous, I grew up “in the middle of language” (Cixous & Calle-Gruber 1997). I remember the place and the sound and the look and the texture of my mother tongue, that lived body of language, from the beginning of be(com)ing in/to my world. Like Hélène Cixous, my aim is to not lock up meaning but to give it/myself over to the chance of linguistic and textual crossing, to (re)imagine and to listen to different language(s) speak. Thus living in the middle of language becomes a métissage of mother tongue and other tongues that are part of my own and my students’ realities in public school and university classrooms where English is the language of instruction, is at the centre, the dominant discourse (Chambers, Donald & Hasebe-Ludt 2000).

I remember what it felt like to grow up in the middle of language, in a landscape littered with Roman ruins and mosaics, in a Germanic language articulated by the Roman alphabet—first language, German/Deutsch, followed by a Romance language Französisch/French/François in elementary school, followed by another Germanic one, in the same Roman alphabet, Englisch/English/Anglais, in grade six [...] the sounds, their pronunciations similar and yet so different, easy to mix up [...] le vent [...] der Wind [...] the wind [...] and my memory of my mother tongue is like the wind, fleeting, hard to hold on to, hard to catch, like the trickster, the eternal elf that lives with/in the self [...] 

My writing, in collaboration with colleagues and graduate students, focuses on the theme of writing to transgress borders/écrire les frontières/Grenzüberschreibung (Council of Europe 1999), autobiographical writing that investigates the role of English in between other languages and memories of mother tongues, writing that aims at affirming a new hybridity of backgrounds, a métissage of mother tongue and second and/or other languages with a view towards reconceptualizing language instruction and curriculum. As a teacher of language and literacy and a teacher educator, I want to help (re-)create the memories and stories of my own and my students’ living with/in languages amidst the mixed strands of narratives that inform them, from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, with the hope of finding new possibilities for classroom praxis and inter/trans/cross-cultural understanding – of interstanding, in more than one language. Thus this research focuses on the use of writing as a way to investigate our various situatedness in between languages and the linguistic and cultural “mixed blood” that is part of our identities. As part of my own identity as a professor in teacher education, English as a second and/or additional language, and intercultural education in Western Canada, and against the background of inter-provincial, cross-Canadian and cosmopolitan cultural, sociopolitical, and linguistic differences,
this writing to transgress becomes a métissage of languages, identities, geographies, homes and diasporas.

Métissage, from which the Canadian word Métis is derived, is a site for writing and surviving in the “interval between different cultures and languages” (Lionnet 1989: 1); a way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary and literacy stance, political strategy and pedagogical praxis. As Métis has been appropriated from its original and negative meaning ‘half-breed’, following Lionnet (1989) and Zuss (1997) we can appropriate métissage from its original meaning ‘mixed-blood’, to become an alternative metaphor for fluidity, and a creative strategy for the braiding of language, gender, race, and place into auto/biographical texts. Métissage not only describes experience; it is a strategy for interpreting and critiquing the experiences reported. At the same time these auto/biographical texts create apertures for understanding and questioning the multiple conditions and contexts which give rise to those experiences; and the particular languages, memories, stories and places in which these experiences are located and shaped. Creation stories, for example, traditionally understood, tell about acts of creation: the origin of the universe, the formation of the earth, the beginnings of humankind. While the purpose of creation stories is to explain unusual and divine events and give reasons why people perform certain rituals, they also invite larger, universal questions about living on and in relation to the earth (Hamilton 1988). These questions provoke a collective wondering, a dialogue which connects individuals to their collective memory and story.

Literary and literacy métissage offers the possibility for writing and telling creation stories autobiographically, stories which are rooted in history and memory, but are also stories of be-coming. These new creation stories are also sites of learning to live well in relation to each other and with the earth. These texts generate knowledge about repressed cultural and individual memories, traditions and mother tongues. We can see literary métissage as a hopeful act initiating a “genuine dialogue with the dominant discourse(s)” in order to transform these discourses, thus “favoring exchange rather than provoking conflict” (Lionnet 1989: 3). Thus, métissage offers the possibility of rapprochement between mainstream and alternative curriculum discourses. When we grow up in the middle and in between language(s), we (re-)create the memories and stories of our ‘lived curriculum’ in between the mixed strands of others’ stories from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The problematic of difference and the very real struggle to reach across differences – linguistic, cultural, racial, sexual, national – or the refusal to try, often leaves language instruction and curriculum like a battlefield occupied and divided by intellectual, instructional and political camps. Alternative avenues such as autobiography, narrative, and critical postcolonial approaches
and theories remain isolated despite being committed to their causes, while mainstream discourses and practices continue to dominate. This impasse offers very little hope for dialogue, peace and freedom. Graduate and undergraduate seminar rooms and public-school classrooms are faced with similar dilemmas: How can we speak to each other, learn to live well with each other and on the earth, and teach our students, our children to do the same, in the face of the entrenchment of our differences? And yet, many of the younger generation are already living in the space of métissage: they are bilingual, of mixed race and part of an immigrant postcolonial diaspora (Gunderson 1999). If they are not linguistic or racial mixed-bloods, they are at the very least cultural mulattoes (Sherman 1996). So it is incumbent upon scholars and teachers to search out metaphorical and metonymic spaces, through mixed languages and stories which will enable us to create a hybrid curriculum, a mulatto/Métis curriculum the intent of which is to live, speak and act with and across the space of difference.

A teacher in a secondary school on the nearby Blackfoot/Blood reserve is doing métissage and memory work and writing as part of his graduate work and as a way to express the personal confusion and angst he has felt regarding his seeming lack of cultural identity, being of mixed cultural heritage—a Métis father and a Norwegian-Scottish mother. Even though he has a father who comes from a long line of Métis families, he has often struggled with feeling culturally unsituated, undefined and nondescript. Rather than being in-between Native and European cultural extremes, he finds that his family has lived largely on the fringes of society and been rejected by almost all its members. He is examining his painful past as a combined father–son auto/biography, mixed with conversation bits and poetry, which attempts to weave the writer’s own memory with the memories his father has of his own childhood and being raised by his grandmother (Chambers, Donald & Hasebe–Ludt 2000).

These memories are painful because father and son have just begun the process of talking about the past, family, hardship, racism and alcoholism. These family stories have only recently been told to the son by his father, have remained untold for so long due to the feelings of shame, anger and emotion which they provoke as well as the decision made by the father to cut himself and his children off from his own side of the family. Still, the son chooses to tell these stories as a way to begin the process of overcoming the feeling of being someone who “looks into a mirror and sees a blur over part of his own face” (Bruchac 1993: 244). By looking at the past and memories in this way, notions of the present, of ancestors and ideas of the self can also be examined and formulated (Momaday 1993). Stories like this express the fluidity and dynamic nature of identity, and make use of the context of literary
métissage to deconstruct the writer’s sense of self as a way to resist easy categorization, stereotyping or finality. In this sense, the stories confront the writer’s desire to define him/herself. As writers we wish to occupy and articulate a space of identity, which cannot be categorized, but is still very much apparent, alive and outside the boundaries of traditional methods of identification (Lionnet 1989). Even when writing about personal and sometimes intimate things – as is often the case in these stories – the writer must work to remind her/himself that a critical and authentic interpretation of the self is being expressed and that by making sense of these memories and interpretations by comparing and creating the memories of the writer through close examination of the memories of others, a better sense of self will develop.

However, as Derrida (1995) reminds us, each time that “identity proclaims itself,” a writer must be careful not to be bound by it and its context for there are ongoing other commitments and responsibilities which must be met to continue the work of understanding the self personally and pedagogically. bell hooks’ (1999) urging to converse across borders, in many different voices, is what we need to challenge ourselves, our students, our world with. And Trinh Minh-ha (1992), the writer and a filmmaker whose work consistently crosses borderlines of disciplines and nations, warns of “essentializing a denied identity” through reactive language that only promotes and perpetuates separatism and self-enclosure. She also cautions us of framing the search for identity as a holistic unified process and/or something whole that can be attained at the end of a struggle. Instead, she sees the complex and often difficult realities of our mixed, hybrid identities, particularly those of the younger diasporic generation, as the points of departure for us to transcend academic, cultural, artistic, linguistic and other borderlines, to actively resist the safeguarding of boundaries and to realize the need to embrace the different sites of our praxis and of our identities as places of hybridity that offer hope for generating new knowledge.

My own writing/research braids the métissage of mother tongue and other tongues through writing the origins and memories of my situatedness in between German, French, English, Japanese, and the linguistic and cultural mixed blood that is now my presence as a daughter, a mother of a Canadian Japanese ‘hybrid kid’, a language and teacher educator. In particular, I am exploring the events of my growing up in the border region of Germany and France and my journeying to (an)other continent(s) and countries through relationships that cross borders between languages, races, cultures, families, disciplines. Against the background of European, Canadian and Asian mixed cultures and political, aesthetic and educational differences, Grenzüber- schreibung becomes a métissage of my bridging of languages, identities and geographies. I create the story of my ‘lived curriculum’ in between the mixed
strands of poetry, myths, fairy tales and other stories, and the storied relationships between myself and my mother and my daughter of mixed Japanese and German blood. I want to affirm this hybridity of backgrounds, this inter/national bricolage as a possibility for generating new realities and new lives beyond borders of language, race and gender, of creating new knowledge out of situated life experiences and life-writing and their representation with the hope of creating new possibilities for classroom praxis and inter/trans-cultural understanding. In this métissage of writing and remembering, in addition to creation myths from various cultures and languages, I draw on the work of poets, philosophers, storytellers and artists from different geocultural locations, such as Adrienne Rich, Hannah Arendt, Thomas King, George Littlechild, Lee Maracle, Toni Morrison, and Anne Cameron, as well as postcolonial writers of mixed tongues and identities, such as Trinh Minh-ha, Hélène Cixous, Homi Bhaba and others. Through “living in the earth-deposits of our history,” Adrienne Rich (1979) reminds us, by looking at the old words and the old worlds, through memory, we re-position and condition ourselves to create new worlds, to dream of a common language – “from all the lost collections” (Rich 1981/1993: 22).

Here is a memory that starts somewhere in the middle, an un-beginning that picks up the poetry in the interspace between the generations of grandmothers and mothers and their tongues and daughters and their lives among worlds and words:

I remember my mother reciting poetry she was taught by her mother, in the days of her childhood and growing years, in German, beloved mother tongue. This memory, fragile and in danger of being lost, this dream of a mother and her poetry, learned by heart, evokes the old stories and legends and landscapes of home in a strange land, on a different continent, in a different language, a different tongue – mother tongue – ears and eyes of sounds and images of words, language like the mother’s body, that is larger than the self, that carries her with it, bears her and births her and sings to her a lullaby.

In my memory, the beginnings of language emerge from a poetic and inspired place. There was my mother, reciting lines by the great German poets: Rilke, Goethe, Schiller, Hesse, and many others. To this day, in her eighties, my mother still recites them by heart at family gatherings, her seniors’ group, over trans-continental telephone lines on her daughter’s and granddaughter’s request. What a remarkable memory my mother has, and I remember when I asked her how she came to be so good at keeping all these wonderful verses alive for such a long time, she told me about a memory that she would never forget: that as a young child she used to practice these poems at night under her bed covers, with a flashlight, “borrowing” her big sister’s school texts, which she wasn’t allowed to touch during the day, and which she was magically attracted to. She never had a chance to go to this same school
of higher learning for girls, the Mädchengymnasium, herself; a war happened, her sister died, and most of the poetry books were destroyed. But my mother kept all those poems in her heart and in her mind until years later when she could once again renew her acquaintance with books, found the poems in new collections and started collecting them, carefully and lovingly arranging them in the big family armoire with the sliding glass doors. That was where I began my childhood reading journeys, amongst volumes with richly textured spines, their pages stained and torn at times from use, always inviting me into their treasures of words, my eyes and ears relishing the textures of the wor(l)ds they revealed, growing into reading, growing into language.

When moving outside of my comfortable self, crossing the threshold into the newness of experiences, both personal and pedagogical ones, of constituting new meanings, my memories inhabit the transgressive spaces in between the past and the present reality of my life. In my moving and shifting between different cultural geographies – Germany and Canada, British Columbia and now Southern Alberta Blackfoot country – and my attempts to refigure my work in and into a new language, I am reminded of the German word *Entgrenzung* (Schwab 1994), referring to a lifting of boundaries...their transgression, transformation, or expansion [...] It is a word that calls up such different realms of discourse as geography and geopolitics, morphology, psychoanalysis and aesthetics. (vii–viii)

Where we are from, where we are now, where we place ourselves in the landscapes of cultural, linguistic and pedagogical identities – these shifting locations are part of a continuous process of connotations and resonances, of mapping ourselves in order to make sense of our lives and work. Memory plays the part of the shifter in this process, the trickster, taking on an ambiguous syntactic and semantic role of both here and there, this and that, then and now, not only ... but also – a metonymic as well as metaphoric space of partial truths, delightful and painful, light and shadow, movement and stillness at the same time. Carl Jung (1956/1972) uses the analogy of the carnival in medieval times with its reversal of the hierarchical order and “contradictoriness” to illuminate the trickster as an individual’s shadow figure reminding us of “the memory image of things as they were” (200).

So I return to the images of my mother tongue, and add the layers of new ones, French, English, Japanese, Spanish, and this intertext refuses to place English and its Western world-view at the colonial centre of the world, reverses its dominant discourse, its desirability as the lingua franca constructed by the colonizers (Gunderson 1999, Pennycook 1998). My letters and those of my students and the texts we read speak to its identity crisis as its centre no longer holds (Gómez–Peña 1996). “No center can move without its fringes, and as these shift they are bound to make strange encounters [...] If there is no
movement round the extremities you can count the center as dead” (Youngman, as cited in Jardine, Clifford & Friesen 1995: 4).

We search for ways to keep languages, English and others, alive together in decentred ways that encourage new understandings of self to emerge through reading and composing texts in response to our placement and displacement in new diasporic landscapes of language, culture and teaching (hooks 1995). Affirming a new hybridity of backgrounds creates possibilities for living lives beyond borders of language, race and culture, for generating knowledge out of situated life experiences and life-writing where English has a place but not the centre space and is not the only language, not replacing others that exist along with it. Instead, as we are Writing Worlds (Barnes & Duncan 1992); what is central is the notion of spaces in a landscape. The new geography of language pedagogy is indeed re-writing earth (geo) – writing (graphing) that considers seriously the spaces of generative possibilities in between, amidst languages.

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“Joseph you know him he don trus dah Anglais”
Or, English as Postcolonial Language
in Canadian Indigenous Films

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Abstract
This essay attempts to outline the conditions of anticolonial filmmaking as well as different strategies that are employed. Foremost it deals with the issue of language and shows through two examples how filmmakers strive to undermine the authority of the colonial language. The Métis filmmaker Maria Campbell, in *The Road Allowance People*, employs a Métis vernacular interspersed with Mitchif words, constructing a linguistic medium which does not alienate oral knowledge – the film’s subject – from its cultural context. Often dismissed as substandard English, such vernacular forms become central in the postcolonial context. The Métis director Gil Cardinal and Cree producer Doug Cuthand, in *Big Bear*, apply an inverted linguistic self/Other dichotomy by having the Cree people speak English and the soldiers and settlers speak an unintelligible gibberish. Thus, the filmmakers subvert the conventional filmic tradition of putting indigenous people in an inferior position through the “other” English they speak.

In the face of Eurocentric historicizing, Third World and minoritarian filmmakers have rewritten their own histories, taken control over their own images, spoken in their own voices. It is not that their films substitute a pristine “truth” for European “lies,” but that they propose counter-truths and counter-narratives informed by an anticolonialist perspective. (Shohat & Stam 1994: 249)
With the above statement Shohat and Stam summarize one important aspect of the global process of decolonization—the emergence of anticolonial media. This essay will outline different strategies of postcolonial filmmaking as well as some of its inherent problems. Central will be the language issue, which is discussed in relation to the two Canadian films *The Road Allowance People* and *Big Bear*.

In order to create anticolonial and self-determined media, postcolonial filmmakers have to make conscious choices about differences from colonial media discourses. This decolonizing process works in a twofold manner: first, as a political struggle by creating self-controlled images and anticolonial history writing/filming, and second, as an aesthetic struggle by rebelling against established feature film and ethnographic film conventions. Both film forms have a significant history of stereotyping and misrepresenting indigenous peoples, and thus served to legitimize colonial wars as well as cultural, economic, and political oppression.

Shohat and Stam delineate several strategies for the making of decolonized films, of which those helpful for a description of the works discussed here will be presented. Naturally, these strategies may overlap. There is, to begin with, the ‘esthetic of hunger’, created by Brazilian filmmakers who turned their lack of technical and financial resources and marketing possibilities into a resource and a signifying characteristic of their films. This strategy is not restricted to Brazil, but also applies to films in other Third- and Fourth-World countries. The ‘esthetic of hunger’ is recognizable in the often sparse and low-key lighting, basic camera equipment, long takes, a basic audio track avoiding a lavish musical score, and the use of a hand-held camera because a tubular track is not available. Often, shots can only be taken once because film material is expensive. For these reasons these films might radiate an air of unprofessionalism. Needless to say, most films do not feature star actors.

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1 The evolution of anticolonial media or the so-called Third-World film is comprehensively described by Gabriel 1994.
2 The term ‘postcolonial’ in this essay refers to works by people living in the Third and Fourth World, whereby ‘Fourth World’ is used for indigenous people in such settler countries as Canada, the USA, New Zealand, and Australia, who are still exposed to internal colonization.
3 In the field of postcolonial media, a clear distinction between documentary/ethnographic and fictional films/videos cannot always be made, especially since many filmmakers avail themselves of the form of the docu-drama, which, as the term suggests, mixes fact and fiction often by re-enacting historical/contemporary events.
5 In contrast, commercial cinema usually employs three-point lighting, which results in high-key lighting.
but, rather, non-professionals, which may result in contrived dialogue and acting. The ‘aesthetic of hunger’ is noticeable in *The Road Allowance People* and partly in *Big Bear*, where a careful deployment of sound, long landscape shots, and long takes is a deliberate choice (Cuthand 1998).

On another level, reflexivity and self-reflexivity subliminally control the filming, because every postcolonial filmmaker communicates with an established body of filmic and printed colonial and postcolonial texts in the form of quotations, allegories, parodying mimicry, and/or formal references. In this sense every postcolonial film becomes a piece of filmic reflection and critique as well as an example of possible decolonizing strategies. Often, in the manner of the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, filmmakers accentuate the medium film and its techniques, creating a rupture in the illusion of reality in the film, and focus on the filmmaking process itself. This alienation effect is achieved through non-linear narratives, collage-like structures (combination of newsreel, documentary footage, and/or photographs with fictitious footage), the extensive use of zooms and pans, inconsistent camera work and characters looking into the camera, an uneven editing pace, the connection of diegetic and nondiegetic sounds, and/or burlesquing mainstream filmic texts. This self-reflexivity in films creates a metanarrative or, better, a metafilm, which describes methods of resistance to accepted film practices.

Another strategy is the incorporation of traditional orality: first, as a narrative formula in which characters or the plot present (traditional) oral accounts, myths, legends etc., and second, as a structuring formula in which a non-linear digressive narrative shapes the form, and the film itself comes to resemble an oral account. In the latter case, the film form is characterized by repetitions, pauses, and a slow rhythm, which are characteristic of oral rhetoric. Here, *The Road Allowance People* is exemplary in both respects, as it stages oral storytelling with an audience surrounding a storyteller and listening to his stories, and the narrative of the film moves in circles: ie, several subnarratives depart from the main narrative to illustrate the stories being told, and then return to it.

Last but not least, there is carnivalesque subversion in these films. It may appear as literal thematization of carnival and masquerade. But more commonly, postcolonial filmmakers develop a carnivalesque film style: ie, they grossly violate established filmmaking conventions. They may purposely employ jump cuts, a digressive narrative without closure, a reshooting of the same scene, a jamming camera, and/or have the film running out in the middle of a shot. At this point the carnivalesque subversion ties in with self-reflexive cinema, where filmmakers also demonstrate resistance to commercial film conventions. Carnivalesque film style hints at Caribbean and Latin-American carnival, where the enslaved and oppressed, disguised in costumes,
ridiculed and parodied their masters and oppressors: ie, it parodies colonial film discourse. Shohat and Stam explain carnivalesque film as follows:

Carnival embraces an anticlassical esthetic that rejects formal harmony and unity in favor of the asymmetrical, the heterogenous, the oxymoronic, the miscegenated […] In the carnival esthetic, everything is pregnant with its opposite, within an alternative logic of permanent contradiction and non-exclusive opposites that transgresses the monologic true-or-false thinking typical of a certain kind of positivist rationalism. (Shohat & Stam 1994: 302)

In short: carnivalesque film advocates an esthetic of mistakes. Although both films discussed avoid such film style and largely abide by established film conventions, in the treaty-making scene the makers of *Big Bear* visualize a masquerade – the Indian chiefs are dressed in red British uniforms and take part in the British anthem ceremony, rising from the ground and taking off their hats; they wear costumes in which they imitate the Canadian military leaders. This ridiculous mimicry is visualized by the filmmakers as a feeble attempt to appease the colonizers. Also, the seriousness with which the Canadians conduct their ritual in the ‘wilderness’ inhabited by ‘savages’ seems ludicrous. In Britain the rituals and uniforms make perfect sense, but removed from their original environment and placed into a different ‘wild and savage’ space and different cultural context, their ritual and dress turn into a pathetic and comical performance as suggested in the film. Still, a few years later the same ceremony and uniforms became major metaphors of colonial power.

Apart from deciding which different strategies to adopt, postcolonial filmmakers for the most part face three major dilemmas. First, in order to create decolonized media, they have to utilize colonial means of cultural expression: film technology, including cameras, film material/video tape, editing boards/computers, as well as colonial marketing systems: namely, distribution and broadcasting companies and the internet. Second, there is what Faye Ginsberg calls the Faustian dilemma: the filmmakers use Western film technologies for self-assertion and self-expression and at the same time they introduce these technologies into their communities, which might promote disintegration and alienation from traditional values (Ginsberg 1991: 96). And finally, there is the issue of which language is to be employed. The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis claims that there is a close connection between language and culture and that “the structure of a human being’s language influences the manner in which he understands reality and behaves with respect to it” (Robins 1976: 99–100). Frantz Fanon links the use of the colonial language with cultural alienation.

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6 Other filmmakers, writers, and scholars – for example, Marjorie Beaucage (1998), Umberto Eco (1976: 22), and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981: 15–16) – also regard language and culture as inseparable.
According to him, colonialism restricts indigenous languages and thus destroys cultures. He asserts that speaking the colonial language implies the acceptance of colonial consciousness and colonial values, which creates a gap between the colonized’s body and consciousness, and the colonized subject becomes assimilated. To put it in a nutshell: accepting the colonial language creates alienation from the mother culture (Fanon 1986 [1952]: 17–40).

Such a thesis is plausible in the case of secluded, traditional communities where the indigenous language is the first language and the colonizing one is only a marginal presence. But applied to indigenous filmmakers in North America, whose communities are penetrated by Western influences and often based in urban areas, it turns out to be essentialist. Many of the filmmakers grow up using only English, many are not able to understand or speak their traditional languages, nor do they want to. As all cultures are in flux, today’s indigenous cultures are amalgamations of indigenous and Western habits, religions, traditions, techniques, media, and languages. In that light, it appears essentializing to proscribe the use of English and to restrict the production of cultural expression – in print and film/video – to the traditional languages. Thus, the development of indigenous forms of expression incorporating the former colonial language must find approval in the postcolonial context and should not be seen as a betrayal of culture.

It is in this spirit that Salman Rushdie advises postcolonial writers not to use English the way the British did but that “it needs remaking for our own purposes […]. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free” (Rushdie 1992: 17). Gerald Vizenor also sees the colonial language as a means of writing resistance:

The English language has been the linear tongue of colonial discoveries, racial cruelties, invented names [...] at the same time, this mother tongue of para-colonialism has been a language of invincible imagination and liberation for many people of the postindian world [...] [It] has carried some of the best stories of endurance, the shadows of tribal survivance, and now that same language of dominance bears the creative literature of distinguished postindian authors in the cities. (Vizenor 1994: 105–106)

Indigenous filmmakers have a choice between the language of the colonizers and their indigenous language. Both choices have their advantages and their drawbacks. On the one hand, films made in English can reach a far greater audience. On the other hand, if a film is in English, it subjugates the subject matter to a certain extent to the colonial context and adapts it to mainstream needs. It cannot transmit contextual meanings of the spoken words and the

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7 As the essay deals with indigenous films in the English-speaking part of North America, references to colonial languages are only made to English.
cultural background they contain. There is, however, the possibility, as Rushdie suggests, of using vernacularized forms of the colonizers’ language which have arisen in the communities concerned. Such usage secures a wider audience and prevents the film as product from surrendering totally to colonial influence. Using an indigenous language makes possible a higher degree of self-determination and decolonization in the process of filming and the film as a product. Still, if a film is made in an indigenous language, a large part of the prospective audience (including indigenous people themselves) may not be able to access the content. There is the possibility of adding subtitles or voice-overs, but this appears to be problematic. Storytellers and characters talking in the indigenous language create a certain aura, a certain space, time, and energy, which would be disturbed and/or spoiled through voice-overs and subtitles (Beaucage 1998). The subtitles distract the viewers’ attention from the image; a voice-over drowns out the voice of the character or storyteller and even falsifies it by creating a different aura and energy. In addition, voice-overs carry the ethnographic film tradition in their wake, in which indigenous people were objectified and were usually not given a voice; instead, narrative voice-overs explained for them and described their cultures from outside. The next problem is that the making of a fictional film in the indigenous language requires that all actors, the filmmakers, and a substantial part of the crew be fluent in the language. But it is not to be taken for granted in Native North America that there will always be enough people who are both suitable for such jobs and speak their traditional language. Thus, filmmakers will have to weigh the pros and cons regarding language usage with the intended audience.

The film *The Road Allowance People* by the Métis writer and filmmaker Maria Campbell serves as one example of differentiated language usage in postcolonial films. Campbell solves the language problem by having her actors speak in their own dialect of English, which she also used in her printed

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8 According to the Canadian census of 1996, 29% of the indigenous population is able to conduct a conversation in a traditional language, with Cree being the largest indigenous mother tongue. People older than 55 are most likely to have knowledge of an indigenous language while only 26% of indigenous youth have this language skill (http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/980113/d980113.htm#ART1).

9 Feature films made in indigenous languages are for example *Yawar Mallku [Blood of the Condor]* (1969) in Quechua and *Ukumau* (1966) in Aymara, both made in Bolivia by Jorge Sanjines in collaboration with the indigenous people (Shohat and Stam 1994: 33). In *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) by Gillo Pontecorvo, the Algerian characters speak Arabic with subtitles provided (252) so that they stand out against the incomprehensible babble that was assigned to them in European features set in Arabic countries and at the same time cease to exist only as an exotic background for a European narrative.
collection of Métis stories (1995). Throughout the film, the storyteller Alcid talks in this Métis vernacular:

“You know Jonas” dah Jesus say “Your a damned good fiddle player. Me I always want to play dah fiddle but I never have a chance. When dah Lucifer he get kicked out he take all dah fiddles wit him an all we got now is harps […]”

Dah General he don like dat very much an he say “Dah charge hees high treason.” Joseph him he don know what dat word treason he mean. But he say it sound awful dangerous so he talk real careful jus in case hees got someting to do wit shooting. Dem soldiers you know dey got guns an he say dey look like dey wan to use dem. Joseph you know him he don trus dah Anglais. He never trus dem in hees whole life. (Campbell 1995: 64, 113)

Ashcroft et al. (1989) assign to such language use a potential to create difference and to construct a counter-discourse. Ashcroft claims that this difference or “overlap of language” occurs when texture, sound, rhythm, and words from the mother tongue are introduced into the colonial tongue (1990: 4). However, at the same time as cultures mingle linguistically, this embodiment of cultural expression in a colonial language creates a gap and confirms the distance between cultures. Ashcroft maintains: “The articulation of two quite opposed possibilities of speaking and therefore of political and cultural identification outlines a cultural space between them which is left unfilled, and which indeed locates the core of the cross-cultural text” (4).

But there remains the risk of devaluation of vernacular forms as colloquial, or simply wrong, English in the face of ‘correct’ Standard English. Such devaluation not only creates difference but also sustains the colonial hierarchy between different languages or different types of English. Although dismissed as non-standard English, such vernacular forms become central in the post-colonial context and demand a language theory which treats them not as marginal varieties of a central language but as forms equal to the latter. Derek Bickerton calls such a theory a “metatheory which takes linguistic variation as the substance rather than the periphery of language study” (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 47). This kind of theory also creates the framework for abrogating Standard English as the language norm for Third- and Fourth-World cultures, where English is the official language.

Ashcroft challenges the thesis that writers inscribe their culture into an English text by metonymically introducing syntax and semantics of their mother tongue into the colonial tongue. The same applies to the situation of indigenous filmmakers in North America, because English with a modified syntax and semantics says nothing about the specific culture that informed this linguistic medium and because the relationship between the untranslated non-English word and the culture of its origin is absent. This privilege is
reserved for the exclusive usage of the indigenous language. Thus, the gap or difference created by language variation is a metaphor for cultural difference and not for culture. Language variation disturbs colonialist culture by disrupting the linguistic dominance of English in a text but it does not inscribe culture into the same text. The Métis vernacular in *The Road Allowance People* interspersed with Mitchif words is the linguistic continuum in which contemporary Métis oral tradition operates. By using this vernacular, Campbell constructs a linguistic medium which does not alienate the oral knowledge from its cultural context and avoids pure colonial linguistic expression. But, as seen above, the linguistic medium does not transport Métis culture.

An inverted linguistic self/Other dichotomy is employed in the four hour TV-mini series *Big Bear* by the Cree director Gil Cardinal and the Cree producer Doug Cuthand. The film outlines the history of the Cree people in the era of treaty making in the Canadian Prairies between 1876 and 1888. It focuses on chief Big Bear, who fiercely resisted the signing of a treaty until finally he had to yield. In that era negotiations could only be realized through the help of a translator. The filmmakers employ a linguistic sleight of hand based on the fact that mainstream films usually assigned English to the non-Indian characters, defining the Indians as the inferior ‘Others’ through the language they spoke, which was either an English interspersed with grammatical errors, an English consisting of mono-syllables or an English fitted with a fictitious and/or exotic accent. Cardinal and Cuthand reverse this tradition and place the Cree at the center of the narrative and the Canadians at the margin by having the Cree speak English and the Canadians speak an artificial language created by Rudy Wiebe, co-script author and author of the novel on which the film is based. An excerpt from the script shows the different speaking positions:

Sweetgrass (Cont)
When I take your hand and touch your heart, I say, let us all be one. May this earth never taste a White man’s blood.

Morris smiles regally, and still holding Sweetgrass’ right hand, looks about the circle slowly. All wait to hear him. Finally, Morris stares across at Big Bear: He seems a mound thrust up by the earth into the level light.

Morris
Me humpret glee, grotle klings, du a wilmming depforth. O a scriple laguran-teum Big Bear, du autom gratualayome …

His voice carries on as Erasmus begins interpreting simultaneously in a high, carrying voice.
Erasmus

He says, “My heart is glad for you, great Chiefs, that you have behaved in the right way. And Big Bear has come, so I can tell him that the Treaty we have made is for him too, as if he were here—


This reversal of linguistic positions has several effects. It puts the audience in the place of the Cree, inducing them to associate and sympathize with the Cree, because they are the only people they can understand. Since there are no subtitles for the gibberish the Canadians speak, the viewers are made to feel the paranoia of not comprehending the language of intruders who turn out to be decision makers through military and self-proclaimed political power. Further, in contrast to conventional narrative films, the European colonizers are defined as the ‘others’, the ‘foreigners’, and the ‘outsiders’ by the ‘uncivil’ and ‘savage’ language they speak. Again, one should be aware that the gibberish juxtaposed against the Standard English creates difference between colonizers and colonized and reveals nothing about Cree culture: only the use of the Cree language could have transmitted the Cree world view. Many Cree people, including filmmakers, reproach Cardinal and Cuthand for not using Cree in the film. It would have been possible since Doug Cuthand (producer), Gordon Tootoosis (Big Bear), and many other actors, extras, and crew members, recruited from Regina and nearby reserves (the historical settings of the filmed events), are able to speak Cree. But the filmmakers aimed at a CBC audience (the mini-series was screened on CBC) and also ruled out four hours of subtitles or voice-overs (Cardinal 1998).

In conclusion, the two filmmakers attempt to resist the uncritical use of the colonial language in different ways. Campbell employs a culture-specific dialect of English, and Cardinal and Cuthand reverse the mainstream film tradition by assigning the superior linguistic position to the indigenous characters. Both films inscribe the concepts of cultural difference and multiplicity into their texts. It becomes obvious that postcolonial filmmakers who don trus dah Standard Anglais have a good strategy with which to work for decolonizing the screen.

GLOSSARY (from Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 477–82)

diegetic sound:
Any voice, musical passage, or sound effect presented as originating from a source within the film’s world.

high-key lighting:
Illumination that creates comparatively little contrast between light and dark areas of the shot. Shadows are fairly transparent and brightened by fill light.
**jump cut:**
An elliptical cut that appears to be an interruption of a single shot. Either the figures seem to change instantly against a constant background, or the background changes instantly while the figures remain constant.

**long take:**
A shot that continues for an unusually lengthy time before the transition to the next shot.

**low-key lighting:**
Illumination that creates strong contrast between light and dark areas of the shot with deep shadows and little fill light.

**nondiegetic sound:**
Sound, such as mood music or a narrator’s commentary, represented as coming from a source outside the space of the narrative.

**three-point lighting:**
A common arrangement using three directions of light on a scene: from behind the subjects (backlighting), from one bright source (key light), and from a less bright source balancing the key light (fill light).

**Works Cited**


**Filmography**

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“When I was a child I spake as a child”¹
Reflecting on the Limits
of a Nationalist Language Policy

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ABSTRACT
This essay examines the limits of the nationalist language policy in the Philippines which is aimed at dislodging English from its privileged position in the controlling linguistic domains. Following the suspect adoption of Filipino (a.k.a. Tagalog) as national language in the 1987 Constitution, the Philippines has witnessed a resurgence of nationalist rhetoric in defense of the privileging of one of the country’s eighty-or-so languages as de jure lingua franca. To the extent that English in the Philippines has evolved into a distinct variety, the essay advocates its institution as sole official language of the country, even as it urges the maintenance of the vernaculars, including Tagalog, as integral part of the Filipino people’s multicultural heritage. Unlike Tagalog, which is viewed with skepticism by other ethnolinguistic groups, Philippine English has established itself as an indispensable medium of social and intellectual exchange and a legitimate vehicle of the Filipino people’s vision.

The Philippines is an archipelago that consists of some 7,100 islands and boasts more than eighty languages. That the Filipinos need a language in which to communicate with one another is an imperative recognized by everybody. The first attempt to formulate linguistic policy came at the height of the Philippine war of independence from Spain, which coincided with the Spanish-American War. The so-called Malo-

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:11.
los Constitution of 1898 spelled out a provisory language policy that adopted Spanish as official language of the country, even as it provided for the optional use of “languages spoken in the Philippines” (1899 Constitution, Title XIV, Article 93). The Philippines, of course, did not become independent in the aftermath of that war but was sold by Spain to the USA. The new colonizers, in turn, promptly implemented their own agenda which included the teaching of English, its use as medium of instruction, and its adoption in other public domains, particularly in government, commerce, and trade. When the status of the colony was changed into that of a commonwealth in 1935, the Philippines drafted a new constitution which provided for the continued use of English and Spanish as official languages while Congress “[took] steps toward the development and adoption of a common national language based on one of the existing native languages” (1935 Constitution, Article XIV, Section 3). This marked the birth of the idea of a national language that was expected to unify Filipinos after they received their independence from the USA in 1945.

It is important to note that the original wish of the delegates to the 1934 constitutional convention was to craft a language based on all indigenous languages (Sibayan 1986: 351–52), an undertaking which was admittedly formidable in nature, but was cognizant of the multilingual character of the soon-to-be independent republic. But, as history would have it, the nationalist delegates won the upper hand, and three years later, in 1937, President Manuel Quezon, who had earlier negotiated the date of Philippine independence, proclaimed Tagalog, his own mother tongue, as the sole basis of the national language. After that, one arbitrary move led to another. In 1940, the Department of Education decided to start teaching the national language in the senior year of high school, even before that language could actually develop and become recognizably distinct from ordinary Tagalog as spoken in the region (Sibayan 1986: 353). In 1946, the still nameless national language became a compulsory subject at all levels of primary and secondary education. Finally, in 1959, Secretary Jose Romero of the Department of Education took the liberty of naming the national language Pilipino in a desperate attempt to create at least a nominal difference between the regional language Tagalog and the phantom national language (Sibayan 1986: 358).

Tagalog suffered a temporary setback in 1973, when a new constitution reverted to the original 1935 idea of developing a national language based on all the languages in the Philippines. Ironically, this came as a result of President Ferdinand Marcos’s usurpation of political power and subsequent tam-

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2 All references to the constitutions of the Philippines are taken from the Chan Robles Virtual Law Library. (http://www.chanrobles.com/philsupremelaw.htm).
pering with the constitution to lend legitimacy to his unlawful regime. The new constitution gave the national language a new name, Filipino (with an ‘F’), but provided for the continued use of Pilipino (with a ‘P’) and English as official languages of the country “until otherwise provided by law” (1973 Constitution, Article XV, Section 3). Despite the tacit admission that Pilipino was really Tagalog, the Department of Education adopted a bilingual policy of instruction a year later, which provided for the teaching of social science subjects in Pilipino and the natural sciences and mathematics in English (Hidalgo 1998: 25–26). Finally, after Marcos fled the Philippines in 1986, the new constitution that came into force simply assumed that the national language Filipino already existed and that the government could now promote its use as “language of instruction in the educational system” (1987 Constitution, Article XIV, Section 6). In truth, however, the framers of the 1987 Constitution simply dissolved the distinction between Pilipino (a.k.a. Tagalog) and the still to be developed Filipino. Thus, Tagalog was catapulted to the status of national language, while English is now in danger of losing its official-language status. With an exasperation that many people in the Philippines must share, one Filipino scholar has criticized the last language policy pronouncement as “a classic case of creating a language by fiat or gobbledygook” (Hidalgo 1998: 24).

As already alluded to, historical developments have twice forced a foreign language down the Filipinos’ throats, and the atrocities committed by the foreign powers that subjugated the country in different periods of its history have been etched in the Filipinos’ collective psyche. The desire to discard the linguistic legacies of colonialism and to promote the indigenous languages in their stead has therefore been part and parcel of the Filipinos’ struggle for freedom itself. The struggle to free the country from the shackles of colonial rule has also been a struggle to free the minds of the people from their enslavement to foreign languages. As defensible as the intention is, it is not a license to skirt the issue of ethnolinguistic diversity. In spite of what nationalists would want everyone to believe, the Filipinos did not become a nation when they finally received their independence from the USA in 1946 (or, for that matter, when they revolted against Spain in 1896). On Independence Day, they were, to a large extent, as diverse as the Spanish colonizers had found them in 1521. Their common experience of exploitation and injustice under the Spanish, the Americans, and for a brief period the Japanese notwithstanding, the Filipinos have remained culturally distinct from one another, speaking a variety of languages, practicing a number of religions, and observing different customs and traditions. Allegiance to the now independent republic demands a high degree of transcendence of ethnolinguistic boundaries, but not their permanent erasure. The clamor for a national language is there-
fore nothing more than wishful thinking. Like the Philippine flag, national anthem, national costume, and so on, the national language is a mere symbol that begs the question of the existence of a Filipino nation.

Florian Coulmas sees “the quest for a national language in Third World countries […] as a response to the existence of national languages in Europe and their symbolic significance for national integrity” (Coulmas 1988: 19). He is, however, quick to call attention to the quintessential difference between late-eighteenth-century Europe and postcolonial Asia and sub-Saharan Africa:

Decolonization produced new states, but not necessarily new nations, let alone new national languages […] Thus, while the nation state in Europe was largely a product of the nation whose awakening sense of identity called for the establishment of a politically autonomous organization; in the new polities of the post-colonial epoch, this has to be produced by the state, which exists as an institutional structure without a nation that pays loyalty to it. (Coulmas 1988: 13)

Herein lies the crux of the problem in Philippine language policy. The Philippines is a linguistically plural society whose political unity is a result of colonial machinations. Spain determined the extent of its Pacific colony in the sixteenth century and spelled out its boundaries in the deed of sale that it signed with the USA three centuries later. For good or for bad, the boundaries of the Philippines have not been redrawn since then. Already burdened with economic difficulties that formed the legacy of some four hundred years of colonialism, various administrations have tried to safeguard the integrity of the Philippines through the promotion of a national language. For all the good intentions, the move owes much to an antiquated European notion and plays into the hands of a small group of Filipino nationalists.

Thus, Wilfrido Villacorta, who played a key role in the 1987 constitutional hat trick, regurgitates the arguments of European nationalists in the late eighteenth century when he insists on an organic tie between language and thought:

National pride is best expressed in the national language because the latter carries with it the sentiments and the thought processes that would otherwise not be captured when one uses a foreign language. (Villacorta 1991: 34)

As is often the case with nationalist rhetoricians, Villacorta’s obsession with national unity and cultural autonomy narrows his perspective, so that he begins to propagate a restrictive identity politics that views the adoption of one indigenous language as prerequisite to Filipino nationhood.

To be sure, most Filipino scholars recognize that Filipino, at most, serves a symbolic function. Andrew González, for instance, aware of the failure of the
country’s bilingual education policy, separates the issue of language from nationalism:

Nationalism assumes many indicators and cannot be stereotyped into preference for medium of instruction in school or even competence in the selected national language. Thus, a linguistic symbol of unity and national identity will not necessarily entail an eagerness to use the language for education, especially when there is a competing dominant second language that is still present to give material incentives and other instrumental reasons for acquisition. (González 1991: 8)

It is unfortunate, however, that Gonzalez eschews the issue of why Filipinos need a national language in the first place. But, at least, he is aware that allegiance to the state is not manifested in the mastery of the national language alone. More importantly, he acknowledges the multiplicity of factors that determine language choice.

The nagging question about the necessity for a national language remains. If it does not really foster unity among different ethnolinguistic groups, nor make a significant contribution to the process of learning, what is it for? In the case of the Philippines, where the question has more or less boiled down to choosing between Tagalog and English as the sole official language of the country, nationalists like Villacorta have a ready answer:

The national language [Filipino] also serves as a defense against foreign cultures that employ their own language to smother the growth and independence of the developing nation. (Villacorta 1991: 33)

Clearly such objection to the continued use of English in the Philippines has to do with a fear that Filipinos will begin to imbibe Anglo-American values, if they haven’t done so already. Again, echoing European Romantics, Villacorta insists that “every language is culture-laden, [and that] English carries with it the Weltanschauung of its native speakers” (Villacorta 1991: 39). Here is a clear exemplification of cultural anxiety. The belief that a foreign language could actually erode local culture and values is, at best, an outmoded paradigm that had some legitimacy in the early stages of decolonization. Following a simplistic causality, it disregards a host of variables that determine which values a particular society adopts at which point in its history. Worse, such deterministic view assigns cut and dried roles to the source culture, as all powerful and pernicious, and the recipient culture, as highly permeable and passive.

This grand design is elaborated on by Robert Phillipson in his comprehensive work *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), which focuses on the dramatic spread of English especially in the last century. The book sets out to expose
the ideological underpinnings of English Language Teaching (ELT) and examines the roles of the various institutions implicated in a linguistic power play with clear Manichaean poles. On the one hand, there is the essentialized “Centre” (suggested by the use of the capital letter), which consists primarily of the UK and the USA and institutions that are more or less affiliated with them, including the US Information Agency, the British Council, the Peace Corps, the Rockefeller Foundation, the IMF, the World Bank, Hollywood, the Internet, etc. The “Centre,” the book argues, advances its own interests through financial aid and the export of material and human resources. On the other hand, there is the “Periphery” (also capitalized and singular) which consists mainly of former colonies that are unable to distinguish what is good for them and what is not. The “Periphery” thus ends up infused with the norms and values of the “Centre” and languishing in a state of protracted cultural dependence. This, in turn, is a precondition for the economic exploitation and domination of the “Periphery” by the “Centre.” To the extent that Phillipson employs his theoretical framework to describe both the colonial and the neo-colonial situations, one gets the impression that linguistic imperialism is an invulnerably closed system that is able to travel through time and across geographic space unchallenged and, indeed, unchanged. Except that history has shown time and again that any assertion of dominance is bound to elicit some form of resistance.

It is in this respect that Phillipson’s paradigm appears to short-change the peripheries. Linguistic imperialism, according to him, works because the people involved in the promotion of English (including teachers, aid workers, government officials, policy-makers, language planners, and so on) are, for the most part, either unaware of their complicity in the evil design of the “Centre” or are willing pawns in this intricate game of subjugation. Maintaining that the English language, more than a neutral instrument that can be used to achieve any particular need, actually carries with it the very blueprint of a hegemonic world order (Phillipson 1992: 287), he describes a complex scenario that has the governments of the peripheries, along with the local intelligentsia, happily delivering their societies to the putative center:

The State not only ensures that certain types of knowledge and skill are generated and reproduced in school. It also, to an increasing degree, commissions the knowledge it needs from higher education research institutions. […] Intellectual activities, such as those engaged in by researchers and educational planners, are divorced from manual work, the process of direct production.

3 The author of the present essay prefers the plural form to foreground the heterogeneity of the territories classified under the totalizing label ‘Periphery’ and to acknowledge their ties to other cultural centers.
The role of the planners tends to be confined to that of purveyors of technocratic ‘facts’, and ideological legitimation of a particular type of society, and its forms of production and reproduction. (Phillipson 1992: 69)

At best, one could appreciate Phillipson’s suggestion that the division between center and peripheries is not as neat as one would have thought. Within a peripheral country, there may exist a similar exploitative structure that has the local elite (which includes people in government) imposing on the rest of society. Except, of course, that this center within the peripheral country is nothing more than an outpost of the foreign center. In Phillipson’s own words, “the norms, whether economic, military, or linguistic, are dictated by the dominant Centre and have been internalized by those in power in the Periphery” (Phillipson 1992: 52).

Wittingly or unwittingly, therefore, Phillipson delivers arguments in favor of a conspiracy theory which is welcome fodder to nationalists in peripheral countries like the Philippines. Phillipson’s suggestion that ideas from the center are transferred to the peripheries through an intricately woven network of linguistic practitioners confirms the anxiety of detractors of the English language. Of course, Phillipson insists that his theory “avoid[s] reductionism by recognizing that what happens in the Periphery is not irrevocably determined by the Centre” (Phillipson 1992: 63). But his protestation is drowned by his own uncompromising belief in a Gramscian hegemonic structure that tricks the peripheries into destroying their own cultural legacies and supplanting them with one that permits an all-out exploitation and domination by a foreign power.

Fortunately, there has never been a dearth of Filipino scholars that have adopted a more sober view of the persistent popularity of English in the Philippines. They recognize English as an indispensable medium of local exchange and appreciate its status as language of wider communication that enables them to participate in transnational knowledge production as active agents and not simply as objects of various theorizing. Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista, for example, documents the development of a Philippine variety of English as evidence of a successful process of language appropriation:

[...] Philippine English is not English that falls short of the norms of Standard American English; it is not badly-learned English as a second language; its distinctive features are not errors committed by users who have not mastered the American standard. Instead, it is a nativized variety of English that has features which differentiate it from Standard American English because of the influence of the first language (especially in pronunciation – although we should always keep in mind Strevens’s distinction between accent and dialect – but occasionally in grammar), because of the different culture in which the
language is embedded (expressed in the lexicon and discourse conventions), and because of a restructuring of some of the grammar rules (manifested in the grammar). Philippine English has an informal variety, especially in the spoken mode, which may include a lot of borrowing and code-mixing, and it has a formal variety which, when used by educated speakers and found acceptable in educated Filipino circles, can be called Standard Philippine English. (Bautista 2000: 21)

In effect, Bautista is arguing that the much feared transfer of norms, values, and ideology from the center to the peripheries has long ceased to be a reality in the Philippines. Her insistence on the role of culture and other locally situated variables belies any efficient manipulation of ELT to advance the hegemonic agenda of the putative center.

For their part, Bonifacio P. Sibayan and Andrew Gonzalez agree that the cultures of the peripheries have a way of frustrating the ideological thrust of the center:

What is fascinating from a linguistic and cultural point of view are the adaptations of the language as it undergoes inculturation [sic] and the new ways in which this culturally grafted code is put to use, to thematize entirely new phenomena, realities, and events. Cultural diffusion is never pure; it results in mixtures. Whatever is received is received in the manner of the receiver, to quote an old Medieval Scholastic principle. As the code undergoes acculturation, it becomes different in many features and if left there longer, it will soon become a different code from its former source. (Sibayan & Gonzalez 1996: 165)

Not only is the form of the transplanted language changed, therefore, but the way it is used is no longer dictated by the source culture. The prevailing conditions in the recipient culture give rise to an altogether different set of imperatives. The agents of the center can only do so much to implement their own grand design. In the end, the users of the language in the peripheries determine what normative features the transplanted language will adopt, for what purposes that language will be used, and whose ends it will ultimately serve.

Again, observing how local imperatives have eventually influenced the lot of post-imperial English in the Philippines, Sibayan and Gonzalez make a statement in the direction of Phillipson:

In our view, linguistic imperialism (on the use of English) in the Philippines is a thing of the past: it was a characteristic of the imperial (colonial) period. The statements on the Philippines quoted by Phillipson [in Linguistic Imperialism] on the Philippines [sic] are those made by an insignificant, biased minority.
This is like flogging a dead horse. Today, Filipinos have taken over their own affairs including what to do with English. The Filipinos today are doing with English what they want to do and not from any dictation of outsiders (foreigners). (Sibayan & González 1996: 165)

For his part, Luis H. Francia uses a more combative language to underline the fact that Filipino writers in the English language are engaged in a counter-hegemonic resistance to the center’s incursion into the cultures of the peripheries:

In a sense, many of our Filipino writers in English are engaged in the literary equivalent of guerilla warfare, using the very same weapon that had been employed to foist another set of foreign values upon a ravished nation, but now as part of an arsenal meant for conscious self-determination and the unwieldy process of reclaiming psychic territory from the invader. (Francia 1993: xiv)

Francia is particularly extolling the achievements of Filipino creative writers, who, in opting to describe their experiences and articulate their artistic vision in the English language, have wrested control of the signifying practice from the former colonizer. From the initial imitative attempts at literary writing in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Filipino writers in English have long matured and established their own tradition, adapting their chosen language to the unique demands of life in the Philippines. Although much is left to be desired in terms of promoting English-language Philippine writing in the country, especially among the general public, a few excellent exponents of this branch of Philippine literature have secured a place in most academic curricula, among them Manuel E. Arguilla, a master of local color, whose short stories are especially popular in high school literature classes; Nick Joaquín, whose short stories and novels highlight the deeply rooted Hispanic traditions in the Philippines that often run into conflict with American and Asian norms and values; and José García Villa, whose controversial experimentation with language in his poetry neatly satisfies the more sophisticated requirements of English classes at universities. In short, there are creative writers, literary critics, publishers, journalists, magazine editors, English teachers, linguists, and other active agents who mediate knowledge production and transfer in the Philippines and disrupt the smooth implementation of America’s hegemonic designs. Francia’s description of Filipinos as “a people continually visited by stranger after stranger, each with fixed ideas as to who we were” (Francia 1993: xxii) was therefore valid only until Filipinos were able to indigenize English and break free from the clutches of the conspiracy outlined by Phillipson.
Describing the roots of Philippine English-language literature, the veteran writer and critic N.V.M. González observes that “whatever else may have resulted from this American intervention, whether inspired by hegemonic reasons or otherwise, it is the English language that appears to have made a most unique contribution to the national culture” (Gonzalez & Campomanes 1997: 66). González belongs to the generation of writers that carried on the pioneering work of Paz Márquez Benítez, Manuel E. Arguilla, Zoilo Galang, Maximo Kalaw, etc. and established a tradition of English-language writing in the Philippines. These writers created a branch of Philippine literature that reaches across different ethnolinguistic groups. By choosing to write in English in the 1940s and 1950s – the formative years of the republic – they helped define the contours of the emerging ‘national culture’ to include not only its indigenous roots, as nationalists left to their own devices would have done, but also the legacies of more than four centuries of colonialism. Thanks to their commitment and energy, the Philippines now boasts a vibrant literature in the English language nurtured by a small but increasing number of writers, critics, and readers.

That Philippine literature in English has failed to develop a sizeable following outside the academe is unfortunate enough. The problem is, however, aggravated by an improper diagnosis that puts the blame squarely on the language of choice. When Arnold Molina Azurin remarks that English has failed to become “the medium for an authentic cultural efflorescence in the [Philippines]” and that it “has served instead as sort of umbilical cord between the creative minds [in the Philippines] and Mother America” (Azurín 1995: 167), he is ignoring the accomplishment of generations of Filipino writers who have claimed the English language as a legitimate vehicle of their own artistic visions. Coming two decades after Miguel Bernad’s famous castigation of Philippine English-language literature as “perpetually inchoate” (Bernad 1961: 100), Azurín’s statement is indeed an anachronism that no longer reflects the complexity of the present situation. At the core of such criticism are two fallacious notions: (1) the chosen code, being alien to the Philippines, will never be able to fully express or depict the prevailing conditions in the country and the aspirations of its people, and (2) should they insist on using English, Filipinos will have to subscribe to either the American or British standard.

The first is refuted by various scholarly works on the emergence of a distinct Philippine variety of English. Again, Bautista reviews previous studies on the nature and development of Philippine English and highlights the ground-breaking attempt by Teodoro Llamzon to define “Standard Filipino English” as early as 1969 (Bautista 2000: 6–7). She also presents examples of how Filipinos have transcended the limitations of American English – from
the simple incorporation of vernacular lexical material into the English text (especially honorific titles such as _ate_ for ‘elder sister’ and _manong_ for ‘an older man’) and changes in the meaning of certain words (like _salvage_ to mean ‘kill in cold blood’, a common practice of soldiers and the police during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos to eliminate the more vocal members of the opposition), to the coining of new phrases and idiomatic expressions (like “dirty kitchen” meaning a second kitchen “where the messy or real cooking is done, since the other kitchen is for show or for the few times when the owner of the house does the cooking,” and “watch-your-car boy,” which, according to her, “needs no explanation in a society where carnapping is not uncommon” (Bautista 2000: 22–23). These linguistic strategies, together with the more literary ones developed by Filipino writers in English, counteract the criticisms of people like Isagani Cruz who hypocritically argue that English “lacks words to express Philippine social realities,” hence is inadequate as a language of Philippine literary criticism (Cruz 2000: 51). The irony of it is that Cruz, Azurín, and their lot are only too willing to use English in making their case.

Having established the existence of standard Philippine English, one should now be able to dismiss calls to subscribe to the American or British standard as moot and superfluous. Except that the problem goes beyond a simple linguistic dilemma. More than half a century after Filipinos claimed their independence from the USA, some of them still suffer from a kind of cultural inferiority complex that prevents them from fully appreciating that which is locally produced. To be sure, this phenomenon resulted largely from the American colonial policy which held up American values, ideals, and culture as superior and worthy of emulation. Philippine criticism, for example, has had its share of apologists and self-effacing comparativists, from Miguel Bernad to Leonard Casper (an American critic married to a Filipina writer). Fortunately, there has never been a shortage of resolute Filipino voices that try to subvert this colonialist practice. Thus, writer Edith L. Tiempo strictly rejects “sedulous aping and adoption of foreign models,” even as she questions the adequacy of an introverted nationalism in dealing with the challenges of an increasingly globalized world (Tiempo 2000: 64). In this regard, she echoes the great Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, whose uncompromising stance on language appropriation may well serve as an inspiration to Filipino writers in English:

my answer to the question: _Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing?_ is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: _Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker?_ I should say, I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. […] The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his
message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. (Achebe 1993 [1975]: 433)

The writer José Y. Dalisay, Jr. sums it up for his fellow Filipino writers in a straightforward manner which is not without its own validity: “language is not an issue; you use what you know; you use what’s available; you use it well” (Dalisay 1995: 115).

More serious than the allegation that English can never be made adequate to describe Philippine realities is the charge that English stratifies society, with English speakers forming an elite that enjoys a monopoly of material rewards and in the process alienating themselves from the so-called masses. While it is true that Americans, in the early years of colonization, systematically implemented a program of training and development for a select group of Filipinos that would assist them in the gargantuan task of administering their newly acquired territory, and while it can also be argued that those Filipinos who studied in the USA and mastered the English language eventually occupied key positions not only in government but in the economy of the country as well, blaming social inequity in the Philippines on English is way too convenient and dangerous. For one thing, it absolves Filipinos of their own culpability in the matter. Certainly the deplorable quality of public education, the inegalitarian distribution of land, the limited employment opportunities, the rampant corruption in government and civil service, and the general perversion of democratic institutions are the real root of the problem. Replacing English with Tagalog, as nationalists have been insisting on, is not going to eliminate the problem. Those who already enjoy a monopoly of material resources will continue to dominate Philippine society, as they are the ones who can and will continue to afford the expensive high-quality education and language training offered mostly by private institutions. Meanwhile, native speakers of Tagalog will find themselves enjoying undue advantage in addition to their geographic proximity to the center of power. This, in turn, could incite feelings of envy if not enmity from other ethnolinguistic groups and exacerbate the problem. At this historical juncture, with the conflicts in the Balkans, Central Africa, and Indonesia, to cite a few examples, reminding everybody of the disagreeable consequences of nationalist policies that place certain ethnolinguistic groups at a disadvantage, the Philippines is well advised to steer clear of policies that could translate into chauvinism, interethnic animosity, and open violence. The only viable solution is to make high-quality education available and accessible to the vast majority of the population. That means more schools, better infrastructure, more attractive compensation and training programs for teachers, and a general reevaluation
of school curricula and education policies. These are the real issues; these are the real challenges.

To conclude, it is high time that the Philippine government re-examined its language policy and admitted that its aim to dislodge English from its privileged position in the controlling linguistic domains and make Tagalog the sole official language is a costly and divisive project, devoid of any merit save perhaps for the symbolic triumph of ridding the Philippines of another colonial legacy. Instead of waxing Romantic in anticipation of the day Filipinos would speak one indigenous language, nationalists are better off acknowledging that the culture of the Philippines is the sum total of different ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds, and foreign influences. The integrity of Philippine society is not necessarily guaranteed by language unity, let alone by the imposition of one indigenous language which is viewed with skepticism by other ethnolinguistic groups (Hidalgo 1998: 27–28; A. González 1991: 12). A more pragmatic alternative is the adoption of a two-pronged strategy that enhances the surviving indigenous languages in the country, even as it pushes for Philippine English as the primary means of communication among the different ethnolinguistic groups and as a legitimate vehicle for their visions. The nationalists’ objection to English is a matter of pride – false pride. More than half a century after the Philippines claimed its independence from the USA, they are still wailing over the legacies of colonialism. N.V.M. González put his finger on the problem as early as the mid-1970s when he admonished detractors of the English language in the Philippines to “ask whether […] the despair is real or only an expression of […] self-flagellation” (N.V.M. González 1976: 424). It is one thing to be critical and to resist attempts to hold up one nation, race, or belief as worthy of emulation, or promote inequalitarian relations between the sexes or among different social classes. It is an entirely different matter to wallow in cultural insecurity and nationalistic paranoia. Filipino nationalists will be doing themselves a huge favor by “put[ting] away [their] childish things.”

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