## Global and worldly Englishes: Discommunities and subcultural empires

(essay)

## English, community, discommunication

Under the headline “Doctor couldn’t spell ‘acute’” an article in the *Barrier Daily Truth* (5/01/01; originally published in the *South China Morning Post*) reports that “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…" The story goes on: “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 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’. The crux of this sad story is in the doctor’s explanation: “I was not sure about the translation" and “I did not know the English spelling…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 without further details about the use of English in Hong Kong medical contexts. All we have is a Hong Kong Chinese doctor and patient, a problem with English, 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?

Let me jump to South Africa. Crawford’s (1999) 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" (p.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” (p.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, 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” (p.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 a fuller picture of 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" (p.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 discommunication. 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. Thus, when we talk of language communities and the possible benefits of communication they may bring, we must also consider who is simultaneously left out of such cultural empires and what the onsequences may be.

For my final example of English and medical discommunication, I would like to turn to a 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, warpings, and twistings; how many opportunities for blackmail and corruption, before, transformed, sometimes unrecognizable, 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. (p.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 inter-connected in a number of ways: 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 tension 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. These 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 then locally derived, knowledge.

There are many domains in which English plays similar roles, business and the economy being one of the most salient. In the Philippines, for example, “English continues to occupy the place of privilege - it being the language of the ruling system, government, education, business and trade, and diplomacy…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" (Ordoñez, 1999 pp19-20). Again we can see here the continued effects of colonialism (the particular effects of the US 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.

To start to understand the complex global role of English, we need to think outside questions of language communities and cultural empires. The notion of language community posits a problematic commonality both in terms of the common premises behind the term language and the usual assumptions of the term community. The notion of cultural empires is equally problematic, however, suggesting also a form of commonality, albeit an imposed one, and implying therefore that English reresents a similiarity of culture and thought. Both notions suggest a level of homogeneity as a result of a supposedly shared language. Alternative versions of the global spread of English propose a more heterogeneous version, whereby we have many Englishes and many worlds. And yet, as I shall argue here this version too has its flaws, based as it is on a supposed pluralization of Englishes based around newly emergent national linguistic identities.

In the rest of this paper, I shall take up these issues from various perspectives in order to open up an understanding of current scholarship on the community of English speakers. I shall argue that we cannot come to an understanding of English without a complex appreciation of globalization as both a global and local process, as both an impositional and an oppositional set of relations that produces something new (neither the same nor merely pluralized) in the doing. First, I shall look at current debates over the global spread of English, looking particularly at the arguments over homogeny and heterogeny in the world. One of the central arguments here will be that one’s understanding of English as part of a cultural empire or a language community depend very much on the model of globalization that one employs. Second, I shall look briefly at colonial language policy in order to make several points: colonialism created more complex empires than simple language communities. By this I mean that spreading the colonial language was only one tool and goal of colonialism. The use of vernacular languages as both a policy of pragmatic vernacularism and part of an orientalist preservationism was at least as significant as the use of English. The spread of English has been driven by postwar changes, the rise of the US, changing economic and political conditions and so forth. One of the other effects of continuing colonial relations is the construction and maintenance of languages, what Makoni and I (Makoni and Pennycook, in press), following Foucault, have called the ‘language effects’ of missionary and colonial activity. Finally I will consider various new directions for thinking about language in the world.

## Beyond homogeny and heterogeny

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 globalisation go hand in hand. Where they differ is in terms of the effects of such globalisation. 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, p.22). 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 internationalization, transnationalization, the Americanization and homogenisation of world culture, linguistic, culture and media imperialism (Tsuda, 1994) ” (p.274).

One view of English and globalization, then, views English as part of a process of global homogenization. Whether or not we wish to adhere to this particular version of imperialism, there are important concerns here about the relations between English and other cultural, political and economic relations. As Tollefson (2000) explains, “at a time when English is widely seen as a key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English also contributes to significant social, political, and economic inequalities. ” (p.8). On the one hand, then, some see English as fulfilling “the perceived need for one language of international communication. Through English, people worldwide gain access to science, technology, education, employment, and mass culture, while the chance of political conflict is also reduced. ” Yet on the other hand, amongst other things, “the spread of English presents a formidable obstacle to education, employment, and other activities requiring English proficiency" (p.9). Phillipson’s (1992) book, *Linguistic Imperialism*, remains the clearest articulation of this position. As Tollefson (2000, p.13) explains “Phillipson’s analysis places English squarely in the center of the fundamental sociopolitical processes of imperialism, neo-colonialism, and global economic restructuring. In this view, the spread of English can never be neutral but is always implicated in global inequality. Thus Phillipson, in contrast to Kachru, argues that the spread of English is a positive development for some people (primarily in core countries) and harmful to others (primarily in the periphery). The spread of English, in this view, is a result of policies adopted by core countries to bring about the worldwide hegemony of English, for the benefit of core country institutions and individuals".

What Phillipson (1992) is arguing, then, is that English is interlinked with the continuing neocolonial patterns of global inequality. He explains:

We live in a world characterised by inequality - of gender, nationality, race, class, income, and language. To trace and understand the linkages between English linguistic imperialism and inequality in the political and economic spheres will require us to look at the rhetoric and legitimation of ELT (for instance, at protestations that it is a ‘neutral’, 'non-political’ activity) and relate what ELT claims to be doing to its structural functions. (1992, pp46-7)

According to Phillipson, therefore, English plays an important role in the structure of global inequality. The notion of imperialism in ‘linguistic imperialism’ thus refers not only to the imperialism of English (the ways in which English has spread around the world) but also to imperialism more generally (the ways in which some parts of the world are dominated politically, economically, and culturally, by other parts of the world). It is not a coincidence, therefore, that English is the language of the great imperial power of the 19th century (Great Britain) and also of the great imperial (or neocolonial) power of the 20th century (and probably the 21st) (USA).

Phillipson convincingly shows how, for example, “A vast amount of the aid effort has…gone into teacher education and curriculum development in and through English, and other languages have been neglected. A Western-inspired monolingual approach was adopted that ognored the multilingual reality and cultural specificity of learners in diverse ‘Third World’ contexts” (1994, p. 19). As he goes on to argue, “In the current global economy, English is dominant in many domains, which creates a huge instrumental demand for English. There has therefore already been a penetration of the language into most cultures and education systems" (1994, pp. 20-21). But the challenge here is to show not only that the global spread of English can be seen as a form of imperialism which is particularly threatening to other languages and cultures, nor only that this spread of English correlates with other forms of political and economic domination and thus reflects global inequality, but rather that there is also a *causative* relationship between the promotion of English and forms of global inequality, that English helps produce and maintain inequitable global power relationships. While it is indeed crucial to understand the political context of the spread of English, we need to be cautious of assuming that the *effects* of the spread of English are easily understood, that language is simply spread rather than learned, adopted, adapted and appropriated.

While this homogeny position views English as a reflex of global capitalism and commercialization, the alternative heterogeny position, as epitomised by the notion of world Englishes, views the global spread of English in terms of increasing differentiation. The interest from this perspective is on 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’ (Kachru, 1997: 66). And yet, while Kachru’s world Englishes framework opens up questions of hybridity and appropriation, at the same time it all too often loses sight of the broader political context. As Canagarajah (1999a, p180) points out, Kachru “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."

Amongst a number of problems here (Pennycook 2002) are the political naivety, descriptive (in) adequacy of the three circles, the focus on varieties of English along national lines, and the exclusionary divisions that discount ‘other Englishes’. Of immediate concern, then, is the rather strange insistence within this paradigm on the social, cultural, and political neutralty of English (see for example, Kachru 1985, 1986). As Parakrama (1995, p.22) points out, these repeated claims, are strangely repetitive, bizarre and inaccurate, hiding as they do a range of social and political relations: “These pleas for the neutrality of English in the post-colonial contexts are as ubiquitous and as insistent as they are unsubstantiated and unexplained. ” Dua (1994, p 7) also takes exception to these claims, arguing that the notion of ‘neutrality’ ‘can be questioned on both theoretical as well as empirical grounds,’ English being both ‘ideologically encumbered’ and ‘promoted to strengthen its hegemonic control over the indigenous varieties. ’ In his debate with Rajagopalan (1999) over the merits of linguistic imperialism and linguistic hybridity arguments, Canagarajah (1999b: p 210) argues that while linguistic imperialism may be problematic, a World Englishes perspective that promotes the neutrality of English leads to an unhelpful ‘business as usual’ line: “We are urged to bury our eyes ostrich-like to the political evils and ideological temptations outside."

Probably the best known and most often cited dimension of the WE paradigm is the model of concentric circles: the ‘norm-providing’ inner circle, where English is spoken as a native language (ENL), the ‘norm-developing’ outer circle, where it is a second language (ESL), and the ‘norm-dependent’ expanding circle, where it is a foreign language (EFL). Although only “tentatively labelled” (Kachru 1985: 12) in earlier versions, it has been claimed more recently that “the circles model is valid in the senses of earlier historical and political contexts, the dynamic diachronic advance of English around the world, and the functions and standards to which its users relate English in its many current global incarnations” (Kachru and Nelson 1996, p 78). Yano (2001, p 121) refers to this model as the “standard framework of world Englishes studies. ” Yet this model suffers from several flaws: the location of nationally defined identities within the circles, the inability to deal with numerous contexts, and the privileging of ENL over ESL over EFL.

First, and most disconcertingly, it constructs speaker identity along national lines within these circles. As Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998, p.30) argue, if Randolph Quirk represented “the imperialistic attitude” to English, the WE paradigm represents “a nationalistic point of view," whereby nations and their varieties of English are conjured into existence: “Like Indian nationalism, ‘Indian English’ is ‘fundamentally insecure’ since the notion ‘nation-India’ is insecure” (p.63). If on the one hand this suggests that speakers within a country belong in a particular circle and speak a particular national variety (or don’t, if their country happens to be in the rather large expanding circle), it also, as Holborow (1999, pp 59-60) points out, “fails to take adequate account of social factors and social differences *within* the circles. ” Thus language users are assigned to a particular variety of English according on the one hand to their nationality and on the other the location of that nation within a particular circle. Australians speak English as a native language, Malaysians speak it as a second language, and Japanese use it as a foreign language. The problem is that it depends very much who you are: A well-educated Chinese Malaysian in KL may speak English as a ‘second’ or ‘first’ language, while a rural Malay may know English only as a distant foreign language. Parallel relations can be found in Australia and Japan, and indeed wherever we care to look around the world.

Second, despite claims to the contrary, it continues to privilege native speakers over nonnative speakers, and then ESL speakers (nationally defined) over EFL speakers (nationally defined) (see Graddol 1997). Although the WE paradigm has significantly questioned the status of native speakers in deciding what counts as English and what does not, it has not gone far enough in questioning the divide itself. It continues to maintain that the core Englishes are spoken by native speakers while the peripheral Englishes are spoken by nonnative speakers. This, as U. N. Singh (1998, p 16) points out, is one of the more “fantastic claims’’ of this line of thinking. More recently, there has been a softening on this position, so that it is now conceded that we may talk of “genetic nativeness” in the inner circle and “functional nativeness” in the outer circle (see Yano 2001). But none of this calls into question either the circular argument that locates ‘nativeness’ according to these circles, or the very divide itself. And a division between genetic and functional nativeness is surely based on an insidious division, a point that Salikoko Mufwene takes up in his discussion of the distinction between ‘native’ and ‘indigenized’ varieties.

Mufwene, (1994, 1998) laments that this distinction discounts pidgins and creoles: “I still find the opposition ‘native’ vs ‘indigenized English’ objectionable for several reasons,” particularly because “the distinction excludes English creoles, most of which are spoken as native languages and vernaculars" (1994: 24). Furthermore, “the label ‘non-native’ seems inadequate and in fact reflects some social biases, especially when it turns out that there are some ethical/racial correlates to the distinction ‘native’ versus ‘non-native English’ as applied in the literature on indegenized Englishes" (1998: 119). Thus, while usefully challenging the central privilege of the NS to define the norms and standards of English, it has generally failed to question the NS/NNS dichotomy in any profound fashion, and indeed has supported an insidious divide between native and indigenized English. The WE paradigm also excludes numerous contexts where language use is seen as too complex (Jamaica and South Africa are two examples given from the outset; many others are similarly excluded). The crucial point here, then, is that inspite of talk of clines and varieties, the indigenized new Englishes remain the codified class dialects of a small elite, while a vast range of other Englishes spoken across much broader sections of the population, including creoles and many other forms of language use, are excluded. But to include such varieties of English would start to destabilize the central myth that there is an overarching thing called English.

While this position within the WE paradigm means on the one hand that the global spread of English is taken more or less as a given - an historical effect of colonialism - it also means, on the other, that struggles around what counts as a variety of English are overlooked. As Parakrama (1995, pp 25-6) argues, ‘The smoothing out of struggle within and without language is replicated in the homogenizing of the varieties of English on the basis of ‘upper-class’ forms. Kachru is thus able to theorize on the nature of a monolithic Indian English…’ According to Parakrama (1995) and Canagarajah (1999a), this focus in World Englishes on codified varieties - so-called Indian English, Singaporean English, and so on - spoken by a small elite pushes aside questions of class, gender, ethnicity and popular culture. While claiming ground as an inclusionary paradigm, it remains insistently exclusionary, discounting creoles, so-called basilectal uses of languages, and, to a large extent, all those language forms used in the ‘expanding circle’, since as uncodified varieties, non-standard forms still hold the status of errors.

Crucially, then, for the argument I wish to make here, as a sociolinguistic theory the WE paradigm is far too exclusionary to be able to account for many uses of English around the world. Its central “methodological strategy” of comparing local forms with “metropolitan English,” and thus always making peripheral difference dependent on variation from the Englishes of the centre circle (Dasgupta, 1993, p 135), makes it blind to other possibilities. It “cannot do justice to those Other Englishes as long as they remain within the over-arching structures that these Englishes bring to crisis. To take these new/other Englishes seriously would require a fundamental revaluation of linguistic paradigms, and not merely a slight accommodation or adjustment” (Parakrama 1995, p 17). If Dasgupta’s (1993, p 137) lament that “…seldom have so many talented men and women worked so long and so hard and achieved so little” is perhaps rather overstated, Krishnaswamy and Burde’s (1998, p 64) call for “a reinvestigation of several concepts currently used by scholars” needs serious consideration. At the very least, we need to break away from the constrictive circles with their many exclusions and to start to think more seriously about globalization, popular culture and other Englishes.

Rather than the model of language implied by a simple globalization thesis - the *homogeny or cultural empire position* - or the view of language suggested by a world englishes framework - the *heterogeny or hybridity position* - my argument is that we need an understanding of English that allows for a critical appraisal of both the globalizing and worldly forces around the language. I am particularly interested here in looking at the complex interactions between global and local forces, English and popular culture. Debates around the global spread of English are still all too often caught between arguments about homogeneity or heterogeneity, linguistic imperialism or linguistic hybridity, that do not allow for sufficiently complex understandings of what is currently happening with global Englishes. Both frameworks, furthermore, maintain a belief in the ontology of English, that all this discussion of English concerns a real entity, a belief that has started to be quistioned in certain domains: “there is, or at least there may well be, no such thing as English" (Reagan, 2004, p42). First, however, I want to explore globalization and colonialism in greater depth.

## Globalization and colonialism

In order to take these arguments further, we need to take a step back and reconsider questions of globalization. There is no space here to explore these in depth, so I shall take up one particular set of concerns - hostorical continuity and disjuncture - in order to develop a broader argument about how we may reconsider English in the current world. An ongoing controversy in discussions of globalization concerns whether we view it as just another phase of capitalist expansion or whether it represents a fundamentally new moment in global relations. On the one hand, there is the argument that capital has always been global in its reach (even if the global wasn’t quite as global as it is now): European imperialism sought to create global access to resources, global distribution networks and global markets for its products. On the other hand is the argument that current globalization is something fundamentally new, involving new arrangements of states, new forms of communication, new movements of people, and so forth. As Kramsch’s (1999) puts it, “If there is one thing that globalization has brought us, and that the teaching of English makes possible, it is travel, migration, multiple allegiances, and a different relationship to time and place" (p.138).

Hardt and Negri’s (2000) *Empire* is significant here since it argues strongly for disjuncture, arguing that most analyses fail to account for “the novelty of the structures and logics of power that order the contemporary world. Empire is not a weak echo of modern imperialisms but a fundamentally new form of rule” (p.146). Unlike the old imperialism (s), which were centred around the economic and political structures and exchanges of the nation state (indeed, the two were in many ways mutually constitutive), and which may be best portrayed in terms of world maps with different colours for different empires, the new Empire is a system of national and supranational regulations that control and produce new economies, cultures, politics and ways of living. The US, in this view, while a major player in the new Empire, has not simply taken over the imperial mantle from the European powers, since such a view maintains a states-centric version of the world.

Such a position, however, runs the serious danger of distancing ourselves too much from past forms of empire. Mignolo (2000) is useful here, arguing that “The current process of globalization is not a new phenomenon, although the way in which it is taking place is without precedent. On a larger scale, globalization at the end of the twentieth century (mainly occurring through transnational corporations, the media, and technology) is the most recent configuration of a process that can be traced back to the 1500s, with the beginning of transatlantic exploration and the consolidation of Western hegemony” (p.236). Mignolo traces three principal phases: The first as the *Orbis Universalis Christianus* consolidated by the defeat of the Moors, the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula and the ‘discovery’ of America. The second phase “replaced the hegemony of the Christian mission with the civilizing mission" with a new basis of mercantile expansion and trading based around Amsterdam, and the emergence of France and England as the new imperial powers. The civilizing mission took over from the Christian mission but also co-existed with it. This misison went through various configurations in the twentieth century, particularly the development and modernization paradigms after WWII. Finally, the third phase has gradually taken precedent with the emphasis on efficiency and expanding markets. But, as Mignolo emphasizes, we need to understand “the coexistence of successive global designs that are part of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system” (p.280).

It is crucial, I want to argue, to see the global spread of English in a complex relation to this imperial past. All too often, it is assumed that the current role of English is either a continuation of the colonial past, or a radically new effect of recent history. In fact, it is a much more complex history. It is important, first of all, to understand that British colonial language policy was not massively in favour of spreading English. Colonial language policies can be seen as constructed between four poles (for much greater detailed analysis, see Pennycook, 1998; 2000): First, the position of colonies within a capitalist empire and the need to produce docile and compliant workers and consumers to fuel capitalist expansion; second, the discourses of Anglicism and liberalism with their insistence on the European need to bring civilization to the world through English; third, local contingencies of class, ethnicity, race and economic conditions that dictated the distinctive development of each colony; and fourth, the discourses of Orientalism with its insistence on exotic histories, traditions and nations in decline. By and large, these competing discourses on the requirements for colonial education produced language policies broadly favouring education in local languages: Vernacular education was seen as the best means of educating a compliant workforce and of inculcating moral and political values that would make the colonial governance of large populations more possible. English was seen as a dangerous weapon, an unsafe thing, too much of which would lead to a discontented class of people who were not prepared to abide by the colonial system.

There are, of course ample examples of imperial rhetoric extolling the virtues of English, from Charles Grant’s argument in 1797 that “The first communication, and the instrument of introducing the rest, must be the English language; this is a key which will open to them a world of new ideas, and policy alone might have impelled us, long since, to put it into their hands" (Bureau of Education, 1920, p.83), through Macaulay’s infamous Minute of 1835, to Frederick Lugard’s views on the use of English at Hong Kong University in the early part of the 20th century: “I would emphasize the value of English as the medium of instruction. If we believe that British interests will be thus promoted, we believe equally firmly that graduates, by the mastery of English, will acquire the key to a great literature and the passport to a great trade (1910, p.4). These arguments, however, had more to do with the construction of English as a language with particular benefits, an issue that will be discussed below, than with the expansion of English beyond a narrow elite.

The weight of argument by colonial administrators was much more in favour of education in local languages. In the 1884 report on education (Straits Settlements), E. C. Hill, the Inspector of Schools for the colony, explained his reasons against increasing the provision of education in English: Apart from the costs and the difficulties in finding qualified teachers to teach English, there was the further problem that “as pupils who acquire a knowledge of English are invariably unwilling to earn their livelihood by manual labour, the immediate result of affording an English education to any large number of Malays would be the creation of a discontented class who might become a source of anxiety to the community" (p.171). This position was extremely common and is echoed, for example, by Frank Swettenham’s argument in the *Perak Government Gazette* (6 July, 1894): "I am not in favour of extending the number of `English' schools except where there is some palpable desire that English should be taught. Whilst we teach children to read and write and count in their own languages, or in Malay... we are *safe*" (emphasis in original). Thus, as Loh Fook Seng (1970) comments, "Modern English education for the Malay then is ruled out right from the beginning as an unsafe thing" (p.114).

In an article on vernacular education in the State of Perak, the Inspector of Schools, H. B. Collinge, explained the benefits of education in Malay as taking “thousands of our boys... away from idleness", helping them at the same time to ”acquire habits of industry, obedience, punctuality, order, neatness, cleanliness and general good behaviour" Thus, after a boy had attended school for a year or so, he was “found to be less lazy at home, less given to evil habits and mischievous adventure, more respectful and dutiful, much more willing to help his parents, and with sense enough not to entertain any ambition beyond following the humble home occupations he has been taught to respect". And not only does the school inculcate such habits of dutiful labour but it also helps colonial rule more generally since “if there is any lingering feeling of dislike of the `white man', the school tends greatly to remove it, for the people see that the Government has really their welfare at heart in providing them with this education, free, without compulsion, and with the greatest consideration for their mohammedan sympathies” (cited in Straits Settlements, 1894, p.177). Similarly in Hong Kong, E. J. Eitel, the Inspector of Schools, argued that by studying Chinese classics, students learn "a system of morality, not merely a doctrine, but a living system of ethics." Thus they learn "filial piety, respect for the aged, respect for authority, respect for the moral law". In the Government schools, by contrast, where English books are taught from which religious education is excluded, "no morality is implanted in the boys" (Report, 1882, p.70). Thus, the teaching of Chinese is "of higher advantage to the Government" and "boys strongly imbued with European civilization whilst cut away from the restraining influence of Confucian ethics lose the benefits of education, and the practical experience of Hongkong is that those who are thoroughly imbued with the foreign spirit, are bad in morals" (p.70).

We need to understand, therefore, the *language effects* of colonialism not only in terms of promotion of colonial languages but also in terms of the construction and use of vernacular languages for colonial purposes. Christian missionaries, for example, have played a crucial role not only in assisting past and current forms of colonialism and neocolonialism, not only in attacking and destroying other ways of being, but also in terms of the language effects their projects have engendered. The choices missionaries have made to use local or European languages have been far more than a mere choice of medium. On the one hand, missionary language projects continue to use and promote European languages, and particularly English, for Christian purposes. The use of English language teaching as a means to convert the unsuspecting English language learner raise profound moral and political questions about what is going on in English classrooms around the world. On the other hand, missionary linguists have played a particular role in the construction and invention of languages around the world. Of particular concern here are the ways in which language use, and understandings of language use, have been - and still are - profoundly affected by missionary projects. Bilingualism between indigenous languages and a metropolitan language, for example, was part of a conservative missionary agenda in which converting to Christianity was the inevitable process of being bilingual.

(see Pennycook and Coutand-Marin, 2003; Pennycook and Makoni, in press).

The implications of this understanding of colonial language policy are several: First, education in vernacular languages was promoted both as a means of colonial governance and as an Orientalist project for the maintenance of cultural formations. While this has many implications for an understanding of mother tongue education and modes of governance (see Pennycook, 2002), it is also significant for the role of English both before and after the formal ending of colonialism. The effects of Anglicist rhetoric did not produce widespread teaching of English but did produce widespread images of English as a superior language that could bestow immense benefits on its users, a topic to which I shall turn below. Meanhwile the language had been coveted and acquired by social and economic elites with whom the British were now negotiating independence. This was to have significant implications for the neocolonial development of English in the latter half of the 20th century.

One of the lasting effects of the spread of English under colonialism was the production of images of English and of its learners. Simply put, the point here is that English, like Britain, its empire and institutions, was massively promoted as the finest and greatest medium for arts, politics, trade and religion. At the same time, the learners of English were subjected to the imaginings of Orientalism, with its exoticised, static and derided Others. Thus, on the one hand, we have the cultural constructs of Orientalism - the cultures and characters of those who learn English - and on the other hand the cultural constructs of Occidentalism - the benefits and glories of the English language. As many writers on colonialism have argued (see for example, Singh, 1996, Mignolo, 2000), such discourses have continued long beyond the formal end of colonialism. Thus, not only can we see the current spread of English in terms of economic and political neocolonial relations, but also in terms of cultural neocolonial relations. As Bailey (1991) comments, "the linguistic ideas that evolved at the acme of empires led by Britain and the United States have not changed as economic colonialism has replaced the direct, political management of third world nations. English is still believed to be the inevitable world language" (p.121).

I have dealt with these at length elsewhere (1998), so I shall only draw attention here to particular aspects of this. First, the global spread of English, as a good and righteous event was seen as already well on its way in the 19th century. Guest (1838/1882), for example, argued that English was "rapidly becoming the great medium of civilization, the language of law and literature to the Hindoo, of commerce to the African, of religion to the scattered islands of the Pacific" (p.703). According to Read (1849, p.48, cited in Bailey, 1991, p.116), in a claim that already in the middle of the 19th century reflects Mignolo’s phases of colonial expansion: "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". And for others, this would clearly be at the expense of other languages: "Other languages will remain, but will remain only as the obscure Patois of the world, while English will become the grand medium for all the business of government, for commerce, for law, for science, for literature, for philosophy, and divinity. Thus it will really be a universal language for the great material and spiritual interests of mankind" (George, 1867, p6)

Such statements continue on through the 20th century, with a particular focus emerging on the suitability of English for its global role. In the 19th century George claimed that Britain had been "commissioned to teach a noble language embodying the richest scientific and literary treasures," asserted that: "As the mind grows, language grows, and adapts itself to the thinking of the people. Hence, a highly civilized race, will ever have, a highly accomplished language. The English tongue, is in all senses a very noble one. I apply the term noble with a rigorous exactness" (George, 1867, p4). In the 20th century many writers have insistently claimed that English has more words than any other language and thus is a better medium for expression or thought than any other. Claiborne (1983), for example, asserts that "For centuries, the English-speaking peoples have plundered the world for words, even as their military and industrial empire builders have plundered it for more tangible goods". This plundering has given English "the largest, most variegated and most expressive vocabulary in the world. The total number of English words lies somewhere between 400,000 - the number of current entries in the largest English dictionaries - and 600,000 - the largest figure that any expert is willing to be quoted on. By comparison, the biggest French dictionaries have only about 150,000 entries, the biggest Russian ones a mere 130,000" (p.3). The MacMillan dossier on *International English* (1989) reiterates the point, claiming that "There are more than 500,000 words in the Oxford English Dictionary. Compare that with the vocabulary of German (about 200,000) and French (100,000)" (p.2). Claiborne (1983) goes on to explain the implications of this large vocabulary: "Like the wandering minstrel in *The Mikado*, with songs for any and every occasion, English has the right word for it - whetever 'it' may be". Thus, "It is the enormous and variegated lexicon of English, far more than the mere numbers and geographical spread of its speakers, that truly makes our native tongue marvellous - makes it, in fact, a medium for the precise, vivid and subtle expression of thought and emotion that has no equal, past or present. ” In case the implications of this are not clear, Claiborne goes on to claim that English is indeed "not merely a great language but the greatest" (p.4)

## Globalization and worldliness

The emergence of English as a global language, then, needs to be understood in relation to this colonial history. There are several further implications of this understanding of English in relation to globalization. I have been trying to stake out a view of globalization and English that takes us beyond the dated and static theories of linguistic imperialism and world englishes. Understanding Englishes in the context of globalization suggests that various linguistic uses that used to be more localized are now occurring on a global scale; these global language uses are not determined by economic relations alone, but rather are part of complex networks of communication and cultural flows. In order to grasp such language use, we need to understand that we are dealing here with radically new conditions and theories. Such use of Other Englishes need to be understood both in terms of their historical continuity and in terms of historical disjuncture; they also need to be understood critically in terms of new forms of power, control and destruction, as well as new forms of resistance, change and appropriation.

The predominant paradigms through which we have come to look at English in the world have remained states-centric conceptualizations of English as a multinational language. Both the world Englishes framework, with its focus on emergent national standards, with speakers of English defined by national identity, and the imperialism and language rights frameworks with English imperialism defined according to the Americanization/ Englishization/ homogenization of the world (with language rights as a language-defined rearguard action) work with definitions of nations, languages, communities and constituences that fail to question the colonial origins of the terms with which they operate and lack a means to engage with current global relations.

Sonntag insightfully points out that the rights-based approach to support for linguistic diversity and opposition to the English-Only movement “has not fundamentally altered the American projection of its vision of global English…because a rights-based approach to promoting linguistic diversity reinforces the dominant liberal democratic project rather than dismantling it” (p.25). This is a crucial point because it points to a particular problem with the arguments against linguistic imperialism and for language rights: They are conducted in exactly the same frameworks as the politics they wish to oppose, or as Rajagopalan (1999) suggests, “the very charges being pressed against the hegemony of the English language and its putative imperialist pretensions themselves bear the imprint of a way of thinking about language moulded in an intellectual climate of excessive nationalist fervour and organized marauding of the wealth of alien nations―an intellectual climate where identities were invariably thought of in all-or-nothing terms" (p. 201) As Sonntag argues, “the willingness to use the language of human rights on the global level to frame local linguistic demands vis-à-vis global English may merely be affirming the global vision projected by American liberal democracy" (p.25).

And yet, we also need to understand that that the new conditions of globalization require and produce new strategies of resistance. Resistance and change is possible but it will not be achieved through nostalgic longing for old identities. As Mignolo suggests, there is another side to these global designs: there is always opposition, resistance and appropriation. Drawing on the distinction used by the Brazilian sociologist and cultural critic, Renato Ortiz, and the Martinican philosopher and writer Edouard Glissant, between globalizaçaõ / globalization and mundializaçaõ/ mondialization, Mignolo suggests that the first may be used to refer to these global designs, while the second term, which I am here translating as worldliness[[1]](#footnote-1), 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, p.278). This, then, is the site of resistance, change, adaptation and reformulation. It is akin to what Canagarajah (1999a) in his discussion of resistance to the global spread of English describes as a ‘resistance perspective’, highlighting the ways in which postcolonial subjects “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" (p.2). From this point of view, then, there is always a response to the designs of empire, processes of resistance, rearticulation, reconstitution.

Shifting how we think about English (or language more generally) opens up several new perspectives: As Williams (1992) and Cameron (1995, 1997) have observed, sociolinguistics has operated all too often with fixed and static categories of class, gender and identity membership as if these were transparent givens onto which language can be mapped. Cameron argues that a more critical account suggests that “language is one of the things that *constitutes* my identity as a particular kind of subject" (1995, p.16). Instead of focusing on a ‘linguistics of community,’ (which is often based on a circularity of argument that suggests that a speaker of x community speaks language y because they belong to x, and the fact that they speak y proves they are a member of x), new work is starting to focus on a ‘linguistics of contact’ (cf Pratt 1987), “looking instead at the intricate ways in which people use language to index social group affiliations in situations where the acceptability and legitimacy of their doing so is open to question, incontrovertibly guaranteed neither by ties of inheritance, ingroup socialisation, nor by any other language ideology” (Rampton 1999, p 422). As Hill suggests, the “kaleidoscopic, ludic, open flavor” of language use in domains of popular culture profoundly challenges the methods of mainstream sociolinguistics “by transgressing fundamental ideas of ‘speakerhood’” (1999, pp 550-1).

These more recent approaches to language, identity and speakerhood open up for further question the very notion of whether languages exist in any useful sense of the word, and what indeed we are engaged in when we use language (Pennycook, 2004; Reagan, 2004). As Hill goes on to suggest, we need to get beyond the localized concept of ‘speech community’ or ‘field site,’ located as they are in modernist concepts of identity and location, and instead “attack the problem of the precise situatedness of such phenomena in the flow of meaning with macro-analytic theoretical tools" (1999, p.543).

To Appadurai’s (1996) picture of ‘global cultural flows’ - ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes - it may be worth adding *linguascapes*, in order to capture the relationship between the ways in which some languages are no longer tied to locality or community, but rather operate globally in conjunction with these other scapes. As Kandiah (1998, p 100) argues, most approaches to the new Englishes miss the crucial point that these Englishes “fundamentally involve a radical act of semiotic reconstruction and reconstitution which of itself confers native userhood on the subjects involved in the act. ” The crucial point here, then, is that it is not so much whether or not one is born in a particular type of community but rather what one does with the language. At the point of semiotic reconstruction, English users become native speakers of a new semiotic construction of language that cannot be predefined as a first, second or foreign language.

While the boundaries of sociolinguistic thought have thus been usefully traversed in some domains - questioning ways in which language, culture, nation and identity have been mapped onto each other - most work in the area of world Englishes has failed to develop any complex understanding of current global conditions, continuing to operate with states-centric models of language analysis while excluding divergent Other Englishes. All too often we see the ‘multicultural character of English’ reduced to monolithic national cultures as represented through the ‘high culture’ activities of English language writers. World Englishes is in some ways akin to what Hutnyk (2000) calls the “liberal exoticist enthusiasm” (p 12) for hybridity in World Music, the “global sampling” (22) of WOMAD festivals. My point here, of course, is not to discount postcolonial writing in English and the questions it raises for the ownership of English, but to seek a more complex, contemporary understanding of cultural production in relationship to English, nations, culture, representation and the world. As Scott (1999, p 215) argues, the “real question before us is whether or not we take the vernacular voices of the popular and their modes of self-fashioning seriously, and if we do, how we think through their implications."

If we take a domain such as hip-hop (see Pennycook 2003), we can start to see both different ways of using and mixing languages, and different circuits of influence. Hawaiian hip-hoppers Sudden Rush, for example, who “have borrowed hip hop as a counter-hegemonic transcript that challenges tourism and Western imperialism" (Akindes, 2001, p95), have been influenced not only by US rap but also by other Pacific Islander and Aotearoa-New Zealand hip-hop that constitutes a “Pacific Island hip-hop diaspora” and a “pan-Pacific hip-hop network that has bypassed the borders and restrictions of the popular music distribution industry” (Mitchell 2001, p 31). Thus, not only is there “now scarcely a country in the world that does not feature some form or mutation of rap music, from the venerable and sophisticated hip-hop and rap scenes of France, to the ‘swa-rap’ of Tanzania and Surinamese rap of Holland" (Krims, 2000, p.5), but many of these local scenes participate in complex orbits of inluence.

Alongisde English, one of the most influential is French, producing an intricate flow of influences between the vibrant music scenes in Paris and Marseille in France; Dakar, Abidjan, and Libreville in West Africa, and Montreal in Quebec. And like many urban popular cultures, French language rap is also mixed with many other languages and influences; thus the urban French rap scene is infused with Caribbean and North African languages and cultures; in Quebec, as Sarkar, Winer and Sarkar (2003) show, rappers draw on standard and non-standard English and French, Haitian Creole, Spanish, and Arabic to make statements about ethnic, racial and linguistic identity, using multilingual code-switching to produce new, hybrid identities: “Tout moune qui talk trash kiss mon black ass du nord." And in Libreville, Gabon, rappers use “relexified French” including “borrowings from Gabonese languages, languages of migration, and English (standard and non-standard, but especially slang) ” as well as *verlan[[2]](#footnote-2)* and “Libreville popular speech and neologisms” (p.116),so that they are “inserted into large networks of communication that confer on them a plurality of identities” using a wide “diversity of languages with their variants, along with their functioning as markers of identity (of being Gabonese, African, or an urbanite) ” (Auzanneau, 2002, p.120):

And across East/Southeast Asia, numerous cross-influences and collaborations are also emerging, mixing English and local languages. Thus Hong Kong DJ Tommy’s compilation, ‘Respect for Da Chopstick Hip Hop’ - the title itself, of course, a play on global (Respect/ Da) and local (Chopstick Hip Hop) elements - features MC Yan from Hong Kong, K-One, MC Ill and Jaguar from Japan, and Meta and Joosuc from Korea, with tracks sung in English, Cantonese, Japanese and Korean. Too Phat’s collaborative track, 6 Mcs, on their CD 360°, includes tracks from Joe Flizzow and Malique from Malaysia, Weapon X from Australia, Freestyle (US), Vandal (Canada) and Promoe (Sweden). These are some of the circuits of language use, play and invention that are the new language communities, subcultural empires that identify across national and linguistic boundaries, that borrow, shift, mix and remake language in a new state of flow and flux.

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1. Mignolo uses the French, Spanish and Portuguese terms. I have chosen to use the term *worldliness,*  which I used in earlier attempts (e.g. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Verlan,*  as Doran (2004) explains, “is a kind of linguistic *bricolage* marked by the multilingualism and multiculturalism present in the communities where it is spoken, which include immigrants from North Africa, West Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Given the marginal status of these communities vis-à-vis elite Parisian culture, Verlan can ve viewed as an alternative code which stands both literally and figuratively outside the hegemonic norms of Parisian culture and language” (p.94). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)