



The English-Only Movement in the US and the World in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

In this article, I examine the English-only movement in the United States and other countries in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Elaborating on research on the hegemony of English, this examination demonstrates English-only ideology, both linguistic and visual, as a primary means of restricting language and ethnic minorities' access not only in the US, but also globally. First, I will present English as a social construction of the Anglo-Saxon elites in the process of the subordination of other language groups throughout American history up to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Second, I will briefly introduce the legislation of the Civil Rights Movement to show that language access increased the political presence of language minorities. Third, I will discuss the reemergence of the English-only movement appealing to nationalist sentiments in order to diminish language and ethnic minorities' rising political presence in the US in the twenty-first century. Fourth, I will examine the spread of English-only ideology within the context of global capitalism, led by the US, in order to show forced compliance to the superiority of English by various diverse social groups on the global level.

Keywords

English-only, inequality, racism, globalization

Most Americans and populations worldwide take for granted that English is the national language of the US and the lingua franca of the world. However, like any language, English and its dominant status is a socially and politically motivated construct (Cooper 1989; Phillipson 2010). As scholars have established, the American Anglo-Saxon colonists quickly emerged as a dominant political force, gradually establishing English as the official language in the public domain and imposing English through explicit or implicit language policies on the linguistically and ethnically diverse peoples encountered during the pursuit of Manifest Destiny in North America, including: Native Americans; involuntary immigrants (enslaved Africans); territorial minorities (e.g.,

Mexicans, Cajuns); and voluntary immigrants from all over the world, among others (Crawford 1992; Pavlenko 2002).

While the notion of English as the dominant language was enforced through the use of English in every domain of public life, the concept of minority languages (minoritization) was developed through iconization and erasure, by the conflation of language with ethnicity, and by the devaluation of minor language/English bilingualism (García and Mason 2009). The Anglo-Saxon elites identified the languages of encountered populations as a social problem, fearing these populations as politically formidable and restricted, or even completely eradicated, the use of their languages (see Ruiz, 1984 on three basic orientations toward language and its role in society). As Karst (1986) argues, “intercultural domination . . . always rests on shaky foundations, for it is based on fear” (p. 315). Thus, targeting minority languages, language measures were rooted in xenophobia. Forced to comply with the superiority of English in order to survive, language and ethnic minorities have become active carriers of the English-only ideology.

Enslaved Africans were the first target of the Anglo-Saxons’ brutal restrictive language policies and rules in North America. Playing a critical role in the growth of the US economy (Stewart 2005), enslaved Africans were socially, economically, and culturally marginalized, forbidden to speak their native languages, and separated from their linguistic groups. Prohibited access to education and forced to communicate in English, enslaved Africans developed the African American Vernacular English (AAVE), which has been denigrated to an inferior status by the Anglo-Saxon elites (Baugh 1999).

Given the unrivaled position of English in public life, the framers of the Constitution (1787) strategically refrained from declaring English the official language of the new country. However, after the establishment of the US, central to the Americanization process was a nativist agenda advocating English as a symbol of American identity. This nativist ideology was justified through an Anglo-Saxon historical linear narrative of US history by romanticizing English as a historical element of national unity, and by projecting English onto the future as an element of common destiny (see Zerubavel 2003 on the construction of a historical narrative). As schools are the gatekeepers to the majority culture, and children are defenseless and vulnerable to ideology, English-only measures targeted linguistic and ethnic groups through education. The aggressive English-only tactic toward conquered indigenous people is documented in the 1868 Indian Peace Commission Report: “In the difference of language to-day lies two-thirds of our troubles . . . schools should be established which children should be required to

attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted" (pp. 84, 87).

Similar assimilationist restrictive language policy targeted immigrants, especially during the periods of large waves of immigration. The foreign-born linguistic groups, including the Chinese, Mexican, German, Irish, as well as Eastern and Southern European immigrants among others, maintained their heritage languages through bilingual education, often lived in cultural enclaves, and therefore were perceived as a threat to American values. As American educator Ellwood Patterson Cubberley (1868-1941) declared: "our task is to break up these groups or settlements to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race" (cited in Pavlenko 2002:177; see also Linton, 2009).

From the aggressive integration campaign up through the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, ethnic children were in segregated schools and ethnic and language minority students were taught through English-only instruction, often accompanied by physical and psychological abuse, and by native English speakers, who utilized the cultural concepts and values of the social majority. This subtractive model of English acquisition, which Phillipson (1992) called linguistic imperialism, resulted in children's stigmatization; low self-esteem; high attrition; low academic achievement; underrepresentation in higher education; and consequently, low socioeconomic status and political presence of their language groups (Baugh 1999; Jacobs 2006; Pawlenko 2002; Powers 2008). Understood as, "capability deprivation," a denial of opportunities for a voluntary choice (Mohanty 2009:102), such poverty results in acculturative stress—stress associated with cultural disparity or discrimination, thus dismantling ethnic and language minorities' self-esteem and social mobility (Berry 2006).

However, the social majority does not perceive language and ethnic minorities' deprivations as outcomes of institutionalized language discrimination, but as inherent characteristics of these language groups, and the cause of their economic failure and poverty. This paradigm, which social scientists term a deficit model, perceives minority characteristics that are different from those of the social majority as a deficit, overlooking the roots of the problem, and justifying social inequality (Valencia 1997). Viewed through the lens of the "deficit model," language and ethnic minorities are not provided empirically sound educational opportunities, and therefore often fail in school. In this circular motion, by denigrating the social, cultural, and economic value of languages other than English and their speakers, the Anglo-Saxon elites perpetuated their privileged position, social inequality, and racism. As Phillipson (1992) asserts, "[a] monolingual methodology is organically linked with linguistic disregard of dominated languages, concepts, and ways of thinking. It is highly

functional in inducing a colonized consciousness" (p. 187). Language policy scholars concur that legislation regulating ethnic and language minorities' language use are not about language per se, but about social control goaded by racial animus that uses language to discriminate against its speaker (González, Schott, and Vásquez 1988; Lippi-Green 1997; Stuart 2006).

The circular minoritization process was interrupted by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s that resulted in legislation providing access for language and ethnic minorities to fundamental social institutions and therefore permitting their social mobility. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, color, national origin, and religion. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (amended in 1975, 1982, and 2006) prohibits discriminatory practices in voting and mandates the provision of bilingual ballots. The Bilingual Education Act (1968-2001) permitted the use of native languages in acquiring English. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 prohibits language discrimination in the workplace. The Court Interpreters Act of 1978 advocates language assistance in federal courts. In addition, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) mandates the desegregation of students in US schools, while the Supreme Court holding in *Lau* (1974) advocates appropriate instructional methods for children with limited English proficiency.

Facilitating instruction in both heritage languages and English, bilingual education specifically improved language minorities' educational access, self-esteem, and personal and professional achievements (Baker 2006; Cummins 1986; Cummins and Swain 1986; García 2009; Tollefson 2007). Tucker (2008) also demonstrates the intricate relationship between discrimination against language minority groups and their depressed political presence.

Despite the English-only initiatives, language minorities' presence grew by three hundred percent among Asians, and by three hundred and forty-seven percent among Hispanics (Tucker 2008:578). In addition, Spanish speakers' "purchasing power [was] . . . growing at triple the rate of the overall US population," and the Hispanic youth, under eighteen years old in 2000, dictated the dynamics of youth-oriented market at the beginning of the twenty-first century (García and Mason 2009:93). Most importantly, between 2000 and 2010, the number of White children declined by four point three million, while the number of minority children increased (U.S. Census 2011a, 2011b).

As language and ethnic minorities' political presence amplified, and their children once again dominated American schools, a nativist English-only movement reemerged in the 1980s and still flourishes in the twenty-first century (Tatalovich 1995). The movement targets mainly Spanish-speakers, the fastest growing population in the United States (US Census 2011a, 2011b), and one of the few languages competing globally with English for predominance.

The increasing presence of Hispanics triggered what Zentala (1997) calls Hispanophobia among the conservative components of US society, a fear that Spanish speakers endanger Whites' privileged social position.

While President Clinton reinforced Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by introducing Executive Order No. 13166 (2000), which obligates agencies receiving federal funding to provide language access to services, the Republicans' conservative agenda, acting on behalf of corporations and supported by the nativist groups, targets this access through restrictive language policies. These English-only initiatives were orchestrated by Californian Republican activist and millionaire Ron Unz, who used his political prestige and private money to force English-instruction in the acquisition of English in California (Proposition 227, 1998), Arizona (Proposition 203, 2000), and Massachusetts (Question 2, 2002). Consequently, these educational language legislations have severely restricted bilingual education in three states that have a significant number of students with limited English proficiency, their educational outcomes.

Nationwide, President George W. Bush implemented an educational policy, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001, signed into law in 2002), which reinforced inequality and racial segregation among students. The NCLB act discouraged bilingual programs by subjecting students not proficient in English to English-only education, dismissing empirical findings by Veltman (1988) that children need five to seven years of bilingual teaching before they can benefit from English-only instruction. Not provided equal educational opportunities, the children with limited English proficiency, just as native English-speaking students, are evaluated by standardized tests, which they are failing.

The NCLB also encouraged the segregation of students with limited English proficiency from their English-speaking classmates by placing them in particular levels of English instruction. Since students with limited English proficiency are predominantly ethnic minority children, NCLB successfully reinforces racial lines. As Hillner and Vance (2010) assert, the NCLB "constitutes de facto discrimination," because it "effectively draws race based lines and jeopardizes access to education based on those distinctions" (p. 17; see also Johnson and Martínez 2000).

Restricting the educational access of language and ethnic minority children, and reinforcing the segregation between them and children from the social majority, Proposition 227, Proposition 203, Question 2, and the NCLB violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the court's holding in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and the Supreme Court holding in *Lau* (1974) (Hillner and Vance 2005). Like before the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s and 1970s, English-only initiatives have a damaging effect on language and ethnic minority children nationwide, as demonstrated by scholars in a study titled *Many Children*

Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act Is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools, edited by Meier and Wood (2004). The detrimental effects of English-only educational policies on ethnic and language minorities and language policies in education also are discussed by Baugh (2000), Gándara and Orfield (2010), Menken, (2009); Mitchell (2005), Wright (2005a, 2005b), Wright and Pu (2005), and Ryan (2003).

The nativist English-only ideology culminates in the Republicans' persistent attempt to declare English as the official language of the US constitutionally: The National Language Act has been reintroduced in Congress annually (most recently called the English Language Unity Act of 2011). The Inhofe Amendment (introduced in the Senate in 2006) not only demands the declaration of English as the official language of the US, but also knowledge of English among immigrants. In addition, the Common Sense English Act (H.R. 1588, 2009) aims to protect employers' English-only rules. The bill "To provide that Executive Order 13166 shall have no force or effect, and to prohibit the use of funds for certain purposes" (H.R. 1228, 2009) calls for the repeal of Executive Order 13166. Although the constitutional amendment did not pass, by 2011, thirty-two states had declared English as their official language. Considering that US immigrants learn English faster than immigrants learn English in other countries, these national and state English-only initiatives are often symbolic, but do seriously threaten to nullify language minorities' access to key US institutions (DiChiara 1997). As Thomas (1996) asserts, "legislating English as the official language of the US is not about 'preserving bonds' or 'providing opportunities'; it is about restricting language rights, limiting access to education, impeding socioeconomic mobility, and ultimately making assimilation into the American nationality for specific populations more difficult" (p. 137).

The nativist agenda that perpetuates inequality through language did not just appear, but rather resurfaced. In general, American society historically considers languages other than English and non-standard varieties of English as a problem rather than an asset, and stigmatizes the speakers in the everyday English language, media, films, and advertisement. English-only campaigns of the twenty-first century exploit nativist sentiments appealing to social amnesia about historical multilingualism in the US and ignorance about the benefits of bilingual English acquisition. This ideology also dismisses the fact that immigrants learn English and lose their heritage languages by the second generation. Moreover, English-only proponents assert that the use of non-English languages endangers the prominence of English and that heritage language use in the acquisition of English impedes assimilation.

The restrictive educational measures also reassert the notion that English should be taught by native speakers, against the empirical studies that show

the benefits of compatible teacher accent, leading to the firing or exclusion from teaching of teachers with accented English (Stanford University School of Education June 21, 2010). Claiming to act on behalf of language and ethnic minorities, who have been mostly excluded from the development of restrictive language initiatives, the policymakers advocated English as foundational to success, failing to acknowledge that the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early-twentieth-century English-only educational method demonstrates the contrary. Moreover, Johnson (1997) rightly points out that, even knowing English, minorities, “have to navigate through a ‘ring of fire’ in adjusting to life lead by predominantly White social majority and the speakers of Standard English,” because minorities’ physical appearance, accent, language, and surnames signal differential treatment from members of the majority culture (p. 1261; see also Padilla and Perez 2003).

In her study of racism in everyday English language, Hill (2008) contends that the concept of the Standard English language perpetuates and reinforces language stereotypes, racial lines, and the privileged position of White native speakers of English who are unwilling to build bridges of communication with language and ethnic minorities. Lippi-Green (1997) asserts that since to use race, ethnicity, national origin, or economic class to exclude others is not officially acceptable, US institutions use accent or language as gatekeepers for entrance to the majority culture.

Media perpetuates the stigmatization of language and ethnic minorities, reinforcing language and ethnic inequalities. The media focuses on Hispanics’ perceived resistance to learning English and showcase their overcriminalization (González and Portillos 2007; Markert 2010). Blacks are portrayed as violent members of gangs and speakers of incorrect native English (Baugh 1999), while Arabs persistently are depicted as villains speaking accented English, perpetuating nineteenth-century racial standards (Salaita 2007). These language stereotypes have been disseminated among children through Walt Disney’s films, implanting in them a racially motivated bias. Symbolizing ungodly and ill repute in our society, the black crows in “Dumbo” (1941) are African-American English speakers, while in “Aladdin” (1992) the villain Jafar speaks Arabic-sounding English. Baugh (2009) also notes that, “it is also rare to find minority news broadcasters who preserve any trace of Nonstandard English” (p. 72). Moreover, American culture not only stigmatizes language and ethnic minorities, and/or erases their linguistic characteristics, but also tolerates racially-charged comments by White elites on talk shows, and in public life in general, by interpreting them as “gaffes” (Hill 2008). Meanwhile, the White elites dominate the national media and advertisements as those who speak the “correct” English language and represent “modernity:”

Madison Avenue and Hollywood have joined forces to perpetuate national linguistic stereotypes. Advertisers routinely employ British accent to imply high quality projects... Good Old Boys' with down-home country accents are used to sell pick-up trucks, while Martha Stewart takes great care to project the linguistic image of a well-educated American hostess. (Baugh 2009:71)

Politicians strategically fuel and exploit White voters' fear of historically marginalized language and ethnic groups by focusing on marginalized groups' constructed negative images. The fact that Blacks, Hispanics, and Arabs constitute the largest imprisoned population groups and that the prisons are the fastest growing industry in the US in the twenty-first-century is not an accident, but a reflection of social inequality and racism. By imprisoning "Black criminals," "Muslim terrorists," and "illegal immigrants" who are predominantly of Hispanic heritage, "politicians appear to be 'doing something' about the insecurity of the 'good' (White) people," turning prisons and detention centers into a lucrative growing industry for themselves (Barlow 2005:224; see also Kil Sang and Menjívar 2006). At the same time, by incarcerating language and ethnic felons, the social majority perpetuates ethnic minorities' negative image and diminishes these groups' political presence. For example, fifteen percent of African American men have been stripped of their voting rights as a result of often unjust criminal convictions (Barlow 2005).

Sociocultural denigration of speakers of languages other than Standard English justifies the nativist anti-ethnic and anti-foreign ideologies, including English-only policies. Ignorant of the complexity of the socioeconomic and political conditions that produce linguistic, economic, and social inequality and racism, nativist groups such as the Tea Party uncritically accept the concept of English as the sole language of national unity and as an element of American identity. Emerging after the election of President Barack Obama, the Tea Party Movement expresses the social majority's fear of change, as in previous periods of US history (Berlet 2011). Internalizing social bias about language groups, particularly about Spanish speakers whose numbers dramatically grew in the twenty-first century, nativist groups blame immigrants for narrowing economic prospects in the US. Fearing escalating multilingualism and economic hardship, these nativist groups continually call to declare English the official language of the US, giving support to Republican English-only initiatives. Ironically, members of the Tea Party not only demonstrate their ignorance of English acquisition among immigrants, and a historical amnesia about American multilingualism, but also a lack of knowledge of Standard English. Many posters carried by Tea Party members are misspelled, e.g., "Make English America's *Offical* Language" [emphasis added].

Although the English-only discourse strategically focuses on immigrants, it targets domestic language and ethnic minorities, since “the treatment of ‘aliens,’ particularly noncitizens of color, under the US immigration laws reveals volumes about domestic race relations in the nation” (Johnson 1998:1111). Johnson (1998) convincingly argues that:

The impact of racially exclusionary immigration laws [in this case accompanied by English-only policies] does more than stigmatize domestic minorities. Such laws reinforce domestic subordination of the same racial minority groups who are excluded. By barring admission of the outsider group that is subordinated domestically, society rationalizes the disparate treatment of the domestic racial minority group in question and reinforces that group’s inferiority. (p. 1153)

Therefore, by targeting Spanish, Chinese, or Arabic-speaking immigrants, English-only rhetoric targets Hispanic, Chinese, and Arab-American citizens. Johnson (1998) further asserts that there is an intricate relationship between domestic ethnic minorities and immigrants of color and, “immigration law sounds the alarm for racial minorities,” and “[t]he punishment of noncitizens of color suggests just how society might zealously attack domestic minorities of color” (p. 1154). Therefore, language laws set alarm bells ringing for all domestic language and ethnic minorities, including African Americans and other ethnic groups.

As the US is a leading global power, the treatment of language and ethnic minorities in the US sounds the alarm for language and ethnic minorities worldwide. This argument is advanced by Phillipson (2010), who demonstrates that the Americans and the British have collaborated on making English a global language since the 1950s. Phillipson (2010) contends that when the neoliberal imperialism led by the US began, the linguistic imperialism of the colonial and postcolonial periods took the form of a linguistic neoimperialism (new imperialism), a key dimension of the US empire throughout the world.

This role of English in determining access certainly is evident in post-colonial societies to which English was introduced by colonial powers. For example, in British Cameroon, English was the language of social interactions, relegating speakers of the native language, Kamtok, to margins of the colonial society. After Cameroon’s independence from the British, as in many other post-colonial societies, English did not lose its dominant status, because of its international importance. Thus, English was invested with a new meaning, but its function remained the same, as it serves to exclude Kamtok-speaking persons from access. However, in post-colonial Cameroon, English is not promoted by the colonial power, but by Cameroon’s institutions. Significantly, as

Ngefacs (2011) demonstrates, it is not simply English, but British English, that is reinforced at the university in Cameroon, as exemplified by a poem:

English is the password, not pidgin
Pidgin is taking a heavy toll on your English; shun it
No Pidgin on Campus, please!
If you speak pidgin, you will write pidgin
Be my friend. Speak English
Commonwealth speak English not pidgin. (p. 18)

Similar to minority languages in the United States, pidgin in Cameroon is trivialized and relegated to inferior status. British English, on the other hand, is the language of prestige and, “like other global languages, is being localized and promoted in the Cameroonian context with every iota of passion and vigour” (Ngefacs 2011:16). Ngefacs (2011) further asserts that this language shift from Kamtok to English.

is predictably rooted in the colonial history or in what Bokamba (2007:41) calls a ‘ukolonia’ tendency whereby the colonised people were indoctrinated to believe that everything of theirs, including their indigenous languages and culture, was inferior and barbaric. Interestingly, English in Cameroon, unlike Kamtok, has an official recognition and is one of the official languages used for state transactions; it is taught in most, if not all, Cameroonian schools . . . (p. 16)

Cameroon certainly exemplifies the power of linguistic neoimperialism, which does not promote any English, but the standard language disseminated from and by the English-speaking power centers (the US or Britain), in this case, Britain. These two dominant English varieties are advocated as the “proper” English language in “global and national domains of power such as science, technology, law, politics, and higher education” (Demont-Heinrich 2009:20). Thus, in addition to post-colonial English-dominant societies, where English has been promoted continually as the language of opportunity within the postcolonial context, English has been exported to countries worldwide.

The hegemony of English could not be successful globally, especially in countries that were never British colonies, if English was not accepted and perpetuated by international educational institutions, corporations, and other social groups. The Peace Corps, for example, has distributed American English globally since the mid-twentieth century, and its activities escalated to the global scale in the twenty-first century (Phillipson 2010). Countries worldwide accept Peace Corps teachers, whether these teachers are familiar with the host country or not, broadening the platform for English hegemony.

Phillipson (2010) demonstrates that, strategically planned to reinforce the association between English and global capitalism led by the US, English is taught globally utilizing methods and myths about English learning promoted by nativist English-only movements that served the propaganda of policy-makers in the United States, Britain, and their colonies. English is often taught monolingually, ideal teachers are “native” speakers of English, English is the lingua franca of the world, English is the language of opportunities, native language use impedes English learning, and the more English the better. After a few weeks of introduction to the host country, native-English-speaking teachers hardly are familiar with the cultural concepts and values of the host society. They teach Standard English from American texts, printed by US publishers or by the US-led global press, disseminating American cultural concepts and ideals. Therefore, the ESL classroom reinforces unequal power relations by utilizing English-only instruction and excluding English learners’ active participation in the curriculum, choice of instructions, and assessment methods (Auerbach 1993). Teachers of English abroad who do not include native languages and cultural concepts in teaching English reinforce the superiority of English, whether consciously or not, and denigrate other languages and their speakers to an inferior status. Fairclough (1989) asserts that: “institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations. Practices can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or dominant bloc and to have become naturalized” (cited in Auerbach 1993:33).

As within the colonization process, monolingual English instruction reinforces the colonial mentality among language minorities within the globalization process.

‘Globalization’ serves as a password, a watchword, while in effect it is the legitimacy mask of a policy aiming to universalise particular interests and the particular tradition of the economically and politically dominant powers, above all the United States, and to extend to the entire world the economic and cultural model that favours these powers most, while simultaneously presenting it as a norm, a requirement, and a fatality, a universal destiny, in such a manner as to obtain adherence or at least, universal recognition. (Bourdieu 2001:84, cited in Phillipson 2010:60)

The preeminence of English as a norm has been ingrained symbolically in the names of English teaching programs. Runcieman (2011) examines word order in terms referring to English language teaching: English as a First Language, English as a Second Language, English as a Foreign Language, or Teaching English as a Foreign Language. In his examination, Runcieman successfully argues that “E” for English precedes all the acronyms of language learning, or is second

only to acronym "T" that stands for teaching. He contends, "if we always place 'E' at the beginning though, as the defining Theme, surely we are giving both it and its origin England a leading role in all conceptual beginnings" (p. 38).

The global appropriation of English by various social groups demonstrates the success of its leading role. Like in the United States, in other societies, the ideology of English targets children and the general public through a noble goal and American cultural concepts. For example, a subway advertisement, "Yes we want," in Spain evokes the slogan President Barack Obama utilized in his 2008 presidential campaign, "Yes, we can" (Baron 2010). Held by a child, this slogan also recalls the public dictum, "English for the children," advocated by the English-only movement in the US. Utilizing American culturally specific concepts, the "Yes we want" advertisement implies change through "correct" English. In Spain, English words also are popularized on children's toys, as discussed in detail by Luján-García (2011). Thus, educational institutions and the toy industry in Spain disseminate the prestige of English and American culture among children, the most vulnerable consumers.

Similarly, advertisements promote English in brand naming in Brazil (Friedrich 2002) and many other societies. The impact of advertisements propagating English on the non-English-knowing audience varies, and English words are often unfamiliar to consumers. However, in each case, advertisements advocate the prestige of English and its association with the global power, the US. Kuppens (2009) contends that consumers do not have to understand the word to recognize the cultural associations with it.

Religion is not an exception in the global market, with English being a significant commodity of cultural access, although the role of religion in advocating English-only policies needs greater research. In India, one of the poorest and historically marginalized communities, the Dalit society builds a temple dedicated to Goddess English in Banka village, believing that English is a means for success (Baron 2011). Modeled after the Statue of Liberty, and made of bronze, the statue of Goddess English is about two feet tall. Unlike the Statue of Liberty, who holds the tablet of law with the inscribed date of American Independence, July 4, 1776, in her left hand and a torch in her right hand, Goddess English holds a pen in her left hand, a symbol of literacy, and a copy of the Constitution of India in her right hand, a symbol of freedom. Dressed in contemporary clothing, wearing a huge hat, and standing on a laptop, Goddess English symbolizes the rejection of tradition. She also implies victory over all through the English language. Whatever the intended meaning of this iconography is, within the framework of linguistic neoimperialism, Goddess English demonstrates that the English language has been welcomed by Dalit. Significantly, it is not English of the colonial power, British English, as in the

case of Cameroon, but American English, implying a shift from the British colonial to US imperial dominance of Dalit.

The recognition of the predominance of American English and American cultural ideals worldwide does not require much effort, since the US disseminates its image through various channels to reach the general public: “70-80% of all TV fiction shown on European TV is American” (Phillipson 2010:125). Whether through movies, talk shows, or popular culture, American concepts and values have become entrenched in many other countries. The US distributes more than eighty percent of its movies worldwide, while importing only a few percent of other countries’ output. In this unequal cultural exchange, the US undervalues the cultural capital of its partner societies, demonstrating arrogance and self-interest throughout the world. While the hegemony of English assists companies worldwide to sell their products, consumers’ preference for English-advertised products, culture, and language actively turns this ideology into a reality. Once again, Foucault’s (1977) concept of the “micro-physics of power” serves the US-led corporate world to perpetuate its privileged position (p. 26).

Whether Cameroon, Spain, Brazil, or India, many societies have internalized the concept of English as a gateway to success, marginalizing their own heritage languages and cultures. What they do not know yet is the tremendous harm that the loss of heritage languages and cultures engenders. Not all are aware that they have to learn the Standard English of the elites, and even that knowledge does not guarantee their social and economic mobility. As throughout US history, English is a language of power and exclusion within the world not only because it controls the outcomes of socioeconomic and cultural activities, but also because it dismisses the cultural capital of language minorities (see Bourdieu, 1991, on cultural capital).

By “minoritizing” non-dominant languages and their speakers, advocates of English-only hinder the possibility of bilingualism and multilingualism that implies the cultural and economic equality of language groups (Garcia and Manson 2009). Moreover, in his examination of the language disadvantage and capability deprivation of tribal mother tongue speakers in India, Mohanty (2009) contends that even bilingualism and the maintenance of native languages, which, “enhances chances for survival,” for language minorities, “does not ensure equality of power and opportunities and access to resources” (p. 106). As in post-colonial India and Africa, the powerful presence of English, which Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:46) calls a “killer language,” has devastating effects on language minorities—as it triggers a “hierarchical competitive relationship,” in which tribal minority languages are marginalized and therefore their speakers left voiceless (Mohanty 2009:119-120).

Thus, language minorities are disadvantaged from the start, since they have less political, economic, and cultural power. In addition, they often are poorer than the speakers of Standard English. Like in the US, the poor economic and educational conditions of minority groups hinder their language development, which in turn is used “to justify further neglect and exclusion in a vicious cycle of disadvantage” (Ibid.:107). Like the English-speaking Indian elites, the global elites “have the capacity to be critical, quietly enjoy the pre-eminence of English in the society and the benefits that accrue to them and their children educated in high cost private English-medium schools” (Ibid.:120-121). Projecting a liberal mask, this English-only hegemony reinforces the inequality between English-speaking persons and speakers of other languages and nonstandard English varieties, “within a framework of exploitative dominance” (Phillipson 2010:137).

Globally, many language minorities are not heard, because their languages have no economic and cultural value and they do not speak the Standard English. The English-speaking elites do not show much interest in a dialogue with language minorities, violating their human rights to access advocated by the United Nations (United Nations 1989, 1990, 1992, 1990). The heartbreaking, damaging effects of English hegemony globally, especially on children (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 2010; Harbert, McConnell-Ginet, Miller, and Whitman 2009), make it imperative to address constantly the role that language plays in restricting access for non-English dominant societies within the global community. As Alexander (2009) points out in the case of Africa, “unless African languages are given market value, . . . no amount of policy change at school level can guarantee their use in high-status functions and, thus, eventual escape from the dominance and the hegemony of English” (p. 62). As in the US, English ideology conflicts with the position the US aspires to globally as a democratic society with equal opportunity for all.

To finish this brief discussion on English-only ideology on a positive note, it is important to remember that, as a socially and politically constructed phenomenon, no language retains its permanent position. Just as with Latin in the Middle Ages, the linguistic neoimperialism of English will be dismantled by multilingualism and Englishes. However, considering the pervasive nature of English monolingualism in contemporary societies globally, this hegemony must be challenged by scholars, educators, activists, organizations, and the general public. To provide social justice and cultural access for language minorities globally, it absolutely is imperative to approach language minorities not as subjects of assimilation, or as “others” distinguished by a different language, skin color, or nationality, but as people who have the human rights to equal opportunities. It absolutely is imperative to recognize and respect

non-dominant languages, because they are important elements of personal and group identities, necessary for healthy socioeconomic and personal growth, and carriers of knowledge (Harrison 2008). Combating the dominant position of English also calls for sensitivity in the use of English by English-proficient persons, and especially by academics, considering the racism inherent in the English language itself.

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