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TIME SUBMITTED	07-DEC-2016 11:20PM	WORD COUNT	3277
SUBMISSION ID	749699871	CHARACTER COUNT	18439

THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY
LIBERAL ARTS CAPSTONE – LIB495-OL008

Written Assignment 2

August 2016

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The Function of English as a Globally Universal Dialect

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As outlined previously, linguists have been debating whether or not the English language should be or even could be adopted as a global lingua franca. This paper examines the debate and possible solutions for implementation of such a universal language through research.

This investigation was guided by numerous sources, to include excerpts from literary works, scholarly articles, reports and newspaper articles by linguists, communications experts, and graduate students such as Kingsley Bolton, David Crystal, Robert Phillipson, Yukio Tsuda, Jiao Xue, Wenjing Zuo, David Graddol, Denise Murray, Neil Bullock, Andrew Lawson and Alastair Pennycook. Literary works by authors such as Robert Kaplan, Robert Phillipson, Phillip Sergeant, and Dick Leith were also instrumental.

2.2 Views on the Role of English as an International Language

2.2.1 English is Imperialist

Tsuda, Pennycook and Phillipson make pronounced arguments against the use and spread of English as a universal, or global, means for dialogue between nations. Tsuda uses the writings of both Phillipson and Pennycook to describe his “Cultural/Transformative Position”, which contends that the global spread of English is “a serious problem causing injustices, inequalities and discriminations.” (Tsuda, 2008:48) Robert Phillipson suggests the idea of linguicism as “the ideologies and structures, which are used to legitimate, effectuate

and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources...between groups which are defined on the basis of their language.” (1988: 339) He describes that the condition of linguicism can be realized within the framework of linguistic imperialism: “an essential constituent of imperialism as a global phenomenon involving structural relations between rich and poor countries in a world characterized by inequality and injustice.” (1988: 339) Many linguists maintain that language is an aspect of culture that can never be dissociated from it. Notwithstanding its perceived beneficial use as a method of communication between different cultures, as even Tsuda admits, “Of course I recognize the status of English as an international language. I do not deny the need for English teaching” (Tsuda, 1997), language brings with it imperialistic controls of the culture it represents. Undeniably as one considers Kenya in the 1950’s – when it was still under British colonization – the use of any other language than English was an offense punishable by law. (Sergeant, 2012) This shows that a language imposed in such a manner cannot be neutral or come naturally to these community members.

Phillipson and Tsuda take this a step further by explaining linguistic expansion in terms of imperialism. Expansion is a critical method of imposing one country’s power and influence over another, and in this case the two authors suggest this has been done using ethnocentricity (the appraisal of other cultures by standard of one’s own) and educational policy. In his book, *Linguistic Imperialism*, Phillipson describes the use of these two factors, even coining the word ‘Anglo-centricity’, in the propagation of a division between languages by promoting the allusion of inferiority of secondary languages, or native languages, to the vernacular of the dominant culture. (Phillipson, 1992) Tsuda describes the issue of educational policy as it relates to Japan:

“Universities are also afflicted with Anglomania. Many of my students, asked to give examples of English being used unnecessarily, mention university lectures. In fact, many scholars feel reports not written in

English are not seen as credible... The Ministry of Education, scholars, media and businesses – all of which are encouraging and spreading this English-is-best psychology – should engage in some serious soul searching. Japan itself should develop a critical awareness of Anglomania and its role in English linguistic imperialism...” (Tsuda, 1997)

2.2.2 English is Democratic

Neil Bullock states, “It could be argued that the use of English... could act as a democratic tool. Whether or not the ‘democratic’ description can be universally attributed, however, would depend on the overall context of individual situations.” (2013) He also explains that English is considered as a pluricentric language – one that has multiple standards for originality – meaning English could be used to adapt to various socio-linguistic situations easily. (Kachru & Nelson, 1997: found in Bullock) Crystal defends this position by suggesting that English’s international status is representative of its malleability to fit into other languages. (2003) This is evidenced in the European Parliament, where individuals who do not use English as their first language are able to use accommodation – using different patterns of speech, simplified sentences, avoidance of vernacular, and clear articulation – to allow an understanding between all people. (Crystal, 2006) Though Crystal, and others sharing his beliefs in the practicality of English as a world standard, does not strictly adhere to the concept of any language being characteristic of a political system such as democracy. “People and the political systems they create, are democratic, imperialist, and so on, and this is partly expressed in the language they use... I would never argue that a language ‘is’ anything... it is natural to assume that... where someone says ‘language is X’ [imperialist], one must espouse the opposite position (‘language is not X [democratic]).” (Crystal, 2008)

2.2.3 English is Neutral

Graddol suggests that English has been the intermediary to effect such socio-cultural changes where social media and travel have forced people to consider cultural neutrality. (2006) Considering that the European Union made English the default for communication between member nations, it has been reasoned that English is a logical means to an end in intercultural communication, which indicates a sensible spread of the English language as a global lingua franca. (Bullock, 2008) Graddol adds that there are two main occupations for English in the world: the formulation of a global cultural identity and providing the vehicular language for international communication to achieve it. (Graddol, 1997)

In addition, English has a certain adaptability that can cross all borders. Graddol and Sergeant both hint to English's adaptability and ability to be intertwined into local languages and naturally develop in any context or surrounding in which it is used. (English in the Future, 2006) (English in the World Today, 2012)

Furthermore, Crystal uses countries like Singapore and the Philippines as examples of societies that are able to use English to help them communicate on an international stage, but still retain the cultural importance of their own language. (English as a Global Language, 2003)

2.3 Influences on Societal Development

The influence of language on societal development is universal, as a language is organic to a nation's culture and development of such. However, in terms of English's influence upon societies outside (Periphery or L2) the 'Center' – L1 English speaking

countries – there is much debate as to its usefulness in terms of affording the periphery nations to modernize alongside the center. In other words, those like Phillipson and Pennycook believe that economic development enables L1 countries to exert social, economic, and cultural dominance over L2 countries. (Linguistic Imperialism, 1992) (The World in English, 2006) The idea that a language is the ultimate determinate as to whether or not a country is able to experience modernization or, as Widdowson points out, “there is a fundamental contradiction in the idea that the language itself exerts hegemonic control.” (Widdowson, 1998:398, found in Phillipson, 1992:13).

2.3.1 Japanese Society

Although Tsuda argues that the overuse of English in Japan is nothing short of a disease and promotes ‘linguistic chaos’ (Tsuda, 1997). He further argues that, “English has also become an instrument of power and domination through its international use, shoving other languages aside and creating a situation of disadvantage and inequality for those whose native language is not English.” (Tsuda, 1997) Other Japanese scholars and politicians have concluded that Japan should enable its citizens to learn English in order to heighten the country’s ability to communicate information and ideas with the rest of the world. (Honna, 2005) Honna reasons that Japanese society and corporate organizations are realizing the importance of English on an international scale in terms information sharing, global communication and in political cooperation; specifically citing the use of and communicative exchange on the internet. (Honna, 2006) He takes this a step further, addressing Tsuda’s fears of English dominance and the decline of Japanese culture due to its spread, by putting responsibility back on the Japanese people, and challenging them to take command of the

English language, rather than submitting to the myth of “linguistic self-limitation or self-repression accossiated with it.” (Honna & Takeshita, 2005: 377)

In addition, Honna reasons that there are two reasons for the need for English words to infiltrate Japanese: firstly that “foreign words involve new concepts that are not easy to express in Japanese”, and secondly that these words are used as euphemisms to make things simpler. (Honna, 2006)

The issue in Japan is that of cultural imposition, not linguistic imperialism or the like. Honna even acknowledges that there is room for change in the educational systems which are in palce in Japan. The likely resultion to these cultural issues seems to be to make the language education relevant to the japanese rather than relying on L1 cultural conventions to relay the message.

2.4 The Future of English

For now it seems that English will not be toppled as the go-to international language for intercultural communication. There has been much speculation as to other languages becoming the lingua franca for certain areas of the world. This speculation has come from the study of economic scenarios of nations that are quickly becoming economic powerhouses and military threats (to the West). There is very little evidence to support such speculation however. The only language that has given rise for concern especially among many Americans, because of its expansion as an international language, is Spanish. (Crystal, 2003:132)

It has been suggested that English could actually be the cause of its own demise. This is not so incomprehensible as we have seen so many forms of Englishes being developed, or as discussed before, English retains the ability to be integrated into local languages and changed for the users intended practice in any cultural setting. Much like Chinese, this theory

of self-destruction maintains that as English is changed and developed internationally, it will basically fragment into a complex organization of inter-related but mutually unintelligible languages. (McArthur, 1998)

2.4.1 English Domination

Though ‘linguistic imperialism’ is most likely not the case for the spread of English as maintained by Phillipson, there are legitimate concerns for the replacement, or ‘killing’ of ‘smaller’ or less used languages around the world by English. Phillipson suggests that educational policy should be structured so that English may be learned as an additional skill rather than replacing the native tongue. (1992) Honna (2005) seems to agree in speaking about Japanese education and even Tsuda (1997) suggests that English educational policy in Japan should be more narrowly defined, “if the objective is defined as acquiring a basic knowledge of English...”; so to raise the status of Japanese culture rather than allowing it to be overshadowed. The key takeaway here, is that cultural imposition of English felt by L2 societies is not the fault of the language itself. It is an imposition of nations on its people, meaning it is up to each nation, realizing the economic and political advantages of English, to retain its own national and cultural identity.

2.4.2 Language Planning

In order to make sure that the Phillipsonian suggestion of linguisticism or linguistic imperialism is not realized, it is important that nations conduct proper language planning in terms of policy and education. Codification would be important in this agenda by allowing for countries to have a standardized form of English to then refer to and teach in schools. Such

standardization or codification has been suggested by those such as Crystal (2006) and Graddol (2006) where L2 countries develop their own curricula, materials and other educational resources to support the neutral teaching of English. Crystal (2006) even suggests provisions for a World Standard of Spoken English (WSSE). The biggest issue involved in this is attempting to come up with a truly neutral counsel to agree on what the standards should be in communicating in English. In order to do this there would have to be a neutral group of all nations (wishing to adopt such a language standard) to convene and put out a standard that would allow the standard to be implemented in schools worldwide and that would not encroach upon local cultures.

In terms of policy management, the development of English as a world standard, regions, rather than a world council, should be enabled to develop curricula and teach freely the forms or varieties of English that allow local or at least regional cultures/languages to survive English's 'standard' implementation.

Conclusion

In conclusion this report describes, the current role of English as an international communicative faculty, its influence on L2 societies, and its future as an international standard of communication, based on the works of scholars, professors, authors and linguists, Kingsley Bolton, David Crystal, Robert Phillipson, Yukio Tsuda, Jiao Xue, Wenjing Zuo, David Graddol, Denise Murray, Neil Bullock, Andrew Lawson, Alastair Pennycook, Robert Kaplan, Robert Phillipson, Phillip Sergeant, and Dick Leith. Conclusions and determinations found in this report serve as a summary of their research.

Annotated Bibliography

Bolton, Kingsley. "World Englishes Today." *The Handbook of World Englishes*. Ed. B., Kachru, Y. and Nelson, C. Kachru. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 240-269.

Provides an assessment of the station of English being used as an International communicative device and helps to develop concepts regarding English's global uses. Found within a multi-volume series that covers all sub-disciplines within linguistics.

Bullock, Neil. *Assignment SO/12/07*. MA Assignment. University of Birmingham. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2013.

Brings perspective on the proliferation of English internationally by examining language first and specifically English as it pertains to linguistic imperialism. Promotes the viewpoint that a language itself is not responsible for a political agenda. Reinforces the fact that societies are ultimately responsible for their own futures and English could benefit smaller nations in globalization.

Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Provides a huge amount of perspective as it relates to the spread of English and refuting Phillisian theories of linguistic and linguistic imperialism. Specifically addresses the need for educational policy implementation in L2 countries and provides a framework for the future of English as it continues to expand.

Crystal, David. "The Future of Englishes." *Analysing English in a Global Context*. Ed. A. Burns and C. Coffin. Routledge: Open University Press, 2006. 53-64.

Specifically address the future of English from a more recent perspective. Continues the discussion of holding societies accountable for spreading cultural context through English not the language itself being the vehicle for such colonization of the mind.

Crystal, David. *The Role of English as an International Language: Neutral, Imperialist or Democratic?* Andrew Lawson. University of Birmingham, 20 May 2008.

Interview of Crystal by a scholar that specifically addresses Crystal being accused of labeling English as a democratic tool only. Used to convey that the use of the word 'democratic' is only used for the reason an opposing side calls their theory 'imperialist'.

Graddol, David. "English in the Future." *Analysing English in a Global Context*. Ed. A. Burns and C. Coffin. Routledge: Open University Press, 2006. 26-37.

Used to address topics in the future of English and the policy of planning for the expansion of the language on a global scale. Specifically introduces the idea of smaller nations doing their own planning based on what the English language could do for them rather than relying on a world standard as proposed by Crystal.

Graddol, David. "The Future of English?" 1997. *The British Council*. The English Company (UK) Ltd. 29 June 2016 <<https://www.britishcouncil.jp/sites/default/files/eng-future-of-english-en.pdf>>.

Addresses what we can expect to see in the future of English language use and teaching. What there can be done in the development of standards internationally and how to implement these policies.

Honna, N. & Takeshita, Y. "English Language Teaching in Japan: Policy Plans and their Implementations." *RELC Journal* 36.3 (2005): 363-383.

Specifically used to set the tone for what English is used for and what it can do for the country of Japan as long as leaders recognize the power it wields while still looking out for the Japanese culture. Shows that language itself is not to blame for imperialism but the leaders of the peripheral countries.

Honna, N. "East Asian Englishes." Kachru, B., Kachru, Y., & Nelson, C. *The Handbook of World Englishes*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 114-129.

Used to give specific perspective in contrary to Tsuda who believes that English itself is the reason for cultural imperialism. Gives insight into the real uses of English in Japan and the resolution for Japanese to take charge of their own culture rather than submitting to that of the west in face of using different language. Also provides an idea of how English helps in contextual issues where Japanese fails.

Kaplan, Robert B. "English in the Language Policy of the Pacific Rim." *World Englishes* 6.2 (1987): 137-148.

Used as evidence for the future of English and its tendency, as a language, not a political system, to be non-hegemonic.

McArthur, Tom. *The English Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Specifically used to describe what the threat to English dominance might be. Though it seems that English will prevail it could falter and become completely different if allowed to freely form and be used in all corners of the world, ending up like the Chinese language where many dialects are found and sometimes cannot communicate with one another.

Pennycook, Alastair. "The World in English." *Analysing English in a Global Context*. Ed. A. Burns and C. Coffin. Routledge: Open University Press, 2006. 78-79.

Used specifically to back up Phillipson but also provide an argument that shows cultures are susceptible to the will of people rather than the convention of language or linguistics.

Phillipson, Robert. "Linguicism: structures and ideologies in linguistic imperialism."

Cummins, J. and T. Skutnabb-Kangas. *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*.

Clevedon: Avon Multilingual Matters, 1988. 339-358.

Used to provide an outline and understanding of what linguistic imperialism is and what causes are attributed to it.

Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Used specifically to provide understanding of linguistic imperialism and what that means in the context of the spread of English in the world. Also provides solutions for language policy and the development of cultural understanding.

Richards, Jack C. and Richard Schmidt. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 3rd Ed*. Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education, 2002.

Used only to provide an understanding of the term, monolingual as it pertains to linguistics.

Sergeant, P. "English in the World Today." Sergeant, P. and J. Swann. *English in the World - History, Diversity, Change*. Routledge: Open University, 2012. 5-47.

Used specifically to provide understanding of the history of English as an imperialist tool, but then to show that though language was used in industrial expansion it became a question of how to implement English as a benefit to modernization.

Tsuda, Yukio. "English Hegemony and English Divide." *China Media Research* 4.1 (2008): 47-55.

Used to show the side of Japanese scholars that rejects the notion English is beneficial or good for Japanese society. Allows us to see an explanation of language's role in hegemony of societies.

Tsuda, Yukio. "'Japlish' leads to linguistic chaos." *The Globe and Mail*. Toronto: Bell Globemedia, 22 March 1997. D,4.

Used in order to show succinct ideas from Tsuda that allows us to see his position on English as an imperialist tool of the west to oppress and control peripheral nations.

Yule, George. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Used solely in understanding the origins of English as it pertains to history and the development of English and all languages.

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