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Power, accommodation and subversion: negotiating  
identity in communication with English as a lingua franca

Macht, Anpassung und Subversion: das Verhandeln von  
Identität in Kommunikation mit Englisch als *lingua franca*

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## Introduction

There has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much. There has never been a time when so many people wished to travel to so many places. There has never been such a strain placed on the conventional resources of translating and interpreting. [...] And never has there been a more urgent need for a global language (Crystal 2003, p. 14)

The world is currently witnessing patterns of linguistic spread unprecedented in human history. Although humanity has since its beginnings seen migration and trade patterns causing certain languages to emerge as tools of communication between linguistic communities, the spread of today's most wide-reaching *lingua franca*, English, is occurring on a scale and with a speed unheard of up to this point in history. Speculations on the effects of this phenomenon range from dire prognoses foreseeing the mass extinction of languages worldwide and the establishment of a monolingual world community, to hypotheses predicting extremes in variation resulting in a mutually unintelligible family of languages, as the English language is taken up by new communities. But Linguists are by no means in accord about what exactly the dangers and possibilities associated with the spread of English as a global "super-language" might be.

The need for a global language in an age of globalization is becoming increasingly clear. As the need for efficient modes of worldwide communication grows, as interconnection across the globe increases, borders become more fluid and people more mobile, more and more countries are acknowledging the significance of English as a means of global communication. And the language is being learned by increasing numbers of people across the globe. Although the status of the language is not stable (and as seen throughout history, dynamics of language development can always change), English seems poised to become the first truly global *lingua franca*, a term defined by UNESCO 1953 as: "a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them" (Fiedler 2011, 81).

This brings up not only questions of cultural dominance and globalization, but also of the integrity of the English language and its standardization. The current ratio of native to non-native speakers of English

worldwide is currently 1:3 and the number of L2 speakers (those who learn English as a second or foreign language) is growing at a faster rate than that of L1 speakers (those who learn English as their mother tongue) (Ricento 2013, 127). Native speakers no longer form a majority of speakers of English, making the question of who to look to for a norm-providing standard increasingly unclear. It provides a theoretical vacuum that is arguably unique in history. Languages have traditionally been defined and measured by their use in closed, usually national communities, but English is being spoken internationally at a rate that makes connecting it with and defining it by its culture of “origin” seem increasingly detached from reality. As this situation has no precedent, the debate regarding the standardization and use of the language must consistently create its own definitions.

One of these is a basic question regarding the definition of exactly what a language is and can be for its speakers. While scholars have traditionally attached language use to culture, ethnicity, nationality and other aspects of identity, this picture no longer holds true for English, which exists increasingly in areas outside of defined borders in heterogeneous international communities. Thus, the debate about defining English centres strongly on questions of identification. Likewise, the question of cultural domination that most often comes up with regard to the spread or “exportation” of English must also be one of identity because the ability of speakers of English to express creatively and negotiate their individuality in the international lingua franca would provide evidence that cultural domination is not a simple, one-sided process.

Focusing on these central issues, this paper will investigate the question of how individuals navigate the rather undefined plain where English exists between its culture of origin and the individual worlds of its multifaceted speakers. Is the English language becoming a worldwide resource owned by all who speak it, or does the spread of the language represent an extension of the Americanization of the world through globalization? While the background of global inequality and dominance of English-speaking nations suggest a process of domination and even imperialism (Phillipson 1992), it will become apparent that the processes of individual appropriation of the language under conditions of globalization have a far more complex character, involving localizing and subversive tendencies within what only appears to be homogenization. It may

be possible, despite the unequal balance of power behind English linguistic spread, to theorize a truly equitable and democratic future for the language in which individual expression takes place under conditions of creativity and spontaneity, rather than representing a simple imitation of a dominant cultural form.

Chapter 1 of this paper takes on the theoretical background of this already much discussed topic. Generally, theorists tend to take on two different perspectives: Some (e.g. Kachru 1988) see English as being heterogenized through appropriation in diverse communities, causing it to change radically. Others take exactly the opposite stance, claiming that the spread of English represents a fatal loss of diversity through dominating, homogenizing forces of imperialism (e.g. Phillipson 1992, Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013). The first perspective projects a rather unproblematic process by which English takes on an additional role in the community, functioning as a “language of communication” (Hüllen 1992) alongside the other “languages of identification” (ibid.) that are used in local contexts. The imperialism argument suggests that the forced appropriation of English represents the “murder” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013) of other languages, resulting in a total loss of diversity and sacrificing the agency of individuals in the affected communities. A discussion of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the “linguistic market” (1994, 1977) will be presented here as an attempt to unravel the workings of linguistic power on a micro-sociological level. Bourdieu’s theory points to many aspects of concern when theorizing the spread of a language and describes in detail the latent workings of power and social inequality represented and reproduced in everyday speech. Particularly the prevalence of English-speaking media in global discourses afforded by the global language, as well as the power differential emerging from the still-accepted “native-speaker norm” are evidence that the English language is not yet the “culture-free code” (Fiedler 2011) that some theorists would like to believe.

The following chapter addresses the shortcomings of prevailing works that claim English to be dis-embedded from culture, discussing the ways in which English is still considered as the “property“ of native speakers. This situation must first be addressed in order to come to an understanding of how these latent structures can be undermined to democratize the language. In a

discussion of modernization and the creation of the nation state, it becomes apparent that the concept of a “language”, as it has been defined as a homogenous, closed system, is actually a construction in itself. Theorists promoting the so-called “deconstruction” of languages (e.g. Makoni & Pennycook 2007) recommend looking beyond the concept of language as a structure to recognize the fluid nature of communication. This admittedly radical view of language allows for a conceptualisation of English beyond the homogenization/heterogeneity debate. Culture and language in this way come to be seen as less concrete and more emergent, which allows for more flexibility in observing what is actually happening to English through the process of its global appropriation and spread.

These processes, as will be discussed in chapter 3, confound what can be defined as simple oppression and are observed as highly individualized and localized expressions of agency and creativity. Through a discussion of the concept of *performativity*, especially as described by Judith Butler (2011, 1997, 2007), the daily use of English as the expression of overriding power structures takes on a new form. Although the latent power structures defining English as the export of England and America are still at work, the daily re-creation of English can be seen as a constantly renewed performance that can be used to undermine the workings of power at their source. Research in English as a lingua franca, or ELF, supports this theory with evidence of the creative and subversive ways in which individuals assert their identities using the tools that English provides. This discussion points towards possibilities for the development of a global language that both L1 and L2 speakers would have to learn, eliminating the privilege currently enjoyed by native speakers and thus levelling the playing field.

The nature of this development requires a rather significant shift in what is currently understood as language education, as will be discussed in chapter 4. New forms of socialization and community-building appearing under conditions of globalization beg a new definition of what qualifies as linguistic competence. Coming away from the classical definition of languages as overriding structures and recognizing the emergent and fluid nature of communication, especially in the fleeting encounters that characterize globalized societies, more emphasis needs to be placed on communicative

competence than on upholding norms. With this theoretical background and the practices to follow it up, English could truly be headed towards a more democratic future.

## **1 English as a “global language”: democratization or imposition?**

### **1.1 English in the “outer circle” and models of diglossia**

The topic of English’s appropriation in communities outside of England, its nation of origin, is, of course, not a new debate. Since the beginnings of colonialism, the English language has been brought into communities in which it was a “foreign” entity, in which it originally did not “belong”. However, as years progressed and nations such as India, Kenya and many other countries affected by colonisation, worked their way towards greater political and economic independence from their former colonizers, the relationship with the language has changed. Salman Rushdie points out pragmatically: “the English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago” (Rushdie 1991, 70). English continues to possess an important role in most of these communities to the point that many in more recent generations have adopted it as a second native language. English has been integrated into daily life in so many nations already, that to speak of a country of “origin” is very much to ignore the current reality of the language.

Braj Kachru’s three circles model (Kachru 1988), conceived in the 1980s, described the spread of English internationally and the diverse forms it takes on in new contexts. This model describes the presence and use of English in various countries according to its status and use. The “inner circle” consists of nations such as the UK and USA, in which English is spoken as a native, standard variety by a majority of the population. The “outer circle” is made up primarily of nations that have a colonial history, where England has exerted (and continues to exert) a strong cultural and economic influence in the past centuries. English is used extensively in these nations, often in administrative spheres, but also in schools and as a second language. The final circle is termed

the “expanding circle” and consists of the increasing number of nations in which English is being taught as a foreign language in schools.

Use of English in the “outer circle” is described as a process of indigenization, a diversification of linguistic norms that, used on a mass scale, can be described as varieties in their own right. As nations previously under colonial rule gained independence, the drive towards self-identification also played out linguistically. Thus, varieties such as Indian English are recognized as official uses of the language with their own distinct lexical, phonological and syntactical idiosyncrasies. These nations have come to develop rich literary traditions using the English language expressing the diversity of those who speak it. Raja Rao describes the development of unique cultural identities that comes from the widespread use of English in India:

We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American (in Crystal 2003, 183).

Through processes of diversification, many claim that the English language has been dis-embedded from its cultural origins, becoming the possession of all those who speak it – a means of a unique, post-colonial form of expression of those looking towards a new future.

Such contexts, where English exists alongside other languages or dialects, and is used largely by the same speakers can be described as *diglossic* (Oxford English Dictionary 2014). In such situations, English is described as existing on different plains of consciousness for its speakers. Rao describes:

English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit and Persian was before – but not of our emotional make-up (in Crystal 2003, 183).

Rao suggests that English has been internalized to the extent that it is no longer felt to be an “alien” language. However it is felt to exist on a different plain than the indigenous languages of India. It is a form of expression on an intellectual and not an emotional level.

This description coincides with Hüllen’s (1992) dichotomy between language of identification and language of communication

(Identifikationssprache und Kommunikationssprache<sup>1</sup>). Hüllen suggests that these forms, which represent respectively, as Rao describes, the intellectual and the emotional aspects of an individual, should be conceptualized separately in multilingual contexts. The so-called language of communication has a functional role for individuals and thus “correctness or particular stylistic and cultural features associated with the speech community from which (the) language originates are less important” (Knapp 2008, in Fiedler 2011, 82). The cultural and emotional implications of language, according to Hüllen, are thus restricted to the language of identification, which individuals learn “in order to be integrated into and identify with the [...] speech community” (ibid.). Hüllen suggests that “concerning English as a world-wide language of trade, the world has to do with a language of communication, not a language of identification” (Hüllen, 1992, 313). English is thus defined as a “native-culture-free-code” (Fiedler 2011).

Indeed, Hüllen cites the “culture-free” nature of English as “[...] the condition for its success“ (ibid.). According to Hüllen, the spread of a wide-reaching language of communication does not present a danger to diverse languages of identification and English has fulfilled this role by maintaining “a certain neutral distance” (ibid. 312) to the regional varieties it exists alongside. He compares relative readiness to accept the spread of English to the resistance against attempts by the former USSR to promote the Russian language. The spread of Russian was widely unsuccessful, according to Hüllen, precisely because this language was being promoted as a language of identification and “triggered in the users of other languages of identification the well-known conflicts of loyalty” (ibid. 314). Hüllen postulates that the supposed “qualitative differences” (ibid.) between language of communication and language of identification reduce the dangers of language dominance, loss and death: “The spread of a uniform language of communication does not have to affect the existence of languages of identification” (ibid.).

Many see the diversification of English and the adoption of the language by other linguistic communities as a voluntary process, as English has been dis-embedding from its original cultural contexts and taken on a “neutral” character. Crystal (2003) optimistically declares:

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Hüllen 1992 are my own translation from the original German

[...] it is plain that no one can now claim sole ownership [of English]. this is probably the best way of defining a genuinely global language, in fact: that its usage is not restricted by countries or [...] by governing bodies (141).

But can the English language so easily be removed from its cultural context and shake loose the history by which its widespread use originated? Can English simply be unhooked from its cultural and historical origins and become the “global” language, providing a mode of free and unique expression for all individuals? And perhaps more importantly, can the adoption of English be described as a voluntary process in the face of the tactics of cultural, military and economic domination historically and currently being used in the spread of Anglo-American hegemony? These connections need to be considered if there is to be hope of accurately analyzing the role of global English in its many communities of use and of influencing its development as a truly global and democratized institution.

## **1.2 Historically embedded inequality: the theory of linguistic imperialism**

[...] the ideology of globalist discourse on globalization tends to omit or trivialize the devastating facts of cultural contact initiated by those who come to be known (and to describe themselves) as history’s ‘winners’ (Ricento 2013, 132)

To what extent is the dominance of the USA and other Anglophone nations in the politics of globalization reflected in the spread of the language? Theories of linguistic imperialism, defined by Phillipson (1992) as a situation in which

the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson 1992, 47),

place the current spread of English firmly in the context of its colonial history and observe how loss of cultural diversity, the elimination of certain ethnic groups and even various forms of genocide have always been associated with the spread of the English language.

The rate of linguistic death on the planet is increasing, with half of the world’s estimated 6000 living languages projected to die out by the end of the century (UNESCO 2009-2014). Loss of linguistic diversity goes along with a

loss of cultural heritage, historical knowledge and even ecological diversity, as the largely orally transported wisdom of indigenous groups, which are disappearing at the highest rate of any languages, is lost forever (Phillipson und Skutnabb-Kangas 2013). A direct correlation can be made between the trend of linguistic loss and the institutionalization of English. To put it simply, when schools decide to start teaching English, there is less room for other languages in the curriculum (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013). As governments put more and more emphasis on English teaching as a means of keeping up economically in a globalizing market, other languages get pushed aside in the process. Language policies and support for languages on a government level are key to preserving linguistic diversity. If a language is no longer supported, especially in the area of education, it can “encourage language shift, triggering language attrition at a group level” (ibid. 85). The promotion of English can result in the suppression of other languages, providing the “macroeconomic, techno-military, social and political causes of linguistic genocide” (ibid. 78) as defined by UNESCO (cf. ibid. 86).

The evidence of the effect that the presence of English can have, especially on indigenous languages, which are being lost at the highest rate of all languages worldwide (UNESCO 2009-2014) is overwhelming. With a lack of support and funding, especially for education, minority languages are eventually given up by younger generations. With them is lost a wealth of unique knowledge and cultural coding, which results in a reduction of cultural diversity worldwide. This can have much further-reaching consequences than just a loss of linguistic goods. In fact, the vitality of world languages is connected with the ecological wellbeing of the planet. Languages play a part in a greater network of *biocultural diversity*, defined as:

[...] a living network made up of the millions of species of plants and animals that have evolved on Earth, and of the thousands of human cultures and languages that have developed over time. (Terralingua 2014)

According to this line of thought, “languages, cultures, and ecosystems are interdependent” (ibid.), making the supposed murder of languages not only a cultural, but an environmental issue, relevant not only for the whole of humanity but for the planet at large.

A look at the historical roots of the spread of English makes arguments for its neutrality today seem somewhat short-sighted. The exportation of languages has always been used in the past by colonizing forces as an important tool for suppressing and dominating other cultures. During the colonialist period, imperialist powers used linguistic suppression to ensure the assimilation of indigenous populations and establish dependence on their rule. Colonialists saw the imposition of language as an integral aspect of establishing their “superior” civilization upon the “savages” (cf. Phillipson 1992, 45). In fact, the history of England’s colonial activities has served to establish the language today as the forerunner for the status of world language, ensuring its presence around the globe.

Considering the imperial agenda of the dominant nations in the spread of English in the past, the power relations carried by the English language bear analysis. Phillipson takes an extreme view of the situation, claiming English to be nothing less than “the capitalist neo-imperial language that serves the interests of the corporate world and of the governments it influences” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013 82). For Phillipson, language policy favouring English and the exportation of the language through the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry amounts to a “project of global dominance” (ibid. 79), a calculated, deliberate process of cultural domination meant to aid capitalist agendas.

It seems somewhat naïve to claim that the spread of English represents a voluntary choice by the countries that adopt it and that the spread of the language can be kept separate from the homogenizing spread of Americanizing hegemony. Mufwene (2013) who argues fervently against the idea that English poses a threat to global diversity exemplifies the contradictions at hand with the following argument. He claims on the one hand that

English is not even the only language of the global economy, since manufacturers trade in different languages, making sure that they secure profitable markets everywhere they can (47).

On the other hand, however, he expounds that

English has spread as a business language not only because of American military and economic hegemony, but also because almost any country in the world would like to trade with the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other important members of the former British Commonwealth (ibid.).

Indeed, the fact that three of the seven economic giants represented in the G7—the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada—are predominantly L1 English-speaking nations and that, as Mufwene admits, “any country in the world” is scrambling to do business with these nations makes the adoption of English more of a necessity than a voluntary choice.

### 1.3 Bourdieu’s “linguistic market”: the prestige of English as symbolic power

The previous discussion describes primarily macro-sociological aspects such as political institutions and the economy that cause the English language to be imposed on speakers in all speech communities in the world. It is thus evident that the English language represents on a structural level a certain dominance by powerful nations that profit from the exportation of their language. But what is happening on a micro-sociological level when individuals take on a new language, perhaps a “language of communication” that they do not identify with on an emotional level, and which demonstrates their attempt or the attempt of the global community to cater to the imposing factors of American dominance? Are power inequalities carried onto this plane as well, influencing the consciousness of the speakers?

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of language sheds some light on this complex relation between language and social power relations. For Bourdieu, the reduction of language to a simple system outside of the social context is a short-sighted practice:

Linguistics reduces to an intellectual encoding-decoding operation what is in fact a symbolic power relation, that is, an encoding-decoding relation founded on an *authority-belief relation* (Bourdieu 1977, 649).

Thus, the concept of a “culture-free code” as Hüllen proposes would be impossible, as language always reflects the power structures existing among the people who speak it. In other words, “the whole social structure is present in each interaction” (Bourdieu 1992, 67).

Bourdieu views all linguistic expression as embedded in a socially encoded network of discourses. These discourses become perceived reality, manifested in social institutions in which individual actors move and interact. For Bourdieu that means, who speaks, how and to who is fundamentally

socially regulated. In order for a discourse to be deemed legitimate, it must fulfill the “tacit presuppositions of its efficacy” (Bourdieu 1977, 650), regarding legitimacy of the speaker, the situation and the receiver. Thus,

when an authorized spokesperson speaks with authority, he or she expresses or manifests this authority, but does not create it [...] the spokesperson avails himself or herself of a form of power or authority which is part of a social institution, and which does not stem from the words alone (Editor’s introduction, in Bourdieu 1992, 9).

Actors express and carry out influence through language in constant reference to their social world. Furthermore,

Discourse is a compromise formation emerging from the negotiation between the expressive interest and the censorship inherent in particular linguistic production relations [...], which is imposed on a speaker equipped with a determinate competence, *i.e.* a greater or lesser symbolic power over those production relations. (Bourdieu 1977, 651)

Every interaction is thus, according to Bourdieu, an expression of symbolic power relations, pre-defined by institutionalized discursive realities. Every speech act is a reflection of these power relations, into which speakers order themselves more or less subconsciously.

Who may speak, to whom and who gets listened to is, according to Bourdieu, defined by the language, or the language form that a person speaks, allotting intrinsic authority to those with command of the dominant form. In his extensive investigations into French society, Bourdieu observed that alone a person’s pronunciation or accent, reflecting their social status and upbringing (cultural capital) can secure inclusion into certain groups, for example into academic circles, or prevent them from advancing socially (Bourdieu & Passeron 2007).

The function of discourse is a reflection of the social structures of the group from which it emerges. Discourse expresses the subtle symbolic relations that exist within the group. Thus,

The science of discourse must take into account not only the symbolic power relations within the group concerned, which mean that some persons are *not in a position to speak* (*e.g.* women) or must *win* their audience, whereas others effortlessly command attention. [...] These hidden conditions are decisive for understanding what can and cannot be said in a group (Bourdieu 1977, 650).

The mechanisms of reinforcing social hierarchy through language can be overt, such as when a certain language or dialect is promoted in schools and

another is discouraged, as well as extremely subtle. Bourdieu's concept of linguistic power ties into his theory of *habitus*, the embodied, largely subconscious "sense of place" (Bourdieu 1994, 82) in relation to the social field. This principle describes the intuitive way in which individuals navigate their lives in society. A person's sense of their probable chances in various fields determines his or her feeling of confidence in social situations and thus, ultimately, his or her choices. In this way, social class systems and domination by certain groups reproduce themselves in predictable ways, despite individual freedom (cf. Bourdieu 2003). In the same way, speakers' "linguistic strategies" are oriented "by the chances of being listened to, believed, obeyed" (Bourdieu 1977, 654). Individuals censor themselves based on their "practical expectation" (ibid.) of receiving a high or low price for their discourse on the linguistic market. This forms the basis for a person's embodied disposition, manifesting in ways such as "'self-assurance' or 'indisiveness' and 'timidity'" (ibid.). The intimate, embodied reactions to a person's perceived social reality make up the basis for linguistic exchanges.

The success or failure of certain language forms thus can determine the success or failure of those individuals who possess them. For Bourdieu, the embedding of linguistic analysis into the context of social power relations involves a shift of focus from "linguistic competence to linguistic capital" (Bourdieu 1977, 646). Language must be seen, in this sense, as a form of symbolic capital. Each utterance is thus valued in relation to the social situation in which it is made. In other words,

Linguistic exchange [...] is also an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit (Bourdieu 1992, 66).

When speakers learn English, therefore, they are increasing their linguistic capital, as English has an extremely wide linguistic "market" where it is valued highly.

The concept of language as economic capital, in a figurative as well as in the very literal sense, is well documented. Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) claim also that when English becomes prevalent in a society, it is an example of "linguistic capital accumulation" (82). This causes other languages

to be neglected leading to “linguistic capital dispossession” (ibid.) of minority languages. De Swaan (2013) defines the “communicative value” (Q-Value) of language as a mathematical equation combining prevalence (number of speakers) and centrality (number of multilinguals learning the language). In this way, the various values associated with languages can be evaluated on a global scale regarding not only the number of speakers, but also who is learning the language and how these languages are promoted. From this standpoint, language learning is seen purely as an investment. The repercussions of a language’s lower “value” on the market can lead directly to linguistic decline and death (De Swaan 2013, 65 ff.).

The symbolic relations of power that Bourdieu describes can thus be plausibly transferred to the concrete relations between individuals and the English language. Bourdieu shows that power plays a role not only in an individual’s choice of which languages they learn or choose not to learn. All-encompassing structures of power also define how that individual positions him or herself with these languages in relation to his or her social environment and how he or she is perceived and received by others. According to Bourdieu’s theory of linguistic capital, command of a language – and precisely, command of the most prestigious *form* of a language – can translate into advantages or disadvantages on a social level.

#### **1.4 English and the discursive construction of reality**

Bourdieu shows that language is inextricably tied with power relations in society. The speaker with the highest linguistic capital, similarly to monetary capital on the economic market, is able to exert the most influence over others. The authority afforded to those with command of the most prestigious languages is related to the access this affords them to influential discourses, which are the building blocks of social reality and thought. The real power possessed by those with access to the creation of discursive reality is the control over those mechanisms defining what people are able to think and realize in their lives and, more importantly, what they take for granted.

Bourdieu describes class as a struggle over “legitimate symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1977, in DiMaggio 1979, 1461). This is described as

the power to impose (and even indeed to inculcate) instruments of knowledge and expression of social reality (taxonomies), which are arbitrary (but unrecognized as such) (ibid.)

The “unrecognized” nature of the creation and maintenance of social class structures makes their subtle but effective workings in defining people’s perception of their social reality all the more powerful. Cultural imperialism, Bourdieu & Wacquant (1999) write,

rests on the power to universalize particularisms linked to a singular historical tradition by causing them to be misrecognized as such (41).

The universal nature of the English language causes the mechanisms of global dominance to be “misrecognized” and thus ignored. English is the very tool of cultural domination. But the language has been de-historicized, that is, cut off from its historical origins, thereby concealing its implications in the construction of global inequality. According to Bourdieu & Wacquant, American cultural norms and the English language have become so commonplace that they are transformed into “universal common sense” (ibid. 42) The

endless media repetition [...] manage in the end to make one forget that they have their roots in the complex and controversial realities of a particular historical society, now tacitly constituted as model for every other and as yardstick for all things (42).

The expectation that English is a “neutral” tool for communication, and “culture-free” can thus be called into question, especially considering the discursive dominance that the spread of the language facilitates in media and academics. Far from being solely a language of communication between speakers of other languages, the spread of English facilitates the spread of Anglo-American ideas in the form of print, film and music, allowing these to be consumed globally at a much higher rate than other languages. The five reportedly most influential newspapers in the world are printed in the English language and 57 percent of all newspapers printed worldwide are in countries where English has a special status (Crystal 2003, 93).

In popular culture, English-language films and music dominate cinemas and airwaves. By the mid-1990s, Hollywood dominated 85 percent of box offices worldwide, even in countries with a strong film-making tradition such as France and Japan (Crystal 2003, 100). The English language similarly

dominates the music industry, with 99 percent of pop groups working in English in the 1990s according to *The Penguin encyclopaedia of popular music* (ibid, 103). If it is true that “people increasingly believe in what they see and buy what they believe in” (Wim Wenders, in Crystal 2003, 100), then the dominance of English-speaking media worldwide becomes an effective rhetorical tool at the disposal of those producing it, namely the capitalist powers behind the film and music industry based in the United States.

Similarly, beyond the realm of popular culture, access to academic discourse, and thus the building blocks of global knowledge and scientific paradigms, is also determined by English proficiency. In 1996, according to a study by Hamel (2007) (in Ricento 2013, 129), 90.7 percent of scientific publications worldwide were written in English. In the social sciences and humanities between 1974 and 1995 publication in English increased from 66.6 percent to 82.5 percent (ibid, 129 f.). It thus remains the sole option of those wishing to contribute meaningfully to scientific progress (or those wishing to be read by a wide audience) to publish in English. Access to influential global discourses is simply more efficient for proficient speakers of English, which has an effect on who gets heard, who has influence on whom and who can exert authority.

### **1.5 Problems of inequality in theorizing “global English”**

Proponents of English see the possibilities of the language as a “unifying power” (Crystal 2003, 103 f.) worldwide, affording access to world markets for developing nations and improving communication internationally. The following quotation, describing South Africa, expresses the type of attitude with which proponents of the world language view the spread of English with hope:

Learning and using English will not only give us the much-needed unifying chord but will also land us into the exciting world of ideas; it will enable us to keep company with kings in the world of ideas and also make it possible for us to share the experiences of our own brothers in the world (Mashabela in Crystal 2003, 111).

While mutual understanding and continued development are certainly goals worth aspiring to as a global community, disregarding the historical and current inequality associated with English poses the risk of underestimating the inherent inequality that enabled the language to spread in the first place. The

aspiration to “keep company with kings” displays additionally an inherent power differential between those who “have” English and those who wish to have it too.

Proponents of English criticise linguistic imperialism theorists for disregarding the complex realities of a world in which a historical conception of power relations has to be seen alongside an emerging set of empowering relationships in which English has a new functional role, no longer associated with the political authority it once held (Crystal 2003, 24 f.).

Although it is true that the development of English is moving in ways that allow creativity and identification within the parameters of the language, theorists who are too quick to disregard the power relations associated with English run the risk of proliferating them further.

Hüllen (1992), for example, displays a logical disconnect in his discussion of educational methods to encourage the possibility of identification across cultural boundaries without causing other languages to be given up in the process (cf. 311). With his claim that international English is spoken as a language of communication with less emphasis placed on the “cultural features associated with the speech community from which (the) language originates” (Knapp 2008, in Fiedler 2011, 82), Hüllen paints a democratic future for the language, dis-embedding it from its cultural roots and thus alleviating the inequalities between native- and non-native speakers. At the end of the article, however, he reverses his argument, clearly placing the English language back within its national borders, observing that “native speakers of English profit especially from the status of *their* language” (Hüllen 1992, 315 – italics added). Hüllen leaves a theoretical gap where the dangers of cultural domination through the English language by which native speakers have more and easier access to global discourses can go by unnoticed. His recommendations for language education suggest that English should “naturally be understood as the expression of its culture and (can) therefore be taken on as a second language of identification through an intensive education experience” (ibid.). The aspiration to reach the level of the “kings in the world” seems still to be a one-sided struggle undertaken by those who want to have English, trying desperately to reach the level of those who already possess it.

Crystal's (2003) view of the future of world languages as one of increasing bilingualism is equally native-centric and short-sighted. He claims

In my ideal world, everyone would have fluent command of a single world language. *I am already in the fortunate position* of being a fluent user of the language which is most in contention for this role (Crystal 2003, xiii – italics added).

Although Crystal promotes linguistic diversity, working towards a future where both “historical identity” and “international intelligibility” (ibid. xiv) are fostered, he still sees the future “Global Language” as his own native variety and his position as “fortunate” for having fluent command of this language. If one is to realistically consider possibilities for a democratization of language, then Crystal has not extended his argument far enough. The proposition in his brief discussion of the problems of “linguistic power” (ibid. 16 f.) seems to avoid the issue entirely. He simply suggests:

If a global language is taught early enough, from the time that children begin their full-time education, and if it is maintained continuously and resourced well, the kind of linguistic competence which emerges in due course is a real and powerful bilingualism, *indistinguishable from that found in any speaker who has encountered the language since birth* (ibid. 17 – italics added)

Again, the struggle for English is depicted as a one-sided battle. To achieve equitable exchange between all of the world's speakers, and to avoid clear social and discursive advantages afforded to native speakers (which he already admitted he was pleased to possess), Crystal suggests that the key is simply for those less “fortunate” non-native speakers to work a little bit harder and expend more resources. This is exactly the social situation, where resources and energy end up being side-tracked from other languages into English, which Phillips and Skatnabb-Kangas (2013) cite as being a primary cause of language death. True democratization of language requires distancing the language to a place further away from native varieties than Crystal suggests. All other hypotheses ring somewhat false, wishful thinking from the comfortable position of privilege.

## 2 A new linguistic paradigm? Deconstructing and “reconstituting” English

### 2.1 Linguistic power and the “native speaker norm”: who has ownership of English?

How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. [...] They are irrelevant (Widdowson 1994, 385)

As the previous arguments have shown, ignoring the social structures surrounding the use of a language can have the consequence of unconsciously proliferating structures of social inequality by pre-determining a person’s access to the social discourses that generate power and authority in the social world. If, as Bourdieu (1992) claims, “the whole social structure is present in each interaction” (67), then who uses English, how and in what contexts has a significant influence on the greater structures of society at large. According to Bourdieu, speakers of languages order themselves on a subconscious level into the structure of internalized hierarchies that define their social world. Bourdieu’s work focused strongly on France, where local dialects are symbolically subordinate to standard French, and where a prestigious accent is a distinct sign of a person’s class. How can this analysis, however, be extended to refer to a global language which exists simultaneously in many different societies at once?

It has been reported that more than 80 percent of interactions that take place with English as a second or foreign language take place with no native speakers present (Gnutzmann 2000, 357). Yet, officially, the measure for correctness in English still continues to be a native-speaker standard. This means that users of English worldwide are constantly in a disadvantaged position in comparison to native speakers. The solution of starting even earlier with education that has been proposed by theorists such as Crystal (2003) only serves to enforce the disadvantage paradigm, implying that non-native speakers have to work harder to achieve something that native speakers achieve naturally.

This proposition is problematic from the perspective that Bourdieu illustrates, as those who control the legitimacy of the prestigious forms of

language are able to control the linguistic market. This applies especially to the most formal discursive contexts, where strict codification is the rule:

The more formal the market is, the more practically congruent with the norms of the legitimate language, the more it is dominated by the dominant i.e. by the holders of the legitimate competence, authorized to speak with authority (Bourdieu 1992, 69).

This means, when the primary means of measuring English are the few codified “native” forms like British English or American English, then those speakers who are lucky enough to inherit this linguistic capital are endowed with more authority and more power on the linguistic market. If, as Bourdieu (2003) demonstrates, such symbolic and social forms of capital are translatable into other forms of capital on other markets, including the monetary, then inequality on a linguistic level translates into social inequality on all levels.

Despite developments in recent years for language teaching to become more learner-centred, egalitarian and to depart from a sense of language “ownership” (Widdowson 1994), the prevailing norm for assessing English continues to be a native standard (Seidlhofer 2001). A representative of the Pearson Test of English, for example, states that the test grades students according to if they are “understandable to the native speaker” (*EL Gazette*, Sept 2008, In Jenkins 2011, 927). The fact that the majority of English language learners are currently learning the language for use as a lingua franca in international contexts is not taken into account. The most widespread use of English is still being assessed according to a “tenacious deficit perspective in which variation is perceived as deviation from ENL [that is, “English native speaker”] norms and described in terms of ‘errors’ or ‘fossilization’” (Seidlhofer 2009, 238).

A prevailing sense of inequality is thus present when it comes to learning English, with those less “privileged” non-native speakers approaching the language from a perspective of resignation. Non-native English teaching professionals are reportedly distraught when faced with the impossible task of living up to a native-speaker norm:

[...] we suffer from an inferiority complex caused by glaring defects in our knowledge of English. We are in constant distress as we realize how little we know about the language we are supposed to teach (Medgyes, in Seidlhofer 2001, 135).

This exemplifies what Bourdieu (1977) describes as the “permanent linguistic insecurity” (656) of those not in possession of the prevailing legitimate language form. Although English is increasingly becoming a means of intercultural communication among multilingual speakers in today’s world, even highly competent and educated speakers face an insurmountable goal when faced with the native-speaker standard.

Increasingly, theorists are acknowledging these problems. Widdowson (1994) cites the essentially creative and dynamic processes by which languages develop and change in an attempt to create legitimacy for new English varieties:

[New Englishes] are all examples of the entirely normal and necessary process of adaptation, a process which obviously depends on nonconformity to existing conventions or standards (385).

So-called “non-native” varieties of English, such as those spoken in the outer circle go through a process of “nativization,” by which they take on new characteristics according to the new sociocultural environment in which they are being used (Kachru 1985, Bamgbose 1998). It is a matter of continuing debate among theorists, as to exactly when such innovations, occurring on the grammatical and the pragmatic level, are to be seen as errors or accepted as linguistic innovations of a separate language community, worthy of being codified in their own right. An absence of official codification makes even indigenized forms that are spoken on a wide scale, such as those varieties found in Africa or South-East Asia, subject to comparison with English or American varieties. This “makes morphological, syntactic and phonological innovations difficult to accept,” according to Bamgbose (1998, 6) writing about Nigerian English. These non-native varieties of language constantly undergo scrutiny measuring their “correctness” compared with native varieties.

Perhaps of most concern is that speakers themselves are reported to compare their own language use to that of the “legitimate” native varieties. Bamgbose (1998) describes

[...] what is happening is like a love-hate relationship in which one does not wish to sound like a native speaker, but still finds the accent fascinating” (6).

He adds that “the best admired newsreaders on national television and radio are those whose accents are closest to a native speaker’s” (7). That even speakers

of non-native varieties, who “do not wish to sound like” native speakers still regard the native varieties with fascination and admiration suggests that the identification with these new varieties is still taking place in reference to a prestigious and “correct” native form. This fact prompts Jenkins (2011) to observe in the academic contexts “While many universities claim to be deeply international they are in essence deeply national at the linguistic level” (928)

This is significant considering that

[...] the determining factor in owning the English language is whether the speakers view the variety they use as being a legitimate variety in a social, political, and economic sense (Higgins 2003, 621).

This means that simply providing a language with legitimacy, which can be achieved through official codification, can generate a sense of ownership of the language. This would entail a further de-centralization of English norm-giving, moving it from the inner circle (a term which in itself implies a focus on native speakers) and re-placing it in the communities and contexts in which it is used. Only in this way can the language hope to become dis-embedded from the latent power structures that can have devastating consequences for those who do not “measure up” to the most prestigious standard and proliferate the domination of the linguistically fortunate. This would entail a shift in paradigm, seeing the English language as a truly global resource, not one that native speakers simply share with the world. In theory this is clear:

The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. To grant such custody of the language is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status (Widdowson 1994, 385).

The implementation of a truly global language in practice is, however, far more complex. The following sections of this chapter will explore the paradigm shift needed to open up the possibility of freeing language from the bounds of national identity so that a truly global language can emerge.

## **2.2 Beyond the nation state: the creation and deconstruction of languages**

[...] I do take it to be a general consensus that what constitutes a language, and in particular ‘English as a global language’, is necessarily a discursive construct in need of deconstruction (Seidlhofer 2001, 135).

Through processes of globalization, English is no longer present within a single social structure; rather it has overridden the boundaries of individual communities to exist on an unprecedented scale in the most varied contexts worldwide. It is now spoken in innumerable social contexts and is the means of communication between members of extremely varied cultures and linguistic backgrounds. What used to be localized use of language is occurring on a global scale, independent of space and time (Pennycook 2007, 31). These are conditions under which no language has ever existed and thus requires an entirely new theoretical framework to describe and understand the outcomes for the individuals and societies that are impacted.

English is transcending the traditional ways in which languages have been defined, as bounded systems associated with closed communities or cultural identities. Bloomaert (2012) claims that languages “are ideological constructions historically tied to the emergence of the nation-state in the 19th century” (10). In his view linguistics “played a major role in the development of the European nation-state as well as in the expansion and organisation of empires” (ibid.). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with nations attempting to centralize and amass more global power, concepts of culture and ethnicity became centralized as well. The modern nation state

[...] was structured in part by new capitalist productive processes on the one hand and old networks of absolutist administration on the other. This uneasy structural relationship was stabilized by the national identity: a cultural, integrating identity, founded on a biological continuity of blood relations, a spatial continuity of territory, and linguistic commonality (Hardt & Negri 2000, in Pennycook 2007, 27).

Languages, which, like human consciousness, are essentially fluid, creative and capable of great adaptation, became something concrete, pressed within the borders of the modern nation state. It would be absurd to expect today that a society be “biologically continuous” or ethnically homogenous. However, many still adhere to a conceptualization of language based on these archaic identity-forming constructs.

Culture and language must under conditions of globalization be theorized in a way that acknowledges the blurred edges of these concepts and the space in between. As humans move and communicate around the globe, what can be identified as culture is no longer an ethnically homogenous, politically defined sphere with an inherent set of identities at the centre

(Welsch 2009). Cultures and are seen today to interweave with one another and constantly take on new characteristics, in a process of change and flow (ibid.). Likewise, the actual nature of languages is constantly developing (Makoni and Pennycook 2007, Bloomaert 2012). Alternatively,

it is far more productive analytically to focus on the very variable ways in which individual linguistic features, with identifiable social and cultural associations, get clustered together whenever people communicate (Bloomaert 2012, 11).

When thought about language adheres to the conceptual construct of language being tied to ethnicity and the ideology of nations, it is difficult to theorize the spread of a language separate from the spread of national ideologies or a certain cultural way of thinking. But, like these institutions themselves, what are commonly accepted to be “languages” – that is, singular, separable entities with a discrete set of characteristics to define them – are essentially discursive constructs, created and manifested over time. The discursive construction of language is founded in various mechanisms that have been reinforced partially by linguistic scholarship, which has long analysed language based on:

[...] the underlying ideology of countability and singularity, reinforced by assumptions of a singular, essentialized language-object situated and physically located in concepts of space founded on a notion of territorialisation (Makoni and Pennycook 2007, 10-11).

Linguists have in the past pushed to isolate discrete languages where no consistent boundaries were actually apparent. By this means, they actually called the concept of “language” into being. That is why huge disparities are often observed between the number of languages that linguistics has identified and those that speakers claim to speak (cf. Makoni and Pennycook 2007, 11). *Ethnologue*, a website dedicated to recording language use across the world, cites the difficulties entailed in counting languages, admitting that a unitary view is only one method of many in recording language use (Lewis, et al. 2014). It is thus speculated that the

[...] very concept of discrete languages is probably a European cultural artefact fostered by procedures such as literacy and standardization (Romaine 1994, in Makoni and Pennycook 2007, 11).

However, the consistent starting point of theories warning against linguistic imperialism continues to be an ethno-national view of language.

Critics of Phillipson's (2003, 1992) work on linguistic imperialism claim that his prediction of a homogenized global culture as a result of globalization and the spread of English fails to take the complexities of globalization into account (Pennycook 2007, 18ff.). Taking English to be a closed entity can even prompt further invocations of nationalism, as minority "languages" feel the need to protect their own "identity" in the form of fixed, national languages (cf. *ibid.* 19). Speaking about "English as an international language" as a starting point thus

[...] avoids the obligation to deal with the complexity of English in relation to globalization while simultaneously reiterating the existence of English as if this were an issue not in doubt (Pennycook 2007, 19).

The problem with a historical view of linguistic imperialism, according to Makoni and Pennycook (2007) is that taking for granted a historical development of language contributes to "the construction of linear histories that imply particular origins" (6). In their view, language as a construct is the result of traditions reflecting a "retrospective construction of stasis, an invention of a prior way of being that is used to justify supposed historical continuity" (*ibid.*) and serving to enforce historically strengthened structures of power. But language is "dynamic and changing" (*ibid.*), and attempts at defining it according to historically constructed parameters – for example English as the export of England and America and carrier of their cultural "tradition" – is essentially to reinforce these definitions rather than call them into question: "To claim authenticity of such constructs [...] is to become subject to very particular discourses of identity" (*ibid.* 9).

### **2.3 From a homogenization/multilingualism dichotomy to a transcultural paradigm**

The foremost theories describing the spread of English have up until now been focused on one of two extremes. On the one hand, linguistic imperialism foresees a homogenization of global cultures, a huge loss of linguistic diversity and generally disastrous outcomes for the agency and self-definition of individuals worldwide, who are seen as subject to overwhelming suppression. The other theories focus on the diversification of the English language (Kachru 1988, 1985) leading to extremes of heterogeneity. This would, at its most extreme, lead to mutually unintelligible varieties stemming

from English, of the sort that arose from the spread of Latin after the Roman Empire.

Both of these theories, however, while apparently focusing on disparate processes (homogenization vs. heterogenization) have an essential definition of language as closed entities at the centre, which leads them both to similar consequences. Critique of Kachru's theory of world Englishes (Pennycook 2007, 22 f.) points out that, while contributing to a wider acceptance of diversity within English, as opposed to the homogenization of imposing one standard worldwide, the three circles model still focuses on definition and codification, causing many varieties of spoken English, such as mixed forms like creoles, to be rejected as unsystematic. It thus still serves to reinforce a native-centric kind of thinking based on "have" and "have-not" that is the root of linguistic inequality, as has been described above.

Pennycook (2007) proposes an alternative, beyond homogenization and heterogenization. Based on the concept of *transculturality* which focuses on the "interpenetration and interwovenness" (Welsch 2009, 2 – own translation) of cultures, he focuses on the "transcultural flows" associated with globalization in general and the spread of English, which is inextricably associated with these processes.

English is a translocal language, a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations. English is bound up with transcultural flows, a language of imagined communities and refashioning identities (Pennycook 2007, 6).

In the theory of transculturalism cultures are not seen as homogenous entities with an essential core, but as fluid instances of overlap, blend and interaction. A sphere model of culture, which assumes that the boundaries of culture are fixed, implies that these cultures must also collide, resulting in conflict whenever cultures meet (Welsch 2009). Such a model also implies domination and suppression when cultures interact, as they are seen as impenetrable entities, not allowing for blending and overlap. Alternatively, Welsch (2009) suggests:

The topic of discussion should not only be that today's societies encompass diverse cultural models ("cultural diversity"). Instead, the focus should be on the ways in which individuals today are formed by multiple cultural patterns and carry different cultural elements within themselves (6 – own translation).

The problematic aspect of current views promoting multiculturalism as the upshot of interactions and movement between societies is in viewing the individual cultures in interaction as integral entities. While pluralisation is the norm in a world where individuals are highly mobile, the concept of *multiculturalism* implies a deterministic understanding in which culture precedes the individual. This concept, while parading as open-mindedness, is simply “nationalism transferred from state to society” (Eriksen & Stjernfelt 2010, 360). Likewise, “the concept of multilingualism may do little more than pluralize monolingualism” (Pennycook 2007, 22). Theorizing the pluralisation of languages (or cultures) while containing these languages in a concrete conceptual form is not an innovation, but rather a simple extension of essentialist dogma.

Similarly, Pennycook (2007) suggests “the concept of world Englishes [such as that proposed by Kachru] does little more than pluralize monolithic English” (Pennycook 2007, 22). On the other hand, focusing on the creative ways in which language is used, changed and re-created by those employing it could open up new possibilities beyond those postulating simple, one-sided suppression:

We can now start to consider the language not so much in terms of an underlying set of structures but rather as a social, ideological, historical and discursive construction, the product of ritualized social performatives that become sedimented into temporary subsystems (Pennycook 2007, 73).

By focusing on language as a collection of ever-changing “subsystems”, the centre of analysis shifts from nations or ethnicities who “own” language, to “communities of practice”, spontaneous situations of speech that occur in heterogeneous linguistic environments (Wenger 1998). Current views of language teaching acknowledge that communication in and acquisition of an L2 does not occur in “idealized, homogenous communities but in complex, heterogenous ones” (Norton Peirce 1995, 12). Furthermore, language “does not exist as a prior system but is produced and sedimented through acts of identity” (Pennycook 2007, 73). Wherever a language is spoken (and as a result of travel and communication technology, language is increasingly disembedded from the constraints of time and space), it is created and re-created to fit the specific

communicative means of those speaking it in the specific community of practice in which it is being used.

Language learning can no longer be viewed as oriented toward a „target culture“ and „target language“. Many learners do not have a clear community in mind, in which they would like to gain access, but hold a communicative or professional goal that motivates language acquisition (Higgins 2011). Globalized societies, in which cultures flow together allow for a hybridization of identities upon which multilingualism can grow. Language is no longer seen as an overriding structure that people submit to, but a highly flexible means by which people negotiate their communication and their own identities in the language in question:

Transcultural and transidiomatic practices point to the ways in which those apparently on the receiving end of cultural and linguistic domination select, appropriate, refashion and return new cultural and linguistic forms through complex interactive cultural groups. [...] Transcultural and transidiomatic practices therefore refer not to homogenization or heterogenization but to alternative spaces of cultural production (Pennycook 2007, 47).

#### **2.4 Bridging the gap between what is and what could be**

Theorizing transcultural and translingual processes can serve as a basis for imagining new paradigms and creating patterns of change. However, a critical view of existing inequalities is crucial to understanding how these reproduce themselves on a subconscious level. One of the fallacies committed in the Enlightenment was to observe language as a discrete entity—for example, John Locke placed language next to nature/science and society/politics as one of the “great provinces of the intellectual world” (Locke, in Pennycook 2007, 32). Although the concept of language being intrinsic to politically and ethnically defined communities is a construct, it manifests in emotional and physical reality for those influenced by these discourses.

The nature of this individual embeddedness in a discursively constructed social reality is that it is felt and manifested in very real ways by those implicated, in the body, mind and emotions. Bourdieu describes this in great detail his work on *habitus*. For Bourdieu linguistic behaviour and the power relations that it serves to enforce are primarily a physical rather than a conscious phenomenon:

The sense of acceptability which orients linguistic practices is inscribed in the most deep-rooted of bodily dispositions; it is the whole body which responds by its posture, but also by its inner reactions or, more specifically, the articulatory ones, to the tension of the market. Language is a body technique, and specifically linguistic, especially phonetic, competence is a dimension of bodily hexis in which one's whole relation to the social world, and one's whole socially informed relation to the world, are expressed (Bourdieu 1994, 86).

In other words, one's linguistic "sense of place", the intuitive knowledge of the price one can expect for one's discourse on the linguistic market, is deeply embedded in the internalized behaviours that are the *habitus*. This means, simply changing the way that language is perceived and lived out cannot be seen as simply a process of changing definitions. Just as national identity can be felt deeply enough to inspire, for example, individual self-sacrifice and severe divisions of communities, language is strongly integrated into an individual's sense of self and of belonging, which are often strongly associated with national borders. Although the origin of social divisions is constructed, they are no less deeply felt by the individuals who are born and socialized into them.

A theory of transcendence, then, must acknowledge the very real outcomes of what is perceived and reproduced as social reality but also take the contingent nature of these realities into account. As Pennycook (2007) describes,

A critical philosophy of transgression [...] demands a continuous and simultaneous questioning of how we come to be as we are, how such limits have been imposed historically, and how we can start to think and act beyond them (Pennycook 2007, 43).

Only with a view of the historical creation of our own identities and an understanding of how our perceived reality has been brought into being is it possible to find the means of subverting and manipulating that reality into acts of self-assertion. This will be the focus of the following chapter.

### **3 Negotiating identity in ELF communication**

#### **3.1 Agency, identity and performance**

When we talk of global English use, we are talking of performance of new identities (Pennycook 2007, 138)

The above discussion illustrated that the situations governing the appropriation of English in a global context are too complex to be explained away using a simple theory of linguistic domination. Likewise, models of pluralisation simply reinforce an essentialist thinking about language, taking it as a given and disregarding the contingent nature of languages in themselves. Rather than focusing on the interactions of monolithic language systems, it would be more productive to observe the “alternative spaces of cultural production” (Pennycook 2007, 47) in which language is manifested.

While the power differentials associated with globalization mean that culture is changing in ways that are not necessarily voluntary for those on the “receiving end” of these rapid processes, it has become apparent that these changes are not always predictable in character. Their characteristics reach far beyond what can be simply described as homogenization or cultural imposition by a dominant power.

Similarly, just as culture and language can be described as fluid and dynamic, human identities cannot be seen as static forms. Rather, identity is “complex, multiple, and subject to change” (Norton Peirce 1995, 26). It is negotiated in direct relation to the social world, which, as described above, is neither predictable nor homogenous, but permeated by various cultural flows, which themselves are anything but concrete.

Bourdieu’s theory provides the crucial insight that language does not exist as a structure outside of the social world, but that every linguistic act derives its meaning and its effect on the interlocutors

from the objective relation between the corresponding languages or usages, that is, between the groups that speak those languages (Bourdieu 1992: 67).

In other words, speakers manifest language within the socially defined parameters in which they speak. The specific worth that a language or language form receives on the linguistic market derives from socially defined parameters of legitimacy. As a result of *habitus*, social rules and norms are upheld largely through self-censorship, not as conscious acts of submission or domination.

Bourdieu’s theory draws on the concept of Speech Act theory popularized by Austin (1990), most notably in the transcript *How To Do Things With Words*. According to Austin, language is invested with the power

to call reality into being depending on the social context and authority of the person speaking. Thus, such statements as “I now pronounce you husband and wife” or “I name this ship the queen Mary” have the potential to create a legally and formally recognized social reality—the statement *is* the reality. The power of speech acts is, however, bound to the social order. Only those with socially legitimate authority (i.e. justice of the peace) in symbolically designated settings (i.e. courthouse) are endowed with the linguistic power of creation. Austin deemed such acts of socially creative speech that “do what they say” *performatives*. Bourdieu takes this concept several steps further. He claims that all linguistic acts are socially endowed and call a reality into being, depending on the social status of the person speaking. Thus, every speech act, combined with the embodied habitus, is embedded in an already existing field of power and endowed with the “magical efficacy” (Bourdieu 1994, 73) of performatively manifesting and reinforcing social reality.

Bourdieu’s analysis sees every linguistic act of language as a symbolic form of capital by which individuals are able to negotiate power in society. The “magical” power of performative utterances lies for Bourdieu not in language itself but is dependent upon “the social conditions of the *institution* [...] which invests legitimacy in its representative as an agent capable of acting on the social world through words” (Bourdieu 1994, 75). Certainly, as the previous discussion has shown, the English language is endowed with a global dominance that provides more authority and influence to English-language media and discourses. Likewise, the historical conditions leading to the dominance of English worldwide and the current economic power of L1 English-speaking nations means that the use of the English language is embedded in institutionalized unequal power relations. And the native-speaker norm forces non-native speakers to compare their speech with an ideal defined by these dominant nations. This would seem to be in accord with Bourdieu’s description of the “permanent linguistic insecurity” (Bourdieu 1977, 656) suffered by the oppressed classes.

However, certain developments seen in the appropriation of English by new communities of practice do not uphold this model of all-encompassing, self-generating power, or of the class-based model of society that Bourdieu takes for granted. Speakers’ creative and innovative use of language displays

an independence, an *agency* for which Bourdieu's theory does not allow. Judith Butler (1997) describes Bourdieu as "inadvertently foreclose[ing] the possibility of an agency that emerges from the margins of power" (156). Butler's conception of *performativity* allows for a flexibility of identity not found in Bourdieu's work. For Butler, although all acts are embedded in a field of power, outside of which "there is no position" (Butler 2007, 7), the constructed nature of identity provides potential for radical subversion.

In her book *Gender Trouble* (2007) Butler describes gender identity as not "seamless", but rather "a stylized repetition of acts through time" (Butler 2007, 192). While Butler's thoughts regard specifically gender identity and the body, these can be meaningfully extended to a more general sense of identity for the sake of this discussion. According to Butler, individuals position themselves through performative acts in a historically constructed field of reality. Each performative is an enactment of what is discursively established as socially "thinkable" and acceptable. Thus individuals position themselves towards the outside world and perform their identities each time anew. Although contingent, this enactment "constitutes the appearance of its own interior fixity" (Butler 2007, 95).

Identity is for Butler not only an embodied set of norms dictated by institutionalized sources of power, but a constant "reiteration" (Butler 2011, 140) of what constitutes the "real". Performative acts of repetition function as a "normative force" (ibid. 59), which not only establishes what qualifies as "being", but renders discourse-external forms of identity "not only [...] difficult to imagine, but [...] radically unthinkable" (ibid.). Herein lies for Butler an inherent violence of language. These excluded identities "haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly foreclosed: the unlivable, the nonnarrativizable, the traumatic" (ibid. 140).

However, the radically constructivist perspective, which assumes that "there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured" (Butler 2007, 192), provides subversive potential at the very "abject borders" (Butler 2011, 140) of discursively constituted identities:

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects (Butler 2007, 198).

Herein lies the agency in linguistic production that Bourdieu's theory does not allow for: it is "to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition" (ibid.). There lies, according to Butler, a subversive potential in the performative nature of identity: "it is only *within* the practice of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (ibid. 198 f.). In other words,

Genders<sup>2</sup> can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. As credible bearers of those attributes, however, genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically *incredible* (ibid. 193).

If, as Butler proposes, identity is a "signifying practice" (Butler 2007, 198), constructed purely on the basis of the reiteration of norms, then there is potential using the same practices, to manipulate those norms and extend the boundaries of intelligibility. Under such conditions, the "cultural configurations" of identity might "proliferate or, rather, their present proliferation might then become articulable within the discourses that establish intelligible cultural life" (Butler 2007, 203). In the case of English, this could point to flexibility in negotiating the boundaries of what identities are considered intelligible using that language. Pennycook (2007) sums up the restrictions and possibilities: "to some extent, the performative is always along lines that have already been laid down, and yet performativity can also be about refashioning futures" (77).

### 3.2 Performing, subverting and creating identity using "borrowed" forms

What we therefore have to understand is not this 'thing' 'English' that does or does not do things to and for people, but rather the multiple investments that people bring to their acts, desires and performances in 'English' (Pennycook 2007, 73)

The concept of performativity opens up new possibilities in the debate over global English. Beyond a simple question of oppression embedded in an essentially class-based system, language becomes seen as something essentially constructed and – although Butler reiterates that performatively

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<sup>2</sup> Here, again, where Butler refers to *gender* we can substitute any sense of identity which agents feel to be inherent, such as cultural identity, nationality or linguistic identity.

constructed identities are not to be pulled on and off at will – thus susceptible to deconstruction. Subversive practices, according to Butler, are those that expose the performative nature of identity as just that – exercises of parody that, through exaggeration, shed light on the very practices in which people partake daily. Butler offers the example of drag as a practice with the potential to subvert conventional concepts of gender. Drag performers expose the constructed nature of what are taken to be essential male or female traits by drawing attention to the performative aspects of these forms of identity (Butler 2011). Thus, new possibilities are gleaned, which is evident in the increased freedom of expression for various “queer” identities, which would not have been thinkable even a few years ago.

Speakers of English worldwide find themselves subject to certain hegemonial norms that dictate what the language is, and how a person can position herself within these structures. Seen from this view, speakers of non-dominant languages are subject to a similar kind of obligatory positioning in society to that which requires individuals to take on one of a binary set of genders. But in the same way as gender norms can be exposed and subverted through performative acts, it may also be possible for the boundaries of what is deemed culturally acceptable, or perhaps “intelligible” – in a different sense than that which Butler intended – to be redefined.

Pennycook (2007) sees the musical genre of hip-hop as such a “transgressive form” (37). As a form of expression used practically worldwide, rap performance has been appropriated in new communities to express varied cultural and human realities across the globe. In fact, the appropriation of hip-hop, originally a creation of African Americans and exported from the USA, has many similarities to what we have seen as the complexities regarding the spread of English. And, like English, hip-hop has undergone complex processes of localisation that transcend a simple model of cultural imposition through globalization.

Important here is the question of agency among the supposedly dominated cultures. Pennycook (2007) points out that, although global media and popular culture are highly commercialized and dominated by western forces, one must not fall into the kind of thinking that “casts those who partake in this transcultural flow as mere passive recipients of culture” (93). Taking

leave of the assumption that nationality, identity and locality are fixed entities, one can come to focus on the ways in which hip-hop is taken on in new contexts and used as a “vehicle through which local identity is reworked” (ibid. 92). This fits in well to Butler’s concept of subversive practices of identity that occur using precisely the coding with which hegemonial norms are constructed. When hip-hop is taken up to express the struggle in Brazilian favelas or the experience of cultural plurality in Malaysia, this does not represent mere mimicry of an American form of expression. That would be a gross underestimation of what artists and individuals are creating for themselves on a daily basis. Rather these occurrences of hip-hop use tools that originated in Black America to create a new, authentic voice that can speak for freedom from oppression for anybody who identifies with it.

Analog to the debate over English, hip-hop as well has come up against questions of ownership and authenticity. But it is general consensus that the art form has long ceased to be the property of those who created it (cf. Pennycook 2007, 92). The very transcendent nature of art is its universal character, the fact that having been brought forth by the author into the world, it is now free to be interpreted, received and incorporated into the emotional world of all who choose to identify with it. In other words,

texts – whether symbol systems or lived experiences – are always in performance. They contain no essential or inherent meaning but are always given meaning by people, in particular times and in particular places (Dimitriadis 2001, 11)

The English language, as a “symbol system” can also be seen in this way. Although it was brought into the world by a specific cultural group in a specific region, it contains no “essential or inherent meaning” on its own. Rather, it is constantly being endowed with meaning by those who use it on a daily basis. What English “is” is in a constant state of re-organization and flux. Granted, in the sense that Butler presents, this re-iteration happens within structures of hegemonial normality. This means that if the discursive norm dictates that English spoken by “native speakers” is more authentic, or excludes a certain pronunciation or grammar from legitimacy, then this is the framework in which people are functioning. However, with more than 80% of English interchanges occurring outside of a native-speaker cultural context, the

ways in which these norms are re-iterated is bound to shift and change, reflecting the hybrid experiences of the individuals who employ it.

### 3.3 Ownership and agency in ELF speech

It follows, therefore, that research needs to be undertaken that investigates the possible emergence of ELF innovations, and makes these visible as expressions of identities and evidence of the sense of ownership of the language (Seidlhofer 2009, 240)

The current reality of English globally is still dominated by a native-speaker standard, proliferated by an entrenched way of looking at what language and communication can be. Thus, those speakers of non-recognized varieties, such as, for example, the many creoles and pidgin languages spoken worldwide, are not recognized as speakers in their own right. The final outcome of the “disinvention” of languages, according to Makoni & Pennycook (2007) should not be that these unrecognized languages achieve the status of other languages, but that the concept of language be “destabilized” (21) and recognized as a product of the latent power structures and discourses that have called it into being. Makoni & Pennycook (2007) propose a radical view that “all claims to know, count, name and define languages need to justify themselves against the normality of creoles” (Makoni & Pennycook 2007, 31). Currently, however, creating freedom of expression in a language begins with legitimization on a structural level.

It is between these two points of view that scholars of ELF are attempting to break theoretical ground. ELF research is guided by the principle of providing agency and increased freedom from the disadvantages associated with English and the native-speaker norm. Seidlhofer (2009), while promoting the expansion of the definition of “what ‘a language’ can be” (328) at the same time champions the codification of ELF as a “crucial requirement” (240) for increasing legitimacy of ELF as a variant in its own right and thus increasing the linguistic capital of those who speak it.

The Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, et al. 2013), for example, seeks to “redress the balance” between description and reality. It recognizes that there is a considerable “conceptual gap” (Seidlhofer 2001) between the recognition of legitimate varieties of English and the highly creative reality of ELF, a means of communication

essentially detached from the concept of native speakers entirely. The lack of knowledge about ELF means that those speaking the language are not able to contribute as meaningfully to global discourse:

Unless we know a good deal more about how much and how speakers of the Expanding Circle really use English in their communities of practice, what their shared repertoires look like, and which communication processes characterize ELF as it is used in jointly negotiated enterprises, the significant contribution that ELF speakers make to norm development will remain invisible (Seidlhofer 2009, 239).

The descriptive work of projects like VOICE is an attempt to redress the power differential associated with the spread of English globally. By creating a corpus of the language usage of ELF speakers, researchers hope to establish them “not as language learners but as language users in their own right” (Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, et al. 2013), thus providing a greater sense of ownership and, hopefully, increasing and shifting the balance of power in favour of the majority of speakers. Research shows ELF speakers currently suffer from what Bourdieu termed “linguistic insecurity” when compared to a native standard: “[...] interview participants felt their identities were casualties of the pressures on them to learn American or British English” (Jenkins 2009, 205). And they reported that “the opposite would be true if ELF became acceptable and those pressures were removed” (ibid.).

True to the concepts of transculturalism and the nature of the pluralisation of cultures in which English “moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations” (Pennycook 2007, 6), conceptualizing ELF requires a re-definition of the relationship between language, space and identity. The term “community of practice” (Wenger 1998) as the meeting point where language is negotiated, rings true for ELF more than for any other language, as its “community” only exists where people speak it. Learning ELF is thus more a process of appropriation and accommodation than one of adaptation and assimilation.

Use of ELF in real speech situations displays communicative features that do not fit into a standard model of language as it is traditionally understood. ELF functions according more to rules of mutual comprehension than an overriding grammatical system. Features that would be considered errors in a top-down, system-oriented view of English (with native norms as its

reference point) are in ELF communication often signs of skilful communication. Phonetical and grammatical variations, such as substituting /t/, /d/, /s/ or /z/ respectively for the voiced and voiceless ‘th’ in English, or the general removal of the plural ‘s’ have been found not to reduce mutual comprehension (Jenkins 2011, 5). Thus, more variation, shaped by the extreme variety of its speakers, is permitted in ELF than would be permitted in a traditional language classroom in which a single pronunciation and grammar (which very few learners can hope to achieve) is taught as the ideal.

ELF speakers are moreover described as utilizing a great breadth of “multilingual resources” (Jenkins 2011, 4) to support their communication. They “create their own preferred form” (ibid.) based on the interlocutors present and project their own cultural identities by means of code-switching<sup>3</sup>. Far from adhering to an overriding set of rules to provide continuity, ELF speakers are seen as highly intuitive communicators, accommodating their language use to promote solidarity and establish a common ground bridging the differences between speakers of heterogeneous linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Consistent with Pennycook’s (2007) observation that processes of globalization are actually a “reorganization of the local” (7) as opposed to a one-sided process of cultural homogenization, developments in ELF show that English and communication in general are being reorganized at an organic level to fit the local needs of its speakers – with local in this sense meaning the spatially disembedded, spontaneous communities in which it is practiced. ELF communities of practice can be seen as archetypal for the new forms of socialization that are coming to bear as a result of globalization. Codifying this language use would be a first step in legitimizing what is already being successfully used worldwide. Perhaps, however, through the discursive power of naming this language usage, which admittedly has far different characteristics than what has up till now qualified as a language, the non-standard and creative uses of ELF speech can make their way into a more influential position in global discourse.

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<sup>3</sup> Code-Switching refers to when speakers insert words from another language or switch languages during conversation. Once considered deficient language use, it is now seen as a sign of highly functional multilingual communication.

### 3.4 Consequences of ELF for native speakers

For ELF to become a legitimate variety in its own right requires also a re-working of the view of native varieties. First of all, there are serious issues with the concept of “native variety” in general. What qualifies as native? Certainly, if one refers to a speaker from Northern Ireland and another from Newfoundland Canada in an attempt to glean a set of phonological or even grammatical norms, one is bound to fail. Here, again the myth that languages exist as discrete entities according to a set of bound norms becomes apparent. As the innumerable and incomparable oral varieties of “native” English show, language in its living state is far more an organic entity emerging from the communicative use of its speakers than an officially dictated set of norms. The concept of a standard form of English has always been a construct. The nature of languages is that individual speakers produce a wide variety of linguistic forms based on social situation, region and a whole host of other contextual factors. As Widdowson (1994) put it: “[...] all uses of language are creative” (384).

But English L1 speakers still enjoy a sense of privilege worldwide, leading to widespread monolingualism in the nations of the inner circle. A truly democratic world language would require the position of native speakers towards “their” language to dramatically change. Scholars have already observed communicators in English as a lingua franca (that is, non-native speakers amongst themselves)

responding adeptly to the nature of the particular communicative context in ways that native English speakers, with their stronger attachment to native English norms, tend to find more challenging (Jenkins 2011, 4).

Because ELF focuses on communicative effectiveness and solidarity rather than on an overriding set of norms, native speakers may find themselves at a disadvantage communicatively when attempting to speak in ELF contexts. The prognoses of the development of ELF would see this language becoming a dialect in its own right, which would have consequences for English monolinguals who up to now have been enjoying a kind of “free ride”. Jenkins clearly states:

It could also be argued that *not* studying a foreign language should not be seen as gaining a ‘free ride’, but as a disadvantage in respect of the cultural and cognitive advantages that result from second language

learning and that are not available to monolingual speakers (Jenkins p. 14).

If ELF communication were to develop to the extent that theorists hope—and indeed this seems like one of the most viable solutions for establishing a more democratic balance of power and preserving diversity—then native speakers of English will be just as effected. Even now it has been well documented that, apart from the cognitive and communicative advantages that come with multilingualism, most often those who have the most problems in international English contexts are native speakers themselves. Phillipson (2003) points out:

In many international fora, competent speakers of English as a second language are more comprehensible than native speakers, because they can be better at adjusting their language for people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (167).

The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000) investigating the state of language learning in the UK comes to a similar conclusion. Their findings also include definitive deficiencies among monolingual residents of the UK. The report warns:

English is not enough. We are fortunate to speak a global language but, in a smart and competitive world, exclusive reliance on English leaves the UK vulnerable and dependent on the linguistic competence and the goodwill of others [...] Young people from the UK are at a growing disadvantage in the recruitment market (6).

The report describes the linguistic complacency found among English native speakers as “dangerous” (ibid. 14), implying a severe deficiency on the global market. The prevailing monolingualism among English speakers is a sign on “inflexibility, insensitivity and arrogance” (ibid.), that can only mean a disadvantage for native speakers in a globalized world.

Much that is essential to our society, its health and its interests – including effective choice in policy, realisation of citizenship, effective overseas links and openness to the inventions of other cultures – will not be achieved in one language alone (ibid.)

ELF communication makes use, as described, of creative communicative means to which native speakers, especially those who have never learned a foreign language and thus do not possess the necessary “language awareness”, have less access. Seidlhofer (2004) describes ELF speakers making use of a variety of metalinguistic tools:

drawing on extralinguistic cues, identifying and building on shared knowledge, gauging and adjusting to interlocutors' linguistic repertoires, supportive listening, signalling noncomprehension in a face-saving way, asking for repetition, paraphrasing, and the like (227)

This kind of communicative flexibility remains inaccessible to speakers who have not learned to function on a high level in more than one language. This could mean for international English, that ELF communication would have to be learned not only in non-L1 nations, but everywhere. As communication becomes globalized, dialects of native English become correspondingly localised. It is possible if this trend continues, that native speaker English could become a “sociolinguistically marked variety, no longer automatically acceptable in international contexts” (Coleman 2006, 11) The most extreme and optimistic projections include a state of diglossia for all regions equally, with local varieties for local communication and ELF for international communication (Coleman 2006). This, however, would require a serious re-organization of how languages are thought about and taught, which is the topic of the final chapter of this paper.

## **4 New paradigms for language teaching**

### **4.1 Beyond language, legitimacy and bound communities**

As far as intercultural communication is concerned, a skilled English user is no longer someone who has ‘mastered’ the forms of a particular native variety of English, but someone who has acquired the pragmatic skills needed to adapt their English use in line with the demands of the current lingua franca situation (Jenkins 2011, 10)

Truly creating an equitable global communication form, in which the dominance of those who “own” and control the language are reduced and true agency and freedom of identity is afforded to speakers regardless of their native tongue, requires a radical re-thinking of language as it has been conceptualized since modern times. Although many theorists (for example Crystal 2003, Widdowson 1994) have promoted the idea that “real proficiency is when you are able to take possession of the language, turn it to your advantage, and make it real for you” (Widdowson 1994, 384), as long as concepts of language teaching adhere to standardized codes as norm-giving

entities it is difficult to argue against the inherent prestige and power associated with native forms.

Recognizing the process by which languages have been invented at the dawn of the modern era, Canagarajah (2007) suggests it is necessary for a truly equitable language to come away from codification entirely. For Canagarajah (2007) even the attempts by Seidlhofer et al. (2013) and others to codify and thus lend legitimacy to ELF speech “smacks of another form of invention with the traditionally dominant varieties continuing to enjoy power” (235). The modern invention of languages sought to establish them as isolated and integral units. Thus an attempt at codification is simply an attempt to create legitimacy within the already existing formats of power. This attempt does not get to the root of these power structures in themselves, and thus is rather conservative than revolutionary.

Moving beyond traditionally defined ways of looking at language and acknowledging the hybridity of post-modern societies and individual identities, Canagarajah (2007) proposes “what speakers need are ways of negotiating difference rather than codes that are shared with others” (236). This would mean a radical shift in language teaching that could, however, allow for a global language to thrive without strict codification and norms. Multilingual speakers have been already seen to possess skills of accommodation, affective adjustment and other “attitudinal resources” (ibid. 237) that allow for effective communication by negotiating shared resources as well as difference (see for example Higgins 2003). Research of pre-colonial societies additionally provides evidence that high levels of plurality and linguistic hybridity can be successfully negotiated when individuals do not adhere to a strict categorization and norm-bound definition of language. In such communities, and even in countries such as India today, individuals do not identify strongly with a single language, rather are accustomed to a multilingual flow of communication on a daily basis (Canagarajah 2007).

It is generally accepted that even non-multilingual humans possess a sort of “intralingual multilingualism” (Hüllen 1992, 300) allowing them to negotiate their social world by switching deftly between registers according to an innate sense of acceptability and solidarity. Hüllen calls this a “human-specific language competence as potential multilingualism” (ibid.), suggesting

that a society in which languages are less strictly defined could certainly be realizable. Hüllen suggests the concept of “transnational competence” (1992, 311) as ideal for a kind of language teaching in which “respect for otherness, rejection of orthodoxy and attitudes of superiority” (ibid.) are promoted, so that identification with several languages can be made possible. This admittedly abstract and lofty goal would mean that gradually the concept of multiculturalism would replace the fixation on nationally bound societies.

Although national borders have since the communication age ceased to be relevant in the same way for human interaction, a theory of community is still required that is not based solely on shared features. This would require

a more processual view of power and agency, to note that communities are not just dominated by rigid structures and fixed boundaries but are like a ‘happening’ (Papastergiadis 2000, in Canagarajah 2007, 236).

Seeing community as a “happening” as opposed to a concretely defined object allows language to be seen as an emergent phenomenon. If communities are created and dissolved daily, according to the shared engagements of the people involved, then language too is involved in a process of collective creating. Although this concept is rather abstract and admittedly idealistic, it is not far from realisable. Just as human beings are hard-wired to build communities, they are inherently adept at negotiating their shared realities using a wide range of linguistic tools. Just as community is being re-defined slowly as a result of communication technology and human mobility and migration, the way languages are taken into account is bound also to change. If the new definition is further removed from top-down prescription models that privilege a few while requiring the majority to struggle, then it will be a gain for all humanity.

#### **4.2 Possibilities for a language teaching beyond languages**

If we believe that education needs to proceed by taking student knowledge, identity and desire into account, we need to engage with multiple ways of speaking, being and learning, with multilayered modes of identity at global, regional, national and local levels (Pennycook 2007: 158).

From this point of view, how could a new language paradigm be implemented in education? A shift in language teaching models, coming away from the traditional “top-down” mentality of correctness according to standard norms, would make room for plurality, hybrid identities and creative

communication. The Language Awareness approach takes on many of these goals, emphasizing the sociological and affective factors involved in communication and language. It is an experiential method of language teaching that places the learner's insight and intuition at the forefront. The emphasis on awareness of how languages are used and how they influence the speaker and the societies in which they are used can lead to "not just [...] improved language use, but also language use which is more sensitive to issues of culture, identity and equity" (Bolitho et al. 2003, 254).

By encouraging students to reflect on and be aware of the socially embedded nature of their own language use, theories of Language Awareness promote critical reflection of "the ways in which language represents the world, and reflects and constructs power relations" (ibid. 252). Teaching students to think critically about the essential power relations associated with language is a critical step in weakening its subconscious workings. Clark and Ivanič (1999) see the development of a Language Awareness curriculum as crucial in this process:

[...] people need to understand the ideological nature of discourse in order to gain control over the way in which their communicative practices contribute to the maintenance or contestation of particular representations of the world and relations of power (67).

In a context of English language teaching, this means learners would be encouraged to take a critical view of the social and linguistic context in which they are embedded and consider their own cultural identities while engaging in developing the international identity represented by the English language. Seidlhofer (2004) argues that "abandoning unrealistic notions of achieving perfect communication through 'native-like' proficiency would free up resources for focusing on capabilities that are likely to be crucial in ELF talk" (226). The emphasis, she states, should be on the development of communicative abilities, such as contextual skills and co-operative discourse building that place more of an emphasis on the linguistic capabilities already possessed by the students. She suggests that with the emphasis on Language Awareness rather than correctness according to a native-speaker norm, the extensive English education, which in many countries takes up many school years and huge resources, will become irrelevant. In such circumstances, she states,

[...] it would no longer be self-evident that a subject called English needs to remain in all language teaching curricula—for some contexts, it might be worth considering whether so-called English courses [...] could be replaced by a subject designated *language awareness* (ibid. 227).

In such a scenario, schools would be occupied with teaching Language Awareness, based on the encouragement of engagement with language and a development of the affective factors that promote successful language learning, such as “Positive attitudes, self-esteem, and emotive involvement” (Bolitho et. al. 2003, 256). Students would be encouraged to follow their own curiosity and cultivate the natural intuition that all humans possess when it comes to language. By developing a critical sense for languages and their social contexts, students would have the freedom to develop their own cultural and linguistic identities, thus fostering the positive emotional atmosphere that is known to cultivate successful language learning. With the focus shifted from perfecting language skills as defined by a separate barometer, success in language learning, and in English as a lingua franca in particular, would be measured according to communicative successfulness, something that each human being with the capacity for language learning is equipped with already. A fundamental shift in the way languages are taught would, more than any amount of codification, contribute to establishing English as the democratizing institution of global understanding that it has the potential to be.

## Conclusion

Language is an immensely democratising institution. To have learned a language is immediately to have rights in it. You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it, as you will (Crystal 2003, 172)

In this quotation, Crystal voices the optimistic attitude shared by many in relation to the development of a global lingua franca. The current situation globally regarding the spread of English is one fraught with problems relating to inequality, agency and fear regarding the loss of linguistic diversity and self-determination. As this work has shown, these concerns are very real. However, the complex nature of societal change through globalization and the inherent contingency of societal institutions, in particular language, have to be taken

into account when analysing the current situation and attempting to plan a more equitable future.

Pennycook (2007) points out: “Difference and diversity, multilingualism and hybridity are not rare and exotic conditions to be sought out and celebrated, but the quotidian ordinariness of everyday life” (Pennycook 2007, 95). This is a point that many theorists fail to take into account when making prognoses about the spread of English. Communities, cultures and languages have always existed in contact with each other and – although contemporary conditions have caused connections to increase – borrowing, adaptation and change between languages and cultures have always been the norm rather than the exception. The concept of a lingua franca, allowing different communities and individuals to more easily come in contact with one another, is also by no means new.

That today’s language of communication happens to be global, however, does generate exceptional conditions, and brings with it both possibilities and dangers. From a starting point that considers the historical conditions of English dominance through colonization and the intentional suppression of cultures, it is easy to see the spread of English as part of the project of global economic dominance by the Anglo-American power machine. Certainly, as well, Bourdieu’s thesis on the inherent structural inequality and reproduction of power propagated through linguistic performance holds true when observing the discursive influence of Anglo-American media worldwide and the subjectively felt, but no less deeply impactful, prestige of native speakers on the global market.

But, whether this is a situation of conscious domination or not, to reduce the complex mechanisms at play when cultures take on new languages to a simple situation of domination and suppression is to underestimate the dynamic nature of culture and human identity. As this paper has shown, when a community appropriates a language or cultural form, this takes on new and unexpected characteristics that are deeply integrated in and an expression of the individuals involved. Although the tools used are integrated into the greater structure of power – which is by no means insignificant in affecting the lives of individuals – the product that comes out can be a deeply personal expression of local reality. It may even have the potential to subvert what has previously

been considered thinkable and generate new forms and possibilities of being that have up till now been inaccessible.

Perhaps it is an upshot of what can be observed as new forms of community-building afforded by globalization. Whether on the internet, through travel or in increasingly international academic discourses, communities today, more than ever, appear and dissolve spontaneously. Borders defining nationality or cultural identity appear under these conditions increasingly artificial, betraying their character as simple discursive constructs. Language too is now subject far more to the spontaneous creativity of these short, hybrid meetings. And English – or better, ELF – is the language at the centre of this creative re-working of society. This is already being observed when English is used in lingua franca contexts, where norms are secondary to spontaneous communicative effectiveness. If the language can be freed further from the bounds of official norms and top-down definitions of what a language “should” be, then this could truly be a democratizing development for the entire global community.

Certainly, there is a long way to go, but recognizing the parameters of latent power structures and imagining the possibilities beyond them is the first step. Training the next generation of English speakers to think critically about the languages they speak and to “negotiate difference” (Canagarajah 2007, 237) rather than attempting to eliminate it is the next. Under conditions of a modernized, urbanized and globalized society, people are already required to be masters of spontaneity, able to slip into a variety of social roles and registers according to the multi-faceted demands of everyday life. The alternative paradigm of language discussed in this paper is simply an acknowledgment of the complicated conditions of living that people negotiate every day, and an extension of it to the realm of the linguistic. From this standpoint a shift in perspective on language could represent not a difficult change, but rather an acknowledgment and acceptance of what is, and the permission to live it.

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