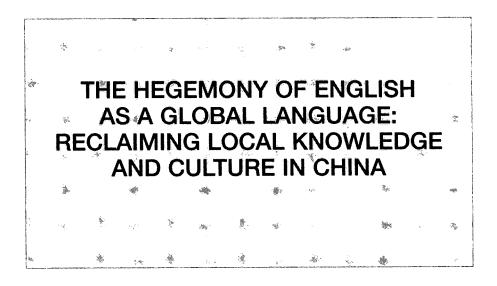
Yan Guo and Gulbahar H. Beckett



Abstract

English has become the dominant global language of communication, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy and the internet. Governments as well as some scholars appear to be accepting such a spread of English uncritically. However, we argue that the increasing dominance of the English language is contributing to neocolonialism by empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantaged further behind, an issue that needs attention. Specifically, we discuss how English as a dominant language worldwide is forcing an unfamiliar pedagogical and social culture on to its learners, along the way socio-psychologically, linguistically and politically putting them in danger of losing their first languages, cultures and identities, and contributing to the devaluation of local knowledge and cultures. Drawing on the work of critical theorists who have drawn our attention to the close relationship between language and power, we show how the global spread of English is not only a product of colonialism, but also the most potent instrument of cultural control and cultural construct of colonialism. We call for more inclusive and egalitarian language policies and practices and suggest some new strategies that may be

used to develop policies and practices that enrich rather than replace local knowledge in China in this global era.

Introduction

English, the first language of about 400 million people in Britain, the United States and the Commonwealth, has become the dominant global language of communication, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy and the internet. Over a billion people speak English as their second or foreign language. These second- and foreign-language speakers of English include millions of migrant and immigrant English as a Second Language (ESL) school-age students (see Faltis 2006), over 560,000 international ESL university students in the United States (Open Doors 2006) and over 137,000 in Canada (OECD 2003). About a billion others in the rest of the world speak English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The estimated users and learners of English in China and India alone number over 533 million, more than those in the United States, the UK and Canada put together (Kachru 2005).

In China, English has become a gateway to education, employment and economic and social prestige. Over the last 20 years the spread of English has increased in China, affecting education at all levels. In September 2001, China decided to make English compulsory in primary schools from Grade 3 upwards. Cities such as Beijing and Shanghai introduced English at Grade 1 in 1999. English is a compulsory subject in university entrance examinations, and university students with non-English majors who fail College English Test Band 4 (CET4) do not receive their university diplomas. CET4 is also a prerequisite for admission to graduate schools. Recently China has even issued a historic policy calling for the teaching of some major university disciplines such as information technology, biotechnology, new material technology, finance and law through the medium of English (TESOL 2006). English is also a precondition for employment and promotion, and many professionals invest heavily in English language learning because it is used as a yardstick to measure general competence (Xie 2004). For example, an associate professor of Chinese was denied promotion because she failed the English examination.

Governments as well as some scholars appear to be accepting such a spread and implementation of English uncritically. Some argue that, when taught correctly, English can be both integrative and empowering (Loomba 1998; Warschauer 2000). We acknowledge the empowerment of English language acquisition, as is the case with the acquisition of any knowledge. However, we argue that the increasing dominance of the English language is contributing to neocolonialism and racism through linguicism by empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantaged and powerless further behind (Beckett

and MacPherson 2005), an issue that needs attention. Linguistic imperialism can occur when English becomes a gateway to education, employment, business opportunities and popular culture and where indigenous languages and cultures are marginalised (Pennycook 1995). Linguistic imperialism refers to 'the dominance of English ... asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (Phillipson 1992, 47).

Specifically, we discuss how English as a dominant language worldwide is forcing an unfamiliar pedagogical and social culture on to its learners, sociopsychologically, linguistically and politically putting them in danger of losing their first languages, cultures and identities, and contributing to the devaluation of the local knowledge and cultures (Canagarajah 2005). Drawing on the work of critical linguists such as Fairclough (1995) and Pennycook (1998), who have drawn our attention to the close relationship between language and power, we show how the global spread of English is not only a product of colonialism, but also the most potent instrument of cultural control (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995) and cultural construct of colonialism (Pennycook 1998). We echo the critique of the spread of English as 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson 1988), which may impoverish indigenous languages and cultures (Cooke 1988; Phillipson 1992) and privilege certain groups of people while having an adverse effect on others who do not have as much access to English language learning (Pennycook 1995). We show how these are manifested in reality, discuss the theoretical underpinnings of such manifestations, and call for a critical treatment of the dominance of the English language by helping learners to develop critical language awareness in order to contest and change practices of domination (Fairclough, 1995) and by reclaiming the local in this global phenomenon (Canagarajah 2005).

This article contributes to the existing literature by adding specific examples from communities whose voices have largely been neglected, namely some Chinese communities in Asia and in North America. In addition, the article extends existing discussions because we call for an in-depth analysis of current EFL policies and practices and their direct impact on the social, cultural and economic, as well as political discourses of local communities. Our discussion of these issues responds to the call for these issues to be studied from local and critical perspectives (Canagarajah 2005; Kubota and Lin 2006). We echo Canagarajah's (2005) call to develop 'more inclusive and egalitarian language policies and practices' (p. xxix) and suggest some new strategies that may be used to develop policies and practices that enrich rather than replace local languages in these complex, postmodern times.

How did it happen? Colonialism, neocolonialism and capitalism

Our language is our greatest asset, greater than North Sea Oil, and the supply is inexhaustible; furthermore, while we do not have a monopoly, our particular brand remains highly sought after. I am glad to say that those who guide the fortunes of this country share my conviction in the need to invest in, and exploit to the full, this invisible, God-given asset. (Chairman of the British Council, in the British Council's *Annual Report 1983–4*, cited in Phillipson 1992, 144–5)

Globalisation is by no means a new phenomenon, nor is the spread of the English language (Canagarajah 2005). The history of both may be traced back hundreds of years ago to when various countries began to see the arrival of foreign visitors (e.g. the arrival of the British and the English language in China in 1637; see Cole 2007) who started to colonise local peoples by imposing their language, culture and religion upon them. Of course, the more recent spread of English is also linked to capitalism, as illustrated by the quotation from the Chairman of the British Council cited above, as well as the emerging neocolonialism and Western cultural and linguistic hegemony that exploit and displace numerous people worldwide. This '[i]nexhaustible ... God-given asset' – the English language – is gaining a monopoly, attracting human and capital investment in economic exploitation and ideological and cultural hegemony, creating further inequality between the rich and the poor (see Beckett and McPherson 2005) and promoting neocolonialism.

The inequity and neocolonialism transpire in different ways and contexts. As English spreads to various corners of the world, the demand for native English-speaker teachers from the major English-speaking countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States (Kachru and Nelson 2001) is increasing, opening the world market to the 'God-given asset' of the world's already richest countries. The services of these teachers are expensive and therefore are affordable to the children of the political and financial elite whose investment in education brings them greater political and financial power (Tri 2001). Those who cannot afford the expensive services of native-speaker teachers resort to the service of non-native speakers with a high proficiency of English (Beckett and McPherson 2005). Such a practice creates a misconception that teaching English is better carried out by native speakers. This influences not only recruitment practices, but also the perceptions of nonnative English-speaking teachers and, by extension, non-native Englishspeaking students (Beckett and Stiefvater 2008), who internalise the misconception of the idealised speaker of English (e.g. Braine 1999). Such misconception and internalisation often result in the formation of linguicist and racist attitudes.

Requiring English: displacing local and first languages

In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson asserts that 'globally, what we are experiencing is that English is both replacing other languages and displacing them' (1992, 27). Phillipson's insights are particularly relevant to China, where the increasing predominance of English works to devalue Chinese languages. Xu Jialu, a well-known Chinese linguist, notices that the learning of English is valued more in China than Mandarin Chinese, mostly because English skills are better appreciated in the job market (Xu 2007). The higher market value placed on English is leading to the neglect of Chinese languages, and a research report by the General Administration of Press and Publications shows proof of this. According to Xu, mistakes can be found in nearly all the Chinese dictionaries on the market, not to mention other books. He states that nowadays, even most well-educated Chinese cannot write or speak the Chinese language learning because the Chinese language and characters are the hallmarks of the Chinese people, which we support.

As a global language, English has become a requirement for decent employment, social status and financial security in various parts of the world. including language minority areas whose inhabitants must learn the dominant language of their countries. For example, the Uighurs in the north-western People's Republic of China (PRC) are feeling increasing pressure to learn Mandarin Chinese as well as English for their basic survival, making local languages and knowledge irrelevant. This is pressuring parents to send their children to schools that teach in Mandarin Chinese so that their children learn Chinese, English and academic subjects. This seems to be causing terrible social and psychological displacement as well as the loss of their first language and culture and identity, as children learn the socially constructed 'high' value of the English language and the 'irrelevance' of their first language at the young age of 5. The local language shift and loss that accompany such curricular changes further undermine the sustainability of these local cultural practices and knowledge by creating linguistic, epistemic and cultural disparities. In this way, changes in education and the curriculum can have a dramatic effect on the sustainability of small, non-dominant cultures (MacPherson and Beckett 2008) that need to be addressed.

The socially constructed importance of English language acquisition has forced many well-educated intellectuals and professionals to migrate to English-speaking countries so that their children can learn English where it is spoken as a first language. Unfortunately, it does not take too long for them to realise that while their children do learn English and may never speak their first language, they themselves may have been permanently dislocated because they may not be able to regain their social status and dignity, as their English is not good enough and their experiences and expertise aren't recognised. Many are

coming to realise that such choices are causing them real psychological damage.

Requiring native speakers: disempowering local non-native teachers

Owing to colonialism, neocolonialism, capitalism, migration and immigration, English has become the language of all. That is, it is no longer the language of white people of British origin. People from all races and cultures can be native or advanced speakers of English. However, despite scientific evidence that native-speakerness does not equal good teaching and research which does not suggest that all students prefer native speakers, there is still a prevalent misconception that English is the native language of white people and that it is better taught by them, which is evidenced in advertisements for English language-teaching jobs in China that explicitly state a preference for native speakers (Niu, Qiang, and Wolff 2003), proof of a linguicist attitude. We have now started to see more and more advertisements that state a preference for native-like proficiency (e.g. see TESOL 2007). While we see this as progress made in the English Language teaching (ELT) profession, it is important to point out that the 'native-like proficiency' construct is by no means neutral. In fact, we find it is often used to hide institutional racism that discriminates against people based on phenotypical features such as skin colour, eve shape and facial features and promotes the white hegemony. ELT scholars have just begun to address and call for more discussions of this important issue (see Kubota and Lin, 2006). As is clear from the following example, further and continued discussion of this issue is indeed necessary.

Guo (2006) recounts her experience of an English language-teaching job application that showed the irrelevance of the native-like proficiency she had. As a speaker of Chinese and English, Guo's credibility as a language educator was challenged in recruitment practice despite the fact that she held a doctorate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from a prestigious Canadian university. While she was looking for a tenure-track position, she was also searching for temporary employment in language schools and colleges. She had received numerous rejection letters. This is one of the rejection messages she received from a language school:

Using words like 'terrific' and fabulous', our head teachers told me you have an excellent knowledge of teaching and that they believe you are highly skilled. They also mentioned that your English is not quite perfect and gave me a number of examples.

The model we present in our classrooms must be flawless. This is because we expect our students to form and test their hypothesis about the way English works against the authority of their teachers' use, and to otherwise base their acquisition on our

faculty's precise model. I expect that your English is better than many native speakers, though as yet, it's not quite at the particularly high level we require of our teachers. We are proud of the few non-native teachers we do have and encourage you to contact us again once you've achieved that last step in your English.

Guo's English was perceived as not quite perfect, or not standard for international students. However, as Davis (2003) reminds us, even native speakers' communicative competence differs one from another, and the language of a speech community is perceived as a standard not because the language is the most perfect, but because the community has power, a possible explanation for the response to Guo's applications to work in English language schools.

It is important to reiterate that native speakership is neither a privilege of birth nor of education, but 'acceptance by the group that created the distinction between native and nonnative speakers' (Kramsch 1997, 363). Similarly, Thomas (1999) challenges the 'birthright mentality' that gives in to 'the fallacy that anyone who speaks a certain variety of English as a native language can teach it' (p. 6). An Indian-born medical doctor Abraham Verghese (1997) puts it nicely: We are 'like a transplanted organ - lifesaving and desperately needed, but rejected because we are foreign tissue' (cited in Braine 1999, xiii). Nonnative speakers become constructed as less authentic, knowledgeable or legitimate (Braine 1999; Kubota and Lin 2006). Non-native scholars in TESL need to continue to argue for the legitimacy of their participation. Do they always have to look at their non-nativeness as a deficit? Do they see themselves as an incompetent ventriloquist, or as a competent bilingual educator and scholar (Nieto 2002)? How should they position themselves? Li (1999, 44) notes: 'Although our credibility and competence as English educators are put to the test every day and occasionally challenged by our colleagues and students, we are compensated with a larger and richer repertoire of pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural knowledge that only between-the-worlds residents are privy to.'

Non-native speakers' otherness is an asset, not a liability (Kubota 2002). English is not their birthright, but it is their language, too. As non-native speakers, they could not claim authority over the language, but they can claim ownership of it (Li 1999). As an owner of two or more languages and cultures, they can take advantage of 'the vantage point of an insider/outsider' (Li 1999, 43). Absorbing the best from both cultures, they can see their in-between experience as a condition of creativity.

Requiring expert knowledge: disempowering local knowledge

As discussed earlier, the global domination of the English language has been exploited as a tool of colonisation (Pennycook 1998) and neocolonialism. The central premise of linguistic imperialism is that the spread of English represents a culturally imperialistic project, which necessarily imparts English language culture to its second or foreign language learners (Melchers and Shaw 2003). Currently, most English textbooks and readings in China, from kindergarten to university, either originate in the Anglo countries or represent Anglocentric culture in the name of authenticity. As a result, many Chinese students know more about the Anglo culture than Chinese culture. Some young Chinese students seem to internalise the belief in the superiority of Anglo culture and the inferiority of their own culture. The idealised West in authentic English reading materials needs to be challenged. There is a need to develop English reading materials that reflect Chinese culture. It is therefore important to produce localised curricula.

The spread of English as a global language also parallels the promotion of English teaching methodologies. Many scholars question that 'mainstream TESOL methodologies are still mainly informed by studies and experiences situated in Anglo societies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, or Britain. This Anglo-centric knowledge base constitutes the canons of the discipline and often gets exported to periphery countries as pedagogical expertise to be followed by local education workers' (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, and Riazi 2002, 307). For example, China employs numerous English native speakers as English teachers in public schools and as university experts. However, many of these 'experts' have no training in teaching English or education. Nevertheless, they are known as foreign experts and receive better treatment and status in institutions than local English teachers or Chinese speakers. These foreign teachers often apply communicative language teaching (CLT) methods, imported from the West, with little regard to its appropriateness in the sociocultural and political contexts of China (Cortazzi and Jin 1996). Ouyang's (2000) anthropological study of a Chinese teacher who tried to apply CLT methods in her rural home town in China illustrated how CLT was constrained by local socio-cultural forces. The teacher realised it was difficult for her to implement CLT in her school owing to lack of support from the school authorities, her peer teachers and students. The ideology that assumes that CLT makes for more democratic, humanistic and egalitarian relationships between teachers and learners may become another form of oppression and control (Hargreaves 1993). This study suggests that Western teaching methods cannot be simply imported to China, and these methods need to be curtailed because of the socio-cultural and political forces at work in the country.

Implications

Providing counter-hegemonic discourses and practices

The hegemony of English as a global language is evidently a paradigm serving Western capitalism and neocolonialism, which creates a misconception that English is the superior language and that English is better taught by native speakers of English. It is important to note that not every white person is a native speaker of English and not all native speakers of English are qualified to teach English. We have now started to see some schools in China require native speakers with at least a university education and a Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certificate (Wang 2006). While we see this as progress in the English teaching profession in China, we argue that a paradigm shift from the dominant dichotomies of either/or, like native versus non-native, to multicompetence is needed (Cook 1992). In examining the idealisation of the native speaker, Widdowson (1994) states, 'when the emphasis is moved from the contexts of use to contexts of learning, the advantage that native speaker teachers have disappears. In essence, the native speaker teacher is better aware of the appropriate contexts of language use, not the contexts of language learning' (cited in Braine 1999, xv-xvi). China employs numerous Chinese English teachers. Having learned English as a foreign or a second language themselves, these bilingual teachers can share their first-hand experience with their students that a native-speaker who has not gone through the same process of learning a second language just does not have. They can be sensitive to the ideological and logical differences that their students experience. They also have translation and interpretation skills that a monolingual speaker does not have. Another privilege of their bilingual background is 'the insider perspective on the immigrant experience, second language (L2) socialization, and bilingualism that allows them to walk back and forth across the divide in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that often separates "us" (academics) from "them" (L2 learners and users)' (Pavlenko 2003, 182).

The hegemony of English as a global language is evidently a paradigm serving monolingualism. Many foreign 'experts' in China employ an 'Englishonly' policy in the classroom, for English is seen as the language of a superior Anglo-Canadian or American Christian culture, a belief also internalised by some Chinese bilingual teachers. There is no empirical evidence to support the assertion that English is best taught monolingually. Educators must abolish the harmful idea that students' first languages must be stamped out to ensure educational success. Educators need to recognise that students' first languages are an important component of their identity and a useful tool for thinking and learning. Thus policies of bilingual or multilingual education should be implemented in China. All the 56 nationalities of the PRC need to take pride in maintaining their first languages. For this to happen, the PRC government and

language policy makers need to consider a pedagogical practice that enables all students to learn in their first languages (e.g. Uighur, Tibetan, Mongolian), in their national language (i.e. Standard Mandarin Chinese) and in the global language, English. This can be done through trilingual policy and practice, as in countries like Sweden and Denmark. By doing this, the country can better serve all of its citizens, who in turn can become much more productive and proud.

Reclaim local languages and cultures through critical multiculturalism and critical multilingualism

It is evident from the above discussion that there is a pressing need to develop a strong critical perspective on the impact of English as a global language and future English language-teaching policies and practices. That is, future policy should call for the reclamation of local languages and knowledge through critical multiculturalism and multilingualism. According to MacPherson and Beckett (2008), there are three prevailing philosophical positions that inform multicultural policies and practices around the globe: conservative, liberal and critical. The conservative approach presumes the superiority of modern Eurocentric thought and education, and objects to socially diverse multiculturalism. Corresponding English language policies and practices are inner-circle native-English centric and prescriptive. It sees a need for all English learners to learn North American, British and Australian English. The liberal position acknowledges diversity, but superficially focuses on the universal human 'race', a rhetoric of sameness that Kubota (2004) refers to as 'political correctness with little substance' (p. 31). An alternative form of liberal multiculturalism is what Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) call 'pluralist multiculturalism', which sees differences in people and cultures. However, the cultural differences are often trivialised, exoticised and essentialised as ends in themselves. Multicultural discussions and practices often involve 'othering' with lists of how 'they' are different from 'us'. Linguistic discussions that attempt to teach native-like accents also often involve contrastive analysis that shows how other languages are different from English and what may be done to eradicate non-native English accents. Such conservative and liberal approaches to multiculturalism and English language policy and practice erase systemic racism, lingualicism and power inequities by perpetuating superiority and the superficial rhetoric of equality, diversity and political correctness.

As MacPherson and Beckett (2008) point out, critical multiculturalism makes explicit hidden or masked structures, discourses and relations of inequity that discriminate against one group and enhance the privileges of another. Criticising ideology is central to the critical enterprise and involves 'the attempt to unearth and challenge dominant ideology and the power relations this ideology justifies' (Brookfield 2000, 38). As pointed out earlier, critical multilingualism calls for a critical examination of the relationship between

language and power (Fairclough 1995; Pennycook 1998) and how it can be an instrument of cultural control (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995) and a cultural construct of colonialism (Pennycook 1998). It also draws our attention to how the spread of English is 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson 1988), which can impoverish indigenous languages and cultures (Cooke 1988; Phillipson 1992), privileging certain groups of people while harming others (Pennycook 1998). As such, it calls for a critical treatment of the dominance of English language, the development of critical consciousness (Fairclough 1995) and the reclamation of the local in this global phenomenon (Canagarajah 2005).

What do we have to do to implement critical multiculturalism and critical multilingualism? A paradigm shift from doing TESOL to doing TEGCOM (Teaching English to Glocalised Communication) could be one approach (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, and Riazi 2005). According to Kraidy (2001), glocalisation is a concept which originated in Japanese agricultural and business practice which means global localisation, a global outlook adapted to local conditions. Glocalisation emphasises the interaction of both global and local forces in specific socio-cultural contexts where local actors can claim their ownership of English and act as active agents to engage in different creative practices. It is therefore important to validate China English, used for international communication, as one form of World English because Chinese learners are far more likely to use their English with non-native than with native speakers. Such a paradigm shift, coupled with critical multiculturalism and critical multilingualism, can become an intellectual enterprise aimed at deconstructing and reconstructing language to generate a more equitable world (MacPherson and Beckett 2008).

Dr Gulbahar Beckett is Associate Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of Cincinnati, USA. Her research interests include content-based second-language education, project-based second- and foreign-language education, second-language acquisition and socialisation and language policy. She has co-edited two scholarly books and has published a dictionary, as well as numerous book chapters and articles. Email<gulbahar.beckett@uc.edu>

Dr Yan Guo is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary, Canada. Her teaching and research interests include teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL), language policy, minority education and bilingual education. She has taught courses in second-language learning, second-language reading and writing, and minority and immigrant education in the graduate and teacher education programmes. She has published numerous journal articles and several book chapters. Email<yanguo@ucalgary.ca>

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