Controlling Influence or Linguistic Default:
Exploring the Hegemony of the English Language

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Abstract

This article will outline a theoretical framework that aims to explore the significance of the English language as a 'lingua franca'. Specifically, this article will stress that the global spread of the English language easily lends itself to being defined as a hegemony. A review of modern interpretations of the concept of hegemony will be given with the aim of constructing a clear definition of the term, and the theoretical basis of hegemony will be further supported by Marshall McLuhan's theory of figure/ground relationships to conceptualize the far reaching effects of the global spread of the English language. The theoretical framework outlined in this article aims to imply that the spread of the English language affects the cultural identity of nations whose native tongue is not English.

Keywords: English as Lingua Franca, hegemony, communication theory, Marshall McLuhan, cultural identity

Language can boast of being the focal point of numerous studies and disciplines, yet the emergence of the phenomenon of Global English or English as a Lingua Franca challenges the basic assumptions of linguistics, and has overreaching effects that have only recently come to light. A large part of the research that looks at the phenomenon attributes the spread of the English language to various general factors such as globalization (Ives, 2010), the lingering after-effects of imperialism and neo-colonialism (Guo & Beckett, 2007), education and pedagogy (Jenkins, 2007), and media. Moreover, the far-reaching effects of media are often given a cursory overview when the phenomenon of English as a Lingua Franca is considered.

Media and the global environment it has created and encompassed is a significant factor in the spread of the English language, and needs to be considered with the same significance that is awarded to the above-mentioned factors of globalization, the effects of imperialism and neo-colonialism, education and pedagogy. It is the goal of this article to establish a theoretical framework from which the factor and environment of media and its effects on the spread of the English language can be examined and explored.

This article is divided into three parts. First, the phenomenon and significance of English

as a Lingua Franca (or the global spread of the English language) will be summarized, followed by a section that makes the concept of hegemony relevant to the spread of the English language, followed by a final section which will use the theories of communications philosopher Marshall McLuhan to establish a theoretical framework from which the effects of the spread of the English language can be analyzed and seen as an environment which contributes to the hegemonic spread of the English Language.

English as a Lingua Franca: An Overview

As mentioned above, the widespread use of the English language has taken a focal role in many academic studies in recent years, with a heavy emphasis on globalization and education as factors contributing to the spread of the language. However, a certain vagueness becomes noticeable when the factors are considered. The following factors will be given an overview below: globalization, education and pedagogy, mass media, and the proliferation of computers and the Internet.

Language is often linked to cosmopolitanism as an important element of the political responses to the process of globalization (Ives, 2010), yet research also points out that the emergence of a global language can obscure the "politics of its acquisition and usage" (Ives, 2010, p. 517). Ives also points out that politically based theories such as cosmopolitanism will be "incapable of…comprehending the complex changes that we are witnessing concerning language" and the process of globalization (p.517). Globalization is a large and very general phenomenon, and its role in the spread of the English language is crucial, yet the scope of the effects of Globalization are so enormous that to consider Globalization itself as an effect is an erroneous generalization.

A consequence of the enormous amount of non-native English speakers has resulted in what some scholars of linguistics call an "independent variety of English in Continental Europe." (Mollin, 2006, p. 1) This 'new' European lingua franca has been extensively researched by Jennifer Jenkins, a linguist who argues that this new variety of English is in the "process of evolving to serve as a European Lingua Franca." (Jenkins & Seidlhofer, 2001)

The connection between globalization and the spread of the English language is further questioned by Phillipson, who points out that there exists a "striking absence of literature that brings the study of globalization and English together." (Phillipson, 2001, p.187) Claiming that the world system itself is "fragile, turbulent, and unsustainable", Phillipson notes that the "English-speaking haves" consume "80 % of the available resources, whereas the remainder

are being systematically impoverished, the non-English-speaking have-nots." (p. 189) Education is also mentioned by Phillipson as a factor in the spread of the language, and is cleverly connected to the influence of another significant factor of globalization: Transnational Corporations. Phillipson points out that education is a "key site of cultural reproduction" and that it only makes sense that "transnational corporations are expanding their influence in education." (p. 190) Using Europe as an example, he notes that there exists a "major support scheme" for English education in "post-communist European countries." (p. 190)

Although education and globalization are common factors in the study of the global spread of the English language, the role of media is often considered as a factor. Considering the lingua franca of Europe, Mackenzie (2009) notes that English is "widely used" not only in the areas of "business, finance, science and technology, international relations," but also "all forms of mass media" (p. 223). James (2008) continues this line of reasoning, pointing out that the "New Englishes" in non-English speaking nations have emerged through the "fields of personal exchange via computer-mediated…communication such as chat, special interest groups" and email. (p. 98) Discussing the emerging "New Englishes", James also states that there has been "much interest expressed" in the global spread of the English language, especially from a "pedagogical point of view" (p. 100). However, he also notes that the "massive increase in international communication" can "equally be computer - and/or telephone – including texting – mediated." (p. 102)

Even a country far away from Europe can provide support for this line of reasoning. Japan provides additional evidence and relevant effects of the hegemonic nature of the English language. Japan has been host to English language education since the "mid 1800s", and since the founding of the Ministry of Education in 1871, a primary policy of the Ministry of Education was "acquiring foreign knowledge." (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006) Recent changes have introduced English as a compulsory subject for elementary students, with the aim of easing the transition for students to high schools, where English education has been a compulsory subject for a long time. (McCurry, 2011) Moreover, the Ministry of Education hopes for a goal of 100% usage of English by 2013. (McCurry, 2011) Additionally, it is worthy to note that the Japanese language incorporates numerous loan words from English, and media in Japan is saturated with films, television programs, and music from English speaking countries. This ubiquity of English in Japan points out the need for research into the effects on culture that result from the significant focus education, media, language, and even the physical environment place on English.

The overview above briefly surveys the factors of globalization, education and pedagogy,

mass media, and the proliferation of computers and the Internet and their connection to the global spread of the English language. However, the resulting effects of the emergence of what James (2008) calls "New Englishes" still needs to be encompassed by the concept of hegemony. The next section of this paper will establish a working definition of the concept of hegemony, and then link it to the emergence of the global spread of the English language.

Hegemony and Global English:

A clear definition of hegemony and how it is relevant to the ideas put forth in this article is absolutely necessary. The concept of hegemony needs to be defined clearly and the relevance of the concept to the theme of the research outlined here must be clearly explored in order to clearly explain the dominance of the English language over other native tongues in relevant terms. To be clear, I intend to use the concept of hegemony in the following way, by contending that the definition of hegemony is a "mode of social control by which one group exerts its dominance over others by means of ideology." (Martin, 1998, p. 66)

Given that the most common use or interpretation of Gramsci's thoughts and ideas about hegemony have been as a "theory of ideological domination" (p. 114), I would like to contend that the idea of hegemony is an appropriate concept within which the spread of the English language can be analyzed. Gramsci goes to great lengths to insist that hegemony is used to explain the supremacy of "one group or class over others in society", via reference to the "proliferation of ideas and values that legitimate its power." (p. 114) Hegemony also came to be seen as an "organizing principle of the capitalist state." (p. 114) How is this aforementioned organizing principle used to define the dominance of one group over another relevant to the global use of the English language?

Research by Ives (2009) explores Gramsci's own interest and education in language and linguistics, and his involvement in the politics of language of his time. The development of the concept of hegemony and the significance of Gramsci's interest in the analysis of language are compiled to lead to the argument that language policy and use were a vital part of his ideological framework of hegemony (Ives, 2009). Ives notes that hegemony usually is "mobilized" to "counter the arguments put forth by the advocates of 'Global English'." (2009, p. 662) The reasoning behind hegemony being 'mobilized' to argue against advocates of 'Global English' lies in the sentiment that the spread of the English language is a "problem to the extent that its role⋯prevents subaltern social group consciousness from developing and creating … counter hegemonic responses." (p. 663) Gramsci supports this idea, that "language

use is intimately tied to education, culture, ideology, and politics." (p. 664) Moreover, Gramsci maintains that language use cannot be "divorced from questions of subordination and domination", and that the possibility for "resistance and struggle" is also encompassed by the use of language (p. 664)

Recent research continually illustrates concrete examples and connections between hegemony and the global spread of English, noting that governments and academics seem to be accepting the dominance of the language without criticism (Guo & Beckett, 2007). Within the context of China, Guo and Beckett (2007) argue that the spread of English as a lingua franca discriminates against the disadvantaged, calling for policies and practices of an egalitarian nature, in order to avoid danger to cultural identities posed by the spread of the language. Furthermore, the "increasing dominance of the English language" largely contributes to not only the neocolonialism mentioned above but also "racism through linguicism by empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantaged powerless further behind." (Beckett & MacPherson, 2005) Another interesting result of the "global predominance" of the English language is that as of 2003 "non-native speakers of English far outnumber" native speakers of English, leading to a shift in the "balance of power between native and non-native speaker groups." (Rudby & Saraceni, 2006, p. 5)

An interesting example of the controlling influence of the English language on non-native speakers can be found in the above-mentioned research of Guo and Beckett (2007); young Chinese students "seem to internalize the belief in the superiority of Anglo culture and the inferiority of their own culture." (124) Guo and Beckett contend that the "idealized West in authentic English reading materials needs to be challenged." (124) Using Singapore as a case study, Pennycook points out that as early as 1994 the ruling party of the "new state actually reinforced English supremacy" via "successfully weaving it into the fabric of the state ideology of building a new meritocratic and technocratic society", while foreign capital was encouraged. (Pennycook, 1994, p. 223-58) Continuing with the case study of Singapore , Choi (2010) contends that the dominance and controlling influence of the English language was clearly "reinforced" by the process of globalization, and "aided by great strides in information technology." (237)

Looking towards the future, and regardless of how one chooses to look at the desirability or undesirability of the hegemony of the English language, future generations of those whose second language is English will "definitely become English users." (R. R. Gann et al., 2005, p. 434) Researching the use of English by children of immigrants to the United States, it is noted that they "eschewed their ethnic-sounding names in favour of English ones and

dismissed the charming artifacts" of their non-English speaking parents and elders. (p. 435)

Considering the above overview of some of the effects of the hegemony of the English language, some notable facts rise to the surface: English use can be seen as a factor in the disappearance of culture and other languages, it can be seen to encourage the viewpoint that English is superior to other, less common languages, and can even result in the remarkable discrimination noted by Guo and Beckett. Considerable attention and research has focused on the effects of the spread of the English language, yet it appears that the causes are often glossed over, cursorily attributed to generalized factors like pedagogy, globalization, or information technology. Little attention is paid to the role of media, and the following will explain and establish media as a factor, and furthermore as an environment which encourages the spread of the English language.

The connection between the Global Village and Global English

For the theoretical basis of this article, I would like to turn to the vintage Canadian communications theorist, Marshall McLuhan, to theoretically explore the significance of the global use of English via figure/ground analysis. Before an explanation of the theoretical significance to the rise of Global English is explained, a concise overview of his works and importance will be outlined below.

Despite often being dismissed as a forgotten cultural relic of the 1960s, the staying power of McLuhan is notable, and the works of this man deserve examination. (Fishman, 2006, p. 567) Focusing his work and thought upon the then-overlooked area of communication, many of McLuhan's admirers contend that he was "prescient in anticipating the role of communications in society." (p. 569) Although McLuhan "relished" his position as a public figure and celebrity, and despite being a "relentless seeker of publicity", Rogers points out that no other "individual brought more attention to the field of communication as a discipline" (1994, p. 16). McLuhan had an acute concern regarding the effects of new media and their connection and effects upon human affairs. He was "convinced that human affairs have their causes and that these causes⋯.must be understood." (Stahlman, 2011, p. 8) McLuhan sought out to discover the "long-term patterns" which he believed were vital to "the understanding of our own lives." (p. 9) Pattern recognition was an important part of his work, often stressed in later works, as he stated that people in general had "lost the ability to recognize the patterns all around" them, choosing instead to focus "on the efficient and the straight-forward." (p. 10)

Not only was McLuhan responsible for bringing the field of communication studies into the realm of popular discourse, he consistently "predicted an upheaval in society based on changes in communication technology." (Fishman, 2006, p. 569) Hegemony is brought to mind as McLuhan often noted that media not only creates the shape of a society in terms of material culture" yet also extends to configure "its cultural dreams." (Romanyshyn, 1989, 223) Key to McLuhan's idea is the precept of media as an environment, within which the "user becomes numb to the structuring effect of a technology", similar to the way in which one "quickly becomes oblivious to the constant humming of an air conditioner in a closed room." (Gow, 2010, p. 22)

Drawing upon McLuhan's focus on pattern recognition and the immense influence that media has upon and society, I contend that the English language should not be seen as a factor that influences and affects environments, but instead should be seen as an environment itself, creating and motivating changes and initiating factors. These changes and factors in cultures created and motivated by the hegemonic nature and use of the English language should be seen as figures, results of the effect of English use. I believe that the English language and its effects on culture need to be regarded as a 'ground', and not a 'figure'. The spread of the English language and the rise of Global English need to be seen as an environment, as opposed to the viewpoint which sees English as factor that affects environments. How would Marshall McLuhan have explained this connection, let alone lend a theoretical explanation?

McLuhan says that the environment or 'ground' is not only the "underlying structure" for a situation, but also provides the "conditions for experiencing any part that presents itself as figure."(McLuhan, 1977,p.14) Continuing this line of thought and expanding the definition and significance of 'ground', McLuhan points out how grounds can affect our perception, even going so far as contending that a ground can "become so familiar to us that we stop paying it any conscious attention." (p. 19). Speaking about the value of analysis using figures and especially ground, it is stressed that these two tools are not to be seen as categories, but as tools that will lead to the discovery of the "structure and properties of situations." (p. 31)

To give the theoretical basis of 'ground' some final functional emphasis with regards to the topic that I am arguing here, it is necessary to look into the range of uses that figure/ground analysis provides when looking at the effects of the widespread use of the English language. McLuhan does have a lot to say about the importance of language, as the aphoristic *Culture Is Our Business* goes as far as to say that "language itself" can be seen as a "shaper and distorter of ordinary experience." (p. 186) Moreover, technological innovation was envisioned

by McLuhan as a "long, painful process" that would "trigger massive identity collapses around the world….generating new and terrifying sources of disassociation." (Coupland, 2010, p. 164) Considering that if every "massive technological innovation" results in the creation of "new environments that destroy national and corporate images," (McLuhan, 1970, p. 66), what can be said about the language that has the dominant role in each of these new technological innovations?

McLuhan has inadvertently provided us with a new viewpoint from which to examine the phenomenon of English as a 'lingua franca'. Although still a vague connection, seeing the spread of the English language as an environment that is spread by global media gives rise to new opportunities and viewpoints in the vast field of research concerned with the global spread of the English language. Utilizing the tools of figure and ground which are prominent in the late works of McLuhan, we can gain new insights into the way that English is adopted and adapted by non-native speakers across the globe.

To add some final words, the phenomenon of the rise of Global English needs to be seen as a hegemonic environment that does displace the cultural values of non-native speakers of English. Whether or not this is a positive or negative effect remains to be seen, yet by looking at something as ubiquitous as media and considering the environment that it has created, one cannot help but wonder why the factor of media has been explored in a minimal manner. However, in order to explore the far-reaching effects of this modern phenomenon, the theoretical framework advanced nearly forty years ago by McLuhan yields a unique method of encapsulating the spread of the English language as an environment, allowing researchers to see the language and the effects it has as a precept, not a concept, gaining a much wider perspective. Given that terms like hegemony, colonialism, and neo-imperialism are often mentioned in the same sentence as Global English, there clearly exists a need for a new theoretical framework that can encompass, examine, and expand upon the existing knowledge of this vital change to the non-English speaking countries and peoples of the world.

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支配的影響または言語学のデフォルト：
英語学的ヘゲモニーの追求

ドムジャンシック・ニコラス

概　要

　この論文は 'lingua franca' としての英語の重要性を模索する目的とする理論的枠組みの概略である。特に英語の世界的普及が，ヘゲモニーとしての定義に役立つことに主眼を置いている。ヘゲモニーのコンセプトの近代的な解釈を再考することはこの論文が意図するところ明確にするのに役立つ。また，ヘゲモニーの理論的な根拠を得るには，Marshall McLuhan のメディア理論が英語の世界的普及の遠因を概念的に説明する助けになるであろう。この論文中の理論的枠組みは英語の普及が英語を非母国語とする国々の文化的アイデンティティーに与える影響を探ることを目的としている。

キーワード：Lingua Franca，コミュニケーション，ヘゲモニー，Marshall McLuhan，文化的アイデンティティー