Teaching English as a multinational language

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Leffa, Vilson J. 2002. Teaching English as a multinational language. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal,* 10(1). The de facto adoption of English as a lingua franca in worldwide communication has met both acceptance and rejection among scientists from different parts of the world. This article tries to analyze the issue from both sides, including the ideologies that underlie frequently-mentioned dichotomies such as central versus peripheral countries, native speakers of English versus non-native speakers, and alternatives that have been proposed to counterbalance the hegemony of English. It is argued that for a language to be multinational it should ideally include certain characteristics such as the prevalence of non-native speakers, the language ability to incorporate other cultures, and tolerance to diversity. Giving a language a multinational status along these lines does not necessarily imply promotion of the language, but also the imposition that the language be willing to lose part of its cultural and linguistic identity. While it is debatable whether any language fulfills these conditions, this article makes a case for English as the best candidate, offering some suggestions on how to teach it from a multinational perspective. **(Universidade Católica de Pelotas, Brazil)**

1. Introduction

My objective in this article is to investigate the opposing ideologies that underlie what I define here as the Teaching of English as a Multinational Language (TEMUL). I understand by TEMUL the de facto use of English as the lingua franca for international contacts in our globalized world. I will try to make two main points: one is that for a language to acquire the status of a lingua franca it must have the ability to incorporate other cultures; the other point is that when a language is used multinationally it does not necessarily replace the local languages, but works in complementary distribution with them, fulfilling different functions. I will not ignore the feelings, of both hostility and admiration, that the hegemony of English has aroused in different quarters, and will try to analyze both sides. I hope to end the article on a positive note, trying to avoid the extremes of blind naiveté and alienation on one hand, and relentless outrage, on the other.

Globalization can be defined as a process by which capital, goods, services and labor are freely moved around the globe. Essentially, it

involves ideological, economical and technological aspects and its complexity lies in the interaction between these three basic elements. A fourth element, which is considered here, is the insertion of English as the language of globalization.

Ideologically, globalization can be seen from various perspectives and, in this case, nothing is less globalized than the perception of globalization. For some, globalization simply means a healthy combination of democracy and free market, with the deregulation of the economy and retraction of the role of the state. The idea is that free market stimulates creativity and generates prosperity. Along with this optimistic view of the globalized world, statistics is used to show that the poor are getting richer and living longer.

For others, however, globalization means the dominance of central countries, mainly the United States and the European Union. For these people what is happening is not a globalization process, but the americanization and McDonaldization of the world. The great majority of humankind is excluded from the process and the environment is destroyed.

From the economical point of view, globalization means the deterritorialization of companies, which are no longer American, British or German but transnational. Merging between companies of different countries have also helped to expand this trend, leading to large conglomerates, some of them wealthier than many countries. As a result, capital, goods and even services such as banking, telecommunications, and satellite television now move freely around the world.

But it is the technological domain that seems to have contributed most to globalization, mainly through the fusion of computer and satellite, which facilitated telecommunications and transformed the world into a digital village. The technology available now allows for interaction to occur not only between companies from one nation to another but also between millions of individuals with millions of other individuals from different parts of the planet. Technology not only made communication viable, but, what is more important, made it *economically* viable, by discovering the bit – the binary digit – which is the minimal unit of information.

Underlying these three aspects of globalization – technology, economy

and ideology – we have a fourth and important element, which is the extensive utilization of the English language. The consequence of using English as the global language is a general feeling of resentment, especially from non-English-speaking countries, where the hegemonic use of this language is perceived as an encroachment over local cultures.

The point raised here is that the close association made between language and culture does not hold when a language becomes multinational – and has more speakers outside the original country than inside – as is the case of English. Speakers of a language are like the shareholders of a transnational company; they impose their own policy as long as they are the majority. A language cannot be used for the benefit of a minority, even if that minority is made up of native speakers (NSs). When a language goes multinational it has to pay the price of incorporating different lexis, accents – and cultures. English, for example, becomes Englishes, including not only the American and British varieties, but also varieties from other countries where the language is spoken by native speakers of other languages.

I will also argue that much of the opposition towards English as a multinational language comes from speakers of central countries, who have suddenly found out that they have to learn a foreign language, and feel the discomfort of expressing themselves through it, if they want to be heard on the global village. Speakers from peripheral countries, whose claims have often been discarded on grounds of incompetence, have, thus, acquired a new ally.

2. Reactions to English as a multinational language

There are many factors which contribute to turn English into a multinational language: (1) English is spoken by more than a billion and a half people; (2) English is the language used in more than 70% of scientific publications; (3) English is the working language in most international organizations; (4) English is the most taught foreign language in the world. The most important reason, however, is the fact that English has no geographical boundaries. While Chinese, for example, is also spoken by more than a billion people, it is geographically bound to China and some neighboring countries.

English, on the other hand, is not only designated as the official language in 62 countries, spread all over the world (Ammon, 1992, p. 78-81), but is also spoken as a foreign language in many other countries, having for each NS, three other people who speak it as NNSs.

This multinational nature of English has raised plenty of opposition from many speakers of other languages – from both peripheral and central countries – who see the hegemony of one language in international affairs as a new form of colonialism. The dichotomy is no longer between East and West, or even between North and South, but between speakers and non-speakers of English. By being forced to express themselves in a foreign language, NNSs of English feel diminished when interacting with NSs of English. Geographical colonialism is replaced by colonialism of the mind.

The strongest opposition to English as a multinational language, considering the literature published in the area, does not come from speakers in peripheral countries, who probably never had a chance of being heard after all, but from speakers in central countries – who are now being heard – and taking along with them speakers in peripheral languages as well. Among central nations, strongest criticism seems to come from those speakers who feel that their language has a chance of competing as candidates for a world language. The most notorious case is France, which spends billions of francs annually to support the French language and culture abroad, hoping to recover at least part of the dominance the language enjoyed in the 19th century.

French, however, seems to have succumbed to English, even in diplomatic circles, which was the last bastion of French presence in the international scene. English not only replaced French as an international language, but, according to some French purists, seems to be threatening the French language itself, with the ever increasing insertion English words in everyday life — seen as treason in some quarters, as quoted by Kibee:

Treason, real betrayal, takes place every day, on the radio, on television, in advertising in storefront windows. If you are looking for high treason, there it is, and France will die from it now or in the near future (Kibbee, 1993:209).

If the intrusion of English in the French language is seen as a threat to national security, the use of English as a lingua franca and the need to

speak it is seen as "intellectually and spiritually cramping and a threat to cultural and creative values." (Phillipson, 1992:36)

Another country that is becoming notorious for its resistance to the expansion of the English language is Japan. One of the most caustic critics of the dominance of English in the international setting is Professor Yukio Tsuda (1986, 1990, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996) from the Graduate School of International Development, Nagoya University, Japan. According to him, the use of English as the lingua franca in international contacts does not facilitate communication but rather obstructs the interaction, creating inequality between NSs and NNSs.

According to Tsuda, the dominance of English leads to a new form of colonialism, producing not only linguistic and communicative inequality, but also linguistic discrimination and colonization of the mind. Communicative inequality is generated by the power that NSs have, magnified by their fluency in the language, which reduces NNSs to the condition of deaf and mute and practically prevents them from participating in the conversation. Linguistic and social discrimination makes NSs perceive NNSs as inferior, by generalizing from their linguistic limitations, sometimes to the point of judging them as mentally retarded (Tsuda reports on cases of foreigners who were confined to mental institutions because they were unable to speak and understand English and were seen as abnormal). Finally, colonization of the mind occurs as a result of linguistic domination: in their mental universe, the colonized act as colonizers in their own country and undervalue their own culture, replacing it with the culture and values of the colonizer.

Examples of this kind of criticism can be found everywhere, including the media of any country, which is sometimes used to carry criticism against its own subservience to foreign values. Thus, according to Ziraldo, a famous Brazilian writer and journalist: "We are the unhappiest Europeans in the world because we don't have Europe". Or according to L. F. Veríssimo, another famous writer, with a daily column in many Brazilian newspapers:

This unconditional surrender to American standards, both in terms of politics and behavior [...] is frightening on the media and on our entrepreneurial and economic elite, be it for naiveté or connivance (1999, p. 3)

3. The predicament of the non-native

speaker

The main problem that we have when we need to express ourselves in a foreign language, however, is not that we are more European than the Europeans or that our minds have been colonized. In fact, it seems to be the opposite: we do not know enough of the foreign language and culture to understand what we hear or say what we really mean. We are still too confined to our own linguistic and cultural experiences, perceiving the world through the parameters of our mother tongue:

Our consciousness and our intellect depend on our mother tongue (...) [Other languages] are and always will be (...) foreign languages (Weinrich, 1986, p. 196) (Translated).

I think, I live, I love and I . . . criticize in French. It is in this language that I produce my most sophisticated, my most refined reflections. When I write in English I become weaker, my text gets mediocre. Simply because the language of true creation is the mother tongue (Gouin, 1998) (Translated).

These testimonials, from people who have been forced to express themselves in a foreign language, do not seem to indicate that their minds have been colonized. On the contrary, it seems to indicate that the need to speak a foreign language decolonizes the mind − by making people aware of their general failure to appropriate the language and culture of the colonizer. We wish to be colonized as long as we are under the protective space of our mother tongue; as soon as we venture out and plunge into the discomforts of a foreign language we start being decolonized. We painfully realize what it means to be a foreigner, and have to fight very hard not to feel like monkeys, behaving foolishly before other people, and talking like parrots, trying to make ourselves understood but not sure of what we are saying.

When we speak a language that is not ours, we expose ourselves to misunderstandings, not only on the linguistic level, but also on the human level (Féal, 1990:26) (Translated).

The fluency of the NS, effortlessly using the language that we have so strenuously tried to appropriate, may raise in us feelings of resentment and impotent fury. This can be seen in the following excerpt, taken from a Japanese anthropologist, for whom NNSs of English are unable to compete with NSs, who take full advantage of their linguistic and communicative proficiency to oppress them:

There is a great gap in the working knowledge of English between native speakers and non-native speakers, especially those speakers

whose mother tongues are linguistically distant from English. Thus, native speakers of English intentionally try to push non-native speakers out of discussions by making a full use of tactics that stem from phonetic, idiomatic, syntactic, and pragmatic characteristics unique only in English (...). For example, they step up the speed of speech, use a large number of jargons and idioms, or make utterances that are grammatically complex (...). These communicative tactics are used to take advantage of lower proficiency of non-native speakers in English (Takahashi, 1991:188-189).

Interacting with NSs of any language in real-life situations entails much more than having a good command of the language and being familiar with the values and culture that underlie the language. It also entails reacting almost automatically to some basic facts of life that are taken for granted by the NS. Considering familiarity with the metric system, for example, if it takes a NNS more than a second to realize that somebody who is six feet tall is not really short but tall, the delay may look as a sign of imbecility for the NS, who has been exposed to the Anglo system for a life time. Another example is the problem shown in Figure 1, typical of speed tests used to measure the logical abilities of university applicants. It is extremely easy for a regular American student, who will probably solve it in the time it takes to read it, but may be unsolvable for a NNS, who may not know that 1 yard has 3 feet.

Considering that an ant walks 1 foot in 10 seconds, how long does it take the for same ant to walk 2 yards?

( ) 1 minute

( ) 2 minutes

( ) 3 minutes

( ) 4 minutes

( ) 5 minutes

Figure 1 – Typical item in American speed tests

If we elaborate on the strategies that speakers of a hegemonic language

can use – consciously or unconsciously – to oppress speakers of other language, we can easily find many instances of them. They are an integral part of our every-day life: in the products we use, in the assumptions we hold, and mainly in the manner we are expected to interact with NSs of hegemonic languages.

Products have been made with the English language in mind. One good example is the typewriter, where the distribution of keys on the keyboard was based on the statistical analysis on the frequency of letters in the English language. Also, the need to include diacritics and cedilla adds an extra burden to users of other languages such as Portuguese, Spanish or French, due to lack of standardization or even absence of the necessary keys to type in the special characters.

In terms of assumptions, similar examples showing the tendency to favor the aspects that directly or indirectly benefit NSs, sometimes in very subtle ways, can also be found in foreign language pedagogy. I would like to quote two examples.

One is the historical claim, which prevailed for a long time in language teaching, that the student's mother tongue should never be used in the classroom. This tenet of course would not only authorize the NS teacher's inability to use the student's language but would also deprive the NNS teacher of exercising one of the few advantages that he or she would have over NSs.

The other example is the discrediting of the role played by the student's mother tongue in the process of learning a foreign language, especially in the theory underlying the monitor model, as proposed by Krashen:

In the first empirical study undertaken in which the grammatical errors made by children were actually counted and classified, less than 5% were found to reflect the children's first language. (. . .) ... all the investigations conducted to date reached the same general conclusion: *the majority of errors made by second language learners are not interlingual, but developmental* (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982:173) (Emphasis in the original).

The claim that less than 5% of the errors were due to the student's first language is probably not true, although presented in statistical terms and generalized to "all the investigations" – but it, consciously or unconsciously, served the purpose of disabling NNSs in an area they

would be superior to native teachers of the foreign language. Their experience of learning the same foreign language they are now teaching to their students – an experience which I would evaluate as precious – would be theoretically useless.

There are also certain kinds of interaction that favor NSs over NNSs. One example is the use of poster sessions, which is being adopted more frequently in international congresses, in some cases totally replacing paper presentations. Being able to run a presentation in a poster session successfully, however, demands the ability to interact more or less informally with different people asking unexpected questions – an ability that is much more complex than preparing an oral presentation in which the presenter can control with more precision what to say next.

It is also argued that the process of subduing non-native interlocutors and reducing them to second-class citizen is further intensified by the course of information and knowledge. The globalized world is asymmetrical. The massive flow of information from central countries to the periphery is not counterbalanced by a similar flow in the opposite direction. This happens not only in satellite television programs but also in face-to-face interaction.

 NSs and NNSs play different roles. NSs are active dispensers of knowledge, which is submissively taken by the NNSs. This feeling is demonstrated in the following excerpt from a Brazilian sociologist:

Recently, I was in an international colloquium in social sciences, organized in our country (Brazil) by a famous researcher. He tried to put both Brazilians and foreigners in touch. The foreign specialists, however, would hardly come to the Brazilian presentations, in spite of simultaneous translation. They would rather socialize, among themselves, in another exotic country. The role of the Brazilian hosts should be to listen to them, comment them, admire them, take them to dinner and show our picturesque country (Ribeiro, 1999, p. 10) (Translated).

4. Alternatives to the hegemony of English

Whereas there is a lot of criticism, resentment and even outrage against the dominance of English in the world, there are not many viable solutions to it. Historically, two major propositions have made: one is to replace English by another natural language; the other is to use an

artificial language. None of these propositions, however, have been able to survive the strong criticism that has been raised against them. Currently, the ecology-of-language paradigm is faring a little better and being looked with favor in some circles.

Replacing English by another natural language is no longer considered a viable choice, since the problem of hegemony would simply move from one language to another. Traditionally, French has been proposed for the position of a lingua franca, mainly for its role in diplomatic circles – even today French is still a common language in the European Parliament.

French, however, has historically had the same devastating effect on colonized countries as English, although presented as the language of human rights, with the ideas of humanity, fraternity and equality. French has been presented not only as the language of human rights but also as the language of reason and logic ("ce qui n'est pas clair, n'est pas français / what is not clear is not French") (Quoted by Phillipson, 1992, p. 438).

In terms of artificial languages, out of the hundreds that have been proposed, Esperanto is the only one that has had some success, with about 2 million speakers and a respected body of literature, both translated and original. The claim, however, that Esperanto is a neutral language, has met with some criticism. First, the language has a genealogical preference for Indo-European languages (Romance, Germanic, Slavic), which means that all other languages are excluded. Second, in spite of all its alleged neutrality, Esperanto is not divested of ideological underpinnings, starting with the publication of Zamenhof's manifesto in favor of an "international brotherhood". Whereas no one would classify the content of such a manifesto as negative, it ties the language to a certain ideology, thus violating neutrality.

Since Esperanto has never become a lingua franca, the results of a worldwide use of an artificial language are not known. There is the possibility that Anglo-American ideology would spread all over the world through Esperanto – in the same way it has spread through the English language. There is no reason to suppose that the process of colonization cannot occur through language translation, be it artificial or natural.

The ecology of language paradigm has been presented as a solution to

this problem. From this perspective, a language is seen as part of our threefold living environment – biological, linguistic and cultural – which has to be preserved in its megadiversity. Whereas some languages are in a safe position, others can be regarded as endangered species, in need of some action to be preserved. Language ecology should also be concerned with the teaching of foreign languages and the impact they may have on local languages, learners and users. According to Tsuda (1994), the paradigm involves Human Rights, equality in communication, multilingualism, maintenance of languages and cultures, protection of national sovereignties, promotion of foreign language education (p. 58-59). Language is not just an instrument for communication, but an environment with culture that creates us and shapes us.

(...) the "Ecology of Language Paradigm" believes that language is people, and people are language. Therefore, inequality among languages means inequality among people. The death of one language is the death of its speakers (Tsuda, 1999, n.p.).

Three important components in Tsuda's language ecology are:

The Right to Language

Equality in Communication

Multilingualism and Multiculturalism

The Right to Language should guarantee the individual's right to choose which language to learn and use in any circumstances. "It therefore assumes an individual's right and freedom not to use a language that is not his/her choice but imposed upon him/her" (Tsuda, 1999, n.p.).

Equality in Communication occurs when there is equality among languages. Whenever in the interaction a native language has to be used all the time, there is no equality. Tsuda offers the following suggestions to promote Equality in Communication:

• Linguistic localism: all participants in international communication should use the local language; in a congress held in China, for example, all the procedures should be in Chinese.

• Use of a third language: when two people from two different

languages communicate with each other, they should use a third language.

- Use of both languages: participants in the interaction, for example, speak in their native languages and force their interlocutors to listen to it as a foreign language.

The idea of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism, according to Tsuda, has two main points for the implementation of a language ecology: peaceful coexistence and attention to minorities. In his words:

Pluralism is a philosophy of tolerance and conviviality which pursues a harmonious coexistence of different cultures, languages, and peoples. Pluralism also pays most attention to the minorities, the dominated, and the disadvantaged, as it believes that these people should be given equal opportunities (Tsuda, 1999, n.p.).

The ecology of language proposal is probably the most carefully elaborated alternative to "The Diffusion of English Paradigm", as stated by Tsuda. While most critics of linguistic imperialism are copious in criticism and scanty in alternatives, Tsuda tried very hard to offer a solution to the problem. The question we have to consider now is how viable the solution is.

According to Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996)

alternatives to the current linguistic hierarchies are seldom considered and tend to be regarded as counterintuitive and in conflict with a common-sensical, "natural" order of things (1996:433).

The fact, however, is that Tsuda´s proposal, with the exception of his plea for multiculturalism and multilingualism, does sound counterintuitive. Alleging, as he does in the "Right to Language," that an individual has the freedom not to learn and not to use a given foreign language is at best dangerous. It may not have serious consequences if the individual's native language is a dominant one but might be disastrous for someone who speaks a minority language. The "Right to Language," in practice, considering the world as it really is, would end up by discriminating and excluding speakers of many languages.

"Equality of communication" could also intensify discrimination if followed to the letter. Enforcing "Linguistic Localism", for example,

trying to make participants talk in the language of the country where a conference is being held, would probably result in exclusion – either of countries that do not speak a dominant language or of important speakers who would not be willing to learn a minority language.

The necessity for an international language is unavoidable for the time being. Even Phillipson and Scutnabb-Kangas (1996) recognize that, when they state that English can serve many useful purposes (p. 447) and agree that countries should invest in foreign language education for international purposes (p. 445). The long debate about which language to use, including the discussion of whether it should be a natural language like French or English or an artificial one like Esperanto, seems to be over now, since for practical reasons, English is the language that has been chosen.

5. English as a multinational language

Much of the ideology against the dominance of English in international communication seems to be based on resentment, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Among the leftist intelligentsia, still frustrated with the defeat of Communism, criticism is often made for the sake of criticism, without offering alternatives (Toledo, 1999, p. 166). Since there is no foreseeable solution under neoliberalism, with its emphasis on economic growth, it is regarded as good taste to predict that the world is fast moving to linguistic and cultural genocide. Pessimism, anger and resentment usually dominate the rhetoric on globalization, following more or less unconditionally the proposition advanced by Albert Camus: "We feel outrage, therefore we exist."

In contrast with this view, there is also a perception that we are now entering a new renaissance with the affirmation of democracy, tolerance and generosity (Pedreira, 1999). Totalitarian regimes all over the world are disappearing and the Tower of Babel, which was erected to bring confusion among the peoples, is finally collapsing. Different countries are now uniting for cooperation, examples of which are the European Union and the Mercosur. The world of scarcity is being replaced by a world of affluence, where unimaginable resources are now available for humanity.

Since the ideological component is strong on the issue of globalization, especially when language policy is involved, facts become scarce and beliefs are abundant. In a world where facts are replaced by

interpretations and beliefs are Manichaeanly polarized into extremes, reality becomes subjective to our own representations and can only be perceived zoroastrianly as forces of light or darkness.

6. Criteria for a language to be multinational

Personally, I prefer a world with many languages and cultures; one of the keenest pleasures I have when I travel is to hear people talking in their native languages, even if I do not understand what they are saying. Whenever they switch to a foreign language to communicate with me, I have the feeling that they are no longer real and the authenticity of the encounter is lost. I feel departed from my interlocutor, forced to act like an ordinary tourist and get ready to be exploited.

I understand, however, that in our globalized world we need a multinational language, if not for pleasure, then for practical purposes, for doing business with people. This language, ideally, should meet three special criteria: (1) it should have no NS – everybody should speak it as a foreign language; (2) it should be culture independent – different countries should use it; and (3) it should be used only for specific purposes – it should never compete with the purposes for which the native language is used, for example. Obviously, there is not any natural language that meets all these criteria – I cannot even imagine the possibility of a natural language that has no NSs – but there are some languages that get close to it. The one that is closest, in my opinion, is English, which, in fact, should explain why it has already been chosen as a multinational language; there is more to it than just economical power, as I will try to demonstrate below.

English does not meet the first criterion (no NSs of the language), but it is not far from it: for each NS of English there are three NNSs.

Some would argue that the internationalization of English is the result of a well-orchestrated scheme to expand the language in order to colonize the rest of the world. The English 2000 Project, prepared by the British Council, for example, states that one of the aims of the project in expanding the "role of English as the world language into the next century [is] to exploit the position of English to further British interests " (British Council, 1995, n.p.). I am not sure, however, the "infectious spread of English" (Phillipson and Scutnabb-Kangas, 1996, p. 436) is the result of a well-orchestrated plan. Even if it were, it

backfired, in a way: NSs of English are a minority in the English-speaking community. As a result, along with American and British "Englishes", we have not only Australian and Canadian Englishes, but also Indian English, Nigerian English, and even Brazilian and Korean Englishes. Kissinger, who was Secretary of State in the Nixon period, speaks German English. Joseph Conrad, a famous British novelist, spoke Polish English. Roman Jakobson, a famous linguist, professor in the MIT, spoke Russian English. Nelson Mandella speaks South-African English. All these people belong to the vast majority of NNSs of English and cannot be simplistically classified as either colonized or colonizers. They learned and used English for communicational and pragmatical purposes, without annihilating their identities and national origins. Whenever they opened their mouths, they made it clear to everybody where they came from, including Kissinger. Since NNSs of English are a majority, it seems reasonable to argue that they are in a position to impose their ideas, cultures and interests rather than being imposed upon.

The choice of English as a multinational language, rather than any other of the thousands of languages spoken on the planet, is certainly a result of the expansion and colonization practices developed by both the British and the Americans.   This expansion, however, through contact with other languages and cultures, seems to have supplied the English language with certain traits that are not found in other would-be hegemonic languages.

Besides being the only major language that has more NNSs than NSs – or as a result of that – English has a tradition for being more open to linguistic borrowing. Compared to French, for example, which has traditionally regarded borrowing words from other languages not only as linguistic alienation but also as an act of treason, English has been popularly described as a promiscuous mongrel, for the speed with which it absorbs words and phrases from other languages (Young, 1997).

English has so many different accents that it is probably the most diverse language in the world, a condition that can be assessed by the very existence of the word "Englishes"; English has more "Englishes" than French has "Frenches" or Spanish has "Spanishes". Some people also believe that, in spite of the Anglo-American ideology associated with its expansion, English is nevertheless becoming culturally neutral. "The English language has now ceased to be a vehicle of western culture; it only marginally carries the British and American way of

life" (Kachru, 1986, p. 92). "In fact, the strength of English lies in the fact that it does not represent just one culture or one way of life alone (...)" (Bhatia, 1997, p. 315). Finally, there is a trend towards internationalization within the English language itself, divesting it from Americanisms, idiomatic expressions, etc. Worldwide publications such as *Newsweek* and *Time Magazine* have explicitly followed that policy.

People, who speak more than one language, characteristically use each language for a different function in society. They probably use one language at home, when talking to their relatives and friends, and a different language at work when reading reports or answering mail. The two languages are not in conflict, but complement each other. English as a foreign language does not necessarily compete with the student's mother tongue, but is normally used in a different context, be it at work, at the university or when navigating on the Web.

The same technology that is attacked by many intellectuals as responsible for the "infectious" spread of English, mainly for providing the convergence of computers and television, may be the only means to help preserve linguistic diversity, by making it unnecessary to learn a dominant language. Automatic translation, although extremely primitive, is already available on the Internet. Someday it will be totally unnecessary to use English in international contacts, even when talking face-to-face – unobtrusive devices will be available for simultaneous interpretation. That is, technology, in a broad sense, not only made it possible for two people, from opposite sides of the globe, to get in touch with each other, using one language, but is now making contacts possible in different languages.

English can be seen as a commodity, even in the terms proposed by Tsuda (1999):

Today for the English-speaking countries English is the best commodity that can be exported throughout the world. English is the best-selling product every year. It means that the English-speaking countries have a larger linguistic capital than countries of other languages. Because English is the most widely used and taught language, it is accepted easily in almost any place in the world. Because of this greatest communicability and acceptability, the English-language-related products ranging from movies, videos, CDs to jeans, T-shirts, discos, and so on, are exported and consumed all over the world (n.p.).

I agree with Tsuda that English is a commodity, sold all over the world. But it is not a physical merchandise like a T-shirt or a CD. It is an abstract commodity, like a commercial certificate, which has value in itself, but can only indirectly represent the physical merchandise. In this sense, the speakers of the language like the shareholders of a multinational company, whose product is the language itself. The benefits are divided among them, no matter whether they are NSs or NNSs. The policy to be followed is that of the majority and can only favor the minority of NSs if the majority of NNSs, as shareholders of the language, decide for it.

7. How to teach English as a multinational language

Although knowing English does not automatically guarantee the benefits of globalization, not knowing English is a guarantee to exclusion. We are entering a society where the most precious asset is knowledge – and knowledge cannot be sufficiently acquired if English is not used.

The teaching of English as a multinational language, however, cannot follow the tradition of foreign language teaching, with an emphasis on one language and one culture. The existence of "Englishes", which at first suggests coexistence with linguistic varieties, ultimately makes English a multicultural language as well. This calls for a new teaching paradigm, involving new priorities. Among these new priorities, I would like to emphasize the following: (1) consider local varieties of English; (2) develop tolerance for differences; (3) teach English for production; (4) teach English for specific purposes.

Consider local varieties of English. If you teach English in Brazil, for example, accept Brazilian English as one of the rightful varieties of English, along with American and British Englishes. There is no reason to suppose that Brazilians have to speak English as NSs do; NSs are a minority. One of the conditions for English to be a multinational language is to accept diversity, including the English language itself. I see no need to pursue native-like proficiency, as advertised by a Brazilian private school: "After our course it will be difficult to prove to others that you are Brazilian". The illusion that a school can teach a foreign language without an accent may be necessary to motivate the students, but we know that it is an illusion.

Develop tolerance to differences. One of the propositions that have been made to avoid the colonization of the mind is to abolish dominant languages and cultures from schools; the assumption, I suppose, is that it is better not to know something than knowing it and being seduced by it – the colonizer seen as a sinful company that should be avoided or a place that we should not go. I see two problems here: first, I do not understand why people have to be restricted to their own language and culture; second, I do not see why we are so much in danger of being seduced by foreign-language speakers. I do not think we should teach our students to hate other cultures, as much as I do not think we should try to teach them to admire dominant cultures uncritically. Along with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) idea of instrumental and integrative motivation, students should have the right to approach a foreign language in an integrative way, wishing to be part of it – but they should also be warned of the dangers. Like ecological systems, cultures have a tendency to treat foreign bodies as intruders, rejecting them if they want to enter, or expelling them if they have already managed to get inside. But they are not in any way superior or inferior to, better or worse than any other culture; they are different – and I hope they remain that way. Students should not be deprived of the opportunity of experiencing difference and learning how to accept it.

Teach English for production. One of the mistakes incurred to by some foreign language policy makers is that English should be taught for reception only, mainly for reading purposes, thus making foreign language students not interlocutors, but readers of the language. I think this is tragic. It reminds me of people who have been hit by a stroke, can hear and understand everything, but are unable to reply. In international terms, it is even more tragic because it reinforces the idea that information should flow unilaterally from central to peripheral countries, disseminating art, culture and science in only one direction. I think it is our duty in peripheral countries to help students not only to import information but also to export it. The agenda to move students from consumers to producers of information has to be implemented and could involve specific strategies such as: (1) exploiting news about the student's country published or broadcast in the international media, not only for motivational purposes (we all like to hear what other people say about us), but also to provide students with the necessary linguistic substratum for later production; (2) help students explain their own culture to others, making them aware of the many aspects that are intrinsically interesting and usually taken for granted; (3) exploit students' interests, whatever they are, so that they learn how to turn the language into an instrument for ventilating their ideas. For the first

time, in the history of civilizations, it is possible for anybody in any part of the world to communicate with anybody else, in any other part of the world, making information flow both ways. All we need is to have something to say.

Teach English for specific purposes. In a normal foreign language context, we never use the foreign language to talk with our wife or kids; we use it professionally or academicaly to place an order or explain a theory. The fact that the foreign language does not have to compete with the mother tongue comes as a blessing for two reasons. First, it allows students to use it for very specific purposes, restricting the objectives for which they study the language and, thus, making them attainable. In a narrow context, dealing with a specific area of knowledge, students have a chance to become proficient. They can be realistically expected to read, write and even present a paper in a professional way, if the interactional rules with other participants are not too complex, as it may happen in a poster session, for example. The second, and possibly more important reason, is that the foreign language does not have to encroach on the mother tongue, threatening to replace it – students learn a foreign language to fulfill different functions from those they need when using the mother tongue.

8. Conclusion

I tried to analyze, in this paper, the liguistic aspects of globalization and the feelings of resentment that the hegemony of English has raised in different parts of the world. I have argued that the use of English as a multinational language has created a new dichotomy in world affairs, which is no longer between East and West, or even between North and South, but between NSs and NNSs of English. While many critics see this dominance of English as linguistic and cultural genocide, I hold a different view, believing that English and local languages do not compete with but complement each other, fulfilling different functions. Studying a foreign language should not be seen as a threat to the preservation of world languages and cultures. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are only guaranteed if people are allowed to look beyond the borders of their own countries, have the experience of living abroad, and understand that nationality should be replaced by humanity. The fact that globalization has made the world smaller can produce two different results: one is that languages and cultures are reduced, in relation to the number of individuals living in the world; the other result is that one individual can now experience different cultures and

languages. This article argues for the second view: multiculturalism seen not as a mosaic, or a patchwork, where the pieces are distinctively separated, but the co-existence of different cultures in the same individual.

I understand that globalization is unfair to speakers of minority languages because it doesn't leave them with many choices: either they do not get heard at all, if they decide not to learn the foreign language, or get heard, but express their ideas poorly, always at a disadvantage when compared to native speakers. Other alternatives like forcing NSs of English learn the minority languages or using an artificial language are not realistic – and replacing English by any other natural language, if feasible at all, would obviously only transfer the problems. The solution proposed here was to accept English not as a national but as a multinational language, dissociating it from any culture or country. The main argument I used for that proposal was the fact that English, unlike any other major language, has more NNSs than NSs.

Teaching English as a multinational language entails a revision of some dearly held beliefs in traditional foreign language pedagogy, such as considering foreign varieties of the language and dissociating the language from its culture. When a language becomes multinational it has to lose its national identity, because it incorporates other purposes, far beyond the preoccupations of disseminating certain domestic idiosyncrasies. Students learn a multinational language not to absorb a foreign culture, but to express their own culture in it. They are not colonized monkeys trying to imitate something that does not belong to their nature and they are not parrots saying words that have not originated from their own concepts of the world. Because they are themselves, speaking their own minds, they can contribute more to world understanding than by suffocating their own identity.   English as a multinational language cannot be taught for the benefit of the NS of the language or for the benefit of the foreign learners; it can only be taught for the benefit of humankind. Globalization has made the world smaller and we have to learn how to think, not in terms of nationality, but in terms of humanity.

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